Afghanistan Strides Towards Democratization
From Afghans' Perspective
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4.3.3 Afghan Equality and Law but with strings attached.................................31
4.3.4 Afghans Perspective on Gender Equality and Education........................32

5. Analysis........................................................................................................33
5.1 Democratic principles within Political Culture of Afghanistan....................33
5.2 Perspectives of Afghans.............................................................................34
5.3 Theories versus Reality.............................................................................35

6. Conclusions..................................................................................................37
7. References....................................................................................................39
1. Introduction and Research Problem

Democracy promotion has been the keystone of the international communities for building peace and nation-building in war-torn and conflict-torn countries (Lafraie, 2011). According to the United Nations' mandate for peacekeeping on both the restoration of democracy and the protection of human rights. After the terrorist attacks on 11 September 2001, failed states were seen as antecedents for terrorism and sources of extreme instability for world security and only building democracy was perceived as a tool to create a stable and sustainable form of governance; that could prevent more violence and instability around the globe (ibid).

In the past, scholars and practitioners agreed on the effectiveness of democratization and consolidation of peace in war-torn countries like Afghanistan. According to Roger Mac Ginty and Oliver Richmond (2009) bringing peace to a war-torn society is a complex process in which many factors other than democracy are involved. They believe that democratization in conflict based countries can be effective but it has many pitfalls and difficulties at the same time.

Universally, democracy is seen as containing the fundamental principles of human rights, justice, security and economic development and these values have worldwide recognition among democratic societies. It also symbolizes the freedom of people to choose leaders for themselves where each citizens’ vote is equally valued and there is always a possibility of change at the highest level if it goes against the well of people.

The same understanding and concept of democracy have been introduced in many post-conflict and Muslim countries and their history and political institution have been evident to that in the past (Larson, 2011). Many experts view the new structure of installing institutions holding above mentioned values in a post-conflict country like Afghanistan have widespread propaganda of top-down democratization. A governance system that is installed by name of “democracy” in post conflict country, is regulated by power holders in and outside the country ignoring the political situation of the country with numerous challenges of insecurity. The weak and exploited government is unable or is unwilling to deliver services to its citizens and also the unlimited freedom that has promoted corrupt and immoral social order is considered non-democratic (Larson, 2011).

Arjomand (2013) underlines that democracy for many social scientists assimilates two defining elements. It is a system which produces both good outcomes and mistakes. Consequently, democracy presents the ability to choose and the ability to disapprove. On the other hand, democracy is a government conducted by people who believe in rules that provide repeated chances to make choices/possibilities. Since democracy has always been discussed in a Western frame by Westerns However, Muslims have also reacted to the issue of democracy in different ways. Some consider that democracy is a Western value
which entails moral corruption and others accept it optimistically as an ultimate output of Western civilization and also as the final finding of human political thoughts. And a middle group of Muslims takes it as “neither-nor” looking for more research and experience. At some point, all Muslims are willing to face the question of adaptability and the compatibility of democracy in the Islamic society (Arjomand, 2013).

The argument that Marvin Weinbaum (2009) presents is the association of democracy with Western liberal values have made it challenging for societies other than West to accept the western ideology of democracy either in form of institutions, rule of law, functioning of different civil societies or the change in local or societal norms. However, there is a general acceptance and support to the process of electing governments through a democratic means by providing the secure environment and existed social values of the country (Areu.org.af, 2018).

According to Fareed Zakaria (1997) despite the concerns about foreign interference and ineffectiveness in building democracy in post-conflict countries, there still remains a strong will for a system of democratic representation that should be firmly around the society and country’s own priorities if the hopes are for lasting the roots of democracy into the post-conflict countries. In many countries democracy has been as an unwelcome imposition of Western culture and values, but generally, there is evidence that countries other than west does have their own perception of democracy and do speak of the need to fix democracy within their social, religious and societal framework (Zakaria, 1997). It is also of importance to know that what is meant by democracy if it is of western liberal democracy dominant in the west and based on western ideology then how is it seen by people and what do they have the understanding of it (Lafrarie, 2011). The concept of democracy comes from the West, but it might have characteristics which other societies’ political systems could have to show the compatibility of democracy with their political culture. Further, the problem that has been observed is, the promotion and imposition of democracy in post-conflict countries like Afghanistan, which has not been done in a systematic manner that can express or represents the Afghans’ views. It is of importance to know Afghans’ perspective on democracy, and the compatibility of democracy with the political culture and social structure of country, after 18 years of constant struggle in imposing democratization to establishing a democratic country (Ibid). Since democracy has always been influenced and measured by Western ideas and values; however, societies other than west does have different opinions and understandings of democracy and how it is perceived and served differently by different societies. (Hippler, 2008). This debate of democracy other than western concept will be executed through a case study of Afghanistan as this country has been the latest testing ground for democratic reconstruction and the process has started since 2001 and still the country is facing challenges to pave its path to become a fully free state where its nation can cherish the values and freedoms that “democracy” or its characteristics defines.
1.1 Research Objective

The research objective will be to examine and explore the debate on democracy from the perspective of Afghans that are interviewed for this thesis. The purpose will be to present a general perspective of Afghans on democracy and to analyze if democracy and democratization have been successful in Afghanistan according to what people in the country want it to look like. The paper will analyse the assumption and perspectives of these Afghan citizens who are directly or indirectly involved or effected by the political system of the country beyond the priorities of government officials and decision makers involved in the politics of the Afghanistan. The objective of the study is not to focus or look on details or textbooks that talk about the political system of Afghanistan, rather collect information and formulate the main idea and impression of Afghans in general about the so called imposed political system.

1.2 Research Questions

- Which kind of democratic characteristics does Afghanistan’s political system have?
- What do Afghans think about reconstruction of democracy in the country and how do they see the effectivity of democratic structure?
- Which kind of a political system do Afghans want to have?

1.3 Methodological Framework

The research is a qualitative study based on the analysis of opinions, articles, interviews of Afghan citizens from different spare of life, journalists, analysts, politicians, academics, businessmen and students. The sources of interviews and articles are in Pashto and Dari languages from different authentic sources. I will also use Afghan news channels, political talk shows in which politicians, government officials, opponents of the current regime and Taliban sympathizers and people from different spheres of life has taken part. The research methodology will be a qualitative and abductive desk study.

I chose desk study as it is full of challenges for me to travel to the country and make a research and since the intention is to analyse the democracy and its perspective in Afghanistan as a case study. Therefore, there is quite a wide range of material based on democracy in Afghanistan. The research will be a qualitative method and will go in-depth on existing literature, reports, contents regarding the debate and case study. To write the thesis abductive seems appropriate to this case and a specific analytical framework will be used too, since it has been observed that a specific analytical framework based on democratization theories has not been used earlier.
1.4 Structure of Thesis

Chapter one is, Introduction, consist of information defying context of the research and it also includes the research problem, its objectives, research question and the methodology that is used for developing this research paper.

The second chapter is, Analytical framework, that presents the study of literature explaining the research problem and analysis of theories are presented to understand the process of democratization in post-conflict countries.

The third chapter is, Methodological framework, the methods of developing the research paper is presented along with information about the sources used for this research paper.

Chapter five is, Analysis, the findings will be analyzed and developed in relation to the research questions.

Chapter six is, Conclusions, the findings will be summarized and will conclude the research to the investigation problem and finally a recommendation for further research will be presented if its needed.

1.5 Relevance

The promotion of democracy has always been the cornerstone efforts of the international community for building peace in war-torn and post-conflict societies (Lafraye, 2011). However, for all the commitments to democratic values by the west it is still required to know the society’s traditional set of attitudes to move the society from an authoritarian basis to a more established state (Hippler, 2008). Indeed, there are states that have had political reforms or at least partially democratized as a result of war or civil war. Evidently it is also quite obvious that in many situations after war democracy still does not develop, despite the massive foreign support or pressure (Hippler, 2008). Therefore, it is important to document the views and needs from inside the country or what strategies could be followed outside the narrowly defined Western frame to principally develop or achieve the idea of building a compatible democratic peace in conflict-torn countries.

Countries with different political culture need necessary preconditions and understanding of its system’s characteristics to define if these societies with complex cultural and social challenges can build an alternative way of democracy to fit into democratic structure instead of following an imposed formula that gives the country a notion of western ideology that now is seen mainly as imperial and interest-driven policies (Lafraye, 2011). I hope that the result of this study can be used to see a nonwestern society from their perspective and develop an understanding of compatibility between different cultures and democracy. This research paper will be relevantly more from inside the nonwestern state like Afghanistan and, will reflect more what the internal picture of democracy is in the country and how people were served in the democratic transition period.
2. Analytical Framework

To understand the process of democratization, there is a wide range of literature available both as a case study and politically oriented. Though a good explanation of democracy is already written in the introduction of this paper, but there is still a need for a theoretical framework to understand democratization and its current experiences of attempts to create democracy.

There have been many cases where the international community attempted to create democratic rules, but to understand the link between war and democracy and its compatibility in societies other than west a theoretical analysis will be conducted. In order to obtain conceptual tools on democracy and democratization, two phases need to be analyzed: First the strategies of democratic principles that are not simply or properly applied. Second the strategies other than the democracy that clashes with cultural and humanitarian principles (Hippler, 2008). Therefore, the analysis of this paper will be based on democratic peace theory and Liberal peace theory.

Johan D. Stephan (2005: 4-5) writes about democratization development that: “democratic development is the product of three clusters of power in a state. 1. The balance of class power in a civil society, 2. the balance of power between state and civil society, 3. transitional structures of power or the economic system of a state nationally and internationally that can shape the balances and constraints political decision makings. And at last the distribution of democratization in different societies and the after-effects of it on certain fragments such as ethnic, religious, cultural and educational systems.” Therefore, this strategy of analysis will be approached in order to find the real mechanism of democracy in non-Western society and how it is perceived by the nation. Hence, this paper will try to explain the limited success of an external democracy building in post-war societies through the lenses of Democratic peace theory and Liberal peace theory. The study of theories will help to understand the process of democratization in a post-conflict country. Further, it will be analysed if the post-conflict country like Afghanistan has democratic characteristics in order to observe the possibility of building a democratic structure compatible to the political culture of country. This could also show a moderate integration to the western illustrated democracy.

A complementary study of Democratic reconstruction theory is also presented to show another angle of this triangle to clearly understand the complexities other than just building certain conditions in the process of democratization. Through the lenses of these three theories, it will be helpful to understand the process of democratization and its affect in post conflict country like Afghanistan.
2.1 Conceptualization of Democracy

The core element of democracy is that democracies tend to have a peaceful relationship with each other, they almost never go to war against each other. This simple consideration for decades has made international actors supporting democratization due to the belief that making a state democratic would cause more peace and make them stay peaceful at least to each other within the country or region (Reiter, 2018).

The historical origin of democracy roots in Greek back in 5th century BC. The word “Democracy” comes from two Greek words “demos” meaning “people” and “Kratein” meaning “to rule” (demokratein) which means rule by the people (Campbell, 2008:5) and so then in November 19, 1863 the United States President Abraham Lincoln was the one who coined democracy as a “government of the people, by the people, for the people”.

The agenda of building democracy and stability has been followed by liberal or social democratic states (Arscott, 1987). Some scholars have various debates on concept of democracy. For example, Michael J. Sodaro (2004:17) explains the concept of democracy as “people have the rights to determine who should govern them and mostly people elect the principal governing officials and hold them accountable for their actions (Sodaro and Collinwood, 2004, P31). Democracies also impose legal limits on the government’s authority by guaranteeing certain rights and freedoms to their citizens.”

The primary debate started to accomplish changes in structural and social development in order to establish democracy and provide opportunities for the free market and economic development. Under these concepts ten conditions for democracy is needed which is state institutions, elites committed to democracy, a homogeneous society, national wealth, private enterprise, a middle class, citizens participation, civil society and a democratic political culture, education, freedom of information and a favorable international environment (Sodaro and Collinwood, 2004). Hence, some theoretical work of academic scholars focused on that; democracy is not just about a certain set of institutions rather it is the belief or set of faith on values, attitudes and practices that can take different forms and articulations among different cultures and as well as societies around the world or in other words experts defines democracy theory a set of fundamental principles and not just uniform practices (Nguyen, 2018). Therefore, to build a democratic concept it is vital to work on the foundation of democracy which is set to be freedom, justice and peace in the world (Nguyen, 2018). Evidently, Najibullah Lafrage (2011) argues that liberal values such as rule of law represents the characteristics of democracy and is universally acceptable to conduct a country to growth and development. Some of these values also include the separation of cultural and religious norms from the politics of a state which can be appropriate and desirable in a secular state where people are existing on different faith. However, applying these values to a country where religion and statehood are strongly correlated, can exclude the possibility of democracy taking route in determining democraticness in the country.
2.2 Democracy in peacebuilding: a literature review

Democratization has been endorsed by international institutions, development agencies, donor governments to achieve stability and development in a post-conflict state (Larson, 2013). Most of the Authors have different opinions on democratization and its success in fragile states. For instance, Kevin K. Frank (2006) states if free market economics can represent a strong success for democracy in fragile states. He further quotes that a competitive market is regarded as an overwhelming necessary condition for democratic progress. He also observed that greater economic and free market prosperity was evidence of success in the democratization of a state, he also thinks that education and democracy have also a linkage in building and sustaining democratization in a war-torn state. This could be possible when through education the nation develops maturing their thoughts on the effects of democracy and concerns on the growth and effect of economics and free markets on societies (Frank, 2006, P106). On the other hand, Jochen Hippler and Tom Ginsburg along with Aziz Huq (2008) thinks that building democracy in failed states was perceived as a tool to create stable and sustainable forms of governance, since western community’s think that failed states would create humanitarian emergencies and threats to local, regional, and global security which will result in civil wars and genocide (ethnical cleansing). Therefore, the International community would have to deal with it by force and by strengthening development and nation-building in order to create a sustainable form of democracy and governance (Hippler, 2008). According to Tom Ginsburg (2014) west has perceived failing states as security threats and an obstacle to humanitarian and development effects, therefore, the establishment of preferably democratic states was seen as one way to deal with these threats. Ginsburg and Aziz Huq (2014) also states that reforming the constitution of a state can bring the rule of law, democracy, human rights and it can be used as tool to judge the success or failure of certain democratic goals. The debate on western peacebuilding concerning liberal peace will discussed in theory part of the chapter.

A range of literature is reviewed on democratization and the states related to the theoretical definitions and concepts of democratization and the state-citizen relationship (Larson, 2013). That, how the relationship of state’s citizen with government on local, national and regional level can promote the understanding and concept of democratization, and it can be possible when governments have democratic characteristics such as rule of law, individual liberty, freedom of choice, freedom of vote and other power of civil and responsibilities are maintained (Larson, 2013).

Furthermore, authors like Gerti Sqapi (2014) describes transitology as a way to promote democratization in fragile states and how the west has approached it. transitology paradigm is a process of changing a country from one political regime to another preferably from an authoritarian regime to a
democratic one. Transitology paradigm is described as an umbrella for all other democratization processes in a country moving away from autocracy. This approach is based on six assumptions such as changing a regime/ political change, promoting elections and this holds some very high expectations of what elections can do to path democratization (Sqapi, 2014: 212-213). The fourth assumption is the moods of transitions from authoritarian rule to democratic stability, shaping and the prospect of consolidation for a new regime which includes various agreements between political actors leading the transition process and the vital interest of those who is entering in it. The fifth assumption is the underlying conditions such as economic level, political history, institutional legacies, ethnic makeups, socio-cultural traditions or other features and concepts in transitional country. The sixth assumption is recently developed by building state and democracy at the same time. It is considered to be two faces of one coin, since western community assumes that state building and democracy building can be mutually reinforced. However, this parallel process of democratization by reforming or redesigning state institutes, the creation of new electoral institutes, parliamentary reforms and judicial reforms widely ignores the challenges faced by a society trying to democratize (Sqapi, 2014: 15-17).

Variously, other literature criticizes transitology approach as an insufficient approach to explain the complexities of political transition and also the nature of democratization (Larson, 2013). Transitology can explain the application of the theory of transition in a fragile state, but it is unable to abduct the dynamics of social changes on a local level (Larson, 2013). This concept is needed to be revealed by analyzing the political transition in Afghanistan and to what extent it was successful in the case of Afghanistan as a case study. It can be also debated if transitology in a fragile country like Afghanistan has explained the political reality of the country and if transitology completed the placement or institutionalization of democracy (Sqapi, 2014).

According to Larson (2013: 60-61) “conflict-affected fragile states do present a certain set of special circumstances in which political process takes place. However, there is a significant differentiation among them and fragility in anyone is not a static phenomenon. Different types of conflict have differential effects on society and its relationship to ruling powers, which in turn is likely to affect the democratization process”. For this thesis, Larson’s work will be used as a subject to study and explain background information of democracy in fragile states and to see her work in context to definitions of the perspective of the states in the international system and sovereignty paradox and look at them through a case study (Larson, 2013). This literature will be also useful to present a study background of democracy measurements from a Western perspective and later compare it from a state’s perspective shrank to a case study of a specific fragile state and its nation.
As earlier, it is mentioned that there has been many studies, researches, and literature on democracy from a Western perspective on conflict-related states and how it is measured. However, there have been very few studies done on democracy, state building and its effect on locals in a fragile state (Middle East Institute, 2018). On the other hand, in some literature, the limited progression of democracy in a state is examined through elites versus citizen analysis, instead of an explanation of its after-effects on a states’ nation (Schmeidl, 2016).

In this part of the literature a brief explanation of democracy in Afghanistan will be presented through literature reviews of Carolyn C Coleman, Anna Larsson and Noah Coburn. A research done by Carolyn C Coleman (2010) on democracy perspective in Afghanistan was based on specifically chosen cities of Afghanistan to find the criterion of democracy. She mentions that democracy in Afghanistan is seen as freedom in a western package. However, the analysis of this concept; that democracy is a western package is also written from the author’s own surveillance. Hence, the actual states dwellers’ mindset on democracy and how it is seen in a country full of social cleavages is missing (ibid). The data from Carolyn C Coleman’s literature will be useful for the thesis in order to have a deeper analysis of democracy in Afghanistan.

In 2009 Afghanistan research and evaluation unit did research on democracy from Afghans perspective which was done by Anna Larson who has spent almost six months to study Afghanistan’s political situation. The study was more in form of investigation of elections held in 2009 and the reform challenges in Afghanistan and how was it seen by citizens from specific cities in Afghanistan (Larson, 2009). Also, authors like Noah Coburn (2014) has done research on elections and political reforms in Afghanistan. His research is on International intervention in Afghanistan since 2010, elections in Afghanistan and that how did the intervention went wrong. He has drawn a comparative theoretical perspective of elections on post conflict, intervention, sovereignty and on terms how elections have played role in failing other opposition groups in times of Karzai’s regime. He has also discussed the increasing distance between Afghans and their national government and the role of security in daily life at a local level (Coburn and Larson, 2014).

Noah Coburn’s (2014) research is based on analyses of communities responded to the structure of democratization. Most of his work as I mentioned is based on the process elections and that how it was useful for observing politics in action, particularly in Afghanistan. He further explains the politics and democracy structure in Afghanistan being unstable due to the political and security situation in the country as whole. He also tried to find the conceptual clarity to analyze if elections 2001 promoted some democratic values. The research also explains how international community has prioritized elections in the hope of a quick establishment of legitimate democratic regime, yet ignoring the other pitfalls of the top to bottom democratic structure that has actually encouraged violence, stagnation and inequitable distribution of
resources which is considered as undemocratic condition by many political commentators (Coburn and Larson, 2014).

These studies will probably be a reliable source for the thesis which will contribute with a more broader perspective in order to understand the institutionalization of democracy specifically to a case study of Afghanistan. The research gap that has been identified regarding democracy in Afghanistan is that there is a lot of research done on democracy in a conflict-affected country like Afghanistan, but it has always been from outside from others' perspective other than Afghans themselves. The link has been always missing of where the Afghan nation finds them connected to the Western word "Democracy"? How much do they accept it and if not how much it is possible to make alternatives in order to breed democracy in a fragile country like Afghanistan? Moreover, very few authors used an analytical or theoretical framework to strengthen its beliefs and analysis, mostly I found no author with any theoretical framework to strengthen their debate. Therefore, more research is needed to be done to find the perception of common people in Afghanistan on democracy and to compare the 2001 era to now 2018 and the understanding of Afghans on democratization and how it has served the nation so far.

To understand the imposition of the Western concept of democracy in peacebuilding a number of theories have been developed to explain and legitimize the international intervention, which will be discussed in theory part this research paper.

2.3 Theories of Democracy

Western scholar David Held divides (2006), democracy into two structures: one is the understanding of the concept of democracy and its underlying structure and second is related to the economy, cultural and social conditions that can build or support the construction of democratic society and institutions. Nguyen (2014) observes that in order to turn a war affected country from a post-war zone to a more democratic and acceptable society among the international society, three theories of democracy are mostly implemented: The democratic peace theory, the liberal peace theory and democratic reconstruction model. Based on the case study of Afghanistan for this thesis, these three theories can explain well the process and approach of democratization in the country.

2.3.1 Democratic Peace Theory

The democratic peace theory focuses as well on two structures: The norms and culture of democracy and the Institutional constraints (Nguyen, 2014). This theory invites states to acknowledge other democratic
states having similar values and the interaction of democrats among each other should go through peaceful
dialogs, negotiation, and political compromises in order to find a peaceful resolution of a conflict (Layne,
2018). Further Christopher Layne mentions Kant’s three mechanisms that foster peace among nations and
societies which is: 1) Interaction of democrats among each other through peaceful dialogue and negotiation
in order to find a peaceful resolution of a conflict, 2) The presence of a “republican constitution” with
free independent judiciary system that can work against lawlessness of the country without being
influenced other authorities, 3) fostering the close trade relations which means that if countries has close
trade relations with one another then it is presumed that going to war will be irrational for the state since
war will threaten their mutual welfare (Layne, 2018). The theory also refers to the military mobilization
process that can effectively prevent countries going to any spontaneous war or attacks against each other
or even if the country intends to go for war it will need the country to prepare and go through a lengthy
public institutional approval process. This process of approval from legislation and different governmental
organs takes a long way and the duration of mobilization means that conflicts are given additional time to
negotiate or make ways for political compromises that can pave way to any other conflict resolution which
will contribute to the peaceful settlement between democracies (Geis and Wagner, 2010).

However, it is far from reality to claim that democratic countries will not or do not go to war with
each other, only the possibility of the states going to a war with another state becomes minor and they only
use threats or threatens each other as it is “illegitimate” to do so (Mello, 2014). According to the democrats
the governments hesitate to go to war with other countries because they are answerable to their citizens
(ibid). This theory also emphasizes on governments and institutions to restrict the argument to focus on
“check and balance”. This is taken on a local political level at three specific features “Executive selection,
political competition and the pluralism of the foreign policy decision-making process” (Mello, 2014:2-3).

The states along with executives (Judiciary, legislation, governors, mayors, president) are obliged
to answer to the selected bodies in order to maintain check and balance that leads the country to be more
politically institutionalized and responsible on decision making and motivates the country not to go back
to war (Mello,2014). Whereas the liberal peace theory has a double impact on a post war country, first: it
promotes the relationship of states and domestic peace, since scholars like Michael Doyle and R.J. Rummel
(2011) contend that countries become democratic when their external environment allows them to: meaning
that when a country is conflict ridden region it seems to provide incentives to develop autocratic state
structure and therefore, peaceful parts of the world enables the countries to shift their economy and
resources to trade and work on welfare and development so to democratize their political institutions.
2.3.2 Liberal Peace Theory

Christopher Zambakari states (2017) states that Liberal Peacebuilding is the formation of institutions associated with modern states, market-based economic reforms. Liberal peacebuilding is characterized by certain assumptions and features.

It is often driven from above by external actors which are justified as political act having the disposition to do good. The first goal of Liberal Peace is not only prevention of conflict by strengthening national and local capacities for conflict management, but also the conflation of democracy with elections, building state institutions by international organization and UN in particular - have prioritized international interventions over local interventions, and top-down state-building over piecemeal, bottom-up approaches (Christopher, 2017). With reference to the liberal peace theory Oliver Richmond (2018:2) also speaks of “model as Western-led agency, epistemology, and institutions that attempt to unite the world under a hegemonic system that replicates liberal institutions, norms and political, social and economic system.”. This model has been deployed in almost fifty to sixty post conflict states over the twenty years. However, the peace in these terms is not seen as an international gift or a local product but as a contract. Since it has the attraction for “International planners on a number of dynamics, that includes state pacification and regional stabilization, transformation, normative legitimacy, civil emancipation, the being of a social contract, opening markets and validating liberal state as a universal framework for liberation.” (Richmond, 2018:3).

The framework of liberal peace has been persuasive at a global, local and state level since it is originated from Western experiences of development, peacebuilding, society, sovereignty, institutions that has worked not only in international fora but also when implemented on post conflict countries. However, critics widely concentrate on the problems raised due to co-option by ideological neoliberalism, that denies the rights that liberal peace proposes, since it focuses mainly on statehood and territorial sovereignty and less ability to connect to local contextual issues. While other scholars have defended by saying that there is no real alternative other than the liberal fantasy that can drive all countries to cosmopolitanism (Richmond, 2018). Liberalism is pictured as an aspirational step amid the freedom of individuals and that it can always be framed by the state and the market. However, the west should not ignore the failures that aroused when engaging with local actors (the state to the community level), comprehend the perspectives, cultures, customs, influences, histories, political, economic and social systems that exist. Since both liberal peace and democratic peace has been criticized for presenting the biases of a specific set of actors that acknowledged system and are unaware of the norms, institutions, techniques, and culture of politics in a post-war zone country (Richmond, 2018:26).

Richmond (2018) argues that before implementing liberal peace to any society it is important to emphasize the needs (beyond the political and human rights needs) to construct local consensus before those politics are developed or applied. This means that international actors should recognize and understand the actual social contract between internationals and local populations of post conflict areas, a
consideration of everyday life especially in its needs terms are the basis of a social contract required between societies and if recognizing that is weak, peace may not come without forms of international interventions. Further, he argues that how international actors involved in peacebuilding should not work from the blueprint but must build/ develop strategies that could develop relationship with local partners, by that the peacebuilding process could reach as far as possible enabling grassroots representation. He also adds that liberal peacebuilding should not reform free market first, instead it should place human needs, particularly to economic and security parallel to local customs in its priority list. This would probably require the parallel social welfare-oriented organizations and customary peacebuilding institutions funded by donors and international actors in whose interest sustaining peace ultimately lies (Richmond, 2018: P111).

### 2.3.3 Democratic Reconstruction Model Theory

The democratic reconstruction model is prescribed as a mechanism for reconciliation and an open response for international interventions in post-conflict countries to stabilize the situation and prevent from the further conflict in the region (Ottaway, 2003:315). This model started to emerge in the early 1990s. After the cold war, a series of peace agreement started to end up the long-lasting war and to sustain peace in conflict regions like Africa, Asia, and Central America, Angola, Mozambique a Nicaragua. Based on two different influences that has been a certain success of democracy implemented to a post conflict country; the first influence is on the governmental agencies and nongovernmental organizations by help of international community to bring a deep political and social transformation and make the country accept democratic strategies and the second influence is on economic development (Ottaway, 2003:315).

This model's approach is not only to reconstruct the state through democracy promotion by implementing new political systems but also to promote a civil society to underpin those systems. The reconstruction model applied a feature of agreements to the post conflict countries by sealing democratic elections within a period of two years ignoring all initial conditions in a post conflict country. For example, when in 2001 after the collapse of Taliban in the Bonn agreement on Afghanistan the call for elections was held within two years by holding of the loya jirga (Ottaway, 2003:316). According Ottaway (2003) the model is consisting of two major pieces: one on the military side, demobilization of the former combatants, some provision for their resettlement into civilian life and the formation of a new national army and the second is on political side the structuring of a democratic system including the drafting and approval of a constitution, the enactment of a necessary laws on political parties, elections, and the registration of voters to finally hold a multiparty elections to form a transitional government. One important issue that was highlighted during the implementation of reconstruction model is the devotion of more attention and resources not only to reintegration and demobilization of former combatants but also to reform the entire security sector in a post conflict state, because by entering the military to be only engaged in security of
the country to stay out of politics can avoid the sophistication that was faced during the implementation of this model in countries like Somalia, Bosnia, and especially recently to Afghanistan. During the implementation of this model on post conflict countries the international community learned how to promote democracy in general by not only developing elections but to quickly put efforts to strengthen fledgling democratic institutions and build up civil society to improve the capacity of independent media and to promote rule of law. And since the post conflict societies were highly centralized and democracy cannot flourish in a centralized environment; therefore, local and regional governments also needs to be build up. Moreover, the implementation of economic market reforms is also needed to underpin democracy (Ottaway, 2003:317).

The validation of the democratic reconstruction model as a mean of building peace after conflict is being tested in many countries, however its success was under severe stress and that was due to less commitment of the international communities in terms of resources and giving short time period for building such a huge model with so many complications. This attitude of International communities has opened criticism and disagreements towards this model (Ottaway, 2003:318).

Marina Ottaway (2003) considers democratic reconstruction as a highly complex and costly model to be implemented and without the full support of the international community a post conflict country cannot implement the model, and on the other hand for the international community it is also a very complex and a long-term task to do while its success is also not certain. And if the model is implemented in a highly multi-ethnic country with very deep social, cultural and religious roots and history then the goal of this model to proceed by making a country into a democratic secular state is nearly impossible. According to her this model will be successful if the reforms are carried out simultaneously in all areas of post conflict country not only in the center of state and this should be done at the level of state institutions and of civil society, in the political, social, economic, governmental and local level (Ottaway, 2003, p318). She also argues that how implementing the democratic reconstruction model can delicate issue concerning human rights because accepting different standards for different countries violates the idea that human rights are universal and upholding the same standards everywhere without considering the social and cultural values and sensitivities, violates common sense. She further mentions that these theories can be implemented if post conflict countries have some democracy elements in their political culture and it can be implemented when the country has some democratic characteristics (Ottaway, 2003:21).

Other experts have mentions some indicators for post-conflict state to be in the democratic process by having characteristics of democracy such as (free and regular elections, a responsible government, majority rule minority rights, freedom of speech, participation in political movements of country and commitment of states in values of tolerance, which in cooperates to the process of true democratic spirits (Cincotta, H., 2017: p3). On the other hand, some critics of democracy calls these indicators not the only reason for democracy. For instance, performing an election without leading a change in power can be
possible or a change in power does not necessarily lead a country to civil liberties like freedom of expression, rights and choice which is one of the fundamental role/step for realizing accountability and participation. Some of these characteristics overlaps by indicators such as (Rule of law and government effectiveness, corruption, accountability, political stability, security and governance) that creates issues in constructing a single index democracy and makes it complicated to score all the characteristics. The combination of these characteristics and indicators will lead the readers to judge the effectiveness of democratic system functioning in a post conflict countries and will present an average picture of concerned countries if it has democratic features as international community sets compared to their political and social culture (Coppedge et al., 2011).

The assumptions that International communities have made on building a democratic state in a post conflict country started with a focus on the re-establishment of institution such as presidential system, provincial council, and bicameral parliament to become the representatives of democracy in post conflict countries. However, very little attention was given to the locals' perception of democracy (Weinbaum, 2009). Explaining the theories of Liberal, democratic peace theory and democratic reconstruction theory will help to understand the planning process of Western polices of democratization in post conflict countries and in order to evaluate the state of democracy in a country it is important to see in the analysis part if political culture of that country (Afghanistan) is compatible enough to develop a western illustrated democratic structure or if it could build its own democracy as it is mentioned by Maria Otway in democratic reconstruction theory. Either ways the important factor is that the country should have characteristics of democracy in order to implement democratic changes in post war countries by focusing on political rights, civil liberties through combination of analysis, advocacy and action (Freedomhouse.org 2018).
3. Methodological Framework

This research paper will conduct a case study with the use of a qualitative desk study. Doing the case study will be useful to see if the political culture of a post conflict country has democratic features or if the democracy is imposed and forced on those countries. The methodology will be abductive and the observation will be based on analysis of the theories that explain the topic and the observation of the case study will be based on interviews, opinions, articles of Afghan journalists, analysts, politicians, academics, businessmen, students, which are available online in Pashto and Dari languages from different authentic sources. The research findings will be narrow downed on

The study is based on the abductive method and within the framework of theories that can best explain the process of democratization in post-conflict country in order to understand the overlaps of a western democracy in post conflict country and the findings will be interpreted based on the views and perspectives of the twelve interviewees who are actively involved in different spare of political, social, local, and governmental positions inside the country.

The interviews are not survey, and it will be open-ended questions and answers and discussions. They will be asked about their views and perspectives on the political culture of the country and their understanding of democracy and the implementations of the western structure of democracy in the country.

I chose desk study as it is full of challenges for me to travel to the country and make research. And since the intention is to analyze the democracy and its perspective in Afghanistan as a case study. Therefore, there is quite a wide range of material based on democracy process in Afghanistan. The research will be a qualitative method and will go in-depth on existing literature, reports, contents regarding the debate and case study. To write the thesis abductive seems appropriate to this case and a specific analytical framework will be used too since it has not been done earlier. It has been observed during the literature review that a specific analytical framework based on the process of democratization has not been used earlier.

It is difficult to detect trends in perceptions of democracy since people’s view on this subject are changeable, and it has been clearly noticed throughout the literature review for the chosen topic. Therefore, the analysis in this paper will be presented as an indication of some of the common perceptions found among different viewpoints inside the country in Afghanistan.

3.1 Case Study

Afghanistan has been the latest testing ground for the international community to test democratization Process for promoting democracy and peacebuilding in war-torn society, however, the results are not as satisfying as it assumed to be. Therefore, I chose Afghanistan as a case study to find if its political culture is compactable for all experiment done by the western community in the process of democratization and if this is what is needed in the current system of Afghanistan.
3.2 Interviewees

After considering interviews as a primary data the next step was to think how to conduct the interviews and decide who to interview. At first step, the interviews were conducted on 12 males and 3 female Afghans who are directly related to the politics and government of Afghanistan and their age is between 26 to 46 years. Three of the interviewees are expert on internal governance, social and economic development of Afghanistan and has served in different governmental posts in the past and the others are working in different governmental, educational and semi-governmental organs. The three women that are interviewed, whom are working as prosecutor officers in Kunduz and Baghlan province and one as a doctor on mental issues in rural areas of Afghanistan who are directly connected to people in Afghanistan. However, the interviews conducted with few females were long and was in informal nature that has gathered more information on inside picture of social, political environment and culture especially for women in Afghanistan. Further, in order to get more deeper views of Afghans on the current political system and what they want the system to be, interviews of Afghan political experts and representatives of people will be transcripted to get the information required for this thesis.

3.3 Interview Method

In order to reach to many people for interview and get the information required, the data collection was done by snowball sampling method and purposive sampling method. These two methods seemed appropriate since it is hard to reach people from distance. It also helped to get the right people to interview and avoid random and irrelevant interactions. Personal accounts from some interviews also helped to ask interviewees open end questions and do some discussions as well on the views of Afghans living and facing the political and social situation in the country. After a brief introduction with each interviewee, the purpose of interview is explained and the questions were sent to them prior to the interview day. The interviews are done through skype calls and one and one questions were asked. Each interview took maximum of an hour and half to answer the questions and do related discussions.

In essence, the research findings are between personal interviews and interviews and views of Afghan experts that are involved in the politics through different medium in Afghanistan. The interviews with political experts have made it reasonable to get a reflection of people’s view on what form they want the government and how they want to see the system Afghanistan.

3.4 Interview Question

The interview questions aimed to describe the political culture of Afghanistan and governance functionalism that what people think of those who are in charge of the political system in the country.
From 2001 till 2018 people in Afghanistan has experienced many ups and downs in the politics and local governance system of the country. In the interview the twelve interviewees were asked about what kind of political system do Afghans want, how it should look like?

It was also important to know interviewees views on gender equality, political participation of men and women and other factors that contribute in building a democratic society that they want. And those questions were a part of the sub-questions that will help readers to understand that which kind of political system in Afghanistan people want to have.

The data from interviewees are used in findings to show their perception on democracy, governance, gender quality and other factors that Afghans wants to have in their system. The answers from political experts have reasonably helped this thesis to get a general view of Afghans’ perception on democracy, since these people are involved in the political movement of the country and have closer overview of what Afghans might think about democracy in the country.

The sources from Afghan news channels and other Afghan politician interviews and texts are used to explain the political culture, system and governance of Afghanistan that how do the analysts see it in order to present true picture of current system in the country.

3.4.1 Ethical Consideration

It was necessary to inform interviewees in advance of the thesis topic, and the questions asked during the interviews were voluntary to answer, all or partially. In addition to that process, and in order to ensure a higher degree of trustworthiness a copy of the thesis will be sent to interviewees after that the final draft is completed. This is a way to confirm their quotes and comments and if they wish to add or delete something. The interviewees were asked if they prefer to keep their names confidential due to security reasons, hence interviewees were fine to mention their names in thesis. And those of the interviewees who wanted to keep their names confidential the information about their names and contacts will remain confidential; unless if there would be an official requirement from the Linnaeus institution. In that case, the interviewees will be contacted in order to get their approval for forwarding their confidential information, which will be for the purpose of data confirmation for the thesis contents.

3.5 Limitations and Delimitations

Building democracy in conflict torn countries is in an unpredictable situation as it is still not fully clear what the requirements and challenges of society is to move from a traditional and authoritarian basis to the establishment of a democratic situation. Therefore, efforts were made to ensure that the research data collection is from reliable and sound sources that can present the utter views of Afghan nation about democracy or politics in the country and how do they perceive it.
The delimitation for this research was selecting Afghanistan as case study since I have prior knowledge about the country and it seemed helpful to do the research more in depth having at least the primary knowledge of Afghanistan and its culture. Being an Afghan myself has given the knowledge of language for me both in Pashto and Dari made it easy to directly interact and contact interviewees for research questions. Having no language barrier made it easy to explore many online sources from Afghanistan without any translation problems from a third party. This helped to get a deep knowledge about the research problem and questions.

A limitation in the case of Afghanistan to present Afghans perspective is rather a field study and do interviews by myself, that it cannot be done due to security and therefore, a desk study might be another limitation due to sources that are needed for this research paper. Another limitation was the number of interviews done, since it was a struggle to get a generalized perspective of Afghans through just twelve interviews therefore, it felt to have more a field research for in depth knowledge and data collection.

Moreover, it was not possible to interview as many women as men, since the limited tools of access for me to reach more females from outside the country made it challenging. Furthermore, the interviews were limited to those living in central cities of Afghanistan and therefore it will be a limited data collection that will be not as a whole view of Afghans, but those who were easily available and reachable. However, the research results are still applicable if the limitations are disclosed and the integrity of the study is saved.
4. Findings

4.1 The Political Culture of Afghanistan

Lucian Pye (1991:495) defined political culture as a composition of basic values, feelings, knowledge and normative judgments held by a population regarding its political system. The concept of political culture does not refer to attitudes toward a specific actor involved in government of a country such as president, prime minister etc. Rather, it indicates how people view the political system as a whole and what is their belief in its legitimacy.

Afghanistan is a country oppressively tribalized with dynastic rules, that has constantly affected the choices and decisions of rulers in the country. From the beginning of Afghanistan’s history, Afghans have had a monarchs’ system which claimed the sources of their sovereignty directly from God. The country is ruled by the majority from Pashtun tribe constituted a centralized system of power that created an extensive system of Sharia court (Shahrani, 2012). Although Afghanistan had a constitutional government since 1923, the concept of true power separation and its present form of power was first introduced in 1964 which is considered a model for democratic government in Afghanistan and served as the foundation of current Constitution (Kakar, Raoofi and Kraemer, 2017). The political culture of Afghanistan largely depends on Loya Jirga\(^1\) (Grand Council) which is based on Sharia law and Constitution of Afghanistan that is based on history and tribal tradition of the country. It is the basic institution of the political culture of Afghanistan and it does have democratic features because it is not only the democratic institutions representatives but also the elders, Khans, and Malik\(^s\)\(^2\) who have people’s voice and have a huge influence on their tribe or community in decision making (Kakar, Raoofi and Kraemer, 2017). These people (Khans, Malik, and elders of tribes and communities) are not officially considered as lawyers or having any other formal position, but due to cultural and historical background, they are connected to people and further they are part of the historical political culture of Afghanistan that was formed from ages in the country. The decision making on certain issues in this Council (Loya Jirga) is based on Sharia law, the constitution of the country and it does not force people to accept the decisions either it is based on winning hearts of their people that is a democratic basic feature of their political system in the country (ibid). Further, Loya Jirga also elected members of provincial councils and members of the Loya Jirga that later the Loya Jirga could elect the President by a majority of votes. The religious and tribal influence was almost presented from the very first in the political history of Afghanistan. However, the different challenges of tribal differences have

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\(^1\) The system of Loya Jirga is basically informally people invited from the different part of the country to represent their tribe and debate on issues that they want to solve. The participation in this Grand Council or Loya Jirga is not only people from parliament or political groups rather common people, workers, farmers, teachers and tribal people known as “Khans” or elders of villages that people know them and trust them that they can solve their issues are taking part in the debate to solve issues (Kakar, Raoofi and Kraemer, 2017)

\(^2\) The title Khan refers to Pashtuns or people who have Pashtun ancestry. Khan or Malik has equivalent meaning for commander, leader or ruler or a chief or elder of a community or village in an area (Wikipedia,2018)
somehow created a political turmoil in the country which negatively impacted on the internal stability and state building (Kakar, Raoofi and Kraemer, 2017).

A similar view is expressed by Nazif Shahrani (2012) that, Afghanistan’s political culture has been influenced by the highly politicized environment of personal and collective kin-based identities. Kin-based groupings at a local level have helped to maintain the trust of communities through informal local shuras (council of elders) to resolve disputes (over property and other claims) and it is still practiced to protect their own localities in times of crises. It has been the most valuable social capital that country has been offered for building a firm state structure, however, this system of kinship and reliance at the level of national politics has proven dysfunctional. And it is because the ultimate wish of rulers or those involved in national politics of the country is to build a strong centralized state structure to affect the choices and decisions of people who wish to bring change or believes in diverse rather than an oppressive tribalized dynastic rules.

4.2 Distortion of the political system of Afghanistan

After the rise of the Taliban (1992-2000) the most important, expression of the rights of sovereignty and the right to appoint, and the elements that promote democracy was demoted. All government officials from cabinet ministers to local administrators have been dismissed and the legal pluralism of the country, Sharia, local customary practices and the rule of law was changed to “rulers- law”. The people of Afghanistan have been treated not as citizens, but as a subject to be controlled and extracted from every fundamental human right (Shahrani, 2012). After the US intervention, peace and democracy building was designed in a phased process of constitution building, elections were implemented without a strategy and coherent policy in a country without a state. A western institutional set up was exported to Afghanistan by the combination of support from local and regional warlords who were not interested in democracy nor in an effective Afghan statehood (Shahrani, 2012).

The experience of state collapse, war, failure to build an effective governance system in a multi-ethnic postcolonial nation is not something new to Afghanistan. It has been faced by Afghans from decays and now the Afghans have understood that it is not only the generic Western model of modern nation-state with powerful security forces that would be able to maintain relative peace and stability in the region until the Afghan government and the elements that form the political culture of country is not set free from violence-ridden, oppressive tribalized dynastic rule that have affected choices and decision making of those honestly involved in the political reforms of the country (Motmain, 2015). Afghans have been tired of two decades of war and an ordinary citizen in Afghanistan had undivided confidence on the progress of stability and peace after the ousting of the Taliban(ibid). The nation hoped that at the presence of highly mediatized international intervention on promises of stability and peace and the funds for reconstruction made every
Afghan eager to embrace what was in fact presented as their only an attractive choice:” Western-backed leaders (such as Karzai), Western-backed processes (such as a Constitution which was drafted with foreign experts’ support), and Western-backed institutions (such as a Parliament that was resuscitated after 30 years). The sustainability of this Western-backed liberal peace, however, appears to be increasingly challenged as the promises dissipate in the face of concrete realities. For those still bent on pursuing the democratization project in Afghanistan, there are at least three serious impediments, without the resolution of which the future of Afghanistan as a state, let alone a democratic one, is endangered. These include the lack of development, lack of reconciliation, and ultimately ongoing combat with insurgent groups.” (Motmain, 2015).

4.3 The Understanding of Afghans on democracy

According to Najibullah Lafraie former Afghan minister, the concept of democracy was introduced to Afghanistan at least as early as the 1960s, the so called “decade of democracy”. So, Afghans living in the cities especially in Kabul can have some ideas on the concept whether that is the case with the majority who live in the rural areas is an open question. Even those who are familiar with the concept, their understanding may be very limited and colored by the events in Afghanistan. One need is to be very careful when they talk about the attitude of Afghans toward a democratic reform. He further argued that it is needed to determine what we mean by democracy? If it is meant “Liberal democracy” dominant in the West and based on individualism and cut-throat competition, then it is not compatible at all with Afghan society and political culture. Afghans can have their own defined democracy from the same western concept but it can have characteristics which other societies like Afghanistan have used it accordingly adjustable to their political system, there are many examples of that which have been used for a long time in many Muslim countries (Interview with Najibullah Lafraie, Former Afghan minister)

4.3.1 Political System and Afghans participation

Since the current government of Afghanistan is blamed of nepotism, corruption and non-strategic government with very weak structure and policies to maintain what they have promised the nation before the elections in 2014, According to a political activist and former minister of Telecommunication department the issue of Afghans is not with democracy it is with the same promises done by the government, in making reforms and policies to tackle corruption. Ministries are corrupt, they are formal thieves appointed by the current government, sitting and looting the nation. (Interview with Abdul Raziq Waheedi, former minister of Finance at telecommunication department)
Corruption in the governmental sectors is indicated as one of the major problems of the current government in Afghanistan. People in Afghanistan want a transparent system that can solve issues on systematic plan and strategies. People now demand their representatives to be appointed on positions according to their abilities not on bases of their relationship with ministers or others involved in nepotism. Two main problems in the system of Afghanistan is indicated; First, Fundamentalism; that needs years to influence the thoughts of Afghans to become a democratic nation and make them educated at least to the primary level about the political system of a country. And the second is the lowest level of education in Afghanistan. Only education can give the ability and understanding to choose what is right and what is wrong for their own future. As, an interviewee stated that 90% of Afghans are illiterate, or have null information about the politics which makes it challenging to make the right choice for their future and talk about the system. The interviewee also added that in general they want to have a system where they can choose and use their rights accordingly, unfortunately right now the country is going through major crises and hopes are high towards new elections. People hope to see a better reform and government who cares for people more than their political allies. (Male, Lecturer/ Faculty of Law & Political Science)

It is clear that the political system of Afghanistan is based on their culture, customs and religious beliefs and yet the constitutional law which is taken from Islam and Sharia law, however, one cannot deny that how these laws are abused by name of Islam now and also in early 1980s (during Jihad and Taliban regime). During the interviews, it has been observed that people of Afghanistan have mix thoughts on the system of Afghanistan depending on the level of their understanding and on their personal experiences. Some interviewees think that system of Afghanistan is highly influenced by western democracy and that is not what they want. An interviewee argued that Afghans wants a system that follows Islamic Sharia Law and services its nation according to what Allah has mentioned in Quran, he further argued about current system being totally against their religious teachings following non-Islamic culture and getting far from Islamic ideology, He said Afghans does not want this kind of a system and they do not want their women to become like westerns (Male, Shopkeeper, Kunduz province)

It seemed that people are not totally against the political structure in form of voting to select a representative or a person to govern the country but they think that giving them the right to vote and naming Afghanistan a democratic republic country cannot solve their problems, an interviewee stated that though they vote to make their choice but they do not have the power to decide who to govern them. The decisions are made outside. People want a government that should be strong enough to fight for its citizens’ rights and to provide the basic needs. It is assumed that due to corruption in system actors involved in the politics of Afghanistan thinks only about personal benefits only. (Male, Finance officer at a Multinational company from Kabul)
It cannot be denied that the government of Afghanistan has improved from before, inform of establishing free markets, job opportunities, free media, however, the centralized government system has ignored a large number of citizens that face social and political issues, one other reason is also the security that shifts the government’s focus from sustaining policies that can restore fundamental rights and needs of citizens.

However, I came to a different respond from an advisor to chief of mission at IOM in Kabul, to the same question of system that how people want it. He stated that “seventeen years of hard work and Western structure on political culture of Afghanistan has transformed the way how our system used to look and how people used to think. Through different tools, like access to media, freedom of speech and Afghans having the opportunity to bring more modernized thoughts to Afghanistan through media has changed peoples’ mind and they have stopped believing blindly on what peers and Mula’s used to say by using the name of Islam. Now people are more aware and they observe broader. They want a system that brings them development, change a non-corrupt government clean from false ideologies either religious or cultural. However, this is mostly happening in the cities, the rural areas are still under the old culture and we need time and patience for that. The good news is that people are becoming more aware and want to have a system as they see other developed countries through social media.”

(Interview with Habib Shafaq, Advisor at IOM in Kabul)

It is also indicated by interviewees that Afghans do want to have free participation in the presidential and parliamentary elections since they want to elect their leader from them and does not want someone to be imposed on them who has partial information about the culture and tradition of the country, since Afghanistan is socially and religiously interrelated country and it is not acceptable for them to separate politics from their religious beliefs. However, everyone seemed to be opened to equally participate in political movement of country regardless of their gender or ethnic background. Since the constitution and election law gives full rights to every Afghan (men and women) to equally participate in the political system of the country. People feel responsible by participating in the political system in order to choose someone that they think can govern them well. Although there are challenges such as security but people think that it is the right process of moving towards the right direction to build a better system.

(Interview, Political analyst and activist from Baghlan province)

Other interviewees stated that they feel it is their right and responsibility to take part in the political, social and cultural correction. All Afghan men and women should participate in building the country. According to interviewees the foreign actors and support in Afghanistan is not for Afghans but for personal interest of foreigners therefore, Afghans should take their own responsibility to build their future and
participate in elections and political movement of country regardless of their gender. *Two Male University students from Kabul*

The participation of women has developed and grown a lot as compared to 14 years before. Women are now facing less challenges than before. 14 years before women were not able to get education or work, but today women are getting education working in parliament. And it is because women came forward and made the choice to participate in political and social issues. The government is also supporting women and implementing policies to let women take an active part in the social and political organs in the country and it is also because women in Afghanistan want to progress. Especially Ashraf Ghani has really supported women a lot and he has made policies that included women to every local, national and international positions representing Afghanistan. *(Interview with a Female, Administrator in governmental organ from Baghlan province)*

However, not all respondents were so positive about electoral experiences and other social participation. A female nurse argued that women want to participate in politics of country but they are not given the chance. Especially women in rural areas either by their families or the fundamental culture of country. An interviewee stated that it is extremely difficult for an Afghan woman to go out of her house and cast her vote. You cannot just see women in central Kabul many of rural areas in Afghanistan are filled with issues of inequality. Women are not given equal opportunity to participate for example in elections just because they are women, unless if they are very lucky and belong to an educated and open family.” *(Interview with a female Nurse, from Kabul Parwan)*

Another different view was presented by a Psychologist working in Afghanistan. She stated that people do not want to participate due to security, several suicide attacks on electoral areas in different provinces has prevented people to participate in elections. People have lost interest and have lost their trust, they are in fear of their life and no one want to die. Especially women are living in great fear, if a girl or woman want to be involved in any kind of activity in Afghanistan she should think about her death first. She further said that as a doctor she is contributing to society through her profession but every day she faces a lot of discrimination which makes it challenging for her to continue her job. She further stated that there are social issues that does not let women to come forward as they want to. *(Interview with Female Psychologist, from Kabul Parwan)*

4.3.2 Governance system, rule of law and Afghan’s perspective

Thirty years of occupation and civil war has impacted numerous points and weakness on Afghanistan governance system and its centrally administered source of organized justice. The law and order justice is failing in many rural areas of Afghanistan and that is due to not obtaining timely and
impartial dispute resolution and unfair administrative justice (Team, 2016). The unconditional funding for
security, development and governance by the international community in different provinces of
Afghanistan has not yet solved the problem (Team, 2016). Their incentives for addressing the root causes
of instability as limited is perceived either, turning a blind eye to the problems of people, or willingly
fostering instability in those districts and provinces that face insecurity and other law and order issues
(Team, 2016).

However, the International community has different metrics to assess the Afghan governance and
security system. According to UN and UNAMA; the holding of credible, inclusive, and transparent
elections in 2014 and 2015. Improved access to justice, and respect for human rights, particularly for
women and children, improved integrity of public financial management and the commercial banking
sector and improved revenue systems and budget execution, including establishment of a provincial
budgeting policy (Katzman, 2017). Progress in the capacity of Afghan institutions since 2001, particularly
in performing duties as managing national finances and providing services, but a significant deficiency
remains. Many of the shortcomings in governance are attributed to all the political disputes, governmental
corruption, nepotism and favoritism, and the lack of trained or skilled workers (Katzman, 2017).

It is observed that Afghans want equality and no ethnic problems, there are tribal problems and
language problem, for example, a Pashtun will not want a Dari speaking person to work with him together
in one place. The interviewee said that this sort of attitude and ethnic problems should be solved. The other
issue was indicated as lack of transparency in every system. Due to poor system of education, and poor
system of communication and services institutions still follow the old structure of 5000 years and it is still
implemented on today’s generation who want to go forward and who wants to be compatible to the rest of
the world. (Interview male, Finance officer at a Multinational company from Kabul)

Other interviewees point of view on governance system of Afghanistan was that the system is
centralized focusing on certain provinces and the other rural areas in the country is totally neglected.
She further argued that government of Afghanistan is in hand of warlords and to change this a generation
is needed to work on it. Her perception on political leaders was that it is not by people’s choice but imposed
on them from outside who has very less knowledge about Afghan society. She further stated people want
someone who is educated, who know how to tackle issues, who are not corrupt and those who should listen
to people needs and work to ensure their security so that people can feel safe and contribute more in their
country. (Interview with a female, Administrator in governmental organ from Baghlan province)

One other major problem in the system is corruption effecting in each and every organ and that is
the major reason why governance system is poor. Afghans want a person who is fully aware of the Afghan’s
system, culture, mindset and one who knows how to control corruption and bring transparency. People
expect those who govern the country should work on policies that solve security, financial and other day to day issues. They want a person who should be honest and fulfill what he promises the nation. Other views on who to govern the system of Afghanistan was very fundamental, that according to the constitution of Afghanistan, He should be Afghan, Muslim and should know cultural and religious values and be fully aware of social issues. It is indicated that Afghans does not want someone imposed on them from outside. They want someone from their own community (*Interview with two University Student from Kabul*).

### 4.3.3 Afghan Equality and Law, but with Strings Attached

Though the Afghan Constitution (2004) is influenced by Universal Human Rights Declaration, it forbids discrimination and grants equal rights and duties before the law to all citizens, regardless of gender (Constitution 2004: Article Twenty-two) (Afghanistan Online, 2018). Most of the political analysts and commentators agree that there has been significant progress in many areas relating to gender equality in Afghanistan. After the ratification of Afghanistan constitution and its commitment to international human rights instrument, gender equality is now considered the Afghan government's policy (Najafizada, 2018). As compared to 2001 to 2015 and now 2018, a significant number of women has contributed to elections. A ministry of women now exists and women's access to all kind their rights and their political participation do exist to a modest level. Najafizada (2018) states that Afghan women's lives have improved significantly since the Taliban were ousted, but women continue to face problems, particularly with economic issues. Most Afghans (70%) agree that women should be allowed to work outside the home, and the majority (84%) said women should have the same opportunities as men in education. Acceptance of *bad* and *baddal* is declining, and acceptance of heritage is going up. However, women’s rights are still constraints in Afghanistan as the most vulnerable citizens to various forms of violence including, domestic violence, honor killing, forced marriages, harassment and intimidation (Najafizada, 2018).

The data from interviews showed that social issues do not just end to women, other ethnic groups like Hazaras, Tajik, Uzbek etc. also face various kind of discriminations when it comes to the right to work, education, political and social participation. Due to lack of basic services, economic dependency, and security thighs hands of local and national government to work on policies that can fully flourish each afgan’s right equality to one another. One other major reason which is identified is corruption in different governmental organs excluding many from benefits that a democratic political system might bring to its citizens, especially to the rural areas (Selay Ghaftar, Political analyst, Politician, Solidarity party of Afghanistan) (Hambastagi.org, 2018).

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3 *Baad* is a pre-Islamic method of settlement and compensation whereby a female from the criminal's family is given to the victim's family as a servant or a bride. It is still practiced in certain areas of Afghanistan and Pakistan, mainly among the Kochis. Although baad is illegal under Afghan law, many of the victims do not know their rights, and still, more are prevented from exercising them.
4.3.4 Afghans perspective on gender equality and Education:

The lack of equality, transparency, and accountability within the system in Afghanistan has been identified by interviewees and it is rooted not only in the governmental institutions but also in the attitude of those involved in the system. The perception of interviewees toward gender equality and education is positive and they want to have law enforcement that can benefit every Afghan regardless of their ethnic, religious or language background. However, the fundamental religious belief system does not allow the country to fully function as a secular country compared to other countries around the world. The interviewees showed desire to a system that can work on implementation of equality law that is also defined in the Afghan constitution.

According to political analyst Abdul Ghayas Kakar, it will take decades to achieve this milestone of gender equality. There is no restriction on any Afghan, but the environment is still challenging for Afghans to fully exercise their rights Lack of opportunities and access to education is limited which remains as the biggest challenge. There is a need for accountability of individuals who are misusing the power on the basis of affiliation to certain groups or ethnicity. *(Interview with Abdul Ghayas Kakar, Political analyst from Baghlan province)*

Due to constant war on terrorism in the most areas of the country and social constraints, Afghan women have been affected the most, since most of Afghanistan’s provinces are based on tribal norms and culture and a large area is controlled by the Taliban, therefore, domestic legal frameworks and the judicial system are not able to enforce the standards set by international human rights instrument and even national frameworks are not able to influence local communities and households due to cultural conservatism. The general conservative Afghan society has made women vulnerable to various forms of violence including forced marriages, domestic violence, killings, harassment and other gender-related issues and it is mostly happening to women living in rural areas where the central government is unable to reach to. On the other hand, most of the interviewees do agree on the rapid progress in many areas relating to women’s education, work and political participation, however, it is limited to only central areas of each province. Due to lack of education and social awareness it is very challenging to fully overcome the gender inequality in the country but people are hoping that the active participation of civil society and educated women in the country has changed the culture and now to some extent young women and girls are ambitious and they are running businesses and NGOs and working in government, however the situation for women especially in rural areas are still in a black hole.
5. Analysis

6.1 Democratic Principles within Political Culture of Afghanistan

Concerning the political culture of Afghanistan as presented in section 5.1 the political culture of Afghanistan is bound to its customary law based on its constitution, traditional and tribal norms as well as the very old nation's Islamic heritage. Afghanistan is a multi-ethnic, clan tribes and country and subtribe country and most of the ethnic groups live in rural areas who are still bound to the old Jirga system and shows sensitivity towards another governmental framework which differs from their customary practices. The system of Loya Jirga is identified as a democratic way of its own. Communities of Afghanistan with representatives from all ethnic groups that vote or make a voice on behalf of their community/tribes to encounter social and political issues to the government of the country. The fact that concept of democracy was introduced in Afghanistan as early as the 1960s. Afghans living in cities do have some ideas on the concept, however in the case of majority living in rural areas is an open question. Even those who are familiar with the concept but there is understanding may be very limited and colored by the events in Afghanistan including security and cultural and religious fundamentalism which makes it reactive when it comes to talk about the attitude of Afghans towards democracy to first determine what does it mean by democracy to Afghans and if it means totally a “liberal democracy” and ignorance of social and cultural norms of country and its nation then this will rather create a dysfunction in the system of the country (Lafraie, 2011).

Talking about the elements and features of democracy in the political culture of Afghanistan, the country has an active judiciary, parliament and government that is functioning for make policies and reforms to run the country and above all it is Loya Jirga (as mentioned above). When a political decision is not taken well by these three executive institutions then it is Loya Jirga that comes to function as the decision of the whole country. Since Afghanistan has a multi-diverse culture and Jirga is historically formed by Pashtuns which has some critics due to the marginalization of other ethnicities but it still has its own importance in the political culture of Afghanistan. The formation of Loya Jirga by almost 15000 people from 37 provinces of Afghanistan as representatives of Afghans including lawyers, parliamentarians and other individuals involved in social and political movement of the country gives them a feeling of inclusiveness which is a democratic characteristic of its own.

The other democratic feature that is identified, is the freedom of media and work of civil society in the country. One interviewee mentioned media as a great tool in making people aware of their rights and has given people the freedom of making their voice heard through different news channels and awareness programs which is now seen and accepted as a fundamental right in Afghanistan. However, lack of security threats and other threats such as corruption, low literacy rate among citizens, and weak political culture
etc. will still remain Afghanistan’s biggest challenge in its establishment and sustainability of state building.

Most of the political analysts, interviewees do agree that Afghanistan has significantly progressed in many areas relating to equality, education, political participation, women’s rights, women’s participation and freedom of press and media (presented in section 5.3.3) however, due to weak political system and corruption has increased not only gap between the quality of government policies but also a lack of trust between people and government that has directly affected the social and political system in the country.

5.2 Afghans Perspective on Democracy

Though Afghanistan is a socially conservative and politically religious country the people of Afghanistan have now understood that a positive move towards democracy can bring stability and change to their country. Every democratic approach is now acceptable to the people but to a moderate level that it does not clash with their cultural and traditional norms which is strongly bound to the religion of Islam. Most people of Afghanistan seem open and acceptable to women’s participation in political and social movements of the country. And also, to equally work and access to education opportunities for both men and women but it is only to the central areas of provinces. There might be different opinions among rural and conservative communities of the country.

A major concern is indicated about the security that has put obstacles on the will of Afghans to participate in any kind of political movements. Afghans want peace and stability, they reject imposed governance system on them, they want a person highly educated but also one who is fully aware of their social and cultural values so that the one who governs the country could solve the complex issues (such as, education, women and ethnic rights, social inequalities and values, etc.) in establishing a democratic system of governance. They perceive Afghan government to be corrupt and personal interest based coalitions have ignored the safety of its nation.

Afghans think that if they choose their politicians wisely and those who have the characteristics of being Muslim, educated and having full knowledge of Afghan political, social and local traditions and norms then this country can become a democratic state of its own (A tailor-made democracy) which means that the democratic characteristics somehow should bend to the political structure of Afghanistan. They think that as Afghan they cannot follow the American democracy since some of the issues in Afghanistan are historically and culturally related to each other; like religious freedom. It will never be accepted as open as other democratic states expect. However, it is changing in many other systemic features like women freely moving now and enjoying their freedom of education, working and making choice for their future,
and acceptance of each other among different ethnic groups like Hazara and Tajik marrying and working together. The other factor that Afghans think can play role and want it to be improved in order to have a sustainable peace and democracy in the country is freedom of press, media and education; that can open mindset of Afghans and the tolerance among different groups to the disagreements. Other perceptions are that people do not want a centralized government. They want a system that is for everyone and functions equally for everyone clean from nepotism. Hence, one cannot deny the fact that a large area of Afghanistan is still in hand of warlords and insurgent groups that neglects the rule and law set by the government due to economic, security and general conservative Afghan society that makes it difficult to implement the national framework.

5.3 Theories versus reality

As in chapter three, it is explained that the theories underlining Western intervention to the post conflict courtiers including Afghanistan were based on liberalism and the factors from those theories were described as how economic, security and social development can transit a post-conflict country into a democratic state. However, the analysis of primary and secondary data highlighted that in order to have a politically sustainable country focusing only on economic and security is not enough. Throughout the thesis, it was observed that a country’s governance, economic, and social development can play an important role in sustainability of a country if it is based on its traditional culture and religion. It is observed that the implementation of international theories of liberalism and democratic development in Afghanistan has widely ignored these factors that are strongly interrelated to the cultural and social values in Afghanistan.

On debate of Afghanistan’s political culture, it has been observed that the characteristics of democracy such as (free regular elections, responsible government, majority rule minority rights, freedom of political participation, cooperation etc.) presented in (section 2.3.3) do exist in Afghanistan’s politics, however, one cannot ignore the fact that these characteristics are overlapped by indicators such as corruption, political stability, security and governance. As Maria Ottaway (2003) mentions that how these indicators can create issues in constructing a single index democracy to score all the characteristics fully. Afghanistan needs time, long-term planning and structure in order to bring the country out of warlordism and fundamental conservatism. This cannot be done only by focusing on economics, international donors or relationship with western allies but to educate the nation and feed them the real meaning of freedom and democracy from grass root. Maria Ottaway also argues that constructing democracy in post-conflict country is a lengthy process. It cannot be set by only centralized goals of economic, free market and building institutions to reconstruct a modern state instead it needs a tall period of time to seek ways to
establish links to build a process that may be compatible enough to the political culture of the country leading to democracy of its own (Ottaway, 2003:321).

It was observed throughout this thesis that Afghanistan’s society, governance and other factors that shape the political culture is based on traditional culture and religion of the country. The international actors involved in stability of Afghanistan should consider these factors when structuring and supporting the government of Afghanistan. It was also observed that use of theories such as liberal peace theory and democratic peace theory is not neutral, it seems that such theories are used as a justification to intervene the country and run a self-interest based agenda. For example, the liberal peace focused mainly on statehood by building a free and open market to attract international donors and ignored the local contextual issues.

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6. Conclusions

The objective of this study was to investigate the perspective and assumption of Afghan citizens on democracy who are directly or indirectly involved or affected by the political system of the country. The investigation was done by examining the political culture of Afghanistan to see if it has democratic characteristics and if it is possible to build an independent democratic country of its own in the future. The primary studies showed that Afghanistan’s constitution and its political culture represent a uniform state by electing the president through free votes of citizens. The country does have a parliament that has characteristics of democracy which is under the traditional system of Loya Jirga and now shaped into a parliament house where the representatives from every ethnicity represents views and make decisions on social and political issues of the country. However, lack of international strategy and coherent policy has worsened the security in a large area of the country including the capital (Kabul) widened the trust gap between people and the current government.

The western illustrated setup was exported to Afghanistan that lacked the conceptual clarity of the political culture of Afghanistan and the government that built on immediate needs is not suitable for the Afghan society. The political rights, civil sovereignty, social and political freedom, and independence is under constant challenges of issues like corruption, violence and flawed electoral processes and other executive authorities.

The findings of this study underline that the attitude of Afghans toward democracy is positive. Every Afghan knows that a free and democratic country can improve the quality of life. They want a country developed to have an independent constitution, judiciary, institutions, media, civil society, free market and other organs that can decided to develop and sustain their freedom and political progress by working on fraud-free elections, promoting education, progress in developing awareness to gender equality, women’s rights and give an equal opportunity to both men and women to equally participate in political movement of the country. Afghans want to be able to resolve their disputes and reduce their frictions to the existing Afghan society. They want a government which takes responsible for zero corruption, nepotism and which can provide security and maintain the fundamental rights of citizens.

To come to the theories, in light of the discussion presented by Maria Ottaway the international community can make a long-term commitment to rebuild the areas where the state is failing to reach it. The country should be helped to endemic corruption which is seen as a plague on Afghan society. The country should be helped in improving the quality of life for Afghans by developing on growing legitimate sources of income, providing job opportunity, basic infrastructure including roads, telecommunication, electricity, sanitation, better irrigation, a better security situation that people can feel safe and secure and
especially a better and effective education system that Afghans learn and find a way to deal with actors involved in their social and political issues to pave its way toward real democracy.

A country like Afghanistan with very old heritage of traditional cultural society encrypted in its religious belief that makes not only their social structure but also their political culture should not be imposed by a foreign or secular political reconstruction, people of Afghanistan still want to hold their heritage beliefs and practices but with a moderate development in areas mentioned above.

People in Afghanistan want to live a normal tranquil life but it is assumed that most people in Afghanistan do not want a secular state or a state that creates friction with their social and political reforms. The purpose of this paper was to present a comprehensive understanding of the political culture of Afghanistan and what Afghans’ perspectives are towards the current government of the country.

My findings have evidenced that there are democratic characteristics in the political culture of Afghanistan and that people in Afghanistan do want a democratic state but it should be based on their cultural and religious norms. Afghanistan will be a developed and a democratic country of its own self as it is called a tailor-made democracy that would have compatibility with the social, political and cultural structure of the country.

In the findings, the interviewees exposed the significant rise of corruption, nepotism and alarming security situation that creates a gap in the promotion of democracy and challenges the existing structure of the system in Afghanistan, this means that Afghans are open to a revolutionary change in the system.

For future research, there would be some real benefits of gathering information if the research is done by visiting the country. Field research will open up the possibility to meet and interview more people involved in government, and meeting government representatives and relevant organizations can provide a wider picture of Afghans perspective toward the change of a better structure acceptable to the people and other international communities.
7. References

8.1 Published Sources


**8.1.2 Online Webpages**


