THE SUCCESS AND FAILURE OF CIVIL SERVICE REFORMS IN AFGHANISTAN

(A Critical Study of Reforms in a Fragile and Conflict-Affected State)

by

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Abstract

The Government will create a motivated, merit-based, performance-driven, and professional civil service that is resistant to temptations of corruption and which provides efficient, effective and transparent public services that do not force customers to pay bribes.

— (GoIRA, 2006, p. 106)

We were in a black hole! We had an empty glass and had nothing from our side to fill it with! Thus, we accepted anything anybody offered; that is how our glass was filled; that is how we reformed our civil service.

— (Former Advisor to IARCSC, personal communication, August 2015)

How and under what conditions were the post-Taleban Civil Service Reforms of Afghanistan initiated? What were the main components of the reforms? What were their objectives and to which extent were they achieved? Who were the leading domestic and foreign actors involved in the process? Finally, what specific factors influenced the success and failure Afghanistan's Civil Service Reforms since 2002? Guided by such fundamental questions, this research studies the wicked process of reforming the Afghan civil service in an environment where a variety of contextual, programmatic, and external factors affected the design and implementation of reforms that were entirely funded and technically assisted by the international community.

Focusing on the core components of reforms—recruitment, remuneration, and appraisal of civil servants—the qualitative study provides a detailed picture of the pre-reform civil service and its major human resources developments in the past. Following discussions on the content and purposes of the main reform programs, it will then analyze the extent of changes in policies and practices by examining the outputs and effects of these reforms.

Moreover, the study defines the specific factors that led the reforms toward a situation where most of the intended objectives remain unachieved. Doing so, it explores and explains how an overwhelming influence of international actors with conflicting interests, large-scale corruption, political interference, networks of patronage, institutionalized nepotism, culturally accepted cronyism and widespread ethnic favoritism created a very complex environment and prevented the reforms from transforming Afghanistan's patrimonial civil service into a professional civil service, which is driven by performance and merit.

Table of Contents

Table of Contents ii
List of Abbreviations iv
List of Figures vi
List of Tables viii
Chapter 1: Introduction 1
1.1 Research Background 1
1.2 Research Problem 4
1.3 Thesis Outline 6
1.4 Summary 8
Chapter 2: Concept and Practice of Civil Service and Public Administration Reforms 9
2.1 Some Definitions: Civil Service, Reform, and Success 9
What is civil service? 9
What is Civil Service Reform about and what triggers it? 10
What constitutes reform success and failure? 12
2.2 Conceptual Frameworks of Civil Service Reforms 13
2.2.1 Traditional Public Administration 15
2.2.2 New Public Management 20
2.2.3 Neo-Weberian State 22
2.2.4 Development Administration 24
2.3 Reform Practice and Lessons Learnt from Developing and post-Conflict Contexts 26
2.3.1 Contextual factors 31
2.3.2 Programmatic factors 36
2.3.3 External factors 38
2.4 Chapter Summary 41
Chapter 3: Research Methodology 44
3.1 Research Design 44
3.2 Methods and Sources of Data Collection and Analysis 47
3.3 Challenges for Data Collection and their Implications 52
Chapter 4: Pre-Reform Afghan Civil Service—Developments and Major Milestones 55
4.1 Establishment of the Civil Service and the Initial Stages (the 1920s–1970s) 56
4.2 Republican Civil Service: An Era of Ups and Downs (1970s–1990s) 60
4.3 Decline of Civil Service: The Taleban era (1996–2002) 65
4.4 Chapter Summary 69
Chapter 5: Afghan Civil Service and the Post-Taleban Reforms 74
5.1 Afghan Civil Service in a Newborn, Fragile Democracy 74
5.1.1 System and state of the civil service when the reforms were initiated (2002) 75
5.1.2 Main Civil Service Reform-related policies and legislation since 2002 78
5.1.3 State of the current civil service—How it was and how it is 86
5.2 Overall Reform Strategy of Afghanistan 97
5.2.1 Bonn conference (2001) 98
5.2.2 Tokyo Conference-I (2002) 99
5.2.3 Afghanistan National Development Framework (2002) 101
5.2.4 Public Administration Reform Program (2003) 103

5.2.5 Berlin Conference and the Securing Afghanistan's Future (2004) 106
5.2.6 Afghanistan Compact (2006) and the Development Strategies (2006, 2008).110
5.3 Paving the Way for Reforms: Civil Service Commission 116
5.4 Main Reform Programs and Their Outputs and Consequences..... 127
5.4.1 Priority Reform and Restructuring (PRR).....128
5.4.2 Reforms to inject capacity.....137
5.4.3 Pay and Grading (P&G)—The most significant reform program 150
Chapter 6: Results and Drivers of Reforms 153
6.1 Did the Reforms Achieve Their Intended Objectives? 153
6.1.1 Recruitment 154
6.1.2 Promotion 167
6.1.3 Remuneration and Grading.....172
6.2 Key Factors behind the Success and Failure of the Afghan Civil Service Reforms. 179
6.2.1 Contextual factors.....183
6.2.2 Programmatic factors.....194
6.2.3 External factors.....201
Chapter 7: Conclusion..... 213
7.1 Summary of the Main Findings 215
7.2 A Short Note on the Findings 232
7.3 Limitations of the Study..... 234
7.4 Implications of Findings and Recommendations..... 236
Bibliography 240
Appendix A: Interview Protocol..... 253
Appendix B: IARCSC Organogram, 2006 258

List of Abbreviations

ADB	Asian Development Bank
AEP	Afghanistan Expatriate Program
AIA	Afghanistan Interim Authority
ARTF	Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund
ATS	Afghanistan Transitional State
CIDA	Canadian International Development Agency
COCSAR	Central Organization for Civil Servants and Administrative Reform
CSC	Civil Service Commission
CSR	Civil Service Reform
CSPAR	Civil Service and Public Administration Reform
FCAC	Fragile and Conflict-Affected Countries
GoA	Government of Afghanistan
GoIRA	Government of Islamic Republic of Afghanistan
HRM	Human Resource Management
IAA	Interim Additional Allowance
IAB-1	Independent Board of Appointments
IAB-2	Independent Board of Appeals
IC	International Community
IDLG	Independent Directorate of Local Governance
IARCSC	Independent Administrative Reform and Civil Service Commission
LEP	Lateral Entry Program
MAC	Ministerial Advisory Committee on Public Administration Reform
MAIL	Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation, and Livestock
MCP	Management Capacity Program
MEC	Independent Joint Anti-Corruption Monitoring and Evaluation Committee
MoE	Ministry of Education
MoF	Ministry of Finance
MoHE	Ministry of Higher Education
MoMP	Ministry of Mines and Petroleum

MoPW	Ministry of Public Works
MoTCA	Ministry of Transport and Civil Aviation
MRRD	Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development
NPM	New Public Management
OAA	Office of Administrative Affairs
P&G	Pay and Grade (the major reform program of Afghanistan)
PAR	Public Administration Reform
PRR	Priority Reform and Restructuring (first reform program of Afghanistan)
QRI	Qualitative Research Interview
TAFSU	Technical Assistance and Feasibility Studies Unit
TOR	Terms Of Reference
USAID	U.S. Agency for International Development
WB	World Bank

List of Figures

Figure 2.1. Major Conceptual Frameworks/ Models of CSPAR. 14

Figure 2.2. Theoretical Background and Core Elements of Traditional Public Administration .. 16

Figure 2.3. Theoretical Background of New Public Management 21

Figure 2.4. Characteristics of New Weberian State 23

Figure 2.5. Theoretical Background of Development Administration 25

Figure 2.6. Most Important Factors for the Success and Failure of CSPAR in FCACs. 30

Figure 3.1. Main Domestic and International Actors in the Design Stage of Afghan CSR 45

Figure 3.2. Main Actors in the Implementation Phase of Afghan CSR 45

Figure 4.1. Structure of the Central Organization for Civil Servants & Administrative Reform. 62

Figure 5.1. Varying Numbers on the Total Public Employment in Afghanistan in 2004. 90

Figure 5.2. Total Number of Afghan Civil Servants, 2002–2017 91

Figure 5.3. MoPW Staff based on their grades and the operation levels (2016) 94

Figure 5. 4. MoPW male-Female staff based on their remuneration grades, 2016 95

Figure 5.5. Education level of the MoPW Staff, 2016..... 95

Figure 5.6. Education profile of officials in the MoPW and the General Civil Service, 2016..... 96

Figure 5.7. Main Pillars of Afghanistan's Public Administration Reform Program 104

Figure 5.8. Public Administration Reform Framework 105

Figure 5.9. Projected Annual Civil Service Wage Bill..... 109

Figure 5.10. Public Administration Reform in Afghanistan National Development Strategy ... 111

Figure 5.11. Main Components of the IARCSC, 2003 121

Figure 5.12. IARCSC Tashkeel, 2005–2016. 123

Figure 5.13. Timeline and Types of Afghan CSPAR Programs (2003–2018) 128

Figure 5.14. Pre-Reform Monthly Salaries of Afghan Civil Servants as per Grades, 2003 130

Figure 5.15. Salaries of Afghan Civil Servants Before and After the PRR Program 131

Figure 5.16. Main Challenges and Consequences of PRR. 133
Figure 5.17. Defined Working Arraignment for AEP and LEP 138
Figure 5.18. Distribution of AEP and LEP Recruits among Line Ministries, 2004–2007 140
Figure 5.19. Major Shortcomings of the AEP and LEP 142
Figure 5.20. Distribution of MCP Recruits among Afghan Civil Service Entities. 145
Figure 5.21. CBR vs. Regular Civil Service Pay Scheme (P&G). 147
Figure 6.1. Education Profile of Afghan Civil Servants, 2016 161
Figure 6.2. Change in the Number of Afghan Civil Servants, 2002–2017. 163
Figure 6.3. Monthly Salaries of Afghan Civil Servants Before and After Reforms 173
Figure 6.4. Factors Considered in Recruitment and Appraisal Processes of Civil Servants 180
Figure 6.5. Factors Considered in Recruitment Processes (IARCSC vs. MoPW. 181
Figure 6.6. Estimated Cost of PAR, 2004–2010 210
Figure 7.1. The Most Important Factors for the Success or Failure of CSPAR in FCACs. 217

List of Tables

Table 2.1. Most Important Factors for the Success and Failure of CSPAR in FCACs. 43

Table 3.1. The Extent of Change in Public Management Reform 50

Table 3.2. Progress and Effects of Public Sector Reforms 51

Table 4.1. Relation of recruits' education level with their initial salary step during Taleban 67

Table 5.1. Major CSR-Related Policy Documents of Afghanistan (2001–2017) 78

Table 5.2. Regulation on Appointments of Civil Servants Based on Their Educational Levels . .85

Table 5.3. Strategic Priorities, Actions, and Requirements for Afghan CSPAR, 2002 101

Table 5.4. Summary of the Civil Service Components of the Securing Afghanistan's Future. . 106

Table 5.5. Benchmarks and Strategies of Afghan Civil Service Reforms, 2006-2013 112

Table 5.6. Outputs and Effects of PRR (2003) 136

Table 5.7. AEP and LEP Implementation Results 139

Table 5.8. Outputs and Effects of AEP, LEP, MCP, and CBR (2004–2018) 149

Table 5.9. Outputs and Effects of the P&G Program (2009–Present) 152

Table 6.1. Post-Reform Recruitment Process for Afghan Civil Servants 155

Table 6.2. Education Requirements for Civil Service Employment 160

Table 6.3. The extent of Change in Reforms on Recruitment 166

Table 6.4. The extent of Change in Reforms on Appraisal 171

Table 6.5. Options for Partial Salary Increase in Afghan Civil Service (2003) 174

Table 6.6. Reformed Pay Grades for Afghan Civil Servants (P&G, 2009) 175

Table 6.7. The extent of Change in Reforms on Staffing System 179

Table 6.8. Factors that Contributed to the Partial Failure of Afghan CSRs (2003–2016) 182

Table 7.1. Outputs and Effects of Afghan CSRs (2003–2018) 229

Table 7.2. The extent of Change in Recruitment, Promotion, and Remuneration 230

Table 7.3. Factors that Contributed to the Partial Failure of Afghan CSRs (2003–2016) 231

Chapter 1: Introduction

Aiming to provide background information on the topic of the study as well as introduce the scope, structure, and purpose of the study, this chapter comprises the following sections:

- Introduction and background of the research
- Research questions
- Research structure

1.1 Research Background

State-building is one of the top priorities of most countries after international interventions put an end to periods of war or civil conflicts. Consequently, establishing a functioning public administration capable of delivering essential services to citizens has been a core element of state-building efforts, which, in turn, requires the implementation of reforms in many areas, including the civil service. Following the fall of the Taleban in 2001, and similar to what the world had witnessed during previous post-conflict interventions in "most low- and middle-income countries — such as Georgia, Liberia, Serbia, Sierra Leone, and Timor-Leste (Hogg, Nassif, Osorio, Byrd, & Beath, 2013, p. 94), the Afghan civil service underwent several reforms. Facilitating an appropriate and modern legal framework for the civil service, establishing a specialized governmental body—in most cases, a Civil Service Commission—to implement and monitor reforms, and implementing costly reform programs funded by international donors and technically supported by various consultancy firms, IGOs and NGOs have become a common practice in many post-war societies like the post-Taleban Afghanistan.

Since the Bonn Conference in 2001, the efforts to re-build an effective state capable of providing security and services to Afghan citizens have been at the heart of Afghanistan's reconstruction agenda. Consequently, the reform of Afghanistan's Public Administration was deemed necessary for having an "efficient and effective civil service… [which perceived to be] essential to fulfilling the Government's aim of restoring peace and stability, embedding democratic governance, and regenerating economic growth" (ADB, GoIRA, UNAMA, UNDP, & WB, 2004, p. 59).

The Afghan CSPAR aimed to build a competent civil service, improve governance and service delivery, and finally make the Afghan government accountable to its citizens (World Bank, 2008, p. i). To fulfill these goals, and before taking any major action, forming a specialized independent agency seemed vital. Therefore, mandated by the Bonn Agreement (2001), the post-Taleban Afghanistan Interim Authority (AIA) established the Independent Civil Service Commission (ICSC), which, later in 2003, re-emerged as the Independent Administrative Reform and Civil Service Commission (IARCSC). Functioning under the direct supervision of the head of the state and being in charge of almost all matters of the civil service, the IARCSC had "the Interim Authority and the future Transitional Authority with shortlists of candidates for key posts in the administrative departments, as well as those of governors and uluswals" (Bonn Agreement, 2001, art. III-C-5). Additionally, based on various provisions of the *Afghanistan Civil Service Law* (2005) and the *Afghanistan Civil Servants Law* (2008), monitoring and evaluation of all recruitments in line ministries, as well as processing promotions, transfers, retirements, as well as defining and restructuring the pay grades and remuneration schemes of all civil servants were among the tasks of the IARCSC.

It is worth mentioning that back in 2003, the dominant logic, particularly among the involved international actors in the area of governance, was that Afghanistan needed an administration capable of (1) providing essential services to Afghan citizens, and (2) managing the millions of dollars of international aid—in what turned out to be the largest international intervention in a single country. Meanwhile, the general belief was that, due to various reasons, any kind of immediate large-scale reform of the civil service would be impossible; thus, priorities needed to be identified, and the reforms in these priority areas were to be distinguished from those that could be dealt with later. Assessed as the areas that had a direct or an indirect impact on the capacity of the civil service, these priorities were: merit-based recruitments of civil servants, performance-related pay (PRP), promotions based on pay rather than seniority, and, finally, restructuring of the remuneration system by increasing and decompressing salary scales. Therefore, under the umbrella term of the Public Administration Reform Program (IARCSC, 2003), a series of donor-funded projects aiming to reform and restructure the country's civil service were designed and implemented. These projects were intended to be led by the IARCSC and backed by the financial and Technical Assistance (TA) of the International Community (IC).

However, owing to the countless complaints and allegations by both Afghan citizens and the international community regarding the existence of large-scale corruption and irregularities in the civil service, and considering the exorbitant amount of money reported to have been spent since 2002 without securing substantial outcomes, the Afghan CSR programs are considered to be generally unsuccessful. The performance and leadership of the IARCSC during the processes, problematic reform designs and approaches, as well as the role and influence of local and international actors, are a few examples of the areas that have been criticized and mentioned as some of the reasons for such failure (Wilson, 2014). Moreover, sources including the World Bank (2011b) raise questions about the vision and sustainability of the implemented reforms stating that "the short term aims were not sufficiently mapped against possible longer term trajectory/ies along which the Afghan civil service could have evolved" (pp. 44-45).

Sixteen years after the implementation of the first CSPAR program in 2003, almost all divisions of the Afghan civil service have gone through various reforms, and almost all current civil servants have been hired or re-hired as a result of one or another reform program. However, despite the civil servants having been supposedly recruited based on merit, the same pre-reform problems still exist, if not intensified. A few of the existent, and publicly known, problems in the Afghan civil service are as follows: service delivery remains very poor; civil servants lack motivation and are involved in many types of corruption; citizens have no trust in the administration, and the IC is tired of paying the civil service's wage-bill. Hence, the interesting questions are: What are the causes of these problems and why CSPAR has not been able to resolve them? Were the reform-related rules, regulations, and policies poorly formulated, unrealistic, and ill-fitted to the Afghan context? Or was it because of bad implementation? Does it make sense to conclude that, after more than a decade of performance, the IARCSC itself is the source of many existing problems? Or is the situation the other way around? In other words, as most the IARCSC's official statements suggest, the recruitment and promotion of civil servants are conducted based on merit; there have been considerable positive changes in the Afghan civil service, and the CSR projects have worked well enough to promote positive changes in the Afghan administration. Luckily, these and similar questions will answer be answered throughout this study.

1.2 Research Problem

With the involvement of 61 countries and 21 international organizations (Tokyo Conference-I, 2002), post-Taleban Afghanistan witnessed the largest international intervention in a single country. A considerable part of this intervention involved state-building, with public sector reforms being at its heart. Consequently, a series of reform efforts to build an effective and efficient administration, driven by merit, free of corruption, and capable of appropriate service delivery to Afghan citizens was initiated. However, after almost 16 years, contradictory views exist about the nature, results, and drivers of the Afghan CSPAR. On the one hand, the citizens of Afghanistan, the members of the parliament, and the majority of local and international observers and civil society organizations are of the opinion that little improvements have been made in the Afghan civil service. Some even believe that the reforms not only failed to achieve their intended objectives but also added to the complexities by creating an administration that is still far from merit, even more corrupt, and more politicized than before (Nabizadah, 2011). On the other hand, a group of actors, mainly governmental organizations such as the country's IARCSC, suggest that thanks to the post-Taleban reforms the Afghan civil service, at least in terms of capacity and service delivery, has considerably improved, arguing that the reforms in Afghanistan were as successful as they could be. In addition to such contradictory views about the success and failure of reforms, there is an ongoing blame-game among the major stakeholders concerning the perceived shortcomings and failures. Among the local stakeholders, Afghan line ministries blame the IARCSC for importing reforms from outside the country without the proper consideration of the national context and designing unprofessional reform programs based on unrealistic goals and objectives. They further blame the members of the Afghan Parliament for manipulating the reforms to gain personal and political interests. In turn, the IARCSC blames the individual line ministries for the partial failure, suggesting that the Commission effectively designed the reforms, but the ministries badly implemented them. The Parliament blames both the Commission and the line ministries for wasting millions of dollars of aid allocated for reforms and increasing the patronage, favoritism, bribery, ethnic discrimination, and politicization in the civil service. The citizens complain about poor service delivery and consider all these actors equally responsible for what they perceive as an incompetent and corrupt administration. Finally, the international actors,

while appreciating the improvements made, generally criticize all the local actors for mistakes and problems.

In addition to the above-mentioned puzzling contradictions and even though public sector reforms in both developed and developing countries have been studied in detail from various perspectives, the reforms in Fragile and Conflict-Affected Countries (FCACs), particularly Afghanistan, are yet to be carefully examined. Thus, apart from the partial information presented by the assessments and evaluation reports conducted by or on behalf of the international and donor organizations, a general lack of knowledge exists about the Afghan civil service, its background, as well as the results and consequences of the post-Taleban reforms.

In consideration of all the above-mentioned points, this research aims to (1) explore and explain the nature and background of the CSRs in Afghanistan and (2) examine how these reform policies and projects were formulated and implemented, by focusing on the core elements of all CSR initiatives—the recruitment, remuneration, and promotion of Afghan civil servants. Therefore, the essential questions guiding this study are as follows:

(1) How and under what conditions were the reform policies formulated?

- What were the main components and objectives of reforms?
- Who were the main actors? What were their roles and incentives?
- What were the main influential factors during this phase?

(2) How were the reform policies implemented?

- Did the reforms succeed to achieve their intended objectives? Why or why not?
- Which factors drove the reforms toward success and/or failure?

The first question stated above aims to explore the stage during which the reform ideas turned into policies and programs. By explaining the content and processes, as well as the role, influence, and approaches of the involved actors, this study provides a clear picture of how, under what conditions, and for what purposes the reforms emerged. The second question, on the other hand, concerns the implementation phase of reforms and involves reviewing the reform objectives and examining the extent to which they were achieved. This question guides the study to explore the effects of each reform and the specific factors that contributed to its success and failure.

Finally, this study hopes to become part of, what Pollitt and Bouckaert (2011, p. 215) call "hard evidence" coming from "focused and disaggregated studies, where one can trace complex

actions and reactions as the reform unfolds" and serve as a valuable empirical study providing a clear picture of the nature, content, and outputs of the Afghan CSRs, which can benefit researchers and practitioners interested either in the specific case of Afghanistan or reforms in similar fragile and conflict-affected states.

1.3 Thesis Outline

Chapter 1. Serving as a general introductory section, the current chapter first provides background information on the Afghan CSPAR, including the contradictory debates concerning its outputs and outcomes; secondly, it explains the leading research questions of the study and how they relate to the research purpose; finally, it introduces the structure of the study.

Chapter 2. Titled "Concept and Practice of Civil Service and Public Administration Reforms," this chapter comprises three main parts. Section 2.1 presents the key terminologies and clarifies what this study considers as civil service and its reform. Furthermore, it explains the common understanding of reform success and failure. Then, through section 2.2, the study explores the major CSPAR models and conceptual frameworks. Discussing their roots and main components, this part explains the available models pertaining to public sector reforms and what each of them prescribes. Finally, section 2.3 explores and highlights the learned lessons on the implementation of reforms in developing and conflict-affected countries, particularly where an international intervention has taken place. Moreover, this section presents what scholars and practitioners have found to be the most critical factors for the success and failure of reforms and groups them into the three categories of contextual, programmatic, and external.

Chapter 3. This chapter is dedicated to explaining the study's exploratory research approach, the means and sources for data collection, and the two methods used to study the outcomes and achievements of the reforms. Lastly, it explains the challenges and limitations of conducting academic research on a highly sensitive topic in a turbulent conflict-affected country such as Afghanistan.

Chapter 4. Afghanistan's current civil service has been largely affected by its past practices and partially inherited administrative culture, policies, rules, and regulations that governed the pre-reform era. Chapter 4 provides the background of the Afghan civil service and the major Human Resource (HR) policy developments and milestones throughout three distinct

periods of establishment, development, and decline. It was not initially planned for this chapter to have the level of detail it currently has. However, during the second period of field research, well-informed interviewees suggested a general lack of information about the background of the Afghan civil service and its developments in recruitment, promotion, and remuneration areas. Consequently, they suggested that, during the early 2000s when critical decisions had been made and the overall strategy for the Afghan PAR had been shaped, the reform actors had employed an approach of building everything from ground zero. This chapter on the pre-reform Afghan civil service, therefore, suggests that the development of the Afghan civil service and its historical milestones provide many untold lessons, which, if thoroughly studied, could help the post-Taleban CSR efforts to be successful.

Chapter 5. Before discussing specific factors that contributed to the success and failure of the Afghan CSRs in reaching their intended objectives, this chapter provides an overall picture of the nature, objectives, and contents of the post-Taleban reforms. Thus, section 5.1 discusses the system and situation of the civil service when the reforms were initiated (2002), continues to explore the main policies and legislation that either facilitated the reforms or were part of them and concludes by drawing an overall picture of the post-reform Afghan civil service. Section 5.2 explores the main strategic events that shaped the vision, mission, and objectives of the Afghan CSPAR and discusses the general and specific benchmarks defined for the reforms. Then, section 5.3, due to its crucial role in leadership and the implementation of reforms, focuses on the country's Civil Service Commission and discusses the steps that led to its establishment and development, as well as its role, structure, mission, and criticisms. Finally, section 5.4 introduces the major programs of the Afghan CSR based on the sequence in which they were implemented. This section further discusses the rationales behind those programs, their specific offerings on the recruitment, appraisal, and remuneration of civil servants, as well as their outcomes and effects.

Chapter 6. Focusing on the recruitment, promotion, and remuneration of civil servants, the final major part of this study discusses the implementation results and factors that influenced the Afghan CSRs. It first analyzes the extent to which the reform objectives in these areas were achieved (Section 6.1) and then presents the specific factors practically considered during the recruitment and appraisal of civil servants. The chapter concludes by delving into the specific factors that most influenced the Afghan CSRs by explaining their roles in the processes and

contributions to successes and failures. For this purpose, the study uses the same categorization of contextual, programmatic, and external factors used to highlight the most influential elements for success and failure of reforms in other FCACs in section 2.3.

Chapter 7. Serving as the concluding chapter, the final part of the study first restates the research purposes and leading questions. Thereafter, in section 7.1, the main findings are summarized. Following a short note on the findings (section 7.2), the chapter then mentions some of the limitations and shortcomings of the research (section 7.3). Finally, the chapter ends by explaining the implications of this study and provides some recommendations for both researchers and practitioners working on CSPAR efforts.

1.4 Summary

As mentioned earlier, the object of this study is Afghanistan's CSR initiatives and their core elements of the recruitment, remuneration, and promotion of civil servants since 2002. Through an in-depth analysis of the country's major CSR projects, this research concentrates on the formulation and implementation aspects of the reforms by exploring the national contextual elements, reform designs and contents, as well as the external factors that influenced the processes and outcomes. Acquiring an exploratory perspective, this study highlights the existing debates on the results and consequences of the reforms by describing how the reforms were initiated and then implemented.

Moreover, by studying the motives, roles, and actions of the involved domestic and foreign actors at the leadership level of the reforms and providing data on implementation, this study attempts to answer the following fundamental question: In a situation where the organizations at the leadership of reform, notably the country's Civil Service Commission, consider the Afghan CSRs to be as successful as they could be, why does a majority of the Afghan civil servants view it to be a partial or complete failure?

Finally, by defining the specific factors that led the Afghan CSRs towards success and/or failure and comparing them with the previous international experiences in similar contexts, this study highlights the lessons that can be learned from the specific case of Afghanistan to help future reforms in the same and similar countries.

Chapter 2: Concept and Practice of Civil Service and Public Administration Reforms

Consisting of three parts, the content of this chapter results from a review of the existing literature and debates on the origin, design, and implementation of Civil Service and Public Administration Reform (CSPAR) internationally. First, I explain some key terms, which are widely used throughout this research, and clarify the perspective from which I have studied the Afghan civil service, its reforms, and their success or failure. Second, I review the four main models or conceptual frameworks associated with the design and implementation of CSPAR globally and explain their main characteristics. Finally, with the aim of identifying the key factors affecting the success of reforms in Fragile and Conflict-Affected Countries (FCACs) where international interventions have been present, I briefly explore the CSPAR practices in these contexts and highlight the major points of concerns. Presented as the lessons learned from the past, factors discussed in this section are categorized into the three groups of contextual, external, and programmatic; a framework which is also used at the later stage of this study, in chapter 6, to discuss the specific factors influenced CSPAR in Afghanistan. Overall, the content of this chapter will enable the reader to understand the concept, nature, outputs, and challenges of the Afghan civil service and its reforms, which will be discussed in chapters 4 to 6.

2.1 Some Definitions: Civil Service, Reform, and Success

Before delving into the details of the major conceptual frameworks or, as Pollitt and Bouckaert (2011, Ch. 1) call them, the "big models" for reform initiatives in the public sector, I shall first clarify the following: (1) What is civil service? (2) What is Civil Service Reform about and what triggers it? And (3) What constitutes reform success or failure?

What is civil service? First of all, as also maintained by Demmke (2010, pp. 7–8), providing a common definition of civil service, even on a narrower region-wide scale like the European Union where similar reform trends have been followed, is "almost impossible." This difficulty arises, the source concludes, mainly due to the importance of the national context and diversity of the public administration existing in different countries. Therefore, out of many existing definitions, this study uses a more practical definition that considers civil service as "a subset of the wider public service…[that] consist of government ministries, departments and agencies, including people who advise on, develop, and implement government policies and

programs, and those who manage day-to-day activities" at the national level (Rao, 2013, p. 1). Understandably, the source clarifies that, this is a definition of what is known as the "core civil service" which again can be widened to include some professional groups such as teachers and health workers as well (p. 5).

What is Civil Service Reform about and what triggers it? Depending on the national context, as well as the purpose and perspective, reform initiatives in the public sector are defined differently under various terms such as *Administrative Reform*, *Public Organization Reform*, and *Public Management Reform*. For instance, while Leemans (1976) defines administrative reform as "a consciously induced and directed change in the machinery of government" (p. 8), Christensen, Lægreid, Roness, and Røvik (2007) view the reforms in public organizations as "active and deliberate attempts by political and administrative leaders to change structural or cultural features of the organizations" (p. 122). Alternatively, public management reform can be defined as the "deliberate change in the arrangements for the design and delivery of public services… [including] reform of processes…[such as] recruitment of public officials" (Boyne, Farrel, Law, Powel, & Walker, 2003, p. 3) or the "deliberate changes to the structures and processes of public sector organizations with the objective of getting them (in some sense) to run better" (Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2011, p. 2). Notably, a unique commonality in all these and other reform definitions are the elements of '*deliberation'* and '*consciousness'* of reforms, which suggest a distinction between reform and change in its traditional meaning. Although this aspect might seem, at least to academics, to be very obvious, it is, in fact, a fundamental characteristic of reforms, particularly for studying reform outputs and consequences. In some cases, in an attempt to exaggerate their successes or underplay their lack of proper knowledge, some reform implementers demonstrate *changes*—which would occur one way or another—as the achievements and outputs of reforms, even though such changes have nothing to do, at least not directly, with implemented reforms. Another important element of these definitions is the *top-down* nature of reforms. Boyne et al. (2003, p. 3) add that reform cannot be bottom-up, as it is not "…a spontaneous response by public officials to new circumstances… [and] inevitably involves elements of 'top-down' imposition by senior players in the policy process." This element of reform is also very important because, as the source adds, the top-down nature of reforms makes them "bound to encounter resistance." Therefore, regardless of how perfectly a reform program is designed, it will face resistance one

way or another—in fact, it is not the prevention of resistance but the ability to acknowledge and manage it that plays a significant role in the success of reforms.

Evident from the above definitions, Public Administration Reform (PAR), or as it is now more commonly termed *'Public Management Reforms'* covers a vast area and touches almost all aspects of public administration. Cepiku and Mititelu (2010), in their study on the PAR in transitional countries, conclude that "strategic planning and coordination across PA, stable financial and budgetary management and human resources management are three central areas of PA reform" (p. 62). However, this study focusses on the Civil Service Reform (CSR), which is only one out of several PAR foci. Thus, having a narrower perspective of public sector reforms helps to study reforms better and provides a clearer picture of the nature and output of them. Naturally, one can define CSR based on the "principles of civil service," namely "competence, continuity, political insulation, and accountability*"* (Evans, 2008, p. 16). This way, CSR would consist of planned actions or initiatives attempting to assure or strengthen one or more of these principles. More precisely, CSR concerns the deliberate and planned actions "in areas such as remuneration, human resources, downsizing, and operational efficiencies" (Repucci, 2014, p. 207) of the core civil service; a definition which is more appropriate for this study.

A potential answer to the questions of 'Why do we have reforms at all?', and 'What and when triggers reforms?' is provided by Larbi (1999), who, along with many other scholars, argues that the dissatisfaction with the status quo of public administration and/or its service delivery, as well as economic and fiscal issues, are the general factors triggering reforms. Meanwhile, owing to globalization and the efforts to gain more legitimacy, or retain the existing level, in the national as well as the international environment, governments and public institutions follow the international trends and launch reforms (Christensen et al., 2007). Furthermore, Bresser-Pereira (2004, p. 193) differentiates between the motivations of developed and developing worlds for undertaking reforms, suggesting that the former's concerns are "more efficiency and more quality," while the latter's is "legitimacy and effectiveness." As an example, the legitimacy factor was the case for the first post-Taleban reform program and its unexpected popularity in 2004. Although the participation in the so-called Priority Reform and Restructuring (PRR) process was voluntary and required considerable work and reorganization for the Afghan line ministries, most of them voluntarily submitted proposals to become a part of the reform. This move was to not only

benefit from the increased pay scales that the program would provide for their staff but also to follow the trend and gain legitimacy. Consequently, the voluntary implementation of the reform, allowed the line ministries to portray themselves as reformist organizations, which, in turn, increased their share of direct financial and technical support from donors and international organizations. Lastly, observations from the majority of developing and conflict-affected countries show that socio-political changes in such countries, including sudden regime changes or the culmination of civil conflicts due to or followed by international interventions, lead governments toward a perceived need for substantial reforms in their public sectors.

What constitutes reform success and failure? Finally, it is necessary to clarify what constitutes reform success and failure. First, it should be noted that although I explore both the design and implementation phases of reform programs and specify the important factors during these processes, my focus in the success and failure analysis is the latter phase, meaning success in implementation. According to Ingram & Schneider (as cited in Matland, 1995), there are " several plausible definitions of successful implementation. Among these are: agencies comply with the directives of the statutes; agencies are held accountable for reaching specific indicators of success; goals of the statute are achieved; local goals are achieved, or there is an improvement in the political climate around the program" (p. 154). Therefore, one can conclude that factors such as the purpose, perspective, content, and context influence one's interpretation of reform success and failure. Without delving into the details of existing debates on these terms, it should be noted that my interpretation of reform success is whether or not the "reforms are put into effect as intended, and are not blocked or watered down" (Polidano, 2001, p. 346). In other words, after explaining the objectives, strategic benchmarks, and contents of the major Afghan CSR programs (Chapter 5), this study explores reform outputs and their consequences to examine whether and to which extent the objectives were met (section 6.1). Thus, for the purpose of this study, a reform program is considered to be successful if it has achieved its objectives and has little or no negative consequences on parallel and/or previous reform programs.

To summarize, out of the various definitions, this study has adopted a more practical definition of the civil service that considers it as "a subset of the wider public service…[that] consist of government ministries, departments and agencies, including people who advise on, develop, and implement government policies and programs, and those who manage day-to-day

activities" at the national level (Rao, 2013, p. 1). For the purpose of this study, CSR means a set of deliberate and planned actions, in the form of donor-funded programs, "in areas such as remuneration, human resources, downsizing and operational efficiencies" (Repucci, 2014, p. 207), which started as a result of a sudden regime change by a US-led international intervention in the country. Finally, the definition of reform success employed in this study is whether and to what extent "reforms are put into effect as intended" (Polidano, 2001, p. 346), meet their specific and general objectives, and have little or no negative consequences on parallel and/or previous reform programs.

Having defined the study's interpretation of civil service, its reforms, their triggers and success, it is time to explore what reform frameworks or models are generally available and what has been learned from their implementation in other countries.

2.2 Conceptual Frameworks of Civil Service Reforms

> Reforms strategies have many points in common… [However] there is no single model of reform, there are no off-the-shelf solutions. (OECD, 1995, p. 25)

Notably, concerning the theoretical perspective of reforms, most academics and practitioners agree that "no globally recognized conceptual framework… and [no] robust 'theory of change'" exist (Scott, 2011, p. i; World Bank, 2012b, p. 10). Similarly, while Cepiku and Mititelu (2010) opine that "there has been a comprehensible reluctance to define a generalized model, preferring instead a contingency approach" (p. 62), Lynn (1998) concludes that reforms are "without an accepted theoretical canon… and without accepted methods of application" (pp. 115–116). The lack of a commonly applicable theoretical framework arises for two reasons: (1) As explained in the previous section, due to difference in perspectives and purposes the national contexts, the content and terminology of CSR differ from one country to another; (2) Partially resulting from the first reason, CSR may have multiple directions and can practically deal with different and sometimes conflicting issues, making it impossible to have a single, explicit, and globally recognized theory. What exists, however, are models, each based on a mix of several theories and concepts (Hughes, 2003; Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2011). A few major models are presented below in Figure 2.1.

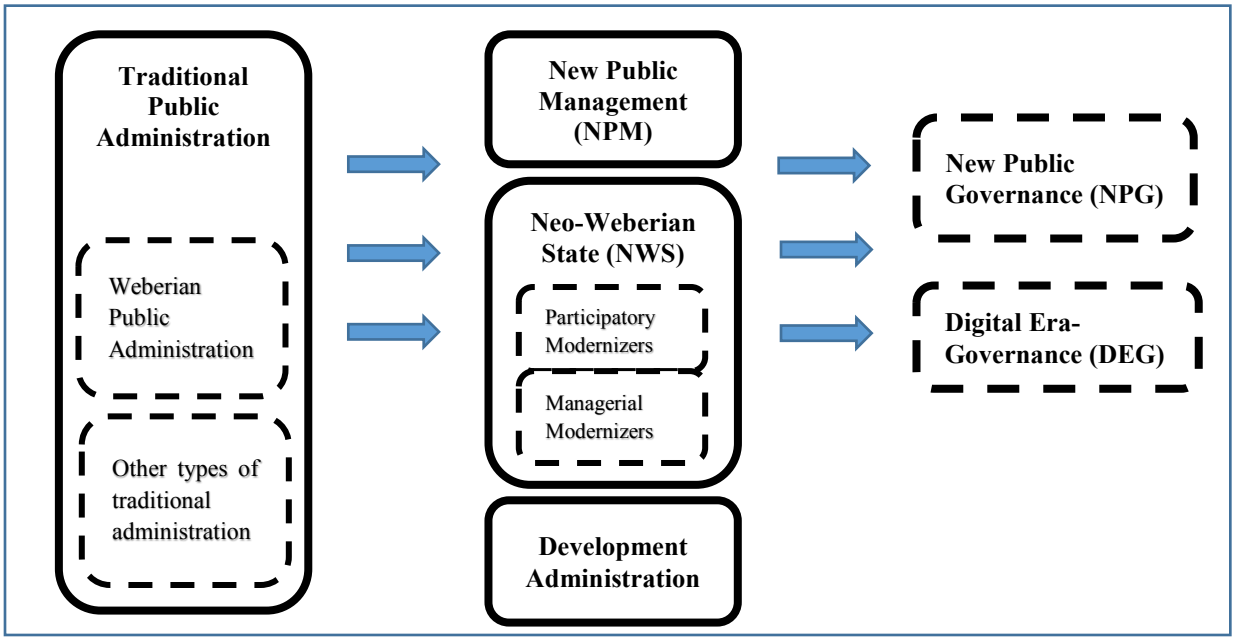

Figure 2.1. Major Conceptual Frameworks/ Models of CSPAR. Source: Hughes (2003); Pollitt & Bouckaert (2011).

If reform is understood as a "trajectory... an intentional pattern—a route that someone is trying to take, [then] it leads from a starting point (an alpha) to some desired place or state of affairs in the future (an omega)" (Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2011, p. 75). The content and nature of this trajectory were briefly explained in the previous section. The question that remains, however, concerns the two ends of reforms: the state from which the reform is trying to move (alpha) and the one that it is aiming to reach (omega). According to Pollitt and Bouckaert (2011), what is today considered the Traditional model of Public Administration was once the desired state, an omega, called the modern administration; and what happened was a shift from the alpha of the nineteenth century, a patrimonial public administration. Later in the twentieth century, owing to the desire to move from then status quo traditional public administration, many countries launched various reform programs (trajectories) to move toward better states and prescribed various models, some mentioned above in Figure 2.1. These *new* states of affairs then served "as omegas, destinations, or ideal worlds that certain groups [of countries] wanted to get to" (Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2011, p. 76). Due to their relevance for the content, context, and timing of the Afghan CSR, below, I shall discuss only four models: Traditional or Weberian Public Administration, New Public Management (NPM), Neo-Weberian State (NWS), and Development Administration.

2.2.1 Traditional Public Administration

Review of the recent CSR initiatives in Afghanistan and similar countries show that reforms in these countries have had the following essential elements: (1) an emphasis on the separation of politics from civil service matters, (2) the (re)establishment of a rationally sound and clearly structured civil service, (3) the development of well-defined job descriptions for civil service positions, (4) the formulation of rules and regulations on civil service procedures. One can immediately notice that these elements are, in fact, the characteristics of the well-known Traditional model of Public Administration (see Hughes, 2003, Ch. 2; Peters, 1996, pp. 3–13; Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2011, pp. 71–73). As Kamenka (1989, p. 83) suggests, this model developed in response to the "personal, traditional, diffuse, ascriptive and particularistic" patrimonial administrations of the nineteenth century of the West and aimed at creating an "impersonal, rational, specific, achievement-oriented, and universalistic" modern public administration.

As shown below in Figure 2.2., concerning the principles and theoretical foundations of the model, Behn (1998) states that "the intellectual heritage of the current public administration paradigm comes from the thinking, writing, and proselytizing of Woodrow Wilson, Frederick Winslow Taylor, and Max Weber. Indeed, these three constructed the rationale for the current form of most of our government" (p. 134). Agreeing with him, Hughes (2003) adds Northcote-Trevelyan (1854) to the list of the main contributors to the development of the model and suggests that as "a major reform movement… the traditional model of public administration remains the longest standing and most successful theory of management in the public sector" (p. 17).

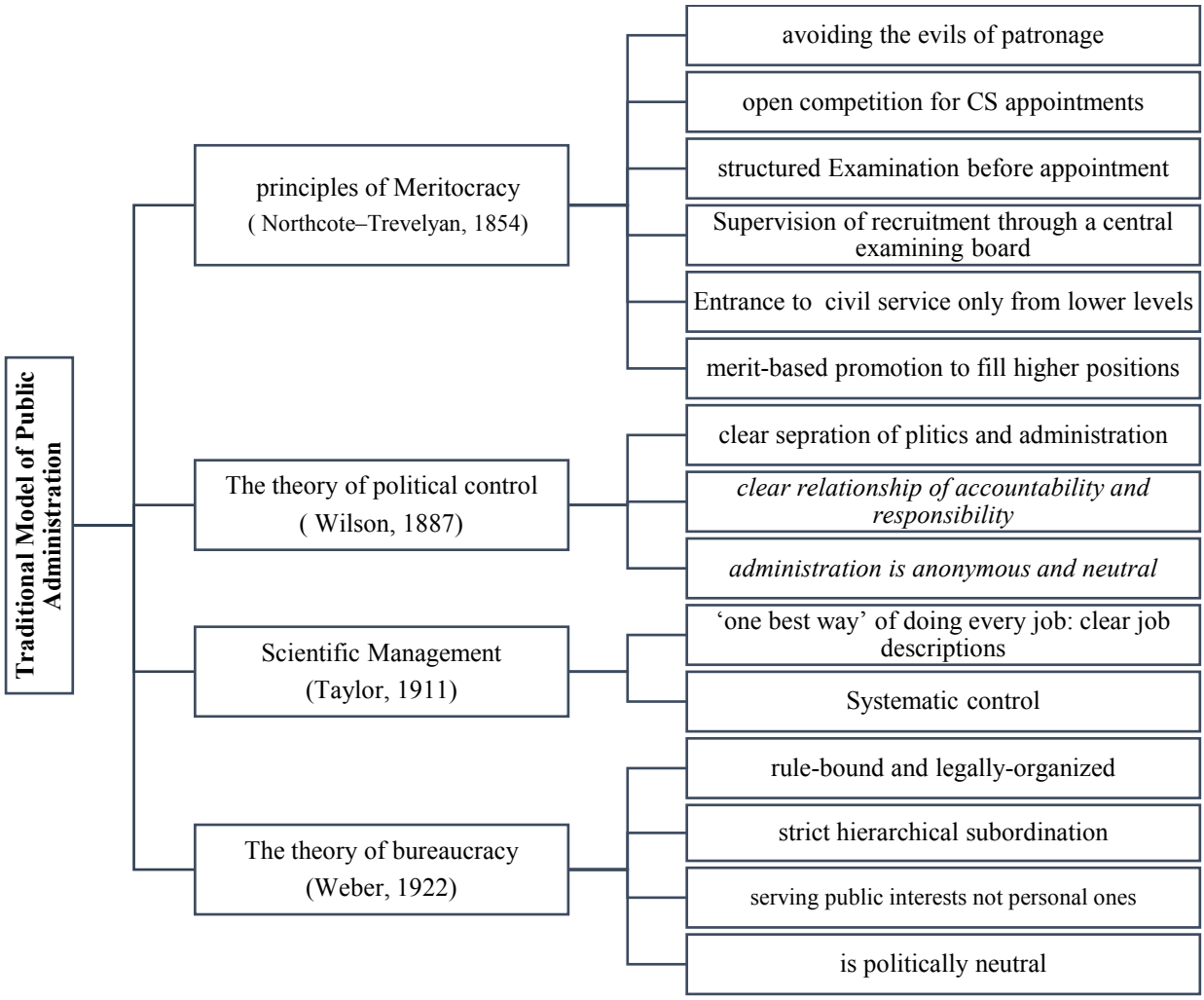

Figure 2.2. Theoretical Background and Core Elements of Traditional Public Administration. Source: Hughes (2003, pp 17–29).

The first step in the development of the Traditional Public Administration model dates back to nineteenth-century Britain, when Northcote–Trevelyan (1854) highlighted that patronage, as well as personal and political connections, dominated the civil service recruitments, which "led to the appointment of men of very slender ability" (p. 4) in the British civil service. Raising questions about meritocracy and the political neutrality of the civil service, their report provided clear recommendations to ensure meritocracy in the civil service. Their recommendations included establishing "a central system of examination" to assure that the civil service is composed of "a carefully selected body of young men" (p. 6). Although competitive examination as a normal method of entry into the British civil service was finally implemented in 1870 (Bresser-Pereira,

2004, p. 33), their study is regarded as "the start of merit-based appointments to the public service and the gradual decline of patronage… [Furthermore, it] represents a beginning to the traditional model of public administration" (Hughes, 2003, p. 20).

Later, Woodrow Wilson (1887) emphasized the political aspect of public administration, suggesting a clear separation between politics and public administration. In Wilson's view, "administration lies outside the proper sphere of politics. Administrative questions are not political questions. Although politics sets the tasks for administration, it should not be suffered to manipulate its office" (p. 210). Recognizing the politicization of public administration as the root of corruption and several other problems of patrimonial public administrations, Wilson suggested that by separating politics from administration and setting up a clear hierarchy within the civil service, the majority of problems, including the challenges to the political neutrality and accountability of civil servants, could be solved. According to him, the border between administration and politics was "too obvious to need further discussion" (p. 211).

On the other hand, Taylor (1911) through his "scientific management approach" made another major contribution to the development of the Traditional model of Public Administration. In the search for a "remedy" to the great inefficiency that he believed existed in all daily matters of his country at that time, Taylor suggested that there was "one best way" of conducting every task, stating that "among the various methods and implements used in each element of each trade there is always one method and one implement which is quicker and better than any of the rest" (p. 25). Furthermore, Taylor suggested that inefficiency could be reduced through "the best management" which he presented as "a true science, resting upon clearly defined laws, rules, and principles" (p. 7). Concerning the application of Taylor's prescriptions in the Traditional model of Public Administration, Behn (1998, p. 138) states as follows:

> Taylor's concept of "the task" and his approach to each individual task is reflected in the "job descriptions" of our civil service system. For in government, it is the responsibility of management (not the worker) to define each task that each worker should perform. These tasks are then listed on the job description, and management fills the job by scientifically selecting the individual whose qualifications best match the job description. The worker's responsibility is to do these tasks and only these tasks. Workers are not supposed to think about these tasks; that is strictly

management's job. Civil service systems apply Taylor's concept of scientific management, which "involves the establishment of many rules, laws, and formula which replace the judgment of the individual workman.

A final, yet pivotal part of the theoretical foundation of the Traditional Public Administration is Weber's (1978) theory of bureaucracy that pertains to his views on the "characteristics of [then] modern bureaucracy" (pp. 956–958) and "the position of the official" (pp. 958–963) in such a system. Jann (2003) summarizes the "typical characteristics of a Weberian bureaucracy… [as:] hierarchical subordination, clear competencies, rule-bound, and legally-organized procedures" (p. 95). In line with Wilson's (1887) view, Weber highlighted the need for the separation of politics from the civil service in the sense that politicians would be in charge of policymaking and civil servants would be the implementers of those policies with neither interfering with the work of the other. According to Weber, civil servants in a bureaucracy with such characteristics would serve the public rather than private interests. In sum, such a bureaucracy would ultimately ensure the quality of performance and service delivery to the citizens. Lastly, as mentioned by Samier (2005), Weber's approach indicates that context-related factors such as history, culture, value, and local authority are the crucial elements to be considered during reform initiatives in the public sector.

Over time, the suggestions of Northcote–Trevelyan (1854) on meritocracy, works of Wilson (1887) on politics and public administration, prescriptions of Taylor's (1911) scientific management, and Weber's (1978) remarks on bureaucracy formed a comprehensive model of public administration that can be characterized as follows:

- Public administration is separated from politics—political leadership controls the administration but does not interfere with its internal affairs;
- The civil service is staffed with professional people, recruited based on merit;
- Employees have the security of tenure, and promotion is based on seniority and merit;
- Employees benefit from an acceptable level of pay and serve the public interest rather than personal and/or political interests;

- The rights and responsibilities of employees are clearly defined through a clear superior-subordinate hierarchy.

With respect to the application of the Traditional model of Public Administration, Robinson (2015) states that "it was initially introduced as part of wide-ranging bureaucratic reforms in the United Kingdom and Prussia in the late 19th century [mainly] to overcome patrimonial systems of administration where patronage and favoritism dominated government decisions and public appointments" (p. 5). Moreover, the source adds, reforms based on this model have proven to be successful particularly in post-independence Singapore and similar countries with a centralized administration and, in which appointments of civil servants are affected by politics. However, the above-mentioned characteristics of the Traditional Public Administration suggest an ideal type of bureaucracy that, despite its success in many western and some developing and conflict-affected countries of the twentieth century, has faced several criticisms for its various aspects that are well explained by Hughes (1998, p. 43) as follows:

> The theoretical pillars of public administration are no longer seen as adequate to analyze the reality of government. The theory of political control was always problematic. Administration means following the instructions of others and, therefore, necessitates an orderly method of giving and receiving instructions. The theory of public administration required a clear separation between those who give instructions and those who carry them out. This was never realistic and became less so with the increase in scale and scope of public services. The other main pillar—the theory of bureaucracy—is no longer considered a particularly efficient or effective form of organization. A bureaucratic organization is no longer seen as the last word in organizational theory or practice… It is not the single best way of organizing and its undesirable aspects—concentration of power, reduction of freedom, usurpation of political will—may be thought worse than its desirable features. The traditional model of public administration has increasingly been superseded… clearly, there is now a greater focus on results rather than process, on responsibility rather than its evasion, and on management rather than administration.

Such a shift in focus, along with the development of the principles introduced by Taylor's scientific management shifted the emphasis from public administration to public management which resulted in the emergence of the New Public Management as "one of the most striking international trends in public administration" (Hood, 1991, p. 3) to replace Traditional Public Administration.

2.2.2 New Public Management

Driven from private sector experience and led by Managerialism (Pollitt, 1993) philosophy of administration, New Public Management (Hood, 1991; Rhodes, 1991) is regarded as "the most well-known organizational recipes" (Christensen et al., 2007, p. 61) in today's public sector, which "replaced" the Traditional model of Public Administration (Hughes, 2003, pp. 14, 16). Criticizing Weberian public administration for its emphasis on hierarchy and strict rules, New Public Management (NPM) favors more flexibility in civil service, proposing that the civil service should be more result oriented and not strictly bounded by rules.

As illustrated below in Figure 2. 3., the core theoretical elements of NPM involve a partial mix of ingredients from *New Institutional Economics* and *Managerialism* (Christensen et al., 2007; Hood, 1991; Hughes, 1998). On the side of economic theories, scholars indicate *Public Choice Theory*, *Principal/Agent Theory*, and *Transaction Cost Theory* as pillars of NPM. On the Managerialism side, Christensen et al. (2007) suggest that "revised versions of Taylorism are supplemented with ideas and initiatives such as Service Management and Value-based Management" (p. 128).

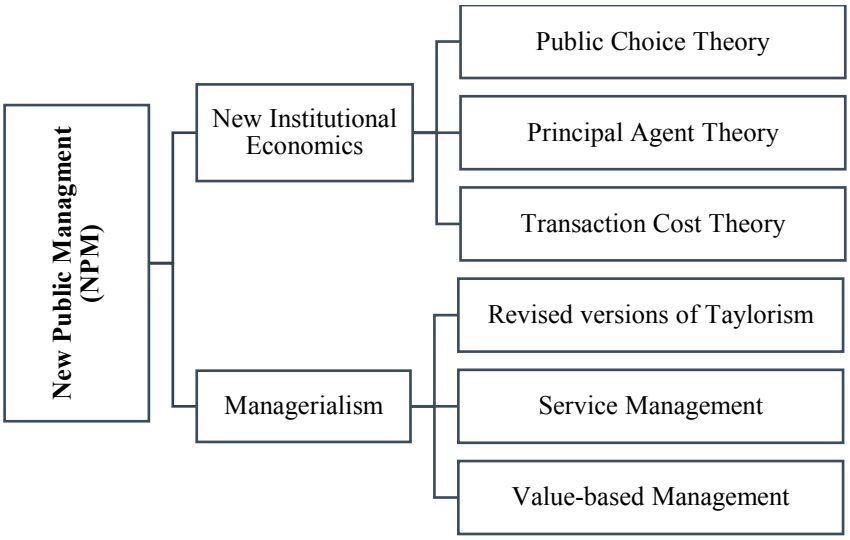

Figure 2.3. Theoretical Background of New Public Management. Source: Christensen et al. (2007, p. 128; Hood (1991, p. 5).

Understandably from the above illustration, NPM is "a marriage of two different streams of ideas" (Hood, 1991, p. 5). Thus, according to Christensen et al. (2007, p. 128),

> NPM is… not a consistent and integrated theory for modernizing the public sector but is better characterized as a wave of reforms composed of some principal reform ideas together with a loose cluster of reform initiatives pointing in various directions. Thus, NPM constitutes a set of organizational recipes that can be translated and spread to numerous public organizations.

Furthermore, as a reform model, the OECD (1998, p. 13) describes the main characteristics of NPM as below:

- Focuses on results in terms of efficiency, effectiveness, quality of service,
- Has a decentralized management environment,
- Has a greater client focus and provision for client choice through the creation of competitive environments,
- Has the flexibility to explore more cost-effective alternatives to direct public provision or regulation, including the use of market type instruments,

- Has accountability for results and for establishing due process rather than compliance with a particular set of rules and a related change from risk avoidance to risk management.

Concerning the application of NPM-driven reforms, a quick review of CSPAR's recent history shows how popular the idea has become. While countries such as the UK, New Zealand, Australia, and the USA have been mentioned by many scholars including Pollitt and Bouckaert (2011) as "core NPM countries" or "NPM enthusiasts," prescriptions of NPM, in various forms and extent, have been implemented in almost every country.

Moreover, studying NPM as a reform model can provide insights into the nature and origin of what has been observed in terms of reform actions and programs worldwide. The reform initiatives to challenge some fundamental precepts of Traditional Public Administration including "lifetime employment, promotion by seniority, the terms and conditions of public employment, traditional accountability, [and] even the theory of bureaucracy" (Hughes, 1998, p. 14) are frequently seen worldwide. Emphasis on downsizing and/or retaining a small civil service, introduction of private-style performance appraisal tools and mechanisms, focus on staff motivation and behavior-driven performance, attention towards pay increases based on performance, and insisting on competition-based recruitment and vetting mechanisms are the reflections of NPM principles, which are widely used for reforms in developing and conflict-affected countries. In fact, as will be further discussed in chapter 5, many of the above-mentioned NPM elements were present in almost all the PAR programs of Afghanistan since 2002.

2.2.3 Neo-Weberian State

Mainly developed and practiced in continental Europe, the Neo-Weberian State (NWS) as a "distinctive reform model" is considered to be a parallel alternative to its "cousin," the New Public Management model (Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2011, p. 118). Although "the term 'neo-Weberian' has been used in the literature of political science, sociology, and public administration since at least 1970" (Lynn, 2008, p. 20), NWS as a distinct international reform trend was introduced by Pollitt and Bouckaert in 2004. The NWS model, which its main characteristics are set out below in Figure 2.4., "was an attempt to modernize traditional bureaucracy by making it more professional, efficient, and citizen-friendly" (Pollitt & Bouckaert 2011, p. 19). An important

aspect of the NWS is that, as Pollitt and Bouckaert add, it "represents a particular instance of path dependency" (p. 120). Considering NWS as a potential reform model for "middle-income and less-developed" countries, Drechsler and Kattel (2008, p. 96) agree with Pollitt and Bouckaert's view on the path dependency of reforms by inserting that NWS "serves as a critical reminder that before public administration modernization (such as NPM reforms), one needs Weberian PA that can be modernized", adding that if NPM-driven reforms are going to be successfully implemented, it would be possible only on "a strong Weberian basis".

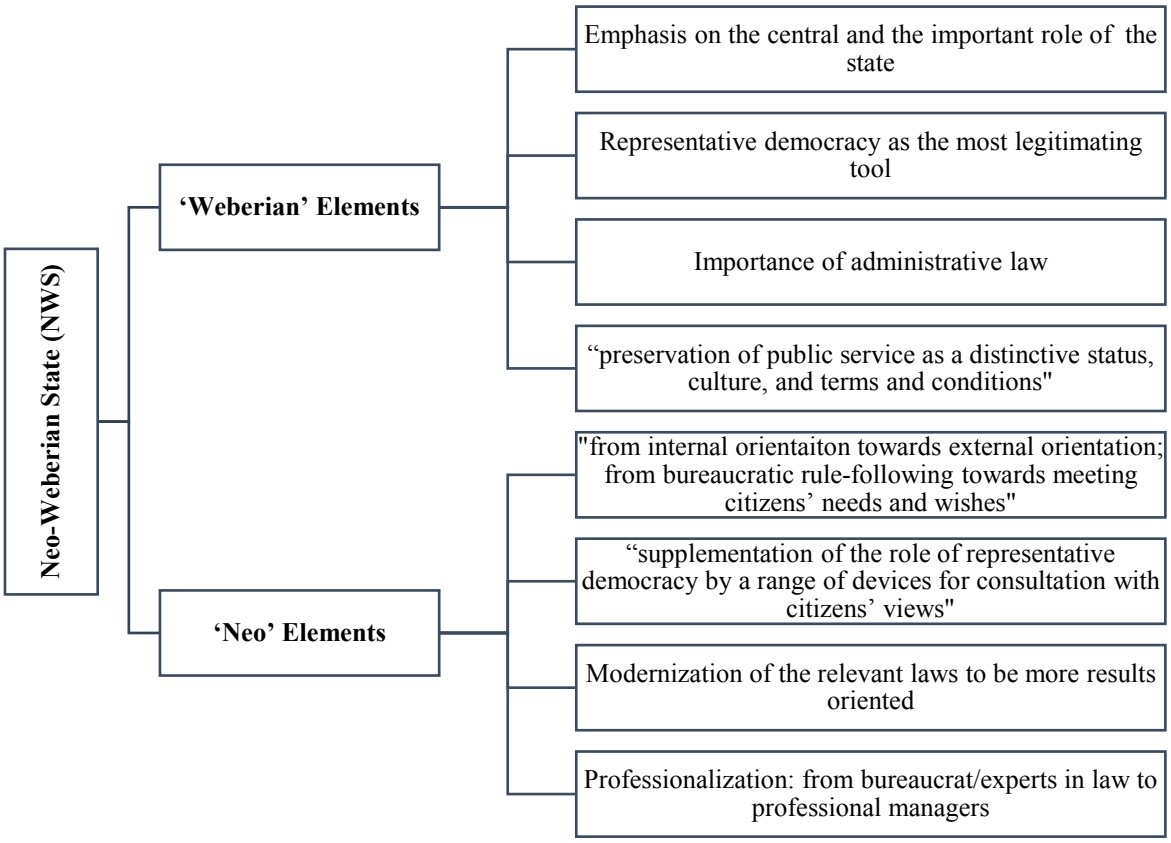

Figure 2.4. Characteristics of New Weberian State. Source: Pollitt & Bouckaert (2011, p. 118, 119).

Concerning the theoretical foundations of NWS, Pollitt and Bouckaert (2011) state that "it was originally intended primarily as a summary description" of a reform trend in Continental Europe, "not a theory, and not a normative vision or goal either" (p. 119). Thus, they admit the weaknesses of the model in this regard. However, Drechsler & Kattel (2008) consider NWS to be

"a concept with both clear and normative facets... [which by the way] needs serious theoretical development" (p. 97).

2.2.4 Development Administration

Contrary to the models discussed in the previous sections (Traditional Public Administration, NPM, and NWS), which originated in the West, Development Administration was a model developed and practiced by western countries and international organizations specifically for developing countries (Hughes, 2003, pp. 225–227; Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2011, p. 6; Turner et al., 2015). As "a specialty within the broader field of public administration," the logic behind Development Administration was "to 'modernize' their [of developing countries] economies, accelerating development to become equivalent, eventually, to the West" (Hughes, 2003, p. 225). Alternatively, Turner et al. (2015) interpret Development Administration as "a form of social engineering imported from the West and embodying faith in the application of rational scientific principles and the efficacy of Keynesian welfare economics" (p. 15). Thus, one can conclude that as a concept Development Administration was based on the prescriptions of Traditional Public Administration (see section 2.2.1 and Figure 2. 2.) supplemented by specific tools and mechanisms so that they can be applied to the context of developing countries. More precisely, as described by Turner et al. (2015, p. 16), also citing the works of Esman, and Stone, Development Administration is characterized by the following:

- Based on the notion of big government—Weberian bureaucracy
- A taken for granted lack of administrative capacity, which would be tackled through the transfer and application of a bag of tools including administrative techniques to increase capacity
- Reliance on a group of elites—an enlightened and a committed minority, which would transfer their societies into the replicas of the modern Western nation-state
- Introduction of foreign aid as a mechanism by which the missing tools of public administration would be transferred from the West to the developing countries
- Interpretation of the traditional culture as the source of bureaucratic dysfunctions or an impediment to the smooth functioning of Western tools and dominant

Weberian models of bureaucracy, which Development Administration had to overcome

As shown below in Figure 2.5., the theoretical background of Development Administration is based on the application of Fayol's (1949) "principles of management," through Taylor's (1911) "scientific management" and Weber's (1978) "ideal-type" of bureaucracy. In other words, as suggested by Turner et al. (2015, p. 15), "development administration represented the practical application of modernization theory." Although in developed countries, these theories were "usurped" or "supplemented" by newer ones, "the Classical School… retained its dominance in developing countries" until the fall of the model in the 1970s (Turner et al., 2015, p. 16).

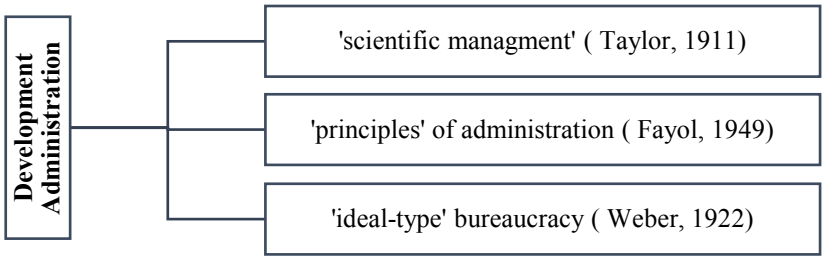

Figure 2.5. Theoretical Background of Development Administration. Source: Turner et al. (2015, p. 16)

Concerning the application of the model, in the post-World War II era, at least until the 1970s, many developing and post-conflict countries witnessed elements of Development Administration in almost all of their reform programs. These reform programs were supported by the direct involvement of Western donors, directly through their development agencies, or indirectly via international organizations such as the WB. However, by the 1970s, several reasons, including disappointments from the implementation of the Development Administration model and the rise of Managerialism and NPM as an alternative to the Traditional Public Administration of the West, led to a shift of focus in developing countries as well. This shift saw the transition from simple and merely technical instructions of Development Administration to more complex prescriptions of Development Management and NPM. More on how and why this shift occurred is explained in the next section, where I explore the implementation of reforms in developing and conflict-affected countries and summarize the lessons learned.

2.3 Reform Practice and Lessons Learnt from Developing and post-Conflict Contexts

> We must deliver, and deliver soon. As words become deeds, as plans become reality, belief in the possibility of a safe and prosperous future will grow. Delivering rapidly does not mean delivering unwisely. We must internalize the lessons of 50 years of experience of international assistance. Perhaps most important is that the vision for development and reform must be owned by government and people, rather than be imposed from outside.
>
> — (Afghan Authority for the Coordination of Assitance, 2002, p. 1)

Aiming to foster economic and social development, the CSRs in developing and conflict-affected countries are linked to the post-World War II involvement of the West in Asia and Africa. Until the 1970s, within the framework of *Development Administration* (see section 2.2.4), Western countries initiated and supported wide-ranging reform programs in the public sector of such countries. The prescriptions for Development Administration in conflict-affected and developing societies included "various features of the best administrative practice available in the developed countries" (Hughes, 2003, p. 225), meaning establishing a rational, non-partisan public administration to serve public interests. Although the reforms based on this framework were largely applied in many countries and became a trend, the source adds that, soon after its application, even before the rise of NPM in the West, Development Administration lost its support (p. 226). Asking "How could it be expected that public servants would stay out of politics as the model naively assumes they should when the bureaucracy was the most powerful political force?" and "How can Weber's model of rational-legal authority apply when the rule of law is itself weak?" (p. 227), the source concludes that the "exacerbated flaws" of the Traditional model of Administration, particularly concerning the "political neutrality and incorruptibility" of the civil service, were the main challenges of Traditional Public Administration and Development Administration. Consequently, they "largely faded… in the mid-1970s" (p. 226).

Moreover, Turner et al. (2015, p. 15) suggest that Development Administration "in its early days, at least, reflected the naive optimism and ethnocentricity of modernization theory, that there were straightforward technical solutions for underdevelopment and the West possessed them" (p. 15). In addition to model flaws, Turner et al. (2015, pp. 17-21), citing several studies, conclude

that Development Administration faced a "deadlock" due to the following reasons: (1) the "attacks on modernization theory," (2) a sharp decrease of funds for development projects from the US, (3) the development of Managerialism, (4) the shift from big government towards downsizing, (5) the "importation" of ideas from the West and their "imposition" on developing countries leading to a situation in which developing countries became merely "emulative of the West," (6) "class interests," (7) the tendency of leading bureaucrats to maximize their interests rather than foster development and change, and (8) the "complexity and uncertainty of organizational environments in developing countries".

The reasons mentioned above and the increasing criticism of Traditional Public Administration in the West for being "rigid and bureaucratic" and "based on process instead of outcomes, and on setting procedures to follow instead of focusing on results" (Hughes, 1998, p. 22) led to the emergence and implementation of an alternative type of reforms based on the principles of Managerialism and NPM (see section 2.2.2). Consequently, the model in developing countries shifted from *Traditional Public Administration* and *Development Administration* to that of *Development Management* and NPM. As discussed before, although NPM was originally developed and advocated in the West—mainly by New Zealand, Australia, the UK, and the US—its "enthusiastic Western advocates and influential multilateral financial institutions such as the World Bank and IMF" rapidly promulgated the model in developing and conflict-affected countries as well (Turner et al., 2015, p. 22). As a result, a transition started from the "three Cs of traditional administration—conduct, code of ethics, and culture—to the three Es of NPM—economy, efficiency, effectiveness" (Samier, 2005, p. 82).

However, despite the overall consensus that NPM-driven reforms worked well in many developed and OECD countries, the same cannot be said about its application in developing and FCACs. Scholars assert that there has been little success in the implementation of NPM in developing countries (McCourt & Minogue, 2001; McCourt, 2013). The different contexts of FCACs compared with most of the developed world challenge the applicability of NPM principles in the administrative systems of those countries. The political economy, the high influence of politics in civil service matters, particularly in the recruitment and appointments of civil servants, and many other contextual issues linked to culture, tradition, and religion indicate that NPM principles, as a whole, are indeed not a good fit for most the conflict-affected countries. Moreover,

flexibility, behavior-driven appraisal mechanisms, and many other NPM prescriptions yield effectiveness and efficiency only when other crucial factors such as the rule of law, strong monitoring and accountability mechanisms, and a low influence of politics are already in existence.

Therefore, out of the discussed models and concepts, reforms based on the utilized principles of NWS—introduced in section 2.2.3 and characterized through Figure 2.4.—seem a more appropriate approach for the FCACs. This is because NWS: has a strong emphasis on a rule-bound professional administration that operates in a clear hierarchy; favors a holistic reform approach embedding citizens' views; supports a reform strategy in line with administrative culture and other national contextual particularities, and considers the path-dependency and the history of reforms in the same and similar contexts crucial.

Having briefly explained the models and logic behind the majority of reforms in developing and conflict-affected countries, I shall now explore the particular elements required to be considered when dealing with CSR in a fragile context, where, among other factors, a dominant presence of the international community, including IGOs and IFIs, exist. Thus, the remaining parts of this chapter are dedicated to discussing the important concerns that have been highlighted by both academics and practitioners as the crucial elements of success and failure during the design and implementation of reforms. Regardless of whether called "lessons learned" (Rao, 2013), "points of observation" (Scott, 2011), or "principles of reform" (Repucci, 2014), they all consider the same or similar issues, which will be presented here. But before that, it is crucial to acknowledge: the existing complexity surrounding the topic; wickedness of the problems CSR is dealing with; lack of transparency about real outcomes and outputs; and a general disagreement about what can be considered a success or failure in developing and FCACs.

An essential issue, which was also mentioned by several interviewees of this research, is '*complexity'*. CSR is a very complex task even in the developed world. In the case of FCACs, the level of complexity increases and is usually underestimated. For instance, the involvement of multiple and, in some cases, too many, national and international actors is an essential element that contributes to this complexity. As a consequent of having too many players dealing with the issue, several other concerns, such as the conflicts of interests and coordination problems arise. Thus, a mere acknowledgment of these complexities, particularly at the stage of reform design and problem definition, is crucial and has direct impacts on the success of reform programs.

Moreover, having a proper definition of the problems that reforms intended to address is crucial. Experience shows that in some cases both local and international actors have had a *tame definition* of the problem which, in turn, has created serious concerns and disappointments during and/or after the implementation of reform programs. Thus, a crucial learning point that should never be forgotten is that the problems CSR deals with are "wicked" in the sense that they are "complex, unpredictable, open ended, or intractable" (Head & Alford, 2015, p. 712); consequently, reform measure, actions, and timelines should be planned accordingly.

In addition to complexity and concerns about the problem definition, some studies suggest that "international organizations have not been especially transparent regarding the successes and failures of civil service reform programmes" (Repucci, 2014, p. 216). Such lack of transparency arises due to the general tendency of individual actors to protect their own interests and is exacerbated by a lack of consensus about the terms of success and failure. Thus, drawing specific conclusions on failure and success has often been cited to be arduous. Despite this difficulty, the majority of both the practitioner reports and academic research on the CSPAR in developing and conflict-affected countries have concluded that the undertaken reforms, in general, were *unsuccessful* and *largely failures* (Boyne et al., 2003; Evans, 2008; Repucci, 2014; Scott, 2011). This failure, moreover, relates to poor or superficial implementation, insufficient outcomes to improve the situation or solve existing problems, or not meeting the intended objectives. Therefore, CSR remains to be "one of the most intractable yet important challenges for governments and their supporters today" (Repucci, 2014, p. 207).

Given the complexity, wickedness, lack of transparency about real outcomes and outputs by reform implementers, and a general disagreement about what can be considered as success or failure, I will now focus on the specific factors that are universally agreed to have crucial effects on the success and failure of reforms. As the title of this section indicates, I shall explore those factors only in the context of developing and mostly conflict-affected countries, where the IC has been one of the key players in either the design or implementation or both phases of reforms. Therefore, these factors may or may not apply to other categories of countries. From my review of research studies, reports, and project documents, the following elements (Figure 2.6) are the most critical factors of the CSPAR in developing and fragile countries:

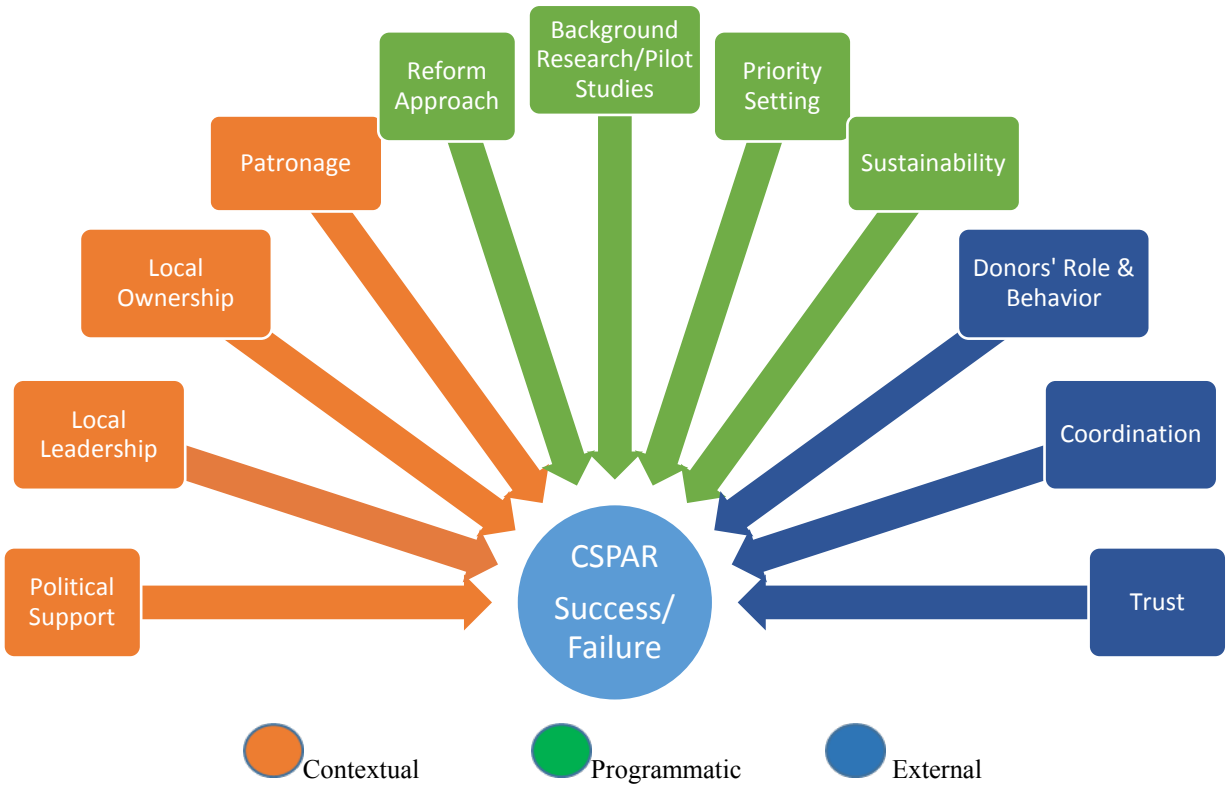

Figure 2.6. Most Important Factors for the Success and Failure of CSPAR in FCACs.

Factors mentioned above can be regarded as the key lessons learned from several decades of CSPAR implementation in developing and post-conflict countries. If these factors receive enough attention during the design and implementation of reforms, my review shows it is are very likely to have reform outputs and outcomes in line with the intended objectives. These factors can be categorized into three groups: contextual, programmatic, and external. The contextual factors that are essential to be considered during the design and implementation of reforms include political support, local leadership, local ownership, and patronage. Programmatic factors, on the other hand, concern the nature, concept, and approach of the reform itself. These are: the reform approach (i.e., whether holistic or partial), prior study and research before and during the design phase, priority setting, and the appreciation of the long-term nature of reforms; in other words, sustainability. Lastly, the external factors are those directly related to the international partners of reforms who provide financial and technical support and have a significant role throughout the reform process, particularly the design phase. The specific factors concerning this group are the behavior of external donors, coordination among them, and trust. Thus, during the following sub-

sections, I will discuss each of these factors and their role in the overall success or failure of reform, and provide examples from multiple countries.

2.3.1 Contextual factors

Recognition of the local context and its associated factors has been highlighted by almost all studies on the topic as the essential elements for successful reform design and implementation (Antwi, Analoui, & Nana-Agyekum, 2008; Chibba, 2009; Evans, 2008; Rao, 2013; Repucci, 2014; Independent Evaluation Group, 2008). Asserting that understanding the local context is "the single most important variable to consider when designing a civil service reform programme" Repucci (2014, p. 208) concludes that "although this is a mantra that has been repeated many times, actions have not always followed words." The same view is shared by Chibba (2009) who sees "contextual dynamics"—including the institutional, historical, political, cultural, and broader social context—as "a powerful determinant of the outcome and impact of interventions" (p. 101) and concludes that "perhaps the single most important problem in policies and practices on governance for development is the failure to ensure that the contextual dynamics found in each developing-country setting are not overlooked" (p. 104). Finally, Antwi et al. (2008) add ideology and traditional values to the ingredients of contextual factors and assert that "reform in the 21st Century will hardly succeed without contextualizing reform efforts within country-specific realities" (p. 263). Cambodia and Honduras are two examples where failure in the appropriate adaptation of the proposed reforms to the context had substantial negative effects on the overall success of reforms (Independent Evaluation Group, 2008, p. 37). The lack of proper context recognition prompts the majority of international supporters of reforms to use more generic approaches by implementing the popular "trend" or "best practices." In this regard, Huque and Zafarullah (2014, p. 11) note as follows:

> Along with influential actors such as the World Bank, IMF, the OECD, and the UN, individual donor countries leaned heavily toward the introduction of public management reforms in developing countries without taking into consideration the indigenous contexts and their suitability to adopt the changes proposed. Consequently, developing countries were confronted with complex structures and relationships, and the outcomes of the reforms were far from satisfactory.

The efforts to implement NPM prescriptions in developing and conflict-affected countries reveal the kind of context ignorance discussed by Huque and Zafarullah (2014) above. As mentioned earlier, the NPM trend of the developed world from the 1980s to 1990s became the *Development Management* model in developing and conflict-affected countries from the late 1990s to early 2000s. However, scholars agree that major contextual differences exist between these two groups of countries which, leads to the conclusion that NPM was not appropriately, if at all, applicable in developing and conflict-affected systems. However, efforts to implement elements of the model were largely witnessed in various developing and conflict-affected countries without proper utilization of the model. This was among the reasons why most reforms in these countries did not meet their objectives. For instance, a general failure attempts to downsize the civil services in Cambodia, Honduras, and the Republic of Yemen (Independent Evaluation Group, 2008) or the unsatisfactory Human Resource Management (HRM) reforms in many other countries, all based on NPM prescriptions, reveal the importance of context and the need for its recognition (Repucci, 2014, p. 209), not only in words but also in actions.

Elaborating more on the content of the contextual issues, Scott (2011) and other scholars (some cited above) suggest that while attempting to launch a CSR program, factors such as political dynamics and support, local leadership and ownership, administrative culture, and the degree of existing patronage and corruption in the system are the most critical contextual points to be considered. Below, I discuss each of these elements in more detail.

Political dynamics and support. Concerning the lessons learned from implementation of the public sector reforms in developing and FCACs, Kettl (2000) states that "the strategies of management reform must fit into a nation's governance system and they must be supported by the political system for the administrative reforms to succeed" (p. 32). Similarly, Scott (2011), in his review of the literature on CSR, suggests that although CSR is technical by nature, the political dynamics of the context plays a significant role in its success, based on several years of international experience. Therefore, having strong political support and willingness is a necessity for any reform in the civil service (Evans, 2008; Independent Evaluation Group, 2008; Repucci, 2014); otherwise it's very likely that the reform plans, mostly developed by bureaucrats who are backed by the technical assistance of foreign donors, will remain only on paper and not reach their intended objectives. Mengesha and Common (2007) provide evidence from two case studies in

Ethiopia, showing how crucial the political commitment and support of local government and administration, particularly those at the leadership of line ministries, could be in paving the way toward successful reform implementation. Similarly, Ghana's CSR efforts from the 1980s to 1990s during the implementation of its Civil Service Performance Improvement Program (CSPIP), reforms in Uganda during the presidency of Museveni, and Malaysia during Prime Minister Mahathir's tenure represent clear examples of how constructive strong political commitment can be (McCourt, 2001). Moreover, having a committed political steering is said to be a leading factor for the unique success of Kenya's CSR reform through its Rapid Results Initiative from 2005 to 2009 (Majeed, 2012).

On the negative side, Ghana's Civil Service Reform Program (CSRP) in 1987 (Ayee, 2001), Sri Lanka's civil service reforms in the late 1990s (McCourt, 2001), as well as reforms in Mozambique (Repucci, 2014), and Albania (Cepiku & Mititelu, 2010) are examples of failed efforts mainly due to the absence of political commitment and even negative interference by politicians in the reform processes. In Mozambique, the government announced many reforms and spoke of its real intention to make them work; however, evidence shows that practical efforts from the government were lacking. Therefore, international donors—who were paying about half of the national budget—concluded that the lack of political commitment was the main obstacle preventing the success of reforms. Similarly, political interference has been indicated as one of the main obstacles to the successful implementation of CSR efforts with a focus on the HRM issues in Albania (Cepiku & Mititelu, 2010, p. 66).

Notably, review of the past experiences indicates that though all involved actors officially acknowledge the importance of political support, there are only a few cases which reveal such commitment in action. Thus, considering the international experience, it can be concluded that, as the foremost condition for success, no real achievement can be made in the absence of a strong local *political support* for and *commitment* to reforms. If political support cannot be secured, such deficiencies should be anticipated during the design phase, and plans should be made to take this lack of support into account.

Local leadership. Facilitating and ensuring strong local leadership are other context-related factors essential for reform success (Polidano, 2001; Rao, 2013; Scott, 2011). Having "champions of reform" (Brinkerhoff & Brinkerhoff, 2015; Wescott, 1999) or a "close-knit team

of passionate and determined leaders" (Faustino & Booth, 2014) at the senior management levels of administration (e.g. general directors, directors, general managers) is crucial to pave the way and help overcome the almost inevitable resistance to reforms.

While agreeing on its importance as a pre-condition for successful reforms, no consensus exists among both academics and practitioners on how local reform leadership can be created. In some cases, donors, according to their own criteria, attempt to recruit and appoint highly educated people as the leaders of reforms. Although this approach might help to address some of the capacity issues within the civil service, it generally creates more harm than benefit. It not only prevents the emergence of a strong and supportive leadership for reforms but also causes even more resistance to foreign-trained leaders and their ideas from the rest of civil servants, as they regard these top managers as externally imposed agents who do not even look or behave like the rest of them. As stated by Choubey (2014) in his *Untold Story of the Indian Public Sector*, leadership has elements that are "contextual, cultural and interpersonal and these differ from one country to another" (p. 81); therefore it cannot be created, injected, or imposed by donors or external supporters of reforms. Instead, it needs to come and evolve from within the context. As it will be discussed later in this chapter, due to the high influence of donors over the leadership of reforms, in many cases, regular civil servants pose strong objections to reforms and discredit administrative leadership by portraying themselves as the followers of donor instructions, rather than competent leaders having and backing their own ideas.[1]

The case of Kenya's Rapid Results Initiative from 2005 to 2009 is a clear example of how effective strong local leadership can be (Majeed, 2012). As the source adds, while the program faced "substantial resistance in very high places" (p. 16), one of the main reasons for its success was the firm steering by both the political and administrative leadership of the country. The program was so successfully implemented that Kenya received the 2007 United Nation's Public Service Award.

[1] The emergence of the so-called "Yes, boss!" phenomenon in Afghan administration is a direct result of this. Particularly in societies that have experienced foreign invasion, while factors such as culture and tradition come before rule of laws and regulations, the so-called "foreign-follower" leaders and top managers are not taken seriously by lower levels of administration, irrespective of how competent they are.

Local ownership. Closely linked to factors of political commitment and local leadership is the equally important element of local ownership. The review of studies on the decades of international experience in CSR suggests that if local leaders and the senior management of public administration, including those in charge of implementation, do not have a sense of ownership for the reform policies and programs they are introducing and if their prescriptions are not driven from their own context in response to their specific problems, then it is highly likely that reforms will not achieve their intended objectives. Thus, Wescott (1999, p. 148) suggests that "ownership of reform programmes needs to be more broadly based and to derive support both from the political and administrative leadership and the rank and file of the civil service. Moreover, local ownership and the engagement of local partners during the processes of defining the reform approach and design will create a stronger sense of accountability for the results and outcomes, which, in turn, creates an environment where local officials and partners take reforms more seriously (Repucci, 2014). As an empirical example, the World Bank (as cited in Ayee, 2001, p.26), states the "'lack of ownership and commitment' on the part of government and bureaucrats" was one of the main reasons why Ghana's CSRP (1987) failed to achieve its objectives.

Patronage culture. Finally, as mentioned by several scholars including Rao (2013) and Repucci (2014), it is essential to acknowledge the existence of *patronage* and its "pervasiveness" (Evans, 2008) at various levels of civil service. Experience has shown that patronage and the extent it has been institutionalized have direct effects on reforms and, thus, should be considered during the design and implementation of CSR programs. For instance, the existence of strong patronage systems in Yemen, Bangladesh, and Ethiopia is believed to have negatively affected the implementation of CSR initiatives in these countries and is thus largely responsible for their failure (Evans, 2008, p. 28). The important question here is, then, how to deal with it? How to design and implement CSR programs successfully, knowing that a strong system of patronage exists and will influence reforms in several ways? Should the reforms fight it or adopt a strategy to work alongside? As a potential answer, while it should be acknowledged that, even in the case of developed countries, fighting patronage has lasted for years and even decades, "patronage systems will eventually be supplanted by career civil service systems—slowly, incrementally, and adaptively" (Grindle, 2010, p. 23).

2.3.2 Programmatic factors

In addition to contextual issues, the review of CSR implementation in developing and FCACs have identified various concerns related to the reform itself. According to Polidano (2001), "tactical choices in the design and implementation of civil service reform can determine whether it succeeds or fails*"* (p. 345)*;* however, the source adds, despite their importance, the "scope" and "design" issues of reforms have been given insufficient consideration. I call these and other relevant factors, such as background research and pilot studies, priority setting, and sustainability and appreciation of the lengthy nature of reforms as *programmatic factors.* It is worth mentioning that although these factors have direct links with the elements of the other two groups—contextual and external—programmatic factors form a distinct group of their own. However, what exactly do these factors concern, and how do they affect the success and failure of reforms? These are the questions that are answered in this section.

Reform approach. The discussions on the reform approach generally concern two questions: (1) Incremental or radical reform? And (2) partial or comprehensive reform? Concerning potential answers, while scholars have consensus on the importance of the decision, they are widely divided on which approach increases the likelihood of reform success or is more appropriate. Suggesting that each option has had successful and failed examples, Rao (2013, p. 1) states that "different reform models or approaches may be appropriate depending on the context." However, he agrees with Scott (2011) that a key lesson from experience indicates "an incremental approach is most likely to be sustainable and politically feasible" (p. i). However, the local and international actors involved in FCACs have a general tendency to bring significant improvements in governance and service delivery as soon as possible.

Moreover, as mentioned earlier in section 2.1, sometimes factors such as a sudden change in a country's government or system of administration, the end of an armed or political conflict, or the attempts to gain international legitimacy by trying to follow international trends force governments and their international partners to launch comprehensive reforms in a speedy manner. The negative effect then is that all these factors lead to the implementation of CSR initiatives without questioning or undertaking the in-depth analysis of the approach, timing and sequence of reforms.

Background research and pilot studies. Another important programmatic factor is undertaking proper background research before the design and implementation of CSPAR. The comprehensive analysis of the context, previous reforms, and potential obstacles of the planned reforms will substantially increase the understanding of the reform programs and, consequently, contribute to their success. However, as stated by Repucci (2014, p. 209) although the involved actors agree on "the importance of background research," it has been "often brushed over or neglected, most likely because its value is underappreciated. As a result, examples of an absence of analysis are more readily available than the contrary" (Repucci, 2014, p. 209). CSR initiatives in several countries such as the 1990s of Ethiopia, Ghana, Guyana are examples of how the lack of proper research and diagnosis can lead to "inappropriate reforms or failure to convince governments to take action" (Evans, 2008, p. 30).

Priority setting. The failure to appropriately set priorities has been one of the major criticisms of failed reforms. The history of CSPAR in developing and conflict-affected countries has many examples where the local administrations have not recognized the implemented reforms as their priorities. Instead, most of the reform areas have been the priorities of donors and international partners or at least inappropriately set by them. For instance, the downsizing and retrenchment efforts in several countries, including Cambodia, Honduras, and Yemen, were not considered a priority by local actors, and thus, these reforms exacerbated the already low commitment and lack of ownership. Resultantly, these reforms largely failed. Therefore, priority setting should be undertaken in consideration of the following factors:

- the accurate and comprehensive knowledge of the local context
- the leadership of local actors rather than the international partners of reforms
- the local needs and priorities rather than those of donors

Sustainability. Reforms are lengthy and expensive, and merely acknowledging this fact is a simple yet critical step toward the success of reforms. Long-term support and sustainability, however, conflict with the interests of donors who are the financial and technical supporters of reforms and are generally looking for short-term gains. Consequently, experience shows that being "*short-termist"* is one of the main criticisms of reform projects (Scott, 2011). Most reforms in FCACs have emerged in the form of three-year donor-funded projects, which consequently put

pressure on local actors and largely contribute to the superficial implementation of reforms. Thus, although short-term approaches may fulfill specific administrative needs and improve some aspects of the civil service, such as capacity, for a certain period, their lasting effects are minimal.

In conclusion, the design and approach of reform programs should be formulated after comprehensive background studies and in consideration of the local realities. Reform priorities should be set by locals, and reform content should reflect the immediate and long-term needs of the local administration rather than the short-term interests of donors. Moreover, it is crucial that, at any stage of reform, involved actors acknowledge the fact that reform, by nature, is a long-term process, which requires them to have long-term plans. Such plans should precisely explain how partial reforms are connected to one another. Moreover, the actors should carefully examine whether the sequencing of partial reforms is appropriate or not. Finally, and most importantly, these sustainability measures should not remain as promises on paper but be reflected during activities.

2.3.3 External factors

> …reforms…have been promoted, funded and assisted by international development institutions. This approach has largely been a failure as it assumes that one size fits all, in the sense of emulating or adapting interventions based on what works in 'successful societies' (Chibba, 2009, p. 97).

International actors, like IFIs and IGOs as the financial and technical supporters of reform projects and programs, have had a crucial role in both the success and failure of reforms in developing and conflict-affected countries. In fact, many CSRs in such countries owe their existence to the international community's involvement. However, since the advent of the post-World War II reconstruction and state-building efforts through the *Development Administration* approach, the role and behavior of the international community have been a topic of debate among both academics and practitioners. Fuhr (2001, pp. 433-434), citing Haggard and Webb, views the role of the international community "instrumental in bringing local actors together and assisting them to agree upon and design appropriate strategies for reform", adding that "they served as catalysts and brokers, shared lessons learned from implementing reforms in other countries, and assisted in adapting them to new contexts."

Contrary to this positive view, Parnini (2009) suggests an "imposing" role of donors and international actors. Similarly, Scott's (2011) literature review highlights that the behavior of the international actors has been criticized for a range of issues, including for having a "short term approach," backing "imported models of reforms," suddenly changing their priorities, and pursuing "perverse incentives." Additionally, Poudyal and Ghimire (2011) provide evidence of serious coordination challenges among international actors; and Wyatt et al. (2008, p. 18) state that "donors support their own favorite areas in isolation, which has resulted in some duplication of agendas" and coordination issues. Finally, the element of trust between local and international actors has been mentioned as a key to success. Therefore, the discussion below will separately discuss each of these three elements, namely donors' behavior, the coordination issue, and the importance of trust.

The behavior of donors and international actors: Imposition and high pressure. Contrary to the case of most developed countries where the need for reforms has originated from the local context, "in many of the less developed countries they have been imposed by agencies of external aid as[the] conditions [for] receiving assistance" (Peters, 1996, p. 2). Similarly, at the time when NPM was the trend, "considerable pressure exerted on Third World countries to accept this new model" (Wyuts, 1995, p. 3). Such pressure seems still to be dominant. Parnini (2009) provides evidence of donor' "imposing" role and Conteh & Huque (2014, p.3) explain the problem as "often there are pressures from external sources as the international community expects developing countries to adopt new practices and standards." Therefore, although borrowing ideas and models is not necessarily bad in principle, if the international actors and their consultants "impose" them, it can "generate disillusionment or even hostility" (Repucci, 2014, p. 210) and, consequently, lead to increased resistance toward and decreased commitment to reforms. Repucci (2014) also mentions that the case of Burkina Faso and its initial Civil Service Reform Plan in the late 1990s is a well-known example of an externally imposed reform agenda, which faced strong resistance by the reform recipients.

Moreover, the literature suggests that a dilemma is evident in the actions of donors. International actors in post-conflict countries "see [the] urgent need for financial and technical assistance on the one hand, but on the other hand can impose heavy burdens on a weak civil service in managing aid programs and implementing aid projects" (Rondinelli & The Mitchell Group,

2006, p. 25). Therefore, the source suggests, that "international assistance for public administration reforms should not… place difficult administrative and financial burdens on governments". Mozambique's post-1992 intervention is the example of such situation where the initiation and funding of hundreds of projects by donors not only put an unmanageable burden on an already weak administration but also attracted most of its skilled civil servants by offering higher salaries (Wuyts, 1995).

To summarize, although the pressure exerted by the international actors is to some extent helpful for administrations to take some first steps toward reforms, an imposing role of donors, through IGOs and IFIs and their consultants, is a frequently witnessed obstacle for achieving success in reform initiatives of FCACs.

Donor coordination. In addition to donor behavior, effective coordination among international actors and between them and local actors has been indicated as a crucial element for achieving success in CSPAR (Evans, 2008). However, although donors admit the importance of effective coordination, they have a general tendency to ignore it in practice. In fact, according to Polidano (2001, p. 351), international experience shows that in addition to their failure to improve coordination, donors generally "exacerbate problems of coordination when there are several of them involved in the same field " (p. 351). The case of Malawi and its CSR efforts in 1996, in which several international actors, including the International Monetary Fund (IMF), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), European Union (EU), Department for International Development (DFID), United States Agency for International Development (USAID), and Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), were involved in the reforms, serves as a good example of how the lack of coordination among actors leads to problems such as "slow implementation" and "capacity overload" of an already weak administration (Adamolekun, Kulemeka, & Laleye, 1997). Other examples are Bangladesh and Honduras, where the lack of coordination among donors, together with their conflicting agendas, created major problems for achieving successful reform outcomes (Repucci, 2014).

Furthermore, concerning the positive examples of coordination, according to the same source cited above, Tanzania's experience in 2004 demonstrates how effective donor coordination can be. Considered as "a leader in making successful reforms to the structure of aid" (Repucci,

2014, p. 215), the government of Tanzania through its "one process, one assessment" motto, initiated better donor coordination, which significantly contributed toward the success of its CSR initiatives. Therefore, the support and involvement of international actors need to be coordinated; otherwise, their different approaches and conflicting interests may lead to tensions among them, such as the "serious conflict" between the WB and the UNDP over the reforms in Guiana and Burkina Faso (Schacter, as cited in Polidano, 2001, p. 351).

Trust. Faustino and Booth (2014) consider *high-level trust* as a pre-requisite of leadership, which is a vital element for achieving reform success. Tway (as cited in Faustino & Booth, 2014, p.22), mentions that there are three "building blocks of trust: the capacity for trusting, the perception of competence and the perception of interests." Experience pertaining to CSPAR shows that at least two of these—the perceptions of competence and interests—have been the reasons behind the lack of trust between local and international actors. First, donors and international agencies do not trust the local leadership of reforms to be competent, which leads to prioritizing the needs and formulating reform policies without proper engagement with the local partners and policymakers. Second, local partners perceive that international actors and consultants serve their own interests rather than the well-being of their public administration; thus, they do not trust the ideas or decisions of donors and their consultants. Yet, local actors agree to the proposals of the international actors mainly because of their high financial and technical dependencies. The consequence is that the local leadership of reforms in these countries end up implementing reforms for which they have no sense of ownership and commitment to make them work. Therefore, it is essential that at any stage of reforms, particularly during the design phase, donors, international consultants, and advisors establish trust with their local partners and involve them, even if the local counterparts are not capable enough.

2.4 Chapter Summary

Composed of three main sections, this chapter started with a discussion on some key terms related to public sector reforms and clarified what the civil service, its reform, and their success or failure mean in this study. Acknowledging that existing definitions provided by scholars and practitioners differ according to the context, purpose, and perspective, I used Rao's (2013) interpretation that civil service is "a subset of the wider public service…[that] consists of

government ministries, departments, and agencies, including people who advise on, develop and implement government policies and programs, and those who manage day-to-day activities" (p. 1).

Moreover, after citing various definitions of reforms, I accepted CSR to be consciously induced and directed by top-down change, which has taken place in multiple areas of civil services, including HRM. Then, I clarified that with respect to HR reforms, this study concentrates explicitly on those elements dealing with the recruitment, remuneration, and promotion of civil servants. Furthermore, I explained that my understanding of reform success is whether they were implemented as planned and achieved their intended objectives or not. Finally, regarding the specific triggers of CSPAR, I mentioned that factors such as the sociopolitical changes in countries, the dissatisfaction about the status quo of public administration and/or its service delivery, and governments' attempts to achieve effectiveness or their efforts to follow the global trend to gain legitimacy in the international environment are among the top factors.

Thereafter, I presented my literature review on the major conceptual frameworks or models used for reforms internationally. Of these models (see Figure 2.1.), I briefly explained the development and main characteristics of the four: Traditional Public Administration, New Public Management, Neo Weberian State, and Development Administration. Naming the main theoretical foundations of each model, I described how the principles of Traditional Public Administration were used, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, by the West to distance itself from the problems of patrimonial administrations. Moreover, I mentioned that with the rise of Managerialism in the second half of the twentieth century, Traditional Public Administration was increasingly criticized for several reasons, including its emphasis on hierarchy and strict rules, lack of flexibility, idealistic and unrealistic approach to separate politics from the administration, and excessive focus on processes than results. Thus, while it was replaced by NPM in several developed countries, such as New Zealand, Australia, the UK, and the US, in Continental Europe, it was modernized and became NWS. Finally, with a particular focus on developing and conflict-affected countries, I discussed that western countries, mainly the US, used the Development Administration framework to prescribe reforms that were based on the principles of Traditional Public Administration. Later, with the spread of NPM, Development Administration was replaced

by the ingredients of the new model and became a trend in many conflict-affected and developing countries as well as a model that is still used in some of these countries.

Subsequently, aiming to highlight the lessons learned from previous CSPARs in developing and conflict-affected countries, this chapter explored the main factors (see Figure 2.6.) mentioned by both practitioners and academics that have driven public sector reforms in these countries toward success and/or failure. As also mentioned below in Table 2.1., these factors are categorized into three groups: contextual, programmatic, and external.

Table 2.1.

Most Important Factors for the Success and Failure of CSPAR in FCACs.

Contextual	Programmatic	External
Political dynamics and support	Reform approach	Donors' role and behavior
Local leadership	Background research and pilot studies	Donor coordination
Local ownership	Priority setting	Trust
Patronage culture	Sustainability	

Giving several examples of the reforms in various countries and acknowledging that multiple factors, including the presence of the international community as the financial and technical supporters of reforms, differentiate the reform processes in conflict-affected and developing countries from those in developed countries, I explained how these factors affect the success and failure of reforms.

The reform frameworks discussed in section 2.2 and the groups of factors presented in 2.3 are used in chapters 5 and 6 when discussing the content and outputs of CSPARs in my case study of Afghanistan.

Chapter 3: Research Methodology

Focusing on the research methodology as well as the means and challenges of data collection, this chapter first explains and justifies the explorative research design used in this study (3.1). Then, it provides an overview of the main tools and sources of data collection and the methods of analyses. The chapter ends by explaining specific challenges regarding data collection on a sensitive topic in a conflict-affected country such as Afghanistan.

3.1 Research Design

Having a qualitative approach that aims to secure "a holistic understanding of complex realities and processes" (Mayoux, 2006), this research is a case study of the post-Taleban CSRs in Afghanistan and their main components of recruitment, remuneration, and appraisal of civil servants on the national level. As will be explained later in chapter 4, Afghanistan has a unitary system of governance and administration, meaning from a structural perspective, the civil service is composed of line ministries with their headquarters in the capital city of Kabul and their provincial directorates in Afghanistan's 34 provinces. The provincial offices of line ministries have the same organizational structure of the central office, but much smaller in size, and, as a general rule, any reform program for the center is also applicable to these directorates. However, due to several reasons, it seems that the reform implementation, for example, in province A is affected by different factors that are not necessarily present on the national level or in province B. Therefore, to prevent variations and keep the study focused, I have studied reforms on the national level, where the challenges to, and environment of, reforms are similar for most the line ministries. Having said that, addressing the outputs and consequences of reforms, describing how, by whom, and in what kind of circumstances they were initiated, and exploring what drove the reforms toward success and failure are the main purposes of this study, which is conducted through an exploratory perspective.

With the above-mentioned research goals in mind and as an attempt to develop my research methodology and data collection strategy, identifying the main actors involved in both the formulation and implementation of Afghanistan's CSRs was among the first tasks. This mapping of the involved actors was done in the summer of 2015 during the preliminary field research in Kabul, Afghanistan. As shown below in Figure 3.1., document reviews and expert interviews

suggested the involvement of several national and international actors in the process of designing the Afghan CSPAR programs and policies. Owing to the lack of a written agreement defining the specific roles, each international actor (right side) and national player (left side) simultaneously worked with the IARCSC (center). According to the initial interviews and document reviews, within these actors, the IARCSC, the World Bank (WB), and the Ministry of Finance (MoF) played a central role.

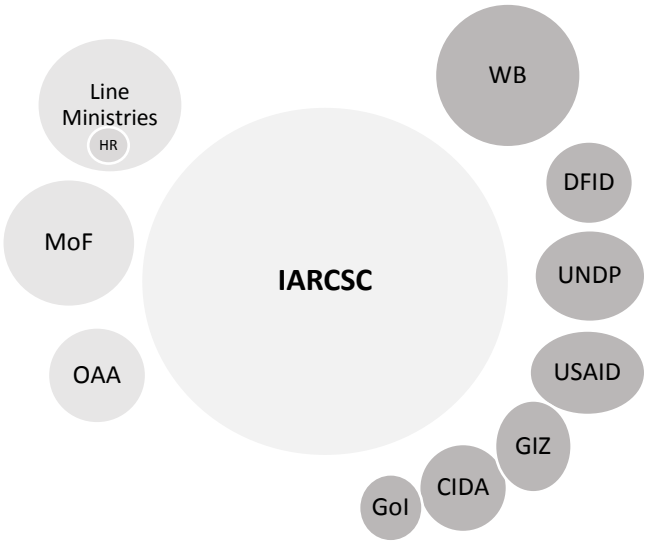

Figure 3.1. Main Domestic and International Actors in the Design Stage of Afghan CSR

However, during the reform implementation phase, the contribution of international actors was told to be limited to the provision of Technical Assistance (TA), which, as shown below in Figure 3.2., left more room for the involvement of local actors.

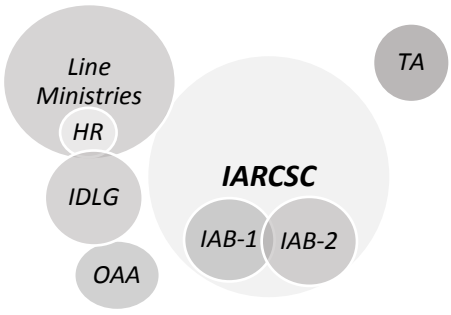

Figure 3.2. Main Actors in the Implementation Phase of Afghan CSR

Having a general picture of the actors involved in both the design and implementation phases of the reforms in hand, the next essential question was deciding which line ministries—out of 25 in 2015— to select for collecting empirical data on the reform implementation. Following the consultations with academic supervisors and bearing the logistics and, more importantly, security issues in mind, I decided to limit the scope of the study to the national level and consider one or two ministries to study the reform implementation in details. The preliminary research suggested that although Afghanistan has a centralized system of public administration, which, in theory, means the same reform policies and programs were implemented for all line ministries, and all of them had the same or similar organizational structures and procedures, the reforms were reportedly more successful in some than the others.

Sources such as the World Bank (2012) suggested that five line ministries had restructured and functional HRM departments and were considered to be successful in terms of CSR implementations; these were Ministry of Finance (MoF), Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development (MRRD), Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation, and Livestock (MAIL), Ministry of Public Works (MoPW), and Ministry of Transport and Civil Aviation (MoTCA). Thus, based on a method of difference, a comparison of the reform implementation in one of these ministries with another line ministry would explain the reasons and factors behind the success and failure of the reforms. However, due to accessibility and the ease of data collection, only two ministries, namely the MoF and the MoPW, could be potentially selected as the most successful cases to study. Nevertheless, the case of the MoF was excluded because it had received extraordinary support and resources from both the government and donors, meaning its success in the reform implementation was an exception. Therefore, the MoPW was selected as the primary source of data for a successful case of reform implementation.

As for the most unsuccessful case, preliminary research and various reports all pointed at the Ministry of Education (MoE). However, it was excluded from the analysis mainly due to the extreme difficulties in data collection and ambiguity on the status of teachers as civil servants. The difficulty in data collection arose from the increasing corruption allegations against the MoE. In his testimony given before the members of Parliament of Afghanistan on May 27, 2015, Afghanistan's then Minister of Education, Mr. Balkhi, spoke about the existence of thousands of so-called "ghost teachers." Later in June 2015, the same concerns were raised by the US Special

Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR). These and similar statements created strong waves of allegations and criticisms against the MoE, which, in turn, made the ministry officials, particularly the HR staff, very sensitive to sharing information with anyone from outside the organization.

Consequently, when I tried to approach the ministry officials to interview them on the reform implementation, they either refused or demanded authorization letters from the Minister's Office or Office of Administrative Affairs (OAA), which was close to impossible for me to secure. Another reason for excluding the MoE from most of the analyses is that, while the MoE employees compose more than 50% of the Afghan non-security public officials, an ambiguity exists regarding the status of teachers as civil servants. Although the *Afghanistan Civil Servants Law* (2008) considers teachers as civil servants, most of the Afghan practitioners and policymakers treat them differently, meaning the policies and procedures regarding the recruitment, remuneration, and appraisal of teachers are different from the rest of the civil service. Therefore, instead of looking at the MoE or any other ministry to identify specific reform failures, a programmatic approach was adapted to study the reforms, their outputs, and the specific factors that affected the results.

To summarize, using an explorative perspective and focusing on the recruitment, remuneration, and appraisal of the core Afghan civil service, this research studies the content, environments, outputs, and consequences of the main post-Taleban CSR programs (see section 5.4) on the national level, and defines the specific factors that influenced their success and failure.

3.2 Methods and Sources of Data Collection and Analysis

Concerning the means and methods of data collection, a wide range of data sources have been used for this study: (1) the studies conducted by both academics and practitioners on the theory and practice of CSPAR in other internationally (see section 2.2 and 2.3), (2) the official project documents on the various Afghan CSPAR programs mainly from the World Bank, (3) the evaluations and studies on the implementation results and regulations of reforms in Afghanistan, (4) the decrees and laws related to the Afghan civil service, (5) a questionnaire to study the specific factors affecting the recruitment and promotion of Afghan civil servants, and (6) Qualitative Research Interviews (QRIs) with individuals from both categories of involved actors (see Figure 3.1.) including senior Afghan officials as well as the consultants, advisors, or employees of the

involved IGOs and the World Bank. As noted by McNamara (2005), qualitative interviews are one of the best tools to get the behind story interviewees' experiences and acquire in-depth information about the topic of study, which are both the essential objectives of this study.

Furthermore, qualitative interviews help the researcher to ask specific questions about the *behaviors, opinions, values, feelings, knowledge, sensory experiences, and background* on a particular topic (Valenzuela & Shrivastava, 2002). Therefore, focusing on the formulation phase of the reform programs as well as the implementation phase, I used qualitative interviews to understand and explain why, on several occasions, the policies and regulations that seemed to be effective on paper are perceived to create even more problems rather than solving the existing ones. It is worth noting that out of the various types of Qualitative Research Interviews, the following three were used for the mentioned category of interviewees:

Informal, conversational. For the senior members of the IARCSC and line ministries (mostly in positions such as general director, director, and general manager) as well as local and international advisors and consultants, informal and conversational interviews were used. These individuals were directly involved in either the formulation or the implementation of the reform programs in various capacities. Therefore, they were mostly the defenders of the reforms or those who considered the reforms successful. As expected, while their responses were more positive on the issues related to themselves, some of these officials provided critical comments about the other stakeholders of the reforms.

Standardized, open-ended. This type of interview was employed mainly for the critics of the reforms, such as members of the Parliament, or those who were negatively affected by the reforms including officials who were put on lower grades than they had been previously on. Most individuals in this category were highly knowledgeable about the reforms, and standardized open-ended interviews did not limit the quantity of data they provided.

Closed-fixed response. This method was used to interview third parties—those who were neither involved nor directly affected by the reforms. Conducting the interviews of this group of officials was critical for both validating the data received from the other two groups and looking at the reforms from an external and objective perspective.

In addition to the interviews, with a particular focus on the factors influencing the recruitment of civil servants, a questionnaire was prepared, and the answers from 48 respondents were collected. The target group of these questionnaires was the Afghan civil servants who had been, reportedly, recruited based on merit through open competition as well as those who had failed several attempts to enter the civil service. The fieldwork and data collection activities are provided below:

- Three field visits in Kabul, Afghanistan
- Met and talked to 51 officials from 14 different organizations
- Conducted 35 in-depth interviews
- Distributed 81 questionnaires and collected 48, the respondents were (1) employees of the IARCSC as the official custodian of reforms, (2) employees of 2 line ministries as the recipients of reforms.
- Observed one recruitment examination with 28 participants and was informed about 3 cases of bribery to get recruited as a civil servant—20,000 USD for a Grade-1 position, 1,500 USD for a Grade-3 position, 900 USD for the position of a secondary school teacher
- Followed one recruitment case since March 2016, where the applicant was finally recruited to a Grade-2 position after applying to several positions for 19 months

Regarding the method of analysis, this study was inspired by three methods to respond to the different dimensions of the research questions explored. First, based on a "comparison of the extent of public management reform" (Boyne et al., 2003, p. 29), I tried to explain the content of the changes that the reforms suggested (extent of the change in policy) and the degree to which they were implemented (extent of the change in practice). Second, an "extended concept of the effects" (Christensen et al., 2007, pp. 144–163) was adopted to highlight the outcomes and consequences of the reforms by answering questions such as whether or not the reforms met their intended objectives or whether the reform ideas in themselves were reliable and appropriate. Third, the lessons learned from the previous CSPAR implementations in post-conflict and developing countries (see section 2.3) provided a framework to categorize the specific factors for the success and failure of the reforms into three groups of contextual, programmatic, and external. This framework is revisited in chapters 5 and 6, where I have discussed the influence of these factors

in the case of civil service reforms in Afghanistan. As the last method has already been discussed in section 2.3, below, I shall briefly explain how the first two methods were used.

First, to explain and analyze the outputs of the reform programs, I have adopted the below-demonstrated approach suggested by Boyne et al. (2003) for *Evaluating Public Management Reforms.*

Table 3.1.

The Extent of Change in Public Management Reform

New Regime \ Old Regime	Policy as adopted	Policy in action
Policy as adopted	(I) The extent of change in principle or policy	(II) The extent to which the new policy formalizes the old practice
Policy in action	(III) The extent to which the practice continues to reflect old policy	(IV) The extent of change in practice

Reprinted from Boyne et al., 2003, p. 29.

After explaining both the pre- and post-reform policies for the recruitment, remuneration, and promotion of civil servants (cell I) in chapter 4 and chapter 5, using the data from interviews and project documents, I analyze, in chapter 6, whether or not the official changes in the policies have changed the practice as well (cell IV). Moreover, when applicable, I discuss whether the policies and procedures introduced by the reforms have been based on the old practice (cell II) or whether the post-reform practice reflects the old policies more than the new ones (cell III). Using such a framework, the ideal situation, or the success of reforms, would be a high degree of change in the practice based on a change in policy, meaning reforms have been implemented as planned. On the contrary, if the post-reform practice, for example, regarding recruitment, continues to reflect the old policies and/or practices, it would mean a failure of the reforms.

Second, Christensen et al. (2007, pp. 144–163) suggest that reforms and their consequences, outputs, and outcomes can be analyzed through either a "narrow*"* or "extended

concept of the effects.*"* According to the source, a narrow concept "directs attention to intended or desired effects, such as effectiveness and efficiency" (p. 146) and its basic question is "whether or not reforms met their goals." An expanded concept, on the other hand, "will also concern itself with side effects and societal and political effects." Giving the NPM-based reforms as an example, they add that the question to be asked in this case is, for example, "whether the underlying model is reliable or not" (p. 146). Thus, although this study does not primarily focus on the reform effects, an *extended concept* of analysis, inspired by the below illustration (Table 3.2.), was adopted to explain and analyze the results and consequences of the Afghan CSRs.

Table 3.2.

Progress and Effects of Public Sector Reforms

Side-Effects	Progress on the main goal: *Positive*	*None*	*Negative*
None	(1) Expected Result	(4) No result	(7) Negative result
Positive	(2) Expected result plus bonus	(5) No expected results, plus bonus	(8) Negative results plus bonus
Negative	(3) Expected result plus risk	(6) No expected results plus risk	(9) Negative results plus risk

Adapted from Christensen et al., 2007, p. 147.

Cell 2 of Table 3.2. illustrates the ideal case of success where not only the main objectives of a particular reform program is achieved but also unintended positive side effects on other issues exist. On the contrary, the certain case of failure is illustrated by cell nine where not only the main objectives are not met, but also the program has adverse side effects on other aspects of the civil service. Depending on the extent of achieving the main objectives and seriousness of the side effects, the remaining cases (cells 3 to 8) represent the various degrees of success and failure.

Having defined the data sources and methods used to analyze them, in the next section, I briefly discuss the challenges and concerns of the research on and data collection about a sensitive issue in a conflict-affected country.

3.3 Challenges for Data Collection and their Implications

> Although it is recognized that Civil Service Reform benefits from the analysis, it is not always clear how to gather the data and the evidence to support it. Relevant data is often lacking or hard to find. Even basic information such as who is employed by the public sector and how much they are paid [is extremely difficult to get]. (Repucci, 2014, p. 217)

As suggested above, due to the sensitivity of the topic, conducting academic research and collecting first-hand and reliable data are generally difficult. The number and depth of challenges increase particularly in Fragile and Conflict-Affected Countries, such as Afghanistan, where in addition to regular data collection and access problems, a researcher needs to deal with other important issues such as trust and access problems due to the excessive security measures and lack of law enforcement. Below, based on my own experience throughout three field research in Afghanistan, I will briefly elaborate on trust and access issues and explain their effects on data collection.

First of all, the lack of trust was the main barrier for data collection. It's worth noting that as a native researcher based outside the country, although I benefited from factors such as knowing the local language and culture very well, due to a general lack of knowledge about academic research, as well as the countless allegations and media reports on the widespread corruption of public officials, the majority of the interviewees had first assumed that I was either a journalist or someone with an agenda other than academic research. For example, the first impression of two top managers in a public organization whom I approached was that I was sent by donor organizations to collect data that might somehow harm them. Apart from some exceptions, my experience was not very different from non-Afghan interviewees either. For instance, after I finally gained access to a designated compound in Kabul, where all the residents were non-military foreigners working with the various entities of the Afghan civil service, most of the consultants and advisors working with the HR departments of line ministries were suspicious and considered

me as someone sent by the Afghan government to collect information about them and their work. Indeed, after a very detailed interview with an HR advisor who had extensively worked in the different levels of the CS, including the IARCSC, and was very open and descriptive, the superior who had been walking around during the whole interview asked me in a very polite and political way not to talk to his team members ever again. Resultantly, although the interviewee had promised to send some handy materials, I did not hear from him. Therefore, with a few exceptions, it would take one or two meetings before the actual interview to build enough trust to have an interview. As mentioned before, an explanation for such behavior is the existence of many reports and allegations on the wrongdoings and corruption in the civil service, including in the recruitment processes of civil servants. For instance, on one occasion, during my stay in Kabul, in March 2016, news reports of the government intentionally keeping about 50,000 civil service positions vacant due to existing conflicts among related officials on who should fill those positions were in the local media. Thus, the topic itself is considered one of the most sensitive issues in Afghanistan, which consequently prevents officials from engaging in interviews and/or sharing accurate data.

The access problem for academic research in FCACs such as Afghanistan is more severe than in the other parts of the world and is generally due to the lack of law enforcement and excessive security measures. Although the Constitution of Afghanistan (2004) guarantees that "the citizens of Afghanistan shall have the right of access to information from state departments in accordance with the provisions of the law, [and] this right shall have no limit" (art. 50), no mechanism exists to ensure its enforcement. Owing to the lack of such mechanisms, public officials are very reluctant to share any data, and even basic information such as the number of staff and their grades in a particular organization is said to be classified. On the other hand, excessive security measures are another reason for access problems. The precautions and measures to reduce security risks have kept many Afghan officials, particularly high-ranking civil servants, far from the access of regular citizens.

In many cases, I had to go through various security checks to meet, for example, a general director or an advisor who do not accept visitors without prior arrangements. However, how can one arrange or request a meeting when the contact details of officials are not publicly available? Even in the cases where the contact details of officials are officially available, they either do not respond or refuse to talk. Moreover, excessive security measures prevent citizens from carrying

any electronic devices such as laptops, mobile phones, and voice recorders inside the premises of most line ministries without prior authorization.[2] Nevertheless, the selective application of these measures was an interesting aspect I observed. These obstacles practically existed only for regular Afghan citizens who wished to enter public offices and meet Afghan officials, whereas if the visitors were foreign nationals and more importantly worked with non-Afghan organizations, access was not an issue.

To summarize, the quantity and quality of research data that can be secured, at least in the context of Afghanistan, highly depend on the nationality and status of the researcher. If the researcher is native and independent, then he would face more access problems and fewer trust issues. On the other hand, if the researcher is a foreign national or a native who works with another local or international organization, then they would have limited access problems but more trust issues. As a result, based on my personal experience in the course of this research undertaking, being creative, having strong communication skills to establish trust, and being pragmatic are the crucial attributes required for successful data collection as far as researchers are concerned. Otherwise, as mentioned by an international advisor in Afghanistan, "*they [public officials] will help you with what you want to get, and then you come up with data garbage*" (IntV12, March 3, 2016).

[2] In fact, this has become an additional source of income for small shops nearby some line ministries. Any regular citizen wishing to enter the premises can neither take their electronic devices inside the building nor leave them at the entrance gate. Thus, nearby shops keep the belongings in exchange for a small amount of money until the owner is back. Contrary to the relation between public officials and citizens, high trust levels exist between the visitors of the ministry and the shopkeepers, as no receipts or anything of the sort is provided.

Chapter 4: Pre-Reform Afghan Civil Service—Developments and Major Milestones

Civil service is "a branch of the politico-administrative system that has been influenced the most by national traditions and history" (Demmke, p. 6). Thus, as the source adds, "different historical traditions and cultures, as well as HR systems, have a considerable impact on public management modernization paths and on the outcomes of HR reforms" (p. 7). More precisely, "pre-existing institutional structures, and legal, regulatory and cultural factors" (Homburg, 2008, p. 766) are among the core elements that define the direction of reforms. Therefore, although a limited number of models or visions for reform exists (see section 2.2) and it is clear what each of them offers, it is essential to acknowledge that reforms are "path dependent" (Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2011, pp. 42,120,124,213). As already discussed in section 2.3.2, international experience suggests that background research and the study of past practices are essential for the success of future reforms. Thus, having a clear picture of the type, characteristics, and development of the administrative system, as well as studying past rules, procedures, and policies are the necessary steps before launching any reform; otherwise, poorly designed and/or contextually inappropriate reforms as well as the repetition of past mistakes are unavoidable.

As it will unfold in the next two chapters, both the post-Taleban (2002) and post-reform civil service (2016) have been affected by and have partially inherited the past policies, rules, regulations, and practices. Therefore, to gain a better understanding of the nature and content of the recent reforms (Chapter 5), as well as their results and the drivers that influenced them (Chapter 6), this chapter provides a comprehensive picture of the Afghan civil service regarding the major policy developments and its milestones. Using a historical perspective and based on the information secured during the interviews as well as a comprehensive review of the civil service-related decrees and regulations published in Afghanistan's official gazettes since 1921, the Afghan pre-reform civil service can be separately studied in three distinct periods of establishment, development, and decline:

- The 1920s–1970s: Civil service during Afghanistan's constitutional monarchies—founding and defining the civil service

- The 1970s–1990s: Afghanistan as a republic and the civil service under the management of socialist regimes—emphasis on the principle of centralism, fair pay, gender balance, and a compact civil service
- 1996–2002: Afghan civil service during the Taleban—an era of decline and almost no service provision with some legislative developments

Therefore, with a focus on the recruitment, promotion, and remuneration of civil servants, I briefly discuss each of these periods and mention the most critical milestones in the below sections.

4.1 Establishment of the Civil Service and the Initial Stages (the 1920s–1970s)

Review of the relevant laws and regulations suggest that the history of Afghan civil service and its reforms goes back to early 1920s when the pro-modernization monarch Amanullah Khan (1919-1929) came into power. Following the independence war (the third Afghan-Anglo War) and as the Amir of a new Afghanistan, he declared the country as a constitutional monarchy and ratified the first Constitution of Afghanistan (1923)[3], which consequently paved the way for a broad set of initiatives known as *Amani reforms*.

Influenced by the developments in the newborn Turkish Republic as well as European countries, Amanullah Khan launched comprehensive reforms in almost all the areas of governance in Afghanistan, including public administration. Based on the principles of accountability and delegation of authority, Amani reforms comprised several legislation, policies, and regulations. These reforms, among other things, clarified the relationship of the Afghan state with its citizens, defining the limits and responsibilities of the civil service by introducing proper mechanisms to facilitate the local participation in civil service matters and ensuring the accountability of civil servants through clearly structured hierarchies (Sakhawaz, 2011).

3 The English version is available online here: http://www.constitution.org/cons/afghan/const1923.htm

More importantly, the ratification of the country's first constitution in 1923 and its usage of terms such as "civil service" (art. 17), "civil servants" (art. 47), and "administration" (art. 25, 35, 62, 63) are considered as the official birth of the Afghan civil service. Only one month after ratification of the constitution, the country's *Law on Principle Administrative Structure of Afghanistan* (1923)[4], which was the first legislative policy regarding the country's civil service, was also ratified under the Amir's direct supervision. This law set relatively clear procedures for almost all aspects of the civil service, including the performance, recruitment, promotion, retirement, and prosecution, in the case of misconducts, of public officials.[5]

Document review suggests that, at least in terms of the official policies and regulations in civil service-related matters, the succeeding monarchs of Afghanistan brought about no significant changes. Instead, they decided to implement what had been developed during the time of Amanullah Khan. Thus, the most significant developments of this era were as follows: (1) definition of the status and rights of civil servants, (2) development of clear procedures for the recruitment of civil servants, (3) delineation of the duties and the definition of the responsibilities of civil servants, (4) establishment of accountability mechanisms to assure justice and transparency, and (5) introduction of a harsh disciplinary system to penalize civil servants' misconducts. Below, I briefly elaborate on each of these points.

Regarding the right of employment in the civil service, article 17 of the Afghanistan constitution (1923) assured, for the first time, that all "competent and skilled Afghan citizens have equal right" to be hired for the civil service. The assurance of equal opportunity was a big achievement because prior to the regulation, particularly in the period between the 1880s and 1990s, banning specific ethnicities from public employment was a widely applied unwritten rule and practice. Furthermore, concerning the status of civil servants, they were granted security of tenure as the constitution clearly stated that "no official can be dismissed unless he resigns or does a misconduct" (The Afghanistan Constitution, 1923, art. 36).

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4 Translated from the original title in Dari as: Nizamnama-ye Tashkilat-e Asasi-ye Afghanestan.

5 Notably, Afghanistan's current administration does not have such a law in place. It has been at least six years since the draft *Law on Principle Administrative Structures of State*, which was expected to solve many problems such as parallel structures and positions, overlaps, conflicts has not been ratified and is stuck in a never-ending cycle between the government and the parliament.

With reference to civil service appointments, again for the first time, the principle of merit was officially recognized through the constitution, which stated that "civil servants will be appointed on the basis of competence and in accordance with the appropriate laws" (art. 36). Regarding the actual process, the procedures introduced in 1923 were similar to the current ones. As it is the current norm, the appointment of line ministers, which at that time were considered civil service positions, as well as the governors of the Kabul and important provinces, were done directly by the head of state, the Amir; and the rest of government officials were recruited and appointed by the respective line ministers or local governments. The recruitment and appointment of government officials, as of 1923, was conducted through the *Employee Selection Councils*[6] in each line ministry. Chaired by the respective ministers and consisted of all heads of ministerial departments, these councils were responsible for shortlisting and recruiting the heads of the provincial departments of line ministries and all officials based in Kabul, including teachers (The Law on Principle Administrative Structures of Afghanistan, 1923, art. 29, 52). The major procedural difference in the recruitments of civil servants was regarding the appointments of provincial officials. Defining "decentralization of authority, delineation of duties, and determination of responsibilities" (The Constitution of Afghanistan, 1923, art. 63) as the core elements of the state on local governance, the responsibility of appointing subnational officials was delegated to the provincial and district governors, whose decisions needed to be based on the advice of advisory councils consisting of the elected representatives of local citizens (The Law on Principle Administrative Structures of Afghanistan, 1923, art. 30,140). A point worth noting is that although the role of local councils on recruitments was *advisory,* they had the option to complain to the "State Council" at the center "if the local government refused to meet their demands" (The Constitution of Afghanistan, 1923, art. 40,41).

Furthermore, according to the reviewed documents and some interviews with senior Afghan officials, ever since the 1930s, all civil service positions at least at the central level had to have formally approved job descriptions. Article 37 of the Afghanistan Constitution (1923) states that the "duties of officials have been described and differentiated through specific legislation and regulations. Every official will be responsible and held accountable for his defined tasks and

6 Anjoman-e Entekhab-e Mamurin (انجمن انتخاب مامورین)

duties." Similar articles were present in the Labor Laws, civil service guidelines, and all the nine constitutions ratified between 1923 and 2002. The significance of this point is that over the past 17 years, it has been repeatedly mentioned that the pre-2002 Afghan civil service lacked any written job descriptions. Moreover, the creation of job descriptions for almost 400,000 civil service positions has always been demonstrated as a key achievement of the post-Taleban reforms. However, this argument is not correct, and as mentioned above, job descriptions of civil servants have been present since the 1930s.

Moreover, to ensure equal treatment and accountability in the civil service, both the interviews and official documents suggest that Civil Servants' Courts and Councils existed and were open to public hearings. These administrative bodies were tasked to prosecute civil servants and deal with any dispute arising among civil servants or between civil servants and citizens during the official work. This is also an interesting learning point, as the current civil service lacks such accountability mechanisms, and no administrative courts exist. The only accountability mechanism in existence is the Independent Board of Appeals (IBA), which operates within the structure of the country's Civil Service Commission; Nevertheless, its performance and particularly its independence have been frequently questioned.

The last important characteristic of the civil service in this period is the existence of a relatively harsh disciplinary system to penalize the corruption and misconducts of civil servants. For example, even small cases of bribery or misconduct incurred various types of punishments including dismissal, imprisonment, whipping, and fines. Moreover, whenever civil servants were dismissed for any reason, they would be banned from public employment for two years, and even after this period, they were obliged to request an official confirmation from their previous office, clearly indicating that the office did not have any objection toward their future recruitment in the government (The Law on Principle Administrative Structures of Afghanistan, 1923).

As a conclusion, the relevance of the period under constitutional monarchies (the 1920s–1970s) for the Afghan civil service is that of the official birth and major developments regarding its structure, role, and boundaries that transpired during this period. These strides were made through the ratification of several legislation including the first four constitutions—all defining and addressing various aspects of the civil service—, the *Law on Principle Administrative Structure of Afghanistan* (1923), and the *Law on Status and Condition of Government Employees*

(1971),[7] which defined the terms and conditions for the recruitment and promotion of Afghan civil servants. The other characteristics of this period include the following: (1) the establishment of partially decentralized processes for the recruitment of servants—approximately 60,000 by late 1960s—through the delegation of authorities to line ministries and local governors, (2) development of mechanisms such as administrative courts to ensure the equal treatment and accountability of civil servants, (3) the adaptation of some participatory approaches through the engagement of local councils in the recruitment of provincial civil servants and Employee Selection Councils in line ministries, and (4) the establishment of *Employee Management Departments* in all line ministries. Owing to these changes and efforts, compared to the situation in the 1920s, when public officials were perceived as the agents of states working in a patrimonial and nanostructured system and having no clear rights and responsibilities, by the early 1970s, Afghanistan had a civil service that was officially defined, structured, and governed by rules and regulations (IntV24, March 29, 2016). Consequently, the source adds that, by the end of this period, civil servants were considered to be the most talented and educated citizens, and were treated as the most respected and honored group in society.

4.2 Republican Civil Service: An Era of Ups and Downs (1970s–1990s)

As a consequence of Afghanistan's transition from a constitutional monarchy to a republic (1973–1978) and then to a democratic republic (1978–1992), the second phase of changes and developments in the Afghan civil service were pursued under the influence of socialistic politicians and communist governments. Interviews and document reviews suggest that while the focus of the republican government, during the Dawoud Khan rule (1973–1978), was on the professionalization of the civil service, implementation of structural reforms, and institutionalization of centralism in the civil service system, the communist governments (1978–1992) were mainly interested in the HR dimension of the civil service by decreasing the gap between pay levels and increasing the number of female employees. Below, I elaborate on the important developments during these two periods.

[7] Also translated as "The Law on State Employees".

The current principle of centralism in Afghanistan's administrative system and strong top-down hierarchy of the civil service take their legal roots from the first four years of Afghanistan as Republic (1973–1978). During this time, the country was ruled by President Dawoud Khan who was at the same time the country's Prime Minister, Defence Minister, Interior Minister, and Planning Minister. Notably, although the last monarchial constitution had stated for the first time that "the administration of Afghanistan is based upon the principle of centralism" (Constitution of Afghanistan, 1963, art. 108), the reflection of centralism in government policies and regulations was realized years later by Dawoud Khan's republic government. It is worth mentioning that although, since 1973, the country has witnessed different forms of government—Republic, Democratic Republic, Islamic Emirate, and the Islamic Republic—and each of them ratified their own constitution, the centralized system of administration has been a key feature reaffirmed by all six constitutions thereafter. Over time, the centralization of civil service-related matters including the management of HR, budgetary processes, and even small structural and regulatory changes at both national and subnational levels became a norm requiring confirmation of the country's head of state. Finally, it was also during this period that the role of center in all matters of civil service increased, and simultaneously the local councils established during the monarchies either disappeared or was superficially maintained.

In line with the principle of centralism in governance, the establishment of the Central Organization for Civil Servants and Administration Reform (COCSAR)[8] and its subordinate National Institute for Management and Administration was an essential civil service-related development in 1977 that has been usually overlooked or ignored by both practitioners and researchers. Reporting directly to the President, the organization was responsible for all aspects of the Afghan civil service, including policymaking, management, coordination, and reform.

[8] Translated from official Dari title "Edare-ye Markazi-ye Mãmurin va Eslahãt-e Edari." The Regulation on the structure and duties of the organization was published in Official Gazette No. 375, on 08/10/1977, and is available in Dari and Pashto here : http://moj.gov.af/content/files/OfficialGazette/0301/OG_0375.pdf

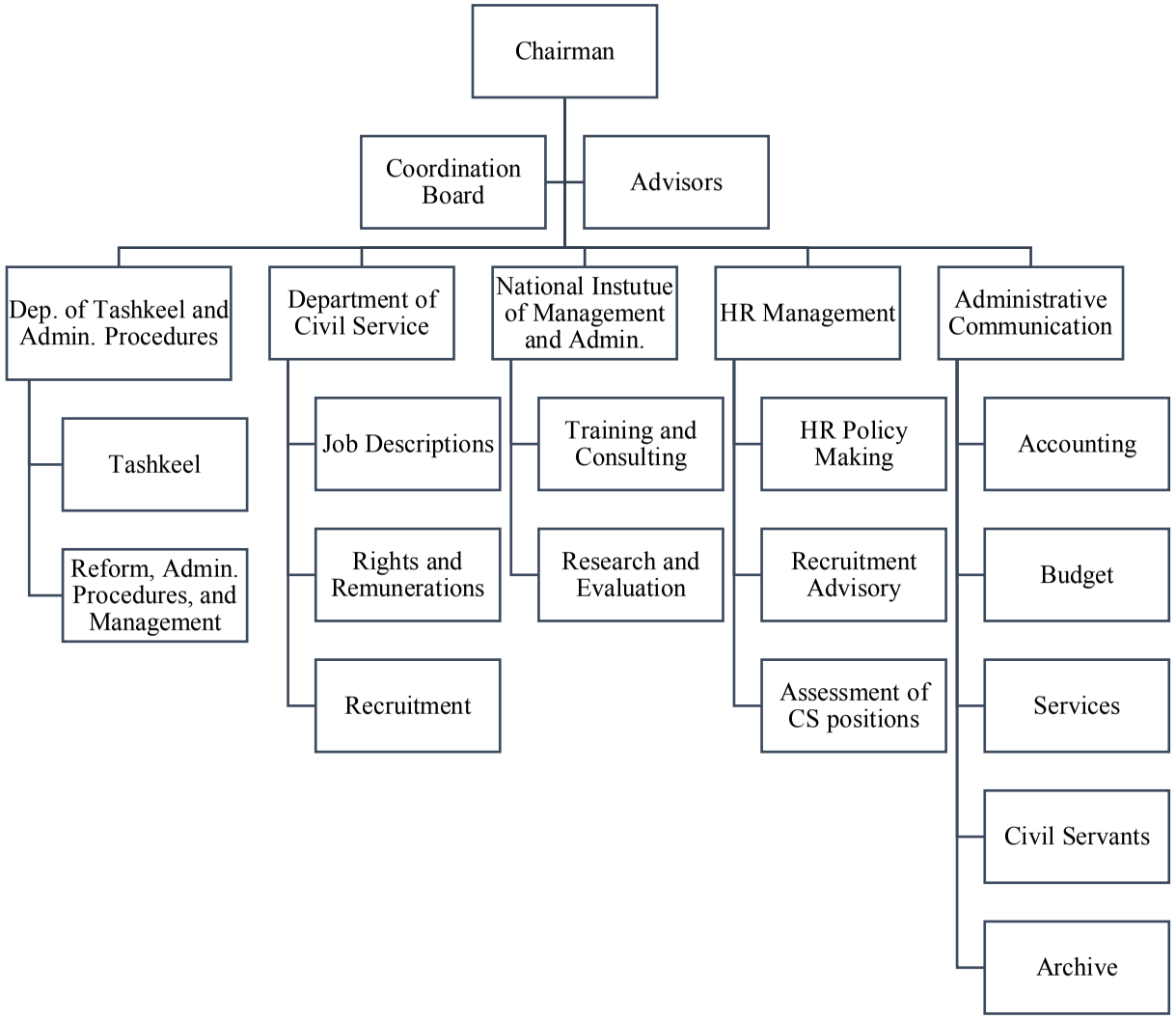

Figure 4.1. Organogram of the Central Organization for Civil Servants and Administrative Reform-COCSAR. Source: Regulation on Structure and Duties of the Central Organization for Civil Servants and Administrative Reform, 1977).

According to a senior Afghan official, the government by establishing such an organization, whose structure is demonstrated above in Figure 4.1., aimed to (1) eliminate overlaps and parallel structures, (2) update administrative structures according to the needs of citizens and for the development of the society; (3) regulate the performance of the civil service, and (4) implement necessary reforms (IntV24, March 29, 2016). Acting as a reform strategy and being the first practical step, the *Regulation on Structure and Duties of the Central Organization for Civil Servants and Administrative Reform* (1977) provided a clear picture about the aims, structure, and duties of the agency as well as the necessary mechanisms to achieve the goals mentioned earlier. In terms of hierarchy, the organization was located between the presidency and line ministries, which legally bounded all line ministries to cooperate with the agency and regularly report their Tashkeels, Terms of References (ToR)s of their positions, employee records, recruitments, vacant positions, and all other administration- and management-related information requested (art. 15). As a final note related to the organization, the review of its regulation indicates that particular emphasis has been given to the promotion of meritocracy, elimination of corruption, and the introduction of a culture of research and evaluation to achieve effectiveness and efficiency in the civil service. To achieve these goals, the COCSAR was tasked with a wide range of duties including the following:

- Drafting and implementing necessary laws and regulations for the civil service
- Assisting administrative structures in clarifying their organizational visions and missions
- Defining and differentiating the ToRs of civil service positions
- Increasing the capacity of civil servants through its National Institute for Management and Administration
- Defining the procedures and policies for the recruitment of civil servants including the factors to be used to assess the competencies of employment candidates
- advising and assisting public organizations on the rights and responsibilities of civil servants

- preparing and regularly updating the Encyclopedia of Public Administration Reform and Management

Following the first four years of the republic, Afghanistan became a democratic republic, and the ruling communist administrations of the 1980s mainly focused on decreasing the power and authority of influential figures, particularly at the local level, and establishing grounds for, as they suggested, a just and fair civil service that really serves citizens. However, although almost all interviewees of this research agree that the level of corruption was much lower during this era, the implications of communist governments for the civil service were more negative. For example, although the COCSAR continued its operation, due to political turmoil and more important agendas of the administration, the role and influence of the organization were rather superficial. Moreover, "hiring and promotion in the civil service…[became] largely dependent on membership in and loyalty to factions and sub-factions of the ruling party, undermining whatever weak commitment to merit-based recruitment had previously existed" (GoIRA, 2006, p. 31). Consequently, The National Institute for Management and Administration became a place for disseminating the propaganda of the regime rather than a place for the training and capacity development of civil servants; becoming a partisan public administration, the neutrality of the civil service started to disappear (IntV24, March 29, 2016).

Moreover, since equal pay and treatment throughout the whole civil service was at the center of these governments' agendas, "with the difference between the pay of the lowest grades and top officials being only 10–20%," the Afghan administration, by 1990s, had "the most compressed civil service pay structure in the world" (Byrd, 2007, pp. 15-16). Remarkably, the most significant development of this era concerned the participation of women in public sector employment. By the early 1990s, women composed about 43% of the total Afghan civil servants (Afghanistan Preliminary Needs Assessment for Recovery and Reconstruction, 2002, p. 14, 24), an increase from almost no participation in the 1970s. As it will be discussed later in chapters 5 and 6, the significance of this point is that after almost three decades and despite multiple post-Taleban reform programs, the current share of women in the Afghan civil service, by most optimistic reports, is about 20%, which is 23% lower than the rate in the early 1990s.

4.3 Decline of Civil Service: The Taleban era (1996–2002)

Before delving into the details of the civil service developments during the Taleban era, it should be noted that the Afghan civil service collapsed when the last communist government, headed by Dr. Najibullah, was toppled by Mujahedin in 1992. The following four years of brutal civil war that led to the division of the country and even the capital Kabul into several islands of power resulted in the destruction of the country and its civil service. Therefore, in 1996, when the Taleban seized power, they inherited an already dysfunctional civil service, which was very weak in capacity and limited in service delivery.

According to multiple sources, including the interviews conducted for this research, bringing law and order was the top priority of the Taleban administration. However, the Taleban's interpretation of those norms and their methods of application were very different from common understanding. As a result, multiple factors including their ideology shaped a unique version of governance policies barely seen anywhere in the world. The Taleban's informal CSR, particularly during their first years of power, targeted some fundamental rights of both civil servants and citizens. For instance, owing to their religious fundamentalism, a mindset of racial superiority, and informal reform policies, certain ethnic groups were practically banned or excluded from public employment (Nabizadah, 2011, p. 106). On the official side of the so-called reforms, except those treated women in the health sector, all women were banned from employment in the civil service, which also led to the dismissal of the already few remaining female officials. As a result of another reform regulation, all civil servants were forbidden from processing requests or dealing with any administrative matters of citizens who had shaved or shortened their beards more than what was permitted.[9] Such measures led to a brain drain in an already weak and limited civil service; the ones who remained had neither the capacity nor the will to work. Consequently "citizens' matters were delayed for days, weeks, months and even years," [10] and the system became paralyzed.

Moreover, abolishing the previously discussed COCSAR, a "Tashkeel Commission" merely responsible for confirming the Tashkeels of line ministries was created in the Office of

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[9] Official Gazette No. 795, published on 08/01/2011, pp. 332–333

[10] Official Gazette No. 795, published on 7/7/1421 or 6 October 2000, published in OG. N. 795 p. 319) Order 796

Administrative Affairs of Emirate. Thus, the Taleban administration struggled between their ultimate goal of implementing their own version of religion in all areas, including the civil service, and the need to gain citizens' trust by creating a functioning civil service. However, review of the legal documents shows that it was the latter that forced them to adopt some relatively positive measures too.

From a structural point, the Taleban in March 1997[11] decided to reduce the number of line ministries, which had been largely increased by Mujahedin (1992–1996) to accommodate the interests of multiple fractions. With some minor changes, the administrative structure, as well as the other laws and regulations of Dawoud Khan's socialist regime in 1973, was brought back. Thus, the civil service consisted of a total of 17 line ministries, with an annual wage bill of USD 6 million, donated by the Pakistani Government (Qasim Shah, 2003). Consequently, through the ratification of the *Law on General Principles of Structure and Administrative Duties of Ministries of Islamic Emirate* of *Afghanistan* (2001), more responsibilities were entrusted with the line ministries. The law proposed the establishment of an administrative council in every ministry (art. 5-1) chaired by the minister and composed of deputy ministers as well as the heads of departments or directors. These commissions were tasked with the "evaluation and decision making on matters related to the selection, training, and appointment of cadre" (art. 1.2.2). Moreover, the same law tasked the line ministries with the "provision of cadre with the high expertise to the administration, organizing training and education… and to enhance the expertise of civil servants" (art. 13).

Concerning the employment rights and status of civil servants, after a period of ambiguity and disorder, a major decision was taken in August 1997, when the Taleban re-enforced the 1970s laws and regulations with minor changes.[12] Therefore, the Acting Council of Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan officially announced that "to ensure social justice, to prevent escape of experts and experienced officials, and also to facilitate employment for graduates of higher education and vocational institutions," [13] all limitations previously imposed by the administration on the

[11] Order No. 12 of Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, Published in Official Gazette No. 783 and available online here: http://moj.gov.af/content/files/OfficialGazette/0701/OG_0783.pdf

[12] These changes usually consisted of only adding Islamic Emirate as suffix when appropriate

[13] Article 1, Order No. 16 of "Acting Council of Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan," published in Official Gazette No. 783 and available online here :http://moj.gov.af/content/files/OfficialGazette/0701/OG_0783.pdf

recruitments in the civil service would be withdrawn, adding that "all citizens of Afghanistan… could be hired as Karmand [regular civil servant] and Ajir[contracted civil servant]." This remarkable decision was followed by several other legislation, most importantly, the Labor Law of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (1999) and the Civil Servants Law of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (1999), with the latter still enforced in some parts of the civil service. Compared to the pre-Taleban era, the definition of civil servants, as well as their grading structure, remained unchanged, meaning civil servants were divided into 13 grades (grades 10–1, beyond-grade, above grade, and out-of-grade).[14]

Moreover, appointments to the civil service positions required to be mainly based on the educational levels of candidates and according to the criteria mentioned below in Table 4.1.
Table 4.2.

Relation of Recruits' Education Level with their Initial Salary Step during Taleban Rule

Level of Education	**Possible Grade for Appointment**
Secondary school (12 Grade)	Grade 10 (entry level)
Bachelor	Grade 9, Step 1
Above Bachelor (Master, Ph.D.)	Starting from Grade 9, Step-1 and considering each pro-bachelor year of study as 1 step promotion
Exception: candidates with Doctorate/ Ph.D. could be appointed up to 6 grades above Grade 9	

Note. Adapted from Civil Servants Law of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (1999, art. 7)

On the other hand, the procedures for the promotion and appraisal of civil servants continued to be the same as before, meaning the civil servants could be promoted either based on the years of service or for receiving *appreciation certificates,* which, depending on the title of the certificate, would qualify the person for one- or two-step or one grade promotion[15]. Civil servants from grade 10 to 1 would be promoted to the next upper grade following three successful years of

[14] A: Beyond Grade and Above Grade; B: First and Second Grades; C: Third, Fourth, and Fifth Grades; D: Sixth, Seventh, and Eighth Grades; E: Ninth and Tenth Grades (Taleban CSL, 1999, art 4)

[15] More details can be found here: Official Gazette No. 797, published in May 2001, Appendix of Law on Signs and Medals of Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan

evaluated service. The servants in the *Above-Grade* level required four years of service to get promoted to the next level, which was *Beyond-Grade*. Moreover, those of Beyond-Grade, due to the fact that they were already at the highest possible grade, would be entitled to appraisals of 15%, 25%, 50%, and 75% for 1 to 4 years of actual performance in that grade (art. 22). Officially, the determining factor for promotions and appraisals was the score each civil servant received in his annual performance evaluation form, titled as the *Competence Evaluation Form for Appraisal of Civil Servants*. What was the process? Two months before the date of appraisal, the minister or a senior official on *Out-of-grade* status would create the Appraisals' Commission, and the evaluation form would be sent to the direct supervisor of each civil servant. The supervisor was required to "responsibly evaluate" the qualifications of his direct subordinates within ten days and send the form to his supervisor, the indirect supervisor of the evaluated servant. The second supervisor was required to review and evaluate according to his own judgment and then send the form to the Appraisals' Commission for confirmation. Upon confirmation, the evaluated civil servant would receive a one-step appraisal. A closer look at the 'Competence Evaluation Form for Appraisal of Civil Servants' used during the Taleban time and the comparison of it with the 'Annual Performance Evaluation Form' used in the current civil service reveals that while the latter has more elements of flexibility and participatory approach, by including the evaluated civil servant in the evaluation process and providing them with the opportunity to write their own feedback on the form, the former has more concrete and standardized factors of evaluation.

Finally, a noteworthy aspect of the civil service during the Taleban regime is the remarkably low level of corruption, which is by now public knowledge. According to the majority of interviewees, there have been almost zero cases of corruption, particularly bribery, in the administration. Supporting the argument, Nabizadah (2011) suggests that almost 60% of Afghan citizens found the Taleban civil service—and any other civil service before them—much cleaner and better concerning factors such as corruption and law enforcement. The reason for such an improvement may be the intolerance and, consequently, harsh disciplinary actions imposed by the

Taleban in this regard. For example, the Islamic Amir's order on bribery[16] defines five years of imprisonment for any official employee taking bribes, regardless of position or amount.

4.4 Chapter Summary

As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, reforms are "path dependent" (Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2011, pp. 42,120,124,213), meaning "pre-existing institutional structures, and legal, regulatory and cultural factors" (Homburg, 2008, p. 766) are among the core elements that define the direction of reforms. Moreover, a part of section 2.3.2 showed that based on international experience, background research and study of the past practices are essential for preventing poorly designed and/or contextually inappropriate reforms and the repetition of past mistakes. Thus, exploring the three distinct historical periods of constitutional monarchies (1923–1973), first two decades of Afghanistan as a republic (1973-1992) under the rule of socialist regimes, and the era of the Islamic Emirate of the Taleban (1996–2002), this chapter provided a clear picture of the main developments of the Afghan civil service throughout its history.

The first part of the chapter provided a review of the main policies and legislation since the official establishment of the Afghan civil service in 1923. With the ratification of Afghanistan's first three constitutions (1923, 1931, and 1964), the period under constitutional monarchies (1923–1973) saw the development of many policies, regulations, and legislation that gradually shaped the Afghan civil service. Notably, the first two *Laws on Principle Administrative Structures* (1923, 1965) which served as the core policy documents defining[17] the nature, structure, role, and borders of the civil service and the *Law on Status and Condition of Government Employees* (1970), which clarified the terms of recruitment and promotion of Afghan civil servants were ratified and enforced during this period.

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[16] Published on the Official Gazette No. 799, 2001

[17] As a note, it should be reminded that although 50 years ago or even 90 years ago, the country has such a law, Afghanistan's modern civil service lacks it. Though efforts to develop the country's new law on Principle Administrative Structures were started more than 10 years ago, conflict of interests among political elites, has brought ratification of the law to a stalemate, which in turn has led to lots of problems and ambiguities on various aspects of the civil service including: existence of parallel structures, conflicts among line ministries over controlling certain areas of, mostly revenue generating, activities, and lack of a clear chain of reporting amongst independent agencies and line ministries.

Some of the main implications of the above-mentioned legislation and policies were that by the early 1970s, the Afghan civil service had a transparent and partially decentralized process for the recruitment and promotion of servants (approximately 60,000) through the establishment of HR Management Departments and Employee Selection Committees in line ministries. Moreover, appropriate mechanisms were developed to ensure accountability in the system through the establishment of specific administrative courts and a relatively harsh disciplinary system for misconducts. Finally, the local participation was facilitated by establishing and involving provincial and district councils in the recruitment processes of local officials. Subsequently, by 1973, when the country became a republic, civil servants were the most respected and honored group in the society and were considered to be the most talented and educated citizens.

The second section of this chapter explored the developments during the first years of Afghanistan as a republic (1973–1978) and then as a democratic republic (1978-1992). It was mentioned that the changes and developments in the Afghan civil service during this period were pursued under the influence of socialist politicians and communist governments. The focus of the republican government of Dawoud Khan (1973–1978) was on expanding the control of the central government and institutionalization of centralism in the administrative system of Afghanistan. Moreover, similar to the experience of the West in nineteenth century that saw a shift from a patrimonial civil service toward a professional civil service based on merit (see section 2.2.1), the primary concerns of the Dawoud government was to decrease the power and authority of influential individuals by establishing clear hierarchical structures and re-defining the roles and responsibilities of civil servants. The establishment of Afghanistan's COCSAR and its subordinate National Institute for Management and Administration in 1977 was a key development of this era and has been usually overlooked or ignored by both practitioners and researchers. Reporting directly to the President, the organization was responsible for all the aspects of the Afghan civil service, including policymaking, management, coordination, and reform. On the negative side, it was during this period that the role of the center in all matters of civil service significantly increased, and the local councils, which were established during the constitutional monarchies, either disappeared or were superficially maintained without any regulatory or executive role in civil service matters.

Following the first four years of Afghanistan as a republic, as the country became a democratic republic, the communist regimes (1978–1992) focused more on, as they suggested, the creation of a *just and fair civil service*. Therefore, a significant decrease in the gap between pay levels of civil servants and a remarkable increase in women's participation in public employment were the two significant developments of this era. On the other hand, it was during this period that the politicization of the Afghan civil service began, and according to the most interviewees of this study, the membership in the ruling communist parties was an essential characteristic of civil servants. According to GoIRA's (2006) Interim National Development Strategy, "hiring and promotion in the civil service…largely depended on membership in and loyalty to factions and sub-factions of the ruling party, undermining whatever weak commitment to merit-based recruitment had previously existed" (p. 31), and the National Institute for Management and Administration became a place for disseminating the propaganda of the regime rather than a place for the training and capacity development of civil servants. Finally, the COCSAR continued its operation in a superficial manner, as no evidence exists that suggests that the organization has done anything considerable during this period. Thus, despite the remarkable increase in the women participation in the civil service from almost zero to 43% (Afghanistan Preliminary Needs Assessment for Recovery and Reconstruction, 2002, p. 14, 24) and the entry of more people from ethnic minorities into the public administration, the civil service lost its neutrality, became a partisan civil service, and ended up having the most compressed civil service pay structure in the world, with the pay difference of the lowest and highest grades of officials being only 10% to 20%.

Excluding the period between 1992 and 1996, during which the country was torn apart and governed by several Islamic parties and factions with no attention toward bringing any significant changes in the civil service system, the third and final era explored was Afghanistan's civil service under the rule of the Taleban (1996–2002). Replacing politics and party membership, religion became the new dominant factor in the civil service. Thus, governed by Islamic Sharia, the Taleban administration placed a very strong emphasis on fighting corruption in its own terms and particularly aimed to achieve a bribery-free civil service. Another significance of this era is that, contrary to the general perception that the Taleban had done nothing to improve the civil service, a comprehensive set of laws, namely Afghanistan's Labor Law and Afghanistan Civil Servants Law, was ratified by them, with latter being still enforced for some parts of the civil service.

The Taleban's CSR targeted some fundamental rights of both the servants and citizens; women, in general, and certain ethnic groups were practically banned from public employment (Nabizadah, 2011, p. 106). Similarly, all civil servants were banned from processing requests or dealing with any administrative matters of citizens who had shaved or shortened their beards more than what was permitted.[18] As a result of these and similar measures, a brain drain occurred in the already weak and limited civil service, which paralyzed the system. However, the pressure to gain citizens' trust led the Taleban toward bringing changes in their policies in 1997. The efforts to fight corruption, as well as the re-adoption of the administrative structures, laws, and regulations of the 1970s republic government, can be considered as few positive developments of this era.

To conclude, the content of this chapter first attempted to fill the existing knowledge gap about the historical development of the Afghan civil service. Second, it contains many learning points for some of the current civil service issues. Third, and more importantly, it questions the dominant view that prior to the Karzai Administration (2002–2014), the Afghan civil service had no policies and regulations. We now know that ever since its official establishment in 1923, the Afghan civil service has had policies, regulations, and mechanisms, which, in some cases, were even more comprehensive than those currently in place. Despite all shortcomings, the constitutional monarchies (1920s–1970s), the newborn republic (1973–1978), the democratic republic (1978–1992), and even the Taleban Emirate (1996–2002) all had their unique regulations and policies regarding the various aspects of the civil service and reformed it accordingly. In fact, the efforts to introduce and assure principles such as meritocracy, accountability, citizen participation, and capacity development—which have been among the core objectives of the post-Taleban reforms—were attempted long before 2002. Even the establishment of a central agency responsible for the policymaking, management, and reform of the civil service has already been witnessed in the past. Therefore, the lack of policies, regulations, and mechanisms is not a question. Knowing the developments, milestones, and experiences of the past as well as studying the roots of current problems are essential for both designing appropriate reforms in future and evaluating

[18] Official Gazette No. 795, published on 08/01/2011, pp. 332–333

the success of recent ones. For instance, considering the zero presence of women in the public administration due to the Taleban's discriminative policies, criticizing the current low share of women in the civil service (approx. 20%) and concluding that in terms of gender balance, the post-Taleban reforms have failed is a big mistake. On the same issue, carefully studying how and through which mechanisms the presence of women in the civil service of the 1990s was significantly increased to approximately 43% could provide potentially indigenous prescriptions and explain many issues.

Finally, knowing and studying the experience of Afghanistan's socialist regime in 1977 with respect to the creation of the COCSAR would have significantly helped Afghan policymakers and their international advisors during their efforts in 2002 to establish the country's CSC (officially known as IARCSC), and the same holds for the other efforts toward accountability mechanisms, meritocracy, performance evaluation, de-politicization of the civil service, and so on. Thus, the essential takeaway is that the historical path and experiences of the past should not be ignored, and the crucial question is whether this was acknowledged during the design and implementation of the post-Taleban reforms.

Chapter 5: Afghan Civil Service and the Post-Taleban Reforms

Having discussed the past developments, regulations, and legislation of the Afghan civil service in the previous chapter, I shall now examine the content of the post-Taleban reforms as well as the circumstances under which these reforms were designed and implemented. Therefore, this chapter will first introduce the system and size of the Afghan civil service as well as relevant policies and legislation since 2002. Additionally, the first section provides information about the education level of civil servants, their grade distribution, and the ratio of male-female officials. Then, it will examine the main reform strategies and explain their overall and specific objectives (section 5.2). Thereafter, owing to the crucial role of the country's Civil Service Commission in the leadership and implementation of the reforms, this chapter will focus on the Commission and study its function, structure, the steps that led to its establishment, and the main criticisms toward it (section 5.3). Finally, it studies the content of major CSR programs; explains the rationale behind each of them; what they intended to achieve; and what their outcomes and consequences were.

5.1 Afghan Civil Service in a Newborn, Fragile Democracy

Following the 9/11 attacks and Taleban's refusal to meet the demands of the US government, in December 2001, the UN-mediated International Conference on Afghanistan was launched in Bonn, Germany. The Bonn Conference served as a starting point for a new era of governance in Afghanistan and it is relevant for this study from three aspects: (1) On a political level, after more than two decades of civil conflicts, the end-result agreement of the conference paved the way for a unique coalition government, comprising all the major ethnic and political groups in Afghanistan: the Leftists, the Mujahedin, the Democrats, and the pro-Monarchy faction. Consequently, the upcoming Afghanistan's Interim Authority (Dec 2001–Jul 2002) intended to be the "first step toward the establishment of a broad-based, gender-sensitive, multi-ethnic and fully representative government" (Bonn Agreement, 2001, p. 1). (2) Ignoring all the five republican constitutions and enacting the 1964 Constitution, it recognized the principle of centralism and created an administrative structure composing 29 line ministries, the largest number in Afghanistan's history. (3) Most importantly, the agreement mandated the upcoming administration

with the creation of an Independent Civil Service Commission (ICSC) (Bonn Agreement, 2001, art. III, section C-5)[19].

Below, I first introduce the system of Afghan civil service and briefly explain its situation in the aftermath of the Bonn Conference. I then review the main reform-related policies, laws, and regulations in the new era (2002–2017) that were either part of the reforms or facilitated the implementation of the reforms. Finally, using the data collected during the field research in Afghanistan, I briefly discuss the size of the Afghan civil service and provide statistical information on the grade-distribution, education level, and gender of the civil servants.

5.1.1 System and state of the civil service when the reforms were initiated (2002)

Concerning the civil service system, two general types of civil service exist: (1) *position-based* civil service applied in the majority of countries, including the US, Canada, the UK, and Australia, and (2) the *career-based* system practiced in fewer countries such as Germany and France (Emperingham, 2014, p. 15). Ever since its foundation, the Afghan civil service has been based on the first type—the position-based system—, and all civil service-related policies, regulations, and legislation have been developed accordingly. On the other hand, while the position-based system was retained, recent reforms changed the recruitment mechanisms from a closed system of hiring to an open one, meaning before the reforms, higher civil service positions were filled internally. Thus, a civil servant had to usually begin from the lowest grade (10th) and would get promoted to a higher grade every three years. However, as it will be discussed later in chapter 6, after the reforms, the system became open, making entry to any position from outside of the system possible.

Moreover, the pre-reform closed and position-based system consisted of 29 line ministers and eight independent or central organizations, with almost 170,000 civil servants, including teachers and health sector employees (Afghanistan Preliminary Needs Assessment for Recovery

[19] The Article stated that "the Interim Administration shall establish, with the assistance of the United Nations, an independent Civil Service Commission to provide the Interim Authority and the future Transitional Authority with shortlists of candidates for key posts in the administrative departments, as well as those of governors and uluswals, in order to ensure their competence and integrity."

and Reconstruction, 2002, p. 14). Review of the relevant documents and interview data suggest that each civil servant was on one of the 13 staffing grades, which were the basis for their remuneration, promotion, and appraisal. The ministerial as well as chair positions were at the top of the administrative hierarchy and had the *out-of-grade* title to clearly indicate their political nature. Similarly, the deputy-ministerial positions were on either *beyond-grade* or *above-grade* levels and were also regarded political positions which required direct appointment by the head of the government. Hence, general directorate and directorate positions, having the status of *grade-1*, were considered the top civil service positions. The entry to the service was possible only from the lowest grade (*grade-10*) or according to the candidate's years of higher education from maximum *grade-6*. Finally, every three years (and as a taken-for-granted appraisal system), almost all civil servants were promoted to the next grade.

On the contrary, the current open yet position-based system consists of 25 line ministries and 27 independent or central organizations with approximately 400,000 employees, including an unknown[20] number of teachers. After the reforms, the staffing grades were officially reduced from 13 to 8. However, the Out-of-grade, above-grade, and beyond-grade statuses continued to be used for ministerial and deputy positions, meaning the real change was from 10 to 8.

Regarding the state of the Afghan civil service in 2002, when the first CSR program started, different assessments were reported. For example, the Afghan government and its international partners assess the general situation of the post-Taleban civil service as below:

> The recent analysis of the civil service indicates that despite the disruption from the war and the serious problems with staffing, the basic administrative structures of the State have proven to be remarkably resilient. The arrangements are highly centralized but provide a coherent management and accountability framework. The administrative laws of the country are basically sound and are well understood and

[20] The number of teachers, the same as their status, is a mystery. Until recently, it was believed that there were about 200,000 teachers, meaning they consisted more than half of the civil service. However, recent reports from USAID and statements of the new MoE suggest the existence of a little more than 6 million students, out of reported 12 million, indicating that the previously reported number of 200,000 teachers may have shrunk to half. However, the real number is unknown, even to the Afghan government and its MoE.

> generally adhered to. Finally, there is some capacity within ministries and at the sub-national (municipal) level that can be developed and harnessed. (ADB et al., 2004, p. 102)

Contrary to the above positive and optimistic view that highlights the strengths and potential areas to build on of the civil service, the following assessment carried out by the Civil Service Commission attributes almost all kinds of problems one can imagine to the civil service:

> The situation at the end of SY 1381 [2002-2003] can be characterized by pervasive patronage; inappropriate pay arrangements, with widespread and counterproductive salary top-ups; a chronic lack of professional capacity; probable over-hiring; fragmented and duplicated Government structures; poor policy analysis and weak implementation at the cabinet level. A concerted and focused program for renewal and transformation of [Afghan] public administration is urgently needed to remedy these shortcomings. (IARCSC, 2003, p. 5)

Closer to the view of the IARCSC, the international partner of the Afghan government believed that,

> The AIA [Afghanistan's Interim authority] has inherited a core public administration… small for a country the size of Afghanistan; and the quality of government services provided by these administrators varies widely. Even at the central level in Kabul, ministries or departments are war-damaged shells, without even the most basic materials or equipment, and with few experienced staff…Government staff has been paid intermittently, if at all, and many of the senior personnel have either left the country or sought alternative part-time employment. It is difficult to predict how many of those who have left the country might return. Even if many return, there is likely to be a major skills gap, especially in key aspects of public administration such as policy formulation, planning, priority-setting, budgeting, and monitoring, which will require a comprehensive program of recruitment, reorientation, and training. (Afghanistan preliminary needs assessment for recovery and reconstruction, 2002, p. 15)

The three views discussed above suggest the lack of a clear and shared understanding about the state of the civil service at the initial stages. However, the path followed by the decision-makers and the launch of several expensive reform projects (see section 5.4) are clear indicators that the Afghan administration and its international partners were in favor of the second assessment. As stated by several interviewees in this research, the decision-makers concluded that "everything had to be built from ground zero"; and thus, they started to develop new policies for almost aspects of the civil service (IntV7, IntV12, IntV18, IntV24, IntV28, IntV29, 2015–2016). Below we will go through some of these policies and legislation.

5.1.2 Main Civil Service Reform-related policies and legislation since 2002

As summarized below in Table 5.1., efforts to reform and reshape the Afghan civil service and its policies were generally pursued through the ratification and amendment of laws and the development of new regulations. A point worth mentioning is that due to the centralized system of administration, the implementation of every major policy requires the approval of the head of state and should be published in the official gazette. This includes the implementation of all reform programs (see section 5.4) on the recruitment, promotion, and remuneration of the Afghan civil servants. Therefore, all points indicated in Table 5.1. either have been a part of a reform program or have served as a legal requirement for its implementation. Below, I discuss the most important of these policies in the chronological order.

Table 5.1.

Major CSR-Related Policy Documents of Afghanistan (2001–2017)

Date	Title	Remarks/Comments
Dec 5, 2001	Bonn Agreement	Mandated the upcoming Interim Authority to establish the Independent Civil Service Commission-ICSC (art III-C-5)
May 23, 2002	Decree No. 257 of the Head of AIA on the establishment of the ICSC	Established the ICSC and defined its role and basic structure
May 28, 2003	Decree No. 25 of the Head of Afghanistan Transitional State (ATS) on the design and implementation of reforms in the Afghan administration	Known as the PAR decree, it tasked the CSC to bring comprehensive reforms in the Afghan public administration; thus, the organization was renamed as IARCSC. Since then, PAR is a core task of the commission.

Date	Title	Remarks/Comments
July 12, 2003	Decree No. 33 of the Head of ATS on Priority Reform and Restructuring (PRR) in the Afghan administration	Known as the PRR decree, it paved the way for the first post-Taleban reform program titled Priority Reform and Restructuring (PRR), which mainly aimed at reforming the remuneration system and Tashkeel. The program, on the negative side, added a second layer to the pay scale.
Sep 4, 2003	Decree No. 57 of the Head of ATS on restrictions on salary supports to civil officials from external sources	Contrary to the title, the decree acknowledged and permitted "cash payments of non-governmental entities, private companies, and foreign sources to government officials in the form of salary and additional payments," adding a fragmented third layer to the pay scale for the civil service.
Jan 26, 2004	The Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan	It obliged the Afghan government to "create a sound administration and implement reforms accordingly," adding that the work for the ratification of the *Law on Principle Administrative Structures of State* should begin within one year (art 159, para. 2–2).
Mar 14, 2004	Decree No. 124 of the Head of ATS on the recruitment of Afghan diaspora	It allowed the recruitment of Afghans residing abroad and paved the way for the implementation of the Afghanistan Expatriate Program (AEP) and Lateral Entry Program (LEP) reforms, adding another layer to the pay scale.
Dec 23, 2004	Presidential Decree No. 4 on the partial merging of some line ministries	It reduced the number of line ministries from 29 to 26.
Sep 5, 2005	Presidential Decree No. 72 on the ratification of Afghanistan Civil Service Law	It was a *regulation on principle structure and duties of the IARCSC.* but contrary to its title as *Civil Service Law*, it had no offerings regarding the structure and function of the general civil service
Jun 15, 2008	Afghanistan Civil Servants Law	It paved the way for the biggest Afghan CSPAR program—the Pay and Grade (P&G) reform (started in 2009).
Mar 29, 2016	Presidential Decree No. 6, amendment of the art 10, 11, and 28 of Afghanistan Civil Servants Law (2008)	It changed the recruitment processes of high-ranking civil servants. The authority for recruiting high-ranking officials (grades-1-and-2) was delivered to line ministries.
Mar 4, 2017	Legislative Order No. 248, amendment of art 9 of Afghanistan Civil Servants Law (2008)	It changed the educational and work experience requirements for recruitments in the civil service and paved the way for the entry of fresh graduates, who due to the lack of work experience could not enter the civil service.
Mar 5, 2018	Legislative Order No. 269, amendment of civil service grades and recruitment authority	It changed the remuneration grades of civil servants (from 8 to 10), mainly to include positions with "Beyond-Grade" and "Above-Grade" statuses in the grading system. It also changed the recruitment authorities and gave more authority and responsibility to the IARCSC and introduced collective examinations.

Compiled from GoIRA, Ministry of Justice, and Official Gazette. Dari and Pashto versions of all mentioned decrees can be accessed here: http://laws.moj.gov.af/ShowLawPersian.aspx

As the first step to re-establish the civil service, the Interim Authority in May 2002 decided to re-enact the *Civil Servants Law of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan,*[21] which was ratified in 1999 by the Taleban regime. At the same time, the government decided to re-recruit employees and servants who had left or been forced to leave the office during the civil wars (1992–1996) and the Taleban regime. This re-hiring was done through a decree[22] from the head of state that noted that "all central as well as provincial civil servants, whom on various grounds were imprisoned or dismissed from duty or forced to resign [were] assigned to their official duties retaining their official titles and years of service."

Notably, in May 2002, the Interim Authority established[23] the country's Civil Service Commission (ICSC). Aiming to create "a sound administration, in which civil servants and state officials are [recruited] based on merit and competence," the decree laid the foundations of the government's HR policy for its future civil service. According to this policy, the ICSC would be in charge of selecting and proposing high-ranking officials (grade-2 and above) to the head of state for their appointments. Meanwhile, servants in grades lower than 2 will be recruited directly by respective line ministries with the commission having a mere monitoring role. Moreover, the decree gave the commission two more tasks: (1) submitting a quarterly report to the office of the president and (2) preventing "all kinds of political interference" in civil service matters. However, according to some interviewees of this study, these requirements were never fully applied.

Following the initial steps, a major reform-related policy was introduced through what is known as the PAR Decree. Decree No. 25 (dated June 10, 2003) from the head of Afghanistan's Transitional State on PAR defined the reform of the civil service as one of the main priorities of the government. Consequently, the role of the Independent Civil Service Commission changed from that of a mere recruitment agency to an important policymaking organization. Thus, the organization was renamed as the Independent Administrative Reform and Civil Service

[21] Following some minor changes such as removing Islamic Emirate's terminology throughout the document and changing the dates/calendar from AH to Solar Hijri (SH), the law was reinforced in 2003, and it is still in effect for those servants whose positions have not gone through the major P & G reform program launched in 2009.

[22] decree No. 150 of the head of the Afghanistan Interim Authority dated April 29, 2002 and published on the Official Gazette No. 802, June 18, 2002.

[23] Through decree No. 257 of the head of the Afghanistan Interim Authority, dated May 23, 2002 and published on the Official Gazette No. 810, August 21, 2003)

Commission (IARCSC). Acknowledging the "shortcomings and negative phenomena in the Public Administration," the landmark policy paper emphasized the immediate need for reforms and introduced the necessary mechanisms and procedures to do so. As a result, the "designing, proposing, leading and implementing [the] comprehensive whole of the government's Public Administration Reforms (PAR)" was added to the previously defined tasks and duties of the commission. Furthermore, to increase the credibility and authority of the IARCSC, through the same decree, the agency was officially announced as "a separate administrative-budgetary unit, reporting directly to the head of state," which practically meant the commission had the status of a line ministry.

Having established the reform agency and defined its tasks, in June 2003, the government through Decree No. 33 of the head of Afghanistan's Transitional State on Priority Reform and Restructuring (PRR) [24] paved the way for the implementation of the first post-Taleban reform program known as PRR. As stated in the official PRR decree, with the intention to "design and implement comprehensive reforms in the area of Public Administration… [and] to restructure the administration, salary, and grading system of civil servants… [and] attract, retain and motivate key civil servants," a new pay scale, much higher than the existing one, was introduced for civil service positions in key line ministries and departments. Notably, for the first time in the Afghan civil service, this policy added a second layer to the pay scale.

One year later, in 2004, Afghanistan's first constitution as an Islamic republic was ratified. The ratification of the Constitution of Afghanistan (2005) is relevant for two reasons: (1) it obliged the state to "adopt necessary measures for creation of a sound administration and realization of reforms in the administration system of the country" (art 50), which means not only it provided a constitutional foundation for the civil service reforms but also made the reforms a constitutional mandate. (2) The government was obliged to "start working on the *Law on Principle Administrative Structures* within one year [2004–2005]" (art 159)—However, more than 13 years have passed since the ratification of the constitution, and the *Law on Principle Administrative*

[24] The PRR article: Decree No. 33 of the head of Afghanistan's Transitional State, dated 12 July 2003, and published in Official Gazette No. 810 on 21 August 2003

Structures is yet to be ratified; in fact, this has been mentioned by most of the interviewees as an important obstacle in the success of reforms.

Another notable and contradictory policy was introduced through Decree No. 57- dated September 4, 2003- of the head of the Transitional State on Restrictions on Salary Supports to Civil Officials from External Sources. It paved the way for multiple unstructured pay scales in the civil service, of which some still existing. Through this decree, the government acknowledged that problems arose from the payment of different types of salaries and financial supports to civil servants by individual donors, private companies, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Emphasizing the importance of a unified and standard pay system, it urged the external players to limit the provision of such supports to civil servants. However, by stating that "civil servants can receive salaries and additional payments from private companies, NGOs and foreign sources," not only it legalized the practice, but also the exacerbated the problem. Thus, in addition to the regular civil service pay scale and the *Super Scale Salary Support* previously introduced by PRR, civil servants could officially receive salaries from outside the system and be paid directly by foreign donors, without any proper monitoring mechanisms in place.

Adding more complexities to the remuneration system, in March 2004, the government introduced the policy of recruiting "Afghan diaspora" as civil servants for "line ministries and other public administration units."[25] Although the justification for the move was "to increase[the] capacity" of the civil service, two additional layers of salary scales were added to an already fragmented pay system. Reform programs such as the LEP, AFP, Management Capacity Program (MCP) as well as the most recent Capacity Building for Results (CBR) were implemented as a result of this policy based on the "capacity injection" approach. As stated by a senior Afghan official interviewed in the course of this study, although each of these programs (see section 5.4) have reportedly succeeded in achieving their intended objectives, they contributed to a more fragmented and non-traceable pay system in the civil service. Over time, these additional pay

[25] Decree No. 124 of the Head of IRA Transitional State, dated March 14, 2004.

systems created another civil service within the civil service whose employees were not integrated with the rest of administration and generally, as perceived by other servants, felt superior due to their higher educational background and salaries and other benefits (IntV13, September 6, 2015).

Moreover, the ratification of the *Afghanistan Civil Service Law* (2005) provided a legal framework for the IARCSC. As far as the content is concerned, the document was a collection of major civil service-related orders and decrees issued during the 2002–2004 period, and contrary to its name, it was a law on the basic structure and responsibilities of the Civil Service Commission, rather than the civil service.

The enactment of the *Afghanistan Civil Servants Law* in 2008 is considered as one of the significant achievements since the advent of reforms in 2002. The law, which was drafted by foreign consultants in English and then translated into Dari (IntV0, July 16, 2015), serves as the central policy of Afghanistan for its civil servants. Defining civil service as the "executive and administrative activities of the state which are done by employees of the civil service" (art. 3), the policy introduced a new remuneration system that led to the implementation of the biggest Afghan CSR program in 2009, known as the P&G reform. Furthermore, strengthening the legal foundations of the Commission, defining the general conditions of recruitment in the civil service with emphasis on the level of education, and introducing a new mechanism for the annual performance evaluation and appraisal of civil servants by adding the self-evaluation aspect to the process are considered the main contributions of the new policy. However, contrary to the original version in English (IntV01, July 16 2015), the ratified law is criticized for being ambiguous and having shortcomings on a variety of topics including the appraisal process as well as the level of minimum education for civil servants (IntV07, IntV12, IntV24, IntV32, 2015–2016). Concerning the appraisal process, the policy created a stalemate for the further appraisal of civil servants with five years of successful evaluated performance. The problem is that the law forbids the promotion of civil servants from one grade to another. Thus, its implementation led to a situation where thousands of civil servants who had reached the final step (step 5) of their grade being neither promoted to the next grade, as forbidden by the law nor assigned to an upper-grade position, as no vacant positions existed. Since 2009, the number of civil servants in this situation has increased enormously, and currently, thousands of civil servants, regardless of their years of service, cannot benefit from salary appraisals despite not acting illegally (IntV09, IntV22, IntV26, IntV29, 2015–

2016). According to the same interviewees, another flaw of the policy arises from the provision that states "those officials who have been recruited before ratification of the Civil Servants Law (2008) and have lower than 12 years of education are exempt from education requirements, provided that they fulfill remaining recruitment conditions" (art. 7).[26] Consequently, despite the availability of thousands of unemployed university graduates willing to work in the civil service, they could not be hired, as they did not fulfill the "relevant work experience" condition set by the law. Therefore, many civil servants with education levels of lower than high school and even some without any education retained their positions or were re-hired in other positions (IntV13, September 6, 2015).

Bringing a significant change to the policy regarding the recruitment procedures of civil servants, in March 2016, President Ashraf Ghani decided to transfer the authority of the recruitments of higher-level civil servants (grades 1 and 2), including that of general directors and directors from the IARCSC, to the respective line ministries and administrative units. Following the new amendment, the role of the IARCSC in civil service recruitments changed from executive-regulatory to an entirely regulatory one, raising questions about the logic of continuing to have an Independent Appointment Board within the Commission. When asked about the reason for the change, a high-ranking member of the IARCSC mentioned that the change happened to accommodate the personal interests of some line ministers (IntV18, March 28, 2016). According to the interviewee, for several weeks, one of the cabinet ministers had attempted to replace some directors and general directors who previously had been recruited through open competition with his favorite candidates from outside the civil service. However, since the processing of the recruitments to these positions was the authority of the IARCSC and not the ministry, the minister had failed to do so. Thus, the minister boycotted the recruitment process and asked the President to change the law and relevant policies accordingly. Resultantly, through a presidential order, the authority of the recruitments of senior-level officials was delivered to the line ministries without any prior consultation with the IARCSC or any assessment on the potential effects of the decision. What is interesting is that a year later in March 2017, the policy was changed again, and not only the authority of the recruitment of senior officials (grades 1 and 2) was delivered back to the

[26] For civil service positions in grades 4, 5, and 6, through open competition.

Commission but also the responsibility for the recruitment for some lower-level positions was transferred from line ministries to the IARCSC. Although no official statements explained the reason for the transition, the timing of this change, which happened after the President could finally appoint one of his closest figures as the new head of the IARCSC, was regarded as an effort to expand his authority over the appointment of senior officials. This is indeed a clear example of how policies and regulations are generally formulated or changed in Afghanistan. The accommodation of personal or political interests is prioritized over systemic needs. When the Commission was headed by someone, not of the President preference, the articles of the Afghanistan Civil Servants Law was amended to reduce the authority of the commission; however, when someone preferred by the President was appointed as the head of the organization, the law was again amended to give him even more authority than was accorded prior to the initial amendment. Interestingly, the review of relevant documents suggests that both the moves were made in the name of improving the system and increasing efficiency and effectiveness.

Finally, attempting to remove the legal obstacles in the recruitment of young but educated candidates, including some specific individuals preferred by the presidential office, conditions pertaining to the years of experience and levels of education were amended, as shown below.

Table 5.2.

Regulation on the Appointment of Civil Servants Based on Their Educational Levels

Level of Education	**Positions**
High school (12 years of education)	Step 1 of Grade 6
Vocational school (14 years of education)	Step 2 of Grade 6
Bachelor's	Step 1 of Grade 5
Master's	Irrespective of work experience: step 1 of Grade 3 + 2 years of relevant experience: Grade 2 +3 years of relevant work experience: Grade 1
Ph.D./Doctoral	Irrespective of work experience: Step 2 of Grade 3 + 1 years of relevant experience: Grade 2 +2 years of relevant work experience: Grade 1

Compiled from the Legislative Decree No. 248, published in the Official Gazette No. 1258, on May 10, 2017.

It is worth mentioning that, accusing the President of directly interfering in all matters of the civil service recruitments and violating existing laws and regulations, the Afghan Parliament refused to ratify these amendments. However, the proposed policy was announced by the President

as an amendment in the law and consequently published in the official gazette, a move which was a clear constitutional violation.

5.1.3 State of the current civil service—How it was and how it is

Having provided a list of the major civil service policies and legislation since 2002, this section draws a general picture of the civil service in terms of structure, size, and education levels of civil servants.

Before discussing the structure of the Afghan civil service, it is worth mentioning that although the reform of the civil service started almost 17 years ago, the *Law on Principle Administrative Structures of State,* which intends to provide a precise definition of the civil service and define its structure and borders, is yet to be ratified.[27] As mentioned in the previous section, the Constitution of Afghanistan (2004, art 159) tasked the Transitional State to commence work in this regard in one year. Nevertheless, according to a senior Afghan official, political struggles and the personal interests of some decision-makers created a situation of stalemate for the ratification of the law (IntV26, August 22, 2016). Therefore, to date, no specific law or regulation exists that defines the nature, general structure, and the number of civil service entities. Contrary to its name, the *Afghanistan Civil Service Law* (2005) offered nothing on this matter, and the *Afghanistan Civil Servants Law* (2008), as expected, focused more on the HR dimension of the civil service. In the absence of such laws or regulations, the structure of the civil service is defined and changed by direct presidential decrees, a mechanism that has been commonly used in the past 17 years.

The pre-reform Afghan civil service in 2002 consisted of 29 line ministries, which were defined by the Bonn Agreement (2001). Additionally, there were eight central or independent agencies.[28] Following the six-month-long Interim Authority (Dec 2001–July 2002) and the two years of the Transitional State (2002–2004), during which the overall structure of the civil service

[27] Though the country ratified one in 1923 and another in 1965, it's unclear when the latter was revoked.

[28] Excluding the security section, the number would drop to 27 line ministries and 7 independent organizations, whose staff were considered civil servants.

remained the same, the first change came in December 2004, when the number of total civil service ministries was reduced to 27.[29] This change was prompted by the increasing pressure of local and international actors to disband the parallel structures within the civil service. Moreover, it was perceived as an attempt to demonstrate the Afghan government's commitment toward the reforms. The final change to the number of line ministries was made in 2006 when the total number of ministries was reduced to 25. However, as also mentioned by Evans et al. (2004, p. 8), having "a large cabinet" and civil service was "by no means a norm." Comparing to the total of 15 ministries during Dawoud Khan's government (1973–1978), the establishment of a large number of line ministries since 2002 can be explained by the overall objective of accommodating interests of political groups, influential individuals, and ethnic groups. As stated by a senior official in the IARCSC (IntV30, March 30, 2016), in addition to 25 ministries, by 2016, the Afghanistan Public Administration had a total of 27 central agencies and independent organizations, which amounted to a total of 52 public organizations, embedding many parallel departments and functional overlaps. According to the interviewee, the existence of functional overlaps and parallel departments has been indeed one of the biggest challenges toward the successful implementation of the reforms, particularly during the implementation of the Pay & Grading program which began in 2009. Therefore, ever since the initiation of the reforms, despite the official slogan of creating a small and an effective, efficient civil service, several attempts have been made to enlarge the civil service structure further, some of which were blocked by the Parliament. These attempts were mainly due to the administration's desire to gain more publicity and support in national as well as global circles.

Apart from the ad-hoc changes in the number of ministries, a significant change in the structure of line ministries, which is also considered an achievement of the reforms, was the establishment of HR (General) directorates in all line ministries and independent organizations. Although HR directorates did not exist under such a title before the reforms (pre-2002), they are,

[29] Presidential Decree No. 3 of the IRA, on 23 December 2004, published in the Official Gazette No. 843

in a way, an upgraded version of the Employees Management Departments[30] (existed since the 1920s) with extended and updated ToR.

Finally, considering that the Afghan administration has been designed and established based on the principle of centralism, each line ministry has its directorates in the provinces, which from a structural point of view, simulates the central ministry in a small size. In other words, "the provincial and district administrations of Afghanistan are simply the extension of ministries in Kabul" (Ehler, Lewis, Espinosa, Farrington, & Ledeen, 2015, p. 113). Regarding the ratio between national and subnational civil service, contradictory data was found in this research. While most of the interviewees indicated that more than 60% of civil servants were located at the center, a credible interview source (IntV09, October 11, 2016) provided an internal document suggesting that back in the 2000s, around 80% of civil servants were located within the core civil service in Kabul, which was home to only about 7% of the country's total population. This leaves only 20% of civil servants for the remaining 93% of citizens in provinces. Moreover, according to ADB et al. (2004, p. 65) staff at the subnational level composed 63% of the total civil servants, which indicates that the share of the core civil service in 2004 has been 27%. Comparing the 63% share of the subnational staff in 2004 with the 20% rate in 2002 indicates that either the number of provincial staffs increased dramatically by more than 50% in just two years or simply the governmental actors, misreported the number.

Moreover, factors such as the size of the civil service, capacity in terms of the education levels of civil servants, and ensuring gender equality have been among the core objectives of the reforms (see section 5.2). Thus, to assess reform outcomes and consequences more accurately, it would be useful to look at the status of the civil service with respect to these elements.

Beginning from the last element, ensuring gender equality and increasing the share of women in the civil service have been part of almost all reforms since 2002. As discussed in section 4.2, the involvement of women in the civil service goes back to the 1970s when Afghanistan became a republic. In the course of the next two decades, mainly due to the communist regimes'

[30] Translated from original title in Dari: 'Mudiriyat-e Mamurin'

policy of promoting women, by 1990, women constituted about 43% of civil servants (Afghanistan Preliminary Needs Assessment for Recovery and Reconstruction, 2002, p. 14), the highest rate to date. However, as a consequence of the devastating 1990s civil wars, which resulted in the emergence of the Taleban who embraced the policy of banning women employment, by the end of the Taleban era in late 2001, the Afghan civil service had almost no female employees. Following the removal of the Taleban from power and establishment of a pro-democracy administration, backed by the US and its Western allies, the involvement of women in governance became one of the essential conditions for financial and technical support of donors. Indeed, according to a former legal advisor to the IARCSC, contrary to the Afghan counterparts of the reforms, the international actors considered gender balance much more important than many other objectives of the reforms (IntV10, September 13, 2015). However, due to many challenges, including the immigration of a vast majority of educated women abroad during the civil wars and the Taleban era, as well as the social and cultural obstacles toward the employment of women, implementation of the initial reforms (e.g., PRR) contributed to the increase in the women participation in the civil service much less than expected. Therefore, according to both the Afghan government and the international actors, by 2004, the share of women in general civil service was very low, and only 3.9% of senior staff positions at the center were held by women (ADB et al., 2004, p. 102). Fast forward to 2017, the share of women in civil service employment was reportedly increased to 20.6% (Afghanistan Central Statistics Organization, 2017), which in comparison to the no presence of women in the civil service, in late 2001, is a significant progress. However, portraying the above-mentioned percentage of female participation in the civil service as an achievement is a debatable topic. Some interviewees suggest that in spite of the fact that over the past 15 years, several initiatives were undertaken to increase the share of women in the civil service, including the establishment of *Gender Units* in all ministries, the government is far behind its 30% benchmark which was supposed to be achieved years ago. Moreover, findings of this research show that a vast majority of the reported 20.6% women officials are, in fact, working in service positions (grades 7 and 8), which according to some experts are not considered as civil service positions.

Concerning the size of the Afghan civil service, it has to be first acknowledged that in the absence of a unified and regularly updated electronic database, no one could provide an accurate and precise number. There is a serious lack of data in this regard, and in cases where data is

available, it is based on estimates, which are sometimes unrealistic or contradictory to other indicators or reports. Conflicting data, sometimes from the same source, is widely reported and used for various purposes. For instance, stating that "there is a significant range of uncertainty," Hakimi et al. (2004, pp. 6,7) report the number of civil government employees in 2004 as 290,000. However, using the same source of data for the same year, Evans et al. (2004, pp. 38,39) report the number of "civilian government employees anywhere between 250,000 and 350,000 people." Details of the data from both sources are shown below in Figure 5.1.

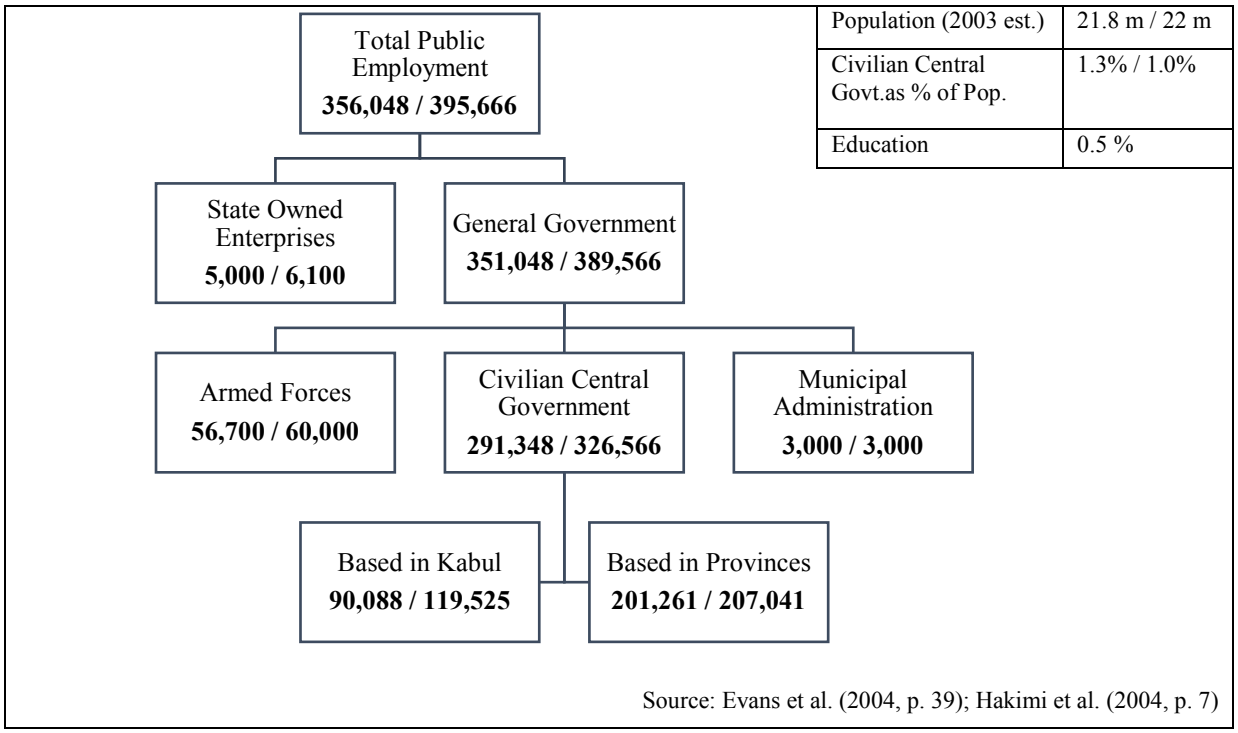

Figure 5.1. Varying Numbers on the Total Public Employment in Afghanistan in 2004.

Furthermore, it's been estimated that before any reforms, the Afghan civil service in 2002 had around 170,000 civil servants, which increased to 250,000 after re-hiring previously dismissed officials during the civil wars (Afghanistan Preliminary Needs Assessment for Recovery and Reconstruction, 2002, p. 6). Two years later, in 2004, the total number of civil public officials understood as civil servants were reported to be 276,255 (Afghanistan Central Statistics Organization, 2017), which suggests no significant increase. After almost 15 years, multiple sources estimate the number of current civil servants to be around 400,000, with Afghanistan's Central Statistics Organization (2017) reporting the exact number as 399,574. A quick comparison of the reported numbers in 2002 and 2017–2018 reveals that over the past 15 years, the number of

Afghan civil servants have doubled. By accumulating and validating all collected data in this regard, the change in the total number of Afghan civil servants between 2002-2017 is shown below in Figure 5.2.

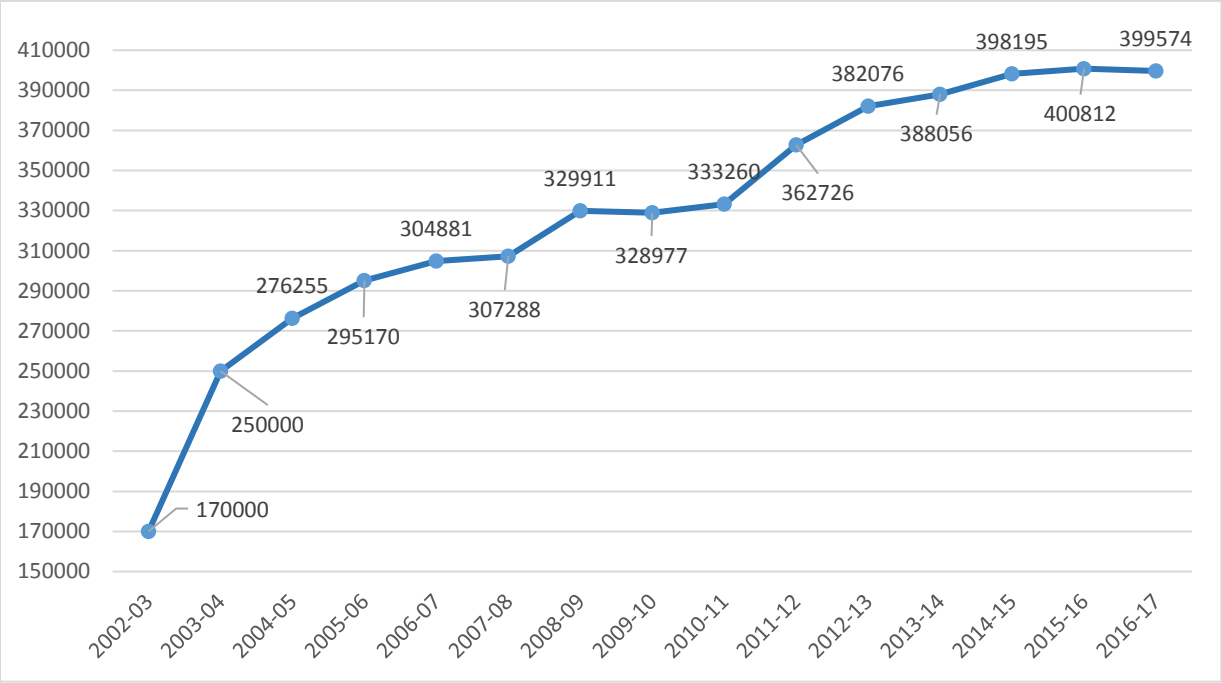

Figure 5.2. Total Number of Afghan Civil Servants, 2002–2017

Notably, the lack of a regularly updated central record system of the actual staff and the consequential emergence of the so-called *ghost employees* are only one side of the problem on the size of Afghan civil service (IntV30, March 30, 2016). The deliberate exaggeration and manipulation of the data by various officials throughout the chain of hierarchy for the purpose of receiving more financial benefits and the ministries attempts to gain legitimacy by demonstrating that they have enough servants to provide essential services (IntV11, March 30, 2016) are another side of the story, which partly explains the inconsistency and contradictions in the statistics. The fact that the numbers of staff have been exaggerated for financial reasons has also been confirmed by senior officials, including an ex-minister of education. As cited by Adili (2017), on May 27, 2015, the then Minister of Education in his first testimony before the Afghanistan Parliament stated that "instead of [previously reported] 11.5 million children being in school, there were, in reality, only a little over six million" and concluded that "the figures had been inflated to safeguard donor

funding." Although, neither the source nor the minister mentions anything directly about the number of teachers, one can logically conclude that if the number of real students is reduced by almost half, the same applies to the reported number of approx. 200,000 teachers, whom the *Afghanistan Civil Servants Law* (2008) consider as civil servants and consist more than 50% of the total civil servants in the country. Considering the case of the MoE to be an extreme example, a senior Afghan official, working at the general directorate level, suggests that similar problems existed about the real numbers of officials in other line ministries, particularly those with a higher number of servants (IntV11, March 30, 2016). Another official, working at the directorate level, explains the issue as follows: "From 2002 until 2010, we had many problems in this regard; for example, there were two or three records on the payroll for a single employee or cases where employees were dismissed, resigned, or had died but their records on the payroll existed for several months after. With varying degrees, we had these problems in almost all line ministries" (IntV30, March 30, 2016). As the last example in this regard, in a recent press conference[31], the new chairman of the IARCSC called the result of their three-month assessment on the existence of *ghost employees* and civil servants absent from their duty stations "shocking, while not surprising," adding that their findings suggested the existence of many vacant positions, particularly in the front line of service delivery. Therefore, in their first attempt, 17,000 such positions, including 8,000 teachers and 9,000 staff in grades 4 and 5, were announced to be filled through open competition.

A central question regarding the size of the civil service, which is also a factor in making the judgment on the success or failure of the reforms, is whether or not the system has become larger. Although the creation of a small, effective and efficient civil service (ADB et al., 2004, p. 15) has been the motto of the Afghan CSR since its advent in 2002, the fact that at least, during the 2002–2014 period, the access to services was considerably improved justifies a normal increase in the size of civil servants. Furthermore, even by the largest reported numbers of 350,000 active servants in 2014, the civil service will constitute about 1.6 % of the total population. Comparing

[31] The press conference of Mr. Nader Nadery, Chairman of IARCSC on November 2, 2017; available online – in Dari- at: https://youtu.be/6yBMIkBAmXU

to the average of 2.5% in the region, the Afghan civil service is considered small (Afghanistan Preliminary Needs Assessment for Recovery and Reconstruction, 2002, p. 15; Evans et al., 2004, p. 39).

With a review of the size of the Afghan civil service and the obstacles in determining the real number of its staff, out of the current 25 line ministries, the MoPW was chosen as a sample to gain details about the factors such as remuneration grades, gender, and levels of education of civil servants. As mentioned in the methodology chapter, the main reasons for selecting MoPW were being among the first line ministries to start implementation of reforms, having an average number of staff, being considered a line ministry whose HR department is functional, and being the ministry that provided access to some of their staffing data. Below, I present the collected data on capacity-related factors and, when possible, compare and generalize it to provide a picture of the whole civil service.

Ministry of Public Works. According to data collected in the course of the interviews, the MoPW in 2015-2016 period had an approved Tashkeel of 3,233 positions; out of which 377 positions were vacant; holders of 18 were marked as military personnel, and one out-of-grade position which belonged to the minister. This leaves a total of 2,837 staff on the regular civil service pay scheme. However, due to existence of *contracted or temporary staff*, who work on non-Tashkeel postions and their salaries are paid through various donor arrangements, the actual number of people working in the ministry has been higher than what mentioned above.

Regarding grade distribution, as shown below in Figure 5.3., the majority of civil servants are in grades 4 and 5, with the number of incumbents in grade-5 being higher (320 staff). Although the figure represents only the MoPW, as a result of several interviews with the IARCSC members, the distribution holds for other ministries as well, meaning the majority of Afghan civil servants are located in grades 4 and 5. Of course, the conclusion is valid only if employees in grades seven and eight are excluded (since they are technical and service personnel).

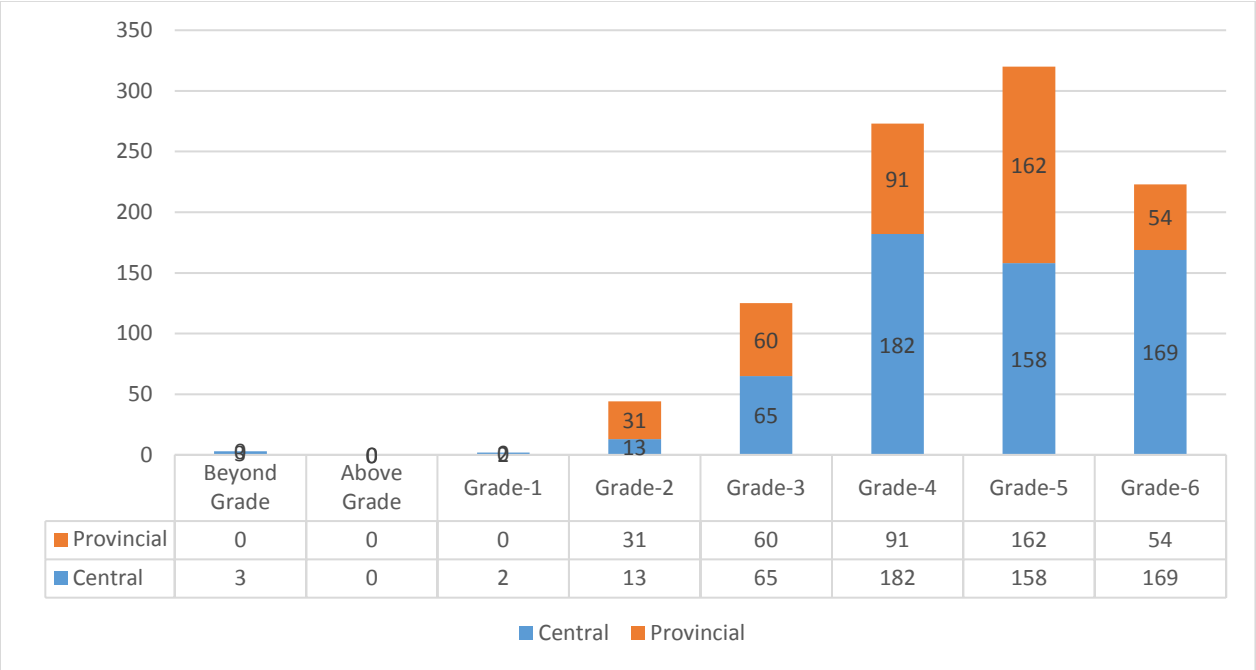

Figure 5.3. MoPW Staff based on their grades and the operation levels (2016)

Also as shown in Figure 5.3., excluding technical and service personnel (holders of grade7 and 8) from the analyses, the MoPW staff at the central level comprise about 59.8% of its totallofficials. However, the the share of center decreases to 39% once all employees are considered.With some variations, this is believed to be true for other parts of the civil service too, meaningabout 30%-40% of the civil service employees are located at the central level.

Concerning the gender distribution in the civil service, according to the data received during an interview with the head of Reform Secretariat of the IARCSC in 2015-2016, women consisted about 20% of the total staff. However, as shown below in Figure 5.4., data from the MoPW shows that only about 10% of its total employees were female, with more than half at the lowest administrative level (grade-6). The number is further reduced to 5.6% if holders of the service and technical positions (grades 7 and 8) are included. Regarding their locality, considering some variations between provinces due to the overall security conditions as well as cultural issues,[32] more than 92% of the female employees work at the center.

[32] For instance, compared to Ghazni, Jalal Abad, or Kandahar, the presence of women in public offices in Mazar-e Sharif, Herat, or Badakhshan is more.

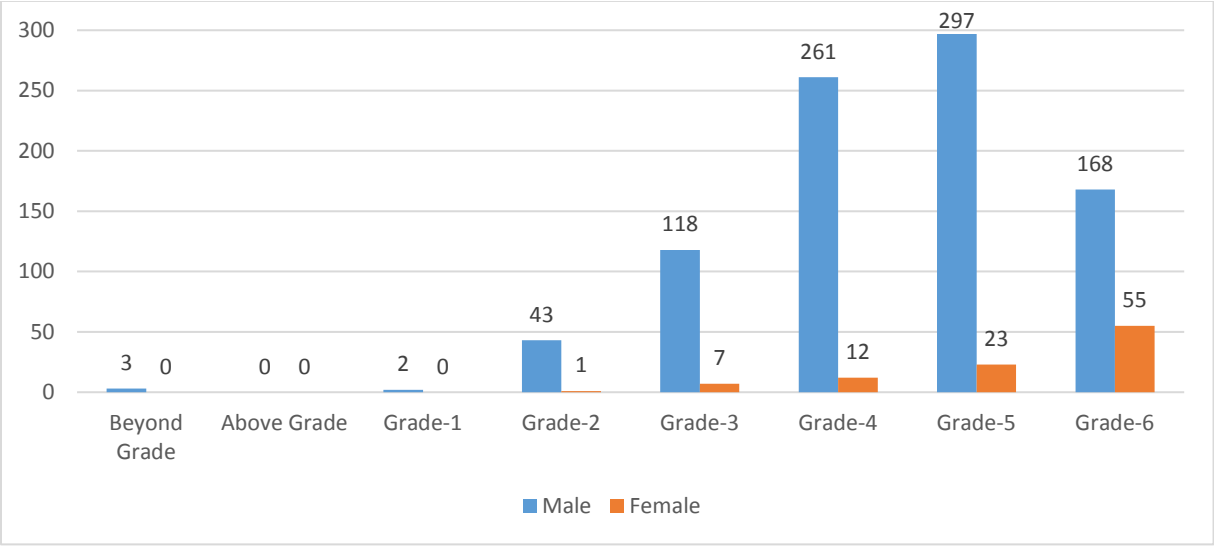

Figure 5. 4. MoPW male-Female staff based on their remuneration grades, 2016

With respect to the level of education, the MoPW data presented below in Figure 5.5. shows that 66% of its employees do not have any higher education, while the percentage of officials (grades 1 to 6) without higher education is 51.1%. Consequently, the share of employees with higher education at various levels is limited to only 17%, including no one with PhD, 2% with Master's degree, 10% with Bachelor and 5% with vocational trainings. While the ministry officials and some IARCSC members indicated the technical nature of the MoPW as the reason for the low number of the educated staff, one should not forget that the 51.1% rate already excludes the technical and service staff in grades 7 and 8.

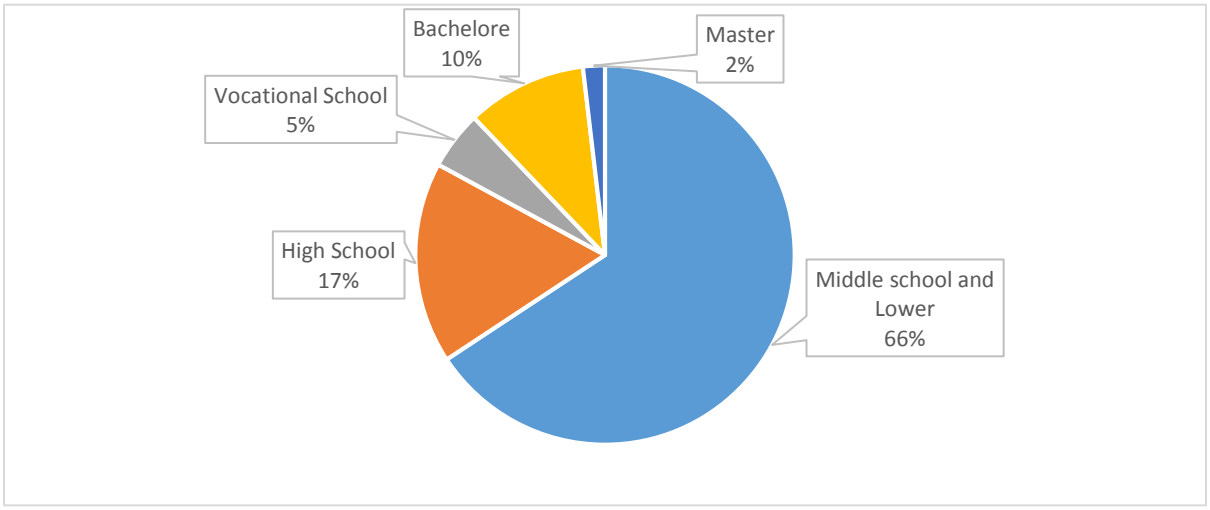

Figure 5.5. Education level of the MoPW Staff, 2016

Furthermore, the comparison of the data on the education level of the MoPW staff with the data received from IARCSC about the whole civil service shows that the education level of MoPW servants, with slight variations, is similar to that of the whole civil service. Figure 5.6. below presents the result of this comparison.

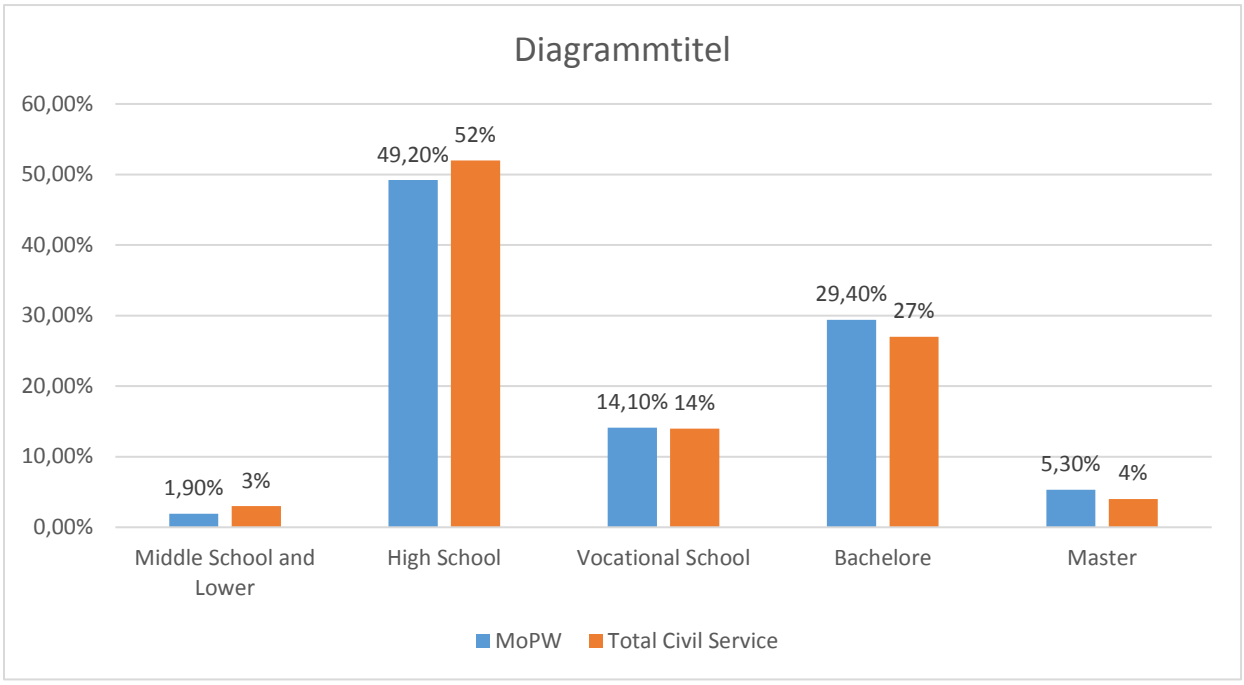

Figure 5.6. Education profile of officials (grades 1 to 6) in the MoPW and the General Civil Service, 2016

According to the Reform Secretariat of the Civil Service Commission, excluding the considerable number of technical and service personnel who mostly have less than 12 years of education, in 2016, about 45% of civil servants had higher education—14% vocational school graduates (14 years of education), 27% with bachelor's degree, and 4% with master's degree. However, this contrasts with the data from the Central Statistics Organization's 2017 report that suggests only 15% of approximately 400,000 Afghan public officials have higher education, probably owing to the inclusion of grades 7 and 8 in their analyses.

During an interview with a senior Afghan official (IntV26, August 22, 2016), the interviewee suggested that following the implementation of the first reforms in 2002 and ratification of the country's *Civil Servants Law* later in 2008, as a general policy, the level of

education had been given priority in recruitments of civil servants, a point that the majority of senior Afghan officials also made. However, a serious contradiction emerges upon the comparison of such statements with the statistics mentioned above. The 50% rate of employees with no higher education in the MoPW and the most positive rate of 55.4% for the whole civil service further strengthen the counter-argument that the reforms, particularly those regarding the recruitment of civil servants, were superficially implemented. Otherwise, it seems impossible to have less than 50% of higher-educated servants when, as part of the reforms, all positions were reportedly re-recruited through open competition. In this regard, another senior official in charge of application pre-screenings stated that, at least since 2008, most of the candidates for civil service employment have been university graduates (IntV13, September 6, 2015); moreover, only during the 2013–2016 period, more than 80,000 graduated from higher education institutes of the country. Thus, either the university graduates, which, according to the Ministry of Labor, is the biggest group of unemployed citizens, have been scoring very low in recruitment exams,[33] or contrary to the official statements, instead of education, other factors such as patronage, bribery, and nepotism have had more influence during recruitment processes.

5.2 Overall Reform Strategy of Afghanistan

> Very little reliable information exists, too often information is fragmented and hoarded. This hampers the government's ability to make policy based on evidence of what works and what does not.
>
> — (Afghanistan National Development Framework, 2002, p. 14)

Beginning with the Bonn Conference (2001), a number of strategic events, mainly in the form of conferences and negotiations between Afghan administrations and the representatives of the IC have taken place. For the Afghan side, these conferences served as the forums for presenting developments, introducing and defining its future strategic plans, and requesting more international aid. In turn, the IC would check the progress, set new conditions and milestones, and

[33] Considering the content and method of the examination, which is based more on knowledge and not on practical skills, this is less probable.

(re)assure its financial and technical commitments. Consequently, due to the high dependency of the Afghan state on the IC's political, technical, and financial support—which still provides more than half the national budget, including the salaries of all civil servants—the results of these conferences shaped the national strategies of the country in all areas, including governance and public sector reform.

Also, as emphasized by almost all the interviewees of this research, the creation of a small and efficient civil service has been at the core of the Afghan CSPAR strategy. The effectiveness and efficiency of the civil service over the past 16 years, particularly in early 2002 when the reforms were initiated, were perceived crucial for the overall aim of "restoring peace and stability, embedding democratic governance, and regenerating economic growth" (ADB et al., 2004, p. 59). Further review of reform-related documents suggests that the interpretation of Afghan officials of these terms has been achieving a civil service capable of delivering essential services to Afghan citizens and properly managing billions of dollars of international aid. However, what were the general and specific strategies of the Afghan government and its international partners to achieve such a civil service? By reviewing the strategic events and their resultant documents, I provide a clear picture of the Afghan CSPAR strategy and its main objectives and benchmarks.

5.2.1 Bonn conference (2001)

The 2001 UN Talks on Afghanistan and its resultant *Agreement on Provisional Arrangements in Afghanistan Pending the Re-Establishment of Permanent Government Institutions* act as the reference points for the post-Taleban CSPAR and the establishment of the IARCSC, where the agreement stated:

> The Interim Administration shall establish, with the assistance of the United Nations, an independent Civil Service Commission to provide the Interim Authority and the future Transitional Authority with shortlists of candidates for key posts in the administrative departments, as well as those of governors and uluswals [district governors], in order to ensure their competence and integrity. (Bonn Agreement, 2001, art. III, Section 5)

Notably, by mandating the upcoming AIA to establish an independent civil service, the Bonn Agreement left Afghan policymakers with no opportunity to discuss and evaluate the

possible options and systems to design, lead, and implement the reforms. It was a decision made outside the country and highly influenced by the involved international actors. As mentioned by a senior Afghan official, who has been one of the first employees of the Commission, the appointment of a former WB senior employee with almost two decades of working experience in the organization as the head of the newly established Civil Service Commission led to the exertion of significant influence by the WB and other international partners, such as USAID and DFID, in prioritizing the needs and defining the reform paths (IntV22, October 4, 2016). Moreover, the source adds it was, in fact, the USAID that recruited the first employees of the Commission—from NGOs and IGOs—and trained them for several months. Thus, as stated by the HR general director of a line ministry, the Bonn Agreement is regarded by many Afghan officials as a means to "import the commission, its structure, and all its reform ideas from outside the country rather than emerging from Afghan context, based on local administrative needs" (InV03, August 5, 2015).

5.2.2 Tokyo Conference-I (2002)

Only some months after the establishment of the Afghanistan Interim Authority, and in preparation for a Transitional State, the involved international actors launched a conference in Tokyo, Japan, to lay down the reconstruction agenda and development strategy of Afghanistan. With the participation of senior-level representatives from 61 countries and 21 international organizations, the first priority of the AIA was set as the "enhancement of administrative capacity, with emphasis on the payment of salaries and the establishment of the government administration" (Tokyo Conference-I, 2002, p. 2). Interestingly, it seems that the involved strategists and decision-makers were not interested in a '*build-on'* approach*,* as they clearly asserted that "recreating the government activities and systems of public management of the 1970s seems neither necessary nor desirable" (Afghanistan Preliminary Needs Assessment for Recovery and Reconstruction, 2002, p. iii). However, nothing was mentioned by either the Afghan policymakers or the foreign supporters of the reforms concerning the reasons why they simply decided to ignore the systems and practices of the past. This approach of '*building* from ground zero*'* which, according to the interviewees, gained incredible popularity among Afghan decision-makers, is probably the main reason why past developments, particularly the establishment of the COCSAR and its subordinate National Institute for Management and Administration in 1977, was completely forgotten by Afghans and was never made known to the most of their international partners. As mentioned

earlier in section 4.2, almost all aspects of the Afghan civil service, including policymaking, management, coordination, capacity enhancement, and reforms, were carried out by the COCSAR and its subordinate units. The organization had clear policy guidelines, and its *Regulation on Structure and Duties* was enforced. A senior Afghan official who had served the organization in the 1980s stated that "the Afghan officials in charge [of policymaking] for the civil service had never worked for the civil service before and the foreigners [technical advisors] were not well informed about what already existed. They thought that nothing was there about the civil service" (IntV24, March 29, 2016*).* Similarly, a senior international advisor, with many years of experience in assisting the implementation of various Afghan CSR programs, mentioned as follows:

> [the majority of technical advisors who led the policymaking and drafting of the strategies] simply had no idea about Afghan civil service… they were just briefed about some classic Dos and Don'ts which were basically around cultural issues… And when they were asking for background information and documents, they were either misinformed by receiving wrong and incomplete data or facing statements such [as] 'there is nothing' from Afghan colleagues. (IntV12, March 17, 2016)

Therefore, partially due to the reasons mentioned above, with an unexplained logic that building on public management systems and practices of the past is unnecessary and undesirable, the overall strategic approach toward the reforms became that of building from ground zero. Consequently, the establishment of a limited but effective and efficient civil service with a total number of about 270,000 civil servants in 10 years (2012) became the first priority of the upcoming government. Notably, this priority was set by the "ADB, UNDP, and WB [even] before the establishment of the Afghan Interim Administration (AIA)" (Afghanistan Preliminary Needs Assessment for Recovery and Reconstruction, 2002, p. 1), promising that the AIA would lead the creation of follow-up strategies in the future. As a result, the strategic document was later criticized by the Afghan administration to have been "prepared quickly by international agencies armed with little data, and with little participation by the month-old Afghan Interim Administration" (I-ANDS, 2006, p. 20). Table 5.3. below summarizes the specific suggestions of the Tokyo Conference and its strategic document for the Afghan civil service.

Table 5.3.

Strategic Priorities, Actions, and Requirements for Afghan CSPAR, 2002

Short-Term Priorities	(i) undertaking a comprehensive review and needs assessment for the reform of the civil service *(ii) designing and implementing a salary structure for regular government employees that pays a living wage and is fiscally sustainable* (iii) paying attention to immediate issues of staffing (claims of former civil servants, their selective reintegration, equitable entry, and exit rules) and related staff training (iv) formulating special procedures to attract Afghanistan citizens currently living abroad who can bring back (a least for short periods) highly needed skills (v) re-establishing gender balance (vi) keeping the size of the public service small but effective (e.g., 1% of the population), to allow the provision of higher salaries to help combat corruption (vii) modernizing personnel rules and regulations for the future (viii) fighting corruption
Immediate Actions	(i) providing financial support for employee salaries (ii) providing technical assistance for the establishment of the CSC (iii) launching a review of all government personnel regulations (iv) establishing an affirmative action policy to increase female employment in civil administration at management and staff levels
Critical Medium to Long-term Requirements	(i) establishing a coherent legal framework consistent with international human rights standards, (ii) enabling the capacity building of government staff in various areas (iii) paying government employees' salaries and other establishment costs (iv) securing urgent technical assistance in establishing the pay structure and payments system (v) securing funds for TA for the working of the CSC

Adapted from Afghanistan Preliminary Needs Assessment for Recovery and Reconstruction (2002, p. 16,17)

5.2.3 Afghanistan National Development Framework (2002)

Attempting to define "national priorities and policy directions" (Afghanistan National Development Framework, 2002, p. 4), the strategic document was the end result of an assessment carried by AIA officials in April 2002. It served as the main guiding source of all other policies and strategies until 2004 when the next and more comprehensive national assessment was carried out. Notably, although it was considered as the first Afghan-developed national strategy of the post-Taleban era and referenced in almost all future strategic documents, "a final version of the NDF [National Development Framework] was never published" (Wilson, 2014, p. 163). Moreover, it is unclear to which extent it served as a real national strategy.

Concerning its offerings for the civil service, the Afghanistan National Development Framework stated that "rebuilding a shattered public administration will be one of our biggest and most important challenges. Not only [we] will have to rebuild but to re-orientate the state machinery, so it becomes light, accountable and concentrates on policy and regulation" (Afghan Authority for the Coordination of Assistance, 2002, p. 3). Highlighting the need for "an innovative approach… as a strategy for reform of the administrative system" (Afghanistan National Development Framework, 2002, p. 10), the document defined the "creation of a modern and efficient civil service" (p. 11) as a crucial area to work on; therefore, the government pledged support for the newly established Civil Service Commission so that it could "formulate and implement a comprehensive agenda of reform" (p. 11). Lastly, it proposed the creation of a civil service training college[34] to take responsibility for staff training, another critical decision that shows either the lack of information or the willingness of policymakers to make a fresh start. As it was discussed earlier, the National Institute for Management and Administration with clear policies and regulations was already in place and operated as a subordinate of the COCSAR in 1977. However, why the AIA and its international partners decided not to upgrade and update the existing mechanisms is a question that even the senior officials of the IARCSC are not able to answer.

On the other hand, the Afghanistan National Development Framework acknowledged that the national staff of NGOs, IGOs, and the UN received as high as 50 times more than what regular civil servants were paid for comparable jobs. Adding that the salaries of international staff were from 1,000 to 2,000 times more than that of the government officials, the strategy mentioned that increasing the salaries of civil servants was a critical issue in need of immediate action; otherwise, the problem would "haunt all good intentions for creating capacity" (Afghanistan National Development Framework, 2002, p. 11) in the civil service. Furthermore, with an income of less than one dollar per day, the civil servants and pensioners were marked as vulnerable groups that needed to be included in social protection policies. However, the document indicated the

[34] Later emerged as Afghanistan Civil Service Institute (ACSI)

government's inability in this regard by ending the discussion with the question "What should be the approach to pensioners and the civil service?" (p. 24).

To conclude, regarded as "the first step toward asserting ownership of the reconstruction process" (GoIRA, 2006, p. 20) by Afghans, the Afghanistan National Development Framework highlighted the need and significance of transferring the leadership of all reform and reconstruction efforts to Afghans. Moreover, with an overall objective of achieving a small and an effective and efficient civil service, the actions to be taken was defined as urgently increasing the pay scale of civil servants, pledging technical and financial support for the newly established Civil Service Commission, and creating a new national training institute for the civil service.

5.2.4 Public Administration Reform Program (2003)

Owing to the immediate need to increase the capacity of the civil service so that it can adequately use and manage billions of dollars of international aid, as well as improve governance and service delivery to Afghan citizens, in 2003, the CSC with the technical support of the IC, particularly the WB, started work on the country's overall reform strategy. Therefore, parallel to the implementation of the PRR program (see section 5.4.1), the Afghan government launched the *Public Administration Reform (PAR) Program* (IARCSC, 2003). PAR Program was "developed to provide a framework for a series of [reform] programs and projects that, together, would build a sound legal, administrative, and physical environment in which civil servants can function efficiently and effectively, and be held to account for their performance" (ADB et al., 2004, p. 60). Therefore, contrary to the understanding of many Afghan officials, PAR was more like an overall reform strategy for the Afghan civil service, rather than a specific reform program. Thus, PAR defined the pillars, mentioned below in Figure 5.7., based on which all post-2003 reform initiatives were designed.

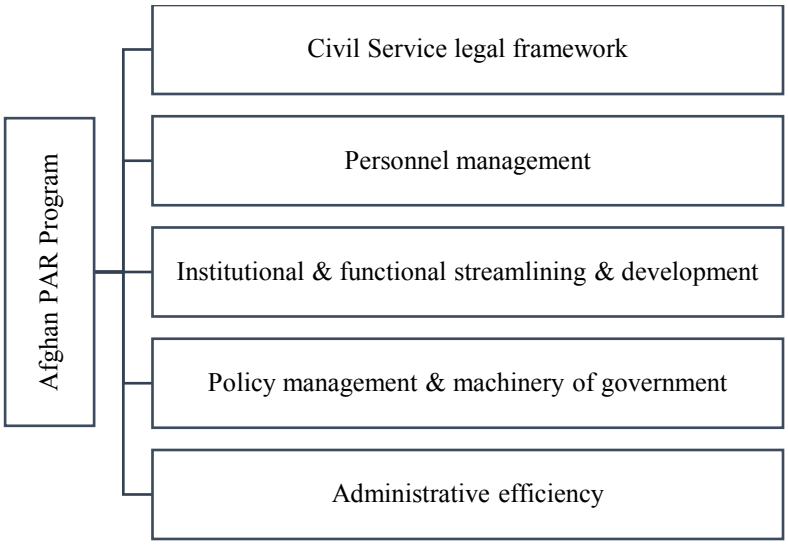

Figure 5.7. Main Pillars of Afghanistan's Public Administration Reform Program. Source: IARCSC (2003).

However, an explanation of the specific actions regarding the pillars mentioned above was provided almost two years later in 2006 through *Afghanistan's Interim Development Strategy* (I-ANDS). Under the headline of the strategy, the *I-ANDS* specified that the PAR program would introduce proper mechanisms for the following:

> [Implemnting] merit-based appointment of civil servants at Grade 2 and above, monitoring ministerial appointments at Grade 3 and lower, increasing wages and benefit packages, creating streamlined and transparent organizational structures, simplifying key rules and procedures, creating effective institutional complaints and redress mechanisms, developing and enforcing a legislative framework that defines civil service ethical standards, terms and conditions of employment and performance, and conflict of interest rules and training to strengthen management skills, understanding the code of ethics, and IT. (GoIRA, 2006, p. 106)

On the other hand, the below-demonstrated framework in Figure 5.8., which was already in place for the management and implementation of the PRR, was adopted to be used for all future reforms in the public sector.

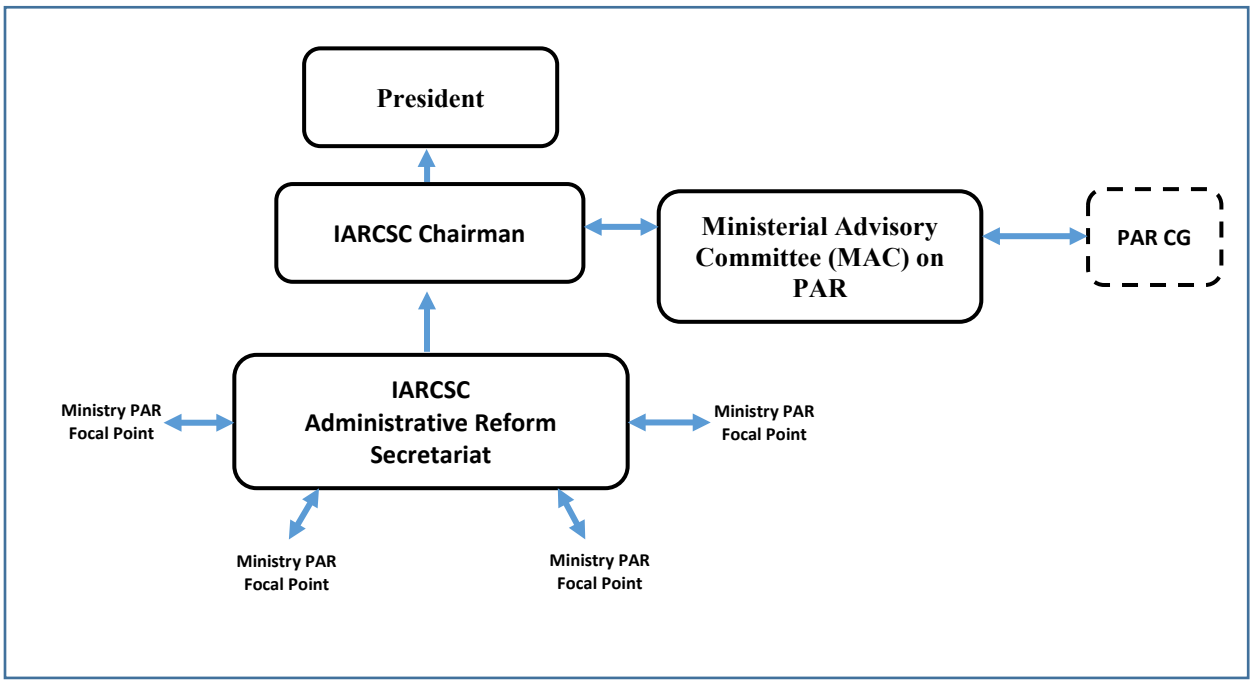

Figure 5.8. Public Administration Reform Framework. Reprinted from Hakimi et al. (2004, p. 8).

Under such an arrangement, having the leadership of all CSPAR efforts, the Commission would operate under the direct supervision of the President. Moreover, a Ministerial Advisory Committee (MAC) on PAR would assist the leadership of the Commission on important decisions, and a PAR Consultative Group (CG) consisting of donor representatives would advise the MAC. Finally, a PAR focal point would be established in each and every line ministry, mainly to inform line ministries about reforms and report back to the Commission on the progress of reform implementation.

Lastly, the ambiguity of PAR was mentioned by almost all interviewees of this research as an important issue. Although the Public Administration Reform Program was introduced in 2003, even its specific objectives were not defined until 2004. Moreover, according to an internal document, provided in an interview with a senior Afghan official, the government had no action plan for its PAR program until 2007 when the WB took the lead and developed an implementation plan, which again was not publicly shared (IntV18, March 28, 2016). Therefore, a general lack of understanding about the PAR Program exists among officials, including senior members of the IARCSC and line ministries, who officially led the process.

5.2.5 Berlin Conference and the Securing Afghanistan's Future (2004)

Aiming to define the path forward and presenting the achievements of the past two years, *Securing Afghanistan's Future* was the end result of a comprehensive joint assessment by the Afghanistan government and over 100 international consultants from WB, UNDP, UNAMA, and ADB (ADB et al., 2004, p. 10), and served as the country's national development strategy until 2006. The Transitional Islamic State of Afghanistan presented the strategic document to representatives of the international community during the Berlin Conference (31 March-01 April 2004) and sought $27.6 billion to implement it (GoIRA, 2006, p. 21).

Once again, through *Securing Afghanistan's Future* the government and its international partners emphasized the overall aim of creating a small and efficient civil service and highlighted its importance for the realization of the defined objectives in all other reconstruction pillars including peace, stability, and economic growth (ADB et al., 2004, pp. 21,59). Moreover, it presented the achievements of the government since the collapse of the Taleban, explained the main challenges toward the development of the country, set the priorities for each reconstruction pillar, provided a vision for them, and defined the actions to be taken. Table 5.4. summarizes the civil service-related points of the strategy.

Table 5.4.

Summary of the Civil Service Components of the Securing Afghanistan's Future.

Progress Made	(i) There has been no increase in the size of the civil service since 2002 (p.59). (ii) The PAR program has been developed and provides a framework for future reforms (p.60). (iii) The IARCSC and a MAC have been established to support PAR implementation. (iv) The implementation of the PRR program has begun, which has led to "better trained, better paid, and more highly motivated pockets of high performance in the administration" (p. 59), and 1,700 civil servants in a total of 10 units and/or line ministries have been placed on the PRR scale (which is an additional allowance of 11,000-11,750 AFN per month). (v) As a first attempt toward the decompression of civil service pay scales, an overall pay reform (increase in salaries of all civil servants) was implemented with a full-year cost of about $20 million (p. 60).

Major Challenges	(i)	Emergence and existence of a *twin or second civil service* (pp. 17, 59)
	(ii)	Establishment of Project Implementation Units, in almost all line ministries, have created many problems including *resentment* in civil servants (p.69)
	(iii)	Inadequate capacity of the civil service is the main critical constraint that affects all areas of reconstruction and state-building (p.100).
	(iv)	The proliferation of TA without proper coordination and adequate involvement of the government and civil service (p.101)
	(v)	*PRR is an ad-hoc approach; there should be a more systemic pay and grading review (p.59).*
Priorities	(i)	Retaining the small size of civil service and making it effective and efficient
	(ii)	Widening and deepening PRR (p. 60)
	(iii)	Accelerating CSR in key ministries (p. 103)
	(iv)	"Carrying out a comprehensive, cross-government pay and grading review… likely to happen in 2004" (p. 61),
	(v)	Rationalizing TA (p.101)
Key Assumptions	(i)	The aim is to have *a "small government"* (p. 63).
	(ii)	There should be a clear distinction between the civil service and politics (p. 64).
	(iii)	"Civil servants should be employed by the state not the individual line ministries" (p. 64), which means civil servants should be politically neutral.
	(iv)	"There will be broad categories of employees" (p. 64). The document probably talks about a cadre-based civil service; however, it is not clarified.
Vision	(i)	A "Small, as the present, but more focused civil service" (p. 64)
	(ii)	A "More diverse and decentralized" civil service (p. 64)
	(iii)	A civil service "driven by an accountable, result-based ethos" (p. 64)
	(iv)	A "significantly better skilled, equipped and managed" civil service (p 64)
	(v)	A "more representative" (in terms of gender and ethnicity) civil service (p. 64)
	(vi)	A civil service "bound by common ethical principles" (p.64)
Targets	(i)	"Achieving a professional, merit-based civil service" (p.65)—in ten years, almost all civil servants will have been appointed based on merit
	(ii)	"Achieving a more decentralized and pro-service delivery civil service" (p. 65)—the current level of 63% subnational staff will be increased every year
Actions to be Taken	(i)	"The central agencies," especially IARCSC, "must have the capacity to deliver their core mandates," and together with MoF, they "must act as the custodians of PAR" (p.68).
	(ii)	PRR should be extended to cover more subnational levels.
	(iii)	The facilitation of "direct budget support" from the IC to pay salaries must be enabled.
	(iv)	"International partners should respect the basic structures and traditions of the Afghan State" (p. 6).
	(v)	The government should increasingly rationalize and coordinate TA inputs provided by different donors (p. 101).
	(vi)	Instead of PRR, a more systemic pay and grading review should be undertaken (p. 61).

Compiled from ADB et al. (2004)

Defining administrative reforms as one of the five domains of state-building in Afghanistan, the strategy reported the implementation of PRR in 10 administrative units and line ministries as a major "stride" achieved in the first two years (ADB et al. 2004, pp. 16, 17); consequently, "*widening* to include all line ministries and subnational units and *deepening*—to

include all departments of a ministry" (p. 60) of the program were set as priorities. In contrast, the same strategy criticized PRR of having an "ad-hoc approach" (p. 59) and highlighted the need for a more systemic pay and grading review and replacement of the program. However, an interesting question that arises is that if the first reform program and its approach were counterproductive, then why did its broad and deep implementation become a part of the future strategy? Similarly, if it was considered a stride toward success, then why did it have to be replaced? Although no information could be found to suggest a potential answer, trajectory taken in the following years showed that decision-makers followed both paths. In other words, the implementation of PRR was set as a precondition for further reform programs in all line ministries, which meant ministries could benefit from more financial support if they had finished the implementation of PRR. Meanwhile, the IARCSC and its partners followed the other recommendation of the strategy as well—a more systemic pay and grading review was conducted, which led to the adoption of a new *Afghanistan Civil Servants Law* (2008) and implementation of P&G reform program (2009).

On the other hand, the emergence and existence of a "twin or second public sector" (ADB et al., 2004, pp. 17,59) and the "limited capacity of the civil service versus [an] urgent need for results" (p. 100) were tagged as the main civil service-related challenges. The source continues by stating that "in the rush to achieve results on the ground quickly" (p. 102), donors tried to fill the capacity gap through directly involving NGOs and IGOs "in traditional government work, from implantation of projects and coordination of expenditure to provision of public services in almost all areas" (p. 59). According to the source, although this second civil service indeed delivered some basic services of which the civil service was incapable, it was the source of many other problems such as follows: (1) paying incomparably high salaries without a unified structure, without proper coordination with the Afghan government, and in an unsustainable manner and (2) "having a brain drained, out-of-date, underrepresented, and very low paid ($30–$40 per month) civil service with low morale and capacity facing an enormous demand to initiate and implement reconstruction activities quickly," which arose as a partial result of the first problem (p. 100).

To overcome these challenges and realize the defined vision, a series of priorities was identified, and some actions were planned: (1) retaining the limited size of the country's civil service but making it effective and efficient, (2) accelerating CSR in key ministries while widening the PRR concept to all ministries and their subnational departments, (3) implementing a

comprehensive pay and grading review of the civil service, and (4) rationalizing the TA provided by donors and international organizations. The priority of rationalizing the TA of donors and international organizations was identified as a result of the argument that "donors simultaneously fund their own and the international agencies' bureaucracies, while also underwriting the civil service bill for the government" (ADB et al., 2004, p. 17). In addition to the creation of the second civil service, this had caused serious coordination problems. Thus, the strategy, on the one hand, tasked the administration to take actions towards the rationalization and coordination of TA (p. 101) and, on the other hand, urged the international partners "to respect the basic structure structures and traditions of Afghan state" (p. 68). Furthermore, highlighting the need for a more systematic pay and grading review, the strategy requested the IARCSC "to act as custodian of PAR." Finally, a direct budget support from the international actors to pay the salaries of Afghan civil servants for the years to come was defined as another urgent action to be undertaken. A 7-year wage bill estimated to be about $ 4.3 billion (p. 108) and a 12-year annual wage bill (excluding police and military) of the civil service were projected as shown below in Figure 5.9.

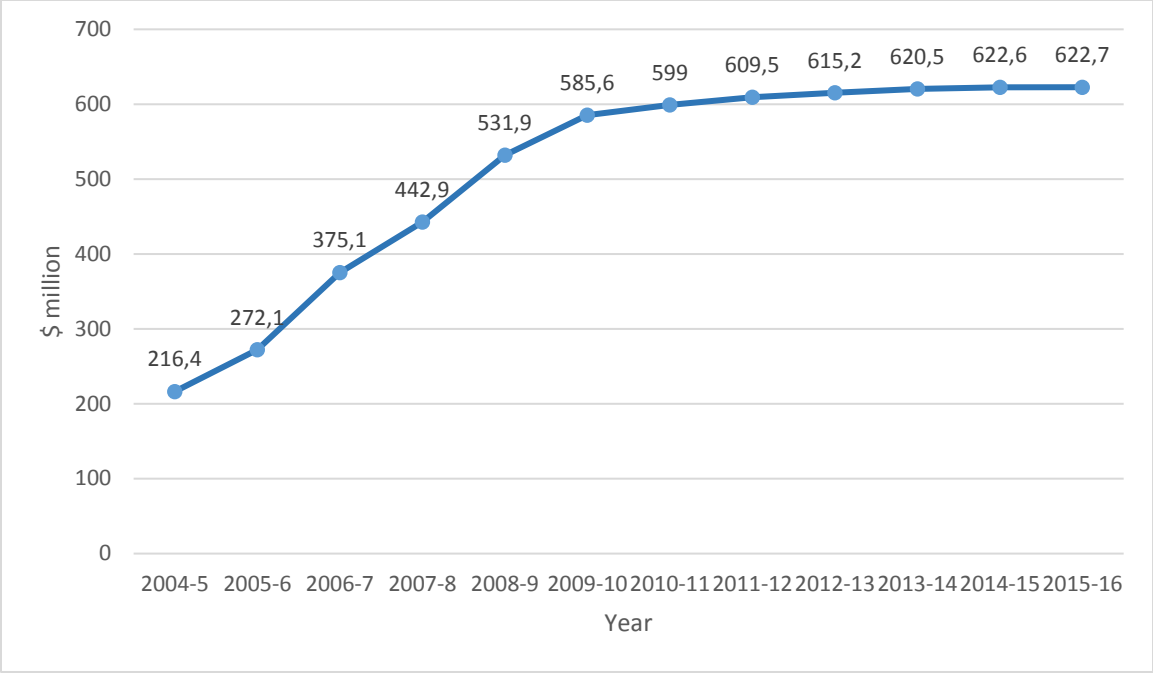

Figure 5.9. Projected Annual Civil Service Wage Bill. Adapted from ADB et al., 2004, p. 68).

Despite its shortcomings, *Securing Afghanistan's Future* drafted by ADB et al. (2004) was unique in many ways. In terms of civil service-related aspects, in addition to clarifying what was previously meant by PAR and defining what actions needed to be taken, it was based on a comprehensive assessment and set "ambitious targets" for the GoIRA to achieve (Berlin Declaration, 2004, p. 3). Therefore, the source adds that it was welcomed and "strongly endorsed" by the IC.

5.2.6 Afghanistan Compact (2006) and the Development Strategies (2006, 2008)

In addition to the PAR Program in 2003, and the strategic document of *Securing Afghanistan's Future* drafted by ADB et al. (2004), Afghanistan's overall strategy and vision for its civil service reform were laid out within the framework of the *Afghanistan National Development Strategies* in 2006 and 2008*,* both developed based on the benchmarks set in *Afghanistan Compact* (2006).

With the involvement of 64 countries and 11 international organizations,[35] the London Conference on Afghanistan (31 Jan–01 Feb 2006) served as a forum for the Afghan administration to present and discuss its landmark *Interim National Development Strategy*. Following the international community's comments, the conference led to a mutual reaffirmation of commitments, and the resultant *Afghanistan Compact* (2006) set specific benchmarks in three critical pillars: Security, Governance, and Economic and Social Development (International Monetary Fund, 2006, p. 3). In 2008, the *Interim Strategy* was expanded to provide more detail, particularly on how the benchmarks would be achieved and became a comprehensive *National Development Strategy* (ANDS).

Reviewing the content of *ANDS*, as shown below in Figure 5.10., the strategy was divided into three pillars and eight sub-pillars. Strategies and benchmarks related to civil service and its reform were located under Pillar 2: Governance and the sub-category of Good Governance. Interestingly, the strategy located PAR in the same category of Governance and Human Rights.

[35] 51 countries and 10 international organizations as participants, plus 13 countries and 1 international organization as observer

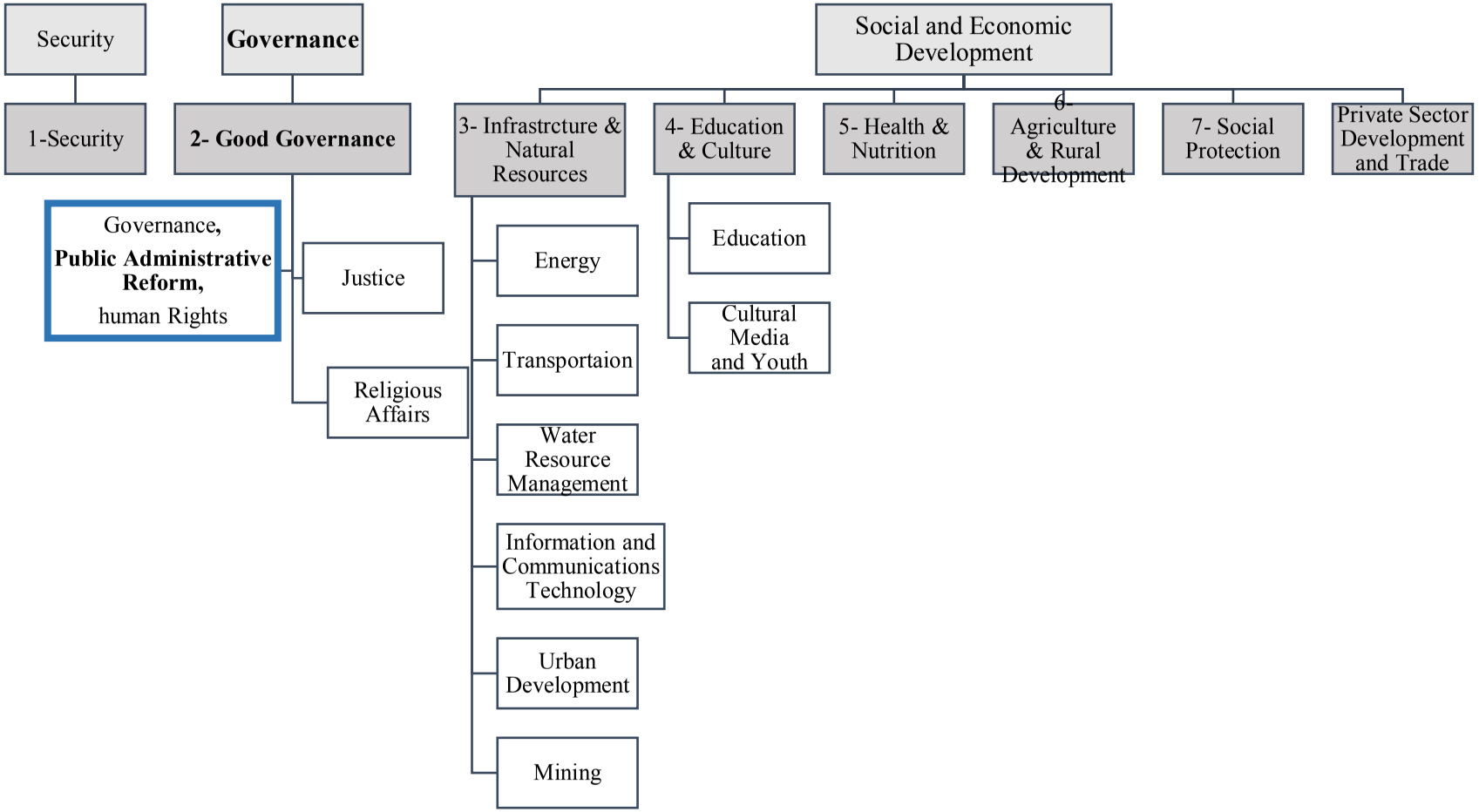

Figure 5.10. Locating Public Administration Reform in Afghanistan National Development Strategy, 2008. Reprinted from GoIRA, 2008b, p. iii).

Serving as the first official national development strategy of the post-Taleban era, *ANDS*, together with *I-ANDS*, provided the government a mechanism to fulfill the obligations and benchmarks it had promised through *Afghanistan Compact* (2006). Table 5.5 below, provides a reprinted summary of the *Afghanistan Compact*, the *I-ANDS*, and the *ANDS* on Civil Service Reforms.

Table 5.5.

Benchmarks and Strategies of Afghan Civil Service Reforms, 2006-2013

Overall Aim	**"Establish[ing] a more effective, accountable and transparent administration at all levels of Government, whose capacity is rapidly expanded and its recruitments are be based on merit" (Afghanistan Compact, 2006, p.3).**
Vision	(i) Having an "effective, accountable, and transparent administration at all levels of Government" (GoIRA, 2006, p.16) (ii) As a result of the PAR program, "the performance-oriented institutions are encouraged to promote progressive social change. Ministries and government agencies in both the center and the provinces are more efficient and effective, staffed by a cadre of well-trained and competent professionals recruited on the basis of merit" (p. 16). (iii) "Government machinery is restructured and rationalized to reflect core functions and responsibilities clearly" (p. 16). (iv) The civil service salaries are made competitive with the private sector (p.16). (v) "The Government has created a motivated, merit-based, performance-driven, and professional civil service that is resistant to temptations of corruption and which provides efficient, effective and transparent public services that do not force customers to pay bribes" (p.106).
Constraints and Challenges	(i) The civil service lacks the required capacity, which has consequently led to the creation of a chain of other problems, including: • Recruitments being based on *patronage and rarely by merit (GoIRA, 2006, p.58)*, leading to having unqualified staff and low capacity in the civil service • The apparent shortage of educated, skilled, and professional staff, leading to an increase in the level of corruption (ii) Lack of resources has led to government inability to pay the wage bill of the civil service (p. 58). (iii) "The need to increase civil service salaries, to recruit and retain competent people and combat corruption, poses a further burden on Treasury" (p. 57, 124), questioning the sustainability and government's vision of paying the wage bill without foreign aid. Thus, "improving public sector salaries while maintaining fiscal sustainability will be an extremely difficult task" (p. 124). (iv) The existence of a very well paid, "second civil service" created by the aid community, making the official civil service unable to compete (p.64) (v) *Unreformed public administration creates incentives and opportunities for corruption. Low public sector wages make state officials susceptible to bribery and corruption* (p. 104). (vi) *Uneven commitment to, ownership of, and leadership for PAR exists across government:* PAR has encountered resistance in some ministries. This resistance is due to the poor understanding of the need for and implications of the PAR process and resistance to the loss of patronage implied by the establishment of a rule-bound civil service (p.123, 124).

The Strategy	(i) The role of the public sector will be to deliver… basic services, rather than engaging in production or trade directly (GoIRA, 2006, p. 71). (ii) The overall PAR program will increasingly move to the provinces and districts. We will make a serious effort to simplify procedures so that civil service reform is better able to succeed (p. 71). (iii) Reliable statistical baselines will be established for all quantitative benchmarks by the first quarter of 1386 (mid-2007), and statistical capacity built to track progress (p.72). (iv) Civil service recruitment must conform to the *Afghanistan Civil Service Law*, which requires all recruitment to be based on merit according to clear criteria. It will be important to ensure the development and adoption of subsidiary regulations, including definitions of competencies required for different grades (p. 105). (v) Implementing the merit-based appointment of civil servants at Grade 2 and above, monitoring ministerial appointments at Grade 3 and lower, increasing wages and benefit packages, creating streamlined and transparent organizational structures, simplifying key rules and procedures, creating effective institutional complaints and redress mechanisms, developing and enforcing a legislative framework that defines civil service ethical standards, terms and conditions of employment and performance, and conflict of interest rules and training to strengthen management skills, understanding the code of ethics, and IT (p.106) (vi) Greater participation of women professionals at all levels of the civil service will give them a voice in policy and decision making, as well as improve the capacity of government as a whole to design and deliver adequate services to female constituents (p.129).
Action and Benchmarks	By the end of 2006: (i) A review of the number of administrative units and their boundaries will be undertaken with the aim of contributing to fiscal sustainability *(GoIRA, 2006, pp. 72, 204, 222)*. By the end of 2010: (ii) The Government machinery (including the number of ministries) will be restructured and rationalized to ensure a fiscally sustainable public administration. (iii) Civil service functions will be reformed to reflect core functions and responsibilities. (iv) CSC will be strengthened *(GoIRA, 2006, pp. 72, 127, 203, 204, 222)*. By the end of 2010 (GoIRA, 2006, pp. 127, 204, 222) and March 2011 (GoIRA, 2008b, p. 420): (v) For civil service positions at all levels of government, the following will be undertaken: • merit-based appointments • vetting procedures and performance-based reviews • annual performance-based reviews for all senior staff (grade 2 and above) starting by the end of 2007 And, a clear and transparent national appointments mechanism will be established within 6 months, applied within 12 months, and fully implemented within 24 months for all senior level appointments

Compiled from the Afghanistan Compact (2006, p. 3); GoIRA (2006, p. 16, 57, 58, 64, 71, 72, 105, 106, 123, 124, 127,129, 203, 204, 222); GoIRA, (2008b, p. 420)

In response to continuous criticism faced by the Afghan government that the international actors had the leadership of the development efforts, and that provision of donor supports were not adequately coordinated with the government, during the London Conference, the representatives of the international community agreed to provide their support based on an internationally recognized mechanism—*Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness* (OECD, 2005). Furthermore, acknowledging the leadership of the Afghan government in setting priorities, representatives of the international community emphasized the need to respect the local context as well as its institutions, culture, traditions, and religion and promised to eliminate duplications, rationalize its activities, ensure and pursue sustainability of its policies, including salaries, and finally harmonize the provision of its Technical Assistance in line with the needs and priorities of the Afghan government. Consequently, both sides agreed to establish a "Joint Coordination and Monitoring Board (JCMB) with the participation of senior Afghan Government officials appointed by the President and representatives of the international community" (The Afghanistan Compact, 2006, pp. 2, 13–15).

On the other hand, suggesting that "hiring and promotion in the civil service… [during socialist regimes from the 1970s to 1990s] largely depended on membership in and loyalty to factions and sub-factions of the ruling party" (GoIRA, 2006, p. 31) and "personnel decisions [in Taleban civil service] were based on neither technical nor professional merit" (p. 32), the Afghan Government blamed and criticized the civil services of the previous socialist and Taleban regimes for almost all the problems faced in the context of public administration. Hence, the government argued that the Afghan administration in 2002 inherited *a partisan civil service, low in capacity and far from merit*. Interestingly, after almost four years of reforms and the implementation of programs such as PRR, the situation in 2006 was reported to be not much different, as the document added that "many civil servants are still recruited through a system of patronage and rarely by merit… this cause corruption by civil servants" (GoIRA, 2006, p. 58). The same statement was reprinted in the 2008 version of the National Development Strategy, highlighting the corruption within the public administration as a key issue. Altogether, concerning promoting meritocracy in recruitment and eliminating or decreasing corruption and patronage, both strategic documents, in 2006 and 2008, suggested that no significant progress was achieved during the first six years of reforms.

As a result of the above-mentioned assessment, increasing "the pace and quality of public administration reform" was defined as the first priority of the governance sector (GoIRA, 2008a, p. 61). Moreover, creation of "a motivated, merit-based, performance-driven, and professional civil service that is resistant to the temptations of corruption and which provides efficient, effective and transparent public services that do not force customers to pay bribes" (GoIRA, 2006, p. 106) was set to be the main civil service related strategic objective. Finally, acknowledging that an increase in civil service salaries would incur further burden on the treasury and contradict the strategic goal of aid-free payment of wages, the strategy suggested that civil service pay-increase and introduction of meritocracy in recruitments were the main tools to reach the strategic goal of having an effective and efficient civil service, as well as for the goal of eliminating corruption. This is exactly the kind of "trade-off" that Pollitt and Bouckaert (2011, p. 2) see as the nature of reform objectives.

Overall, it can be concluded that that by 2008, the core of the government's PAR strategy—in both I-ANDS and ANDS—were defined as reforming the *pay and grading system*, introducing and institutionalizing *merit-based recruitment*, and implementing the annual performance review of civil servants. What exactly was done and to what extent these objectives were achieved are the main topics that will be explained in section 5.4 and 6.1. However, before that, it is essential to explore and explain the first step that paved the way for the implementation of reforms— the establishment of the country's Civil Service Commission.

5.3 Paving the Way for Reforms: Civil Service Commission

> Back in 2002, the notion was that the Afghan government is extremely rigid, not effective, not efficient, the existence of problematic performance and structures, lack of capacity… simply any kind of problems that one could imagine somehow existed in the administration. So, there was a need for urgent wide-range comprehensive reforms for the whole government. Therefore, the first step was to create an independent organization to lead such reforms. (IntV32, Senior Afghan Official, September 1, 2016)

As the creation of the country's Civil Service Commission is considered the first practical step toward the reform of the Afghan civil service, and the fact that the Bonn Agreement's (2001) mandated the AIA to create the organization has been interpreted as a legal justification for post-Taleban reform initiatives, this section discusses the process that led to the establishment of the Commission and explains the legal basis as well as the overall aim of its creation. Furthermore, focusing on the core mandates, duties, and the role of the IARCSC, it provides a review of the organization's structure and development over the past 16 years.

First, I shall discuss the legal basis and the aim for the formation of the Commission. As already discussed in section 5.2.1, the legal basis for the establishment of the Commission was laid out even during the discussions for the creation of the post-Taleban government. Initiated by the US government and mediated by the United Nations, 3 months after the 9/11 attacks, representatives of different Afghan political groups were brought together in Bonn, Germany, to discuss the administration that would replace Taleban. The end result of the meeting was the *Bonn Agreement*, which facilitated the creation of the Afghanistan Interim Authority "as a first step toward the establishment of a broad-based, gender-sensitive, multi-ethnic and fully representative government" (Bonn Agreement, 2001, p. 1). Furthermore, aiming to establish the necessary means to rebuild an effective state capable of providing security and services to Afghan citizens, *state-building* was placed at the heart of Afghanistan's reconstruction agenda. Consequently, PAR, which "in Afghanistan is often equated with Civil Service Reform [CSR]" (World Bank, 2008, pp. vii, 75), became an essential part of the reconstruction agenda.

In line with the above-mentioned agenda, the *Bonn Agreement* obliged the upcoming AIA to establish a new independent unit, initially tasked with the recruitment of high-ranking civil servants, by stating as follows:

> The Interim Administration shall establish, with the assistance of the United Nations, an independent Civil Service Commission to provide the Interim Authority and the future Transitional Authority with shortlists of candidates for key posts in the administrative departments, as well as those of governors and uluswals [district governors], in order to ensure their competence and integrity. (Bonn Agreement, 2001, art III-C-5)

Thus, aiming for "a sound administration, in which civil servants and state officials are recruited based on merit and competence," the government, through Decree No. 257 of the Head of the AIA, May 23, 2002, established the Independent Civil Service Commission (ICSC) and defined its role and underlying structure.

A year later in May 2003, through the *PAR Decree*, the Commission was renamed the Independent Administrative Reform and Civil Service Commission (IARCSC). Acknowledging the existing shortcomings in the civil service and with the intention of building an effective civil service, improving governance and service delivery, and making the Afghan government accountable to its citizens (World Bank, 2008, p. i), the landmark policy paper emphasized the "need for reforms," and thus largely expanded the role of the Commission from a small administrative unit in charge of civil service recruitments to an important policymaking and executive organization for the country's civil service.

Furthermore, to increase the credibility and authority of the Commission among well-established civil service entities such as line ministries, the agency was officially announced as a separate administrative budgetary unit, reporting directly to the head of state meaning all line ministries were obliged to follow and implement the recommended policies and regulations of the Commission. With a status similar to a regular line ministry, over time the legal foundations of the Commission were continuously strengthened through various decrees and legislation, particularly the *Constitution of Afghanistan* (2004), the *Afghanistan Civil Service Law* (2005), and the *Afghanistan Civil Servants Law* (2008).

On the other hand, although the establishment of the Commission is repeatedly mentioned by both the Afghan and foreign stakeholders of reforms as a significant achievement, some practitioners, including the interviewees in this study, criticize the processes that led to its creation as well as its role and nature. First, as the creation of the Commission in the form of an independent administrative unit was mandated by the Bonn Conference, even before the establishment of the administration itself, it left no room for Afghan policymakers and civil service experts to evaluate the possible options and suitable leadership mechanisms for reforms in the Afghan context. Moreover, this crucial decision was taken in an environment in which political interests were prioritized over all other issues, and local or international civil service experts were absent. As discussed in section 2.3.2, while international experiences suggest background research and the analyses of the possible options and approaches as important reform-related factors, an important step such as the creation of a central reform agency involves expert consultations and serious discussions among experts, bureaucrats, and politicians. In the case of Afghanistan, it was a quick decision taken by only one of these groups and without deep thinking. The adverse effects of the decision became apparent many years later. Particularly during the 2004–2015 period, the lack of credibility and authority as well as the inability of the Commission to lead and steward reform processes were indicated by interviewees as some of the core obstacles toward the success of the reforms. Many of these officials believed that these obstacles could have been simply avoided by not creating a new organization for reforms. Instead, the suggestion was that the Afghan CSPAR would have been much successful if the responsibility had been given to an existing line ministry, such as the Ministry of Interior, or a new unit in either the President or Vice-President's office.

Additionally, the large mandate of the Commission is also regarded as a problem. During an interview on October 8, 2016, the IARCSC's Director General for Civil Service Management mentioned as follows:

> The Afghan government could and should separate recruitments from reform, by removing the two Boards of Appointment and Appeals from the body of the Commission. It is due to the existence of these Boards that all our reform efforts and many of our achievements are not seen and shadowed by allegations of corruption in recruitments… everyone's understanding of the Commission is

> limited to that of a recruitment agency of government, while we are much more than this.

A careful review of the Bonn Agreement (2001) shows that it was indeed plausible to keep recruitments separated from policymaking and reform, as the agreement makes no mention of the civil service reform. Alternatively, even if it was a legal mandate for the government to establish an independent reform agency, "a build-on approach could be acquired instead of starting from scratch zero" (IntV24, March 29, 2016). As the interview source added, the administration and its international partners could build on the COCSAR, which "was operational prior to the Taleban era and had a history of more than 20 years of performance." As discussed in section 4.2, the organization had been established in 1977 for the exact purposes that the IARCSC was created, and all the necessary laws and regulations for its performance were already in place. Therefore, as a finding of this study, the environment under which the Commission was created and the processes that led to determining its tasks and features were characterized by an apparent lack of political interest to evaluate and adopt systems and mechanisms of the past, the exclusion of local experts who had worked in previous administrations and knew the system and its features very well, and a general lack of knowledge and misunderstanding about the past Afghan civil service.

On the other hand, partially related to above-mentioned points, the interviews with Afghan officials involved in the process reveals a lack of vision before, during, and after the establishment of the Commission. The AIA was initially tasked to establish the Commission and was under pressure by donors to launch reforms, while it had neither the plan nor the required expertise to do so. Therefore, although the official establishment of the Commission was announced in May 2002, "after a considerable period of uncertainty about its role and responsibilities" (Hakimi et al., 2004, p. 6), its actual establishment took place more than a year later in June 2003. Moreover, several interviewees suggest that this ambiguity and lack of clarity continued at least for several years after the creation of the Commission, with some indicating 2009 as the time when the vision became clear and others believing that the Commission still (2015–2016) does not have a clear vision for the civil service. It is worth noting that even though multiple strategic documents of the administrations (see section 5.2) discuss various aspects of the desired civil service, it seems that there have been no, or at least not enough, efforts to clarify and elaborate the specifics. Alternatively, referring to one of his visits to the IARCSC, a senior international advisor

interviewed for this research stated that "details were there… I saw a 300-page strategy in English prepared by an international consultant. It was on the shelf gathering dust; nobody bothered to translate it or even look at it" (IntV12, March 17, 2016). This account suggests that details were not communicated to directors and managers. Some interviewees go further by asserting that "even some part of the Commission's leadership circle was not aware of those visionary statements and their translation for components of specific reform programs or for daily works of the Commission" (IntV14, Sep 1, 2015; IntV06, Mar 6, 2016). Consequently, at least until 2009, the line ministries lacked proper knowledge about the vision of the Commission for the country's civil service and were not provided with the interpretation of relevant points of these strategic documents, which were usually drafted and approved at higher levels of the government.

Second, the extensive mandate given to the Commission is a relevant topic of discussion. The IARCSC has been officially in charge of all HR as well as the structural aspects of Afghan civil service. The IARCSC was, until March 2016,[36] the sole authority for the recruitment of senior civil servants in almost all line ministries central ministries. Additionally, as a result of the *PAR Decree* (2003, art 1), "designing, proposing, leading and implementing comprehensive Public Administration Reforms (PAR)" were defined as the core tasks and duties of the Commission. Moreover, the *Afghanistan Civil Servants Law* (2008) states that "monitoring and evaluations of all promotions, transfer, retirement, and salary determinations" are also among the tasks of the IARCSC (art 11, 34, 35*)*. The Commission also held the main responsibility of defining and restructuring the pay and grades within the civil service. As a result of all these provisions, the IARCSC emerged not only as a policymaker and observer of the upcoming reforms but also as an organization with a significant executive role.

Nevertheless, asserting that the Commission "wrongly started with a huge mandate," a senior official of the Commission concluded that such a large mandate was not necessary (IntV07,

[36] When the authority of recruitments for high-ranking civil servants was delegated to respective line ministries, leaving the IARCSC with only a monitoring role

Aug 22, 2015). The issue and its consequences have also been highlighted in an internal document of the Commission from 2007 as follows:

> The size and complexity of the reform task… further contributes to perceptions amongst many commentators that the Commission is ineffective… in delivering the Government's vision. As a result, many donors and line ministries (often supported by donors) undertake separate initiatives about PAR without engaging fully with the IARCSC. This has consequences for consistency and comprehensiveness in the implementation of PAR... [Moreover,] in its present form it lacks effective control over the large and complex PAR agenda. This is due to weaknesses in its organizational structure, internal coordination and a fundamental lack of in-house capacity about strategy and policy development.

I shall discuss now discuss the organizational setup and development of the Commission. In 2002, the Decree No. 257 of the head of Afghanistan's Interim Authority on the creation of the Commission defined that the organization would comprise nine members referred to as Commissioners to be "gradually appointed based on their scientific expertise and years of experience." Furthermore**,** based on article 4 of Decree No. 26 of the head of the Transitional Islamic State of Afghanistan (2003) the Commission would be composed of four main units, as demonstrated below in Figure 5.11. (A complete organizational chart of the IARCSC is provided in Appendix E).

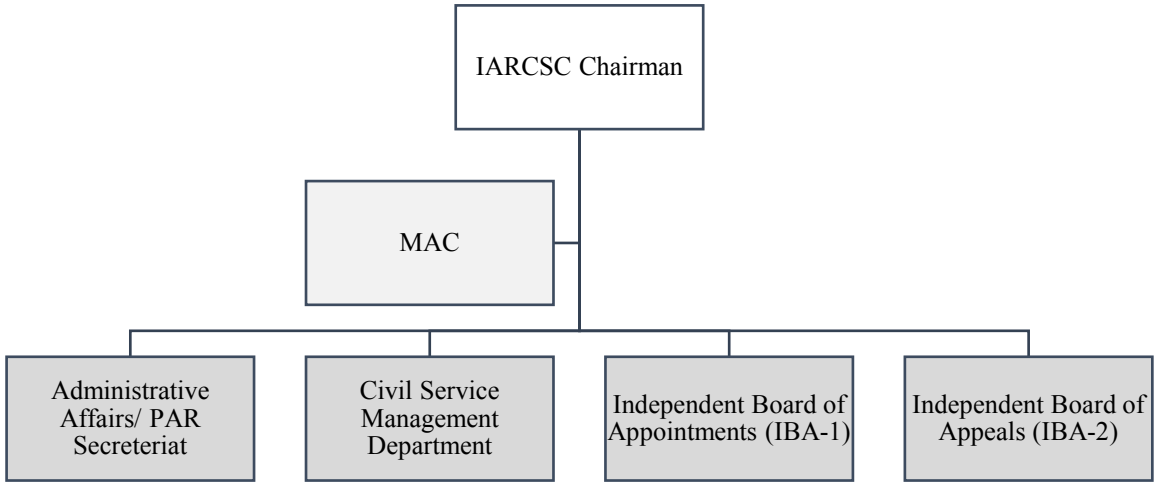

Figure 5.11. Main Components of the IARCSC, 2003. Accumulated from the Transitional Islamic State of Afghanistan (2003).

As shown above, the Independent Board of Appointments (IBA-1) and Independent Board of Appeals (IBA-2) constituted the first and the most critical unit of the Commission. According to the regulation, composed of five commissioners, IBA-1 was (2002–2016) responsible for the "recruitments of high-ranking civil servants—Grades 1 and 2—as well as supervision and monitoring of recruitments for lower than Grade-2 positions" of line ministries through its recruitment specialists. Meanwhile, IBA-2 comprised three commissioners and was responsible for "processing complaints of civil servants regarding illegal, discriminative and/or unfair treatment, corruption, and favoritism," particularly during the recruitment processes in line ministries. On the other hand, the Civil Service Management Department was tasked with the "formulation and implementation of all procedures and policies regarding the civil service as well as drafting necessary legal frameworks" such as the Afghanistan Civil Service Law *(2005).* Finally, the general directorate of the Administrative Reform Secretariat (ARS) would assist the MAC[37] and head the IARCSC in the leadership and management of reforms, as well as receive quarterly reports on the implementation of reform programs and projects from line ministries and submit them to the MAC and the Chairman of the IARCSC.

According to a senior Afghan official, following the official decree on the establishment of the Commission, the organization practically started its work months later when "a small group of Afghans mostly from NGOs and IGOs was recruited by the financial and technical support of the USAID and received several months of training and mentoring regarding some basic aspects such are civil service systems, HR, policy and reform" (IntV22, October 4, 2016). Mainly due to the "uncertainty about its role and responsibilities," almost two years after its foundation, the IARCSC had 60 staff, which was about one-third of what was initially projected (Hakimi et al., 2004, p. 6). Interestingly, the number of the Commission's staff rapidly increased in three years, and by 2007, it had 530 employees. However, according to an internal document of the Commission, in 2007, this number was 52% (181 positions) more than the advised and planned number of 349. A continuous increase in the number of the Commission's staff can also be observed in the IARCSC's official Tashkeel from the 2005–2016 period, which is shown below in

[37] A Steering Committee to advice and support the Chairman of the IARCSC in the leadership of reforms composed of eight ministers (MoFA, MoI, MoF, MoJ, MoLSAMD) and three other ministers based on annual rotation

Figure 5.12. It should be noted again that the actual number of staff has been higher than the officially approved positions. For example, comparing the above-mentioned number of 530 staff in 2007 with the respective number of approved Tashkeel positions for the same year in Figure 5.12., a difference of 81 is evident, and due to the absence of an electronic database, it is unclear whether these 81 staff really existed or not.

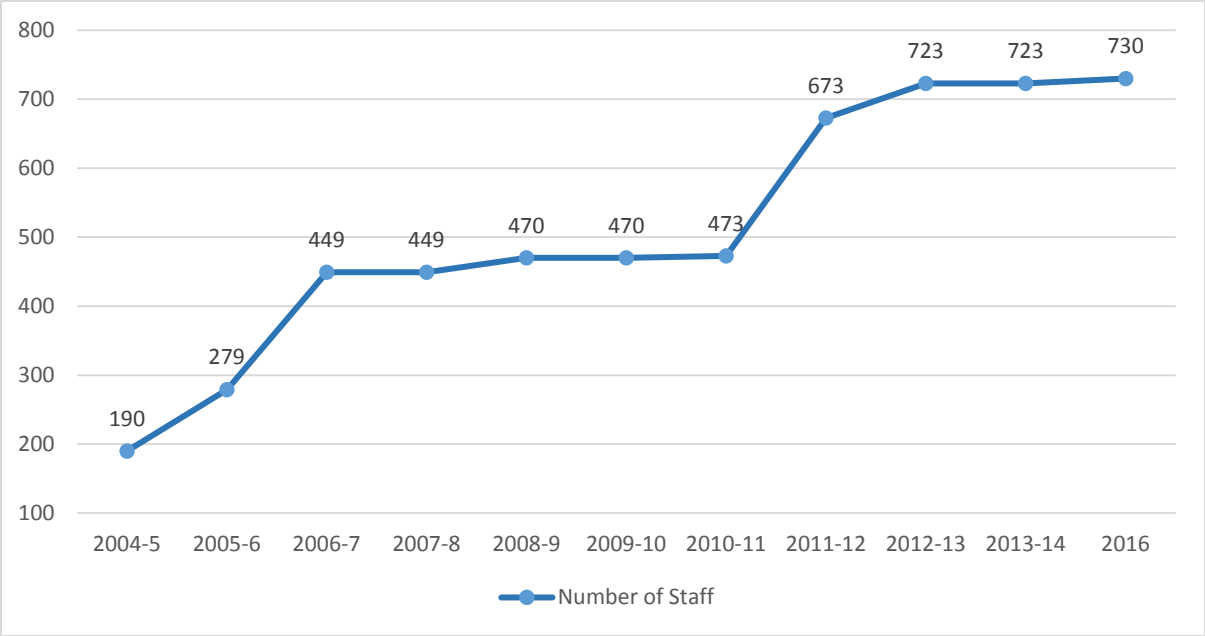

Figure 5.12. IARCSC Tashkeel, 2005–2016.

The continuous increase in the number of IARCSC staff is mainly due to three reasons: (1) the expansion of operations to the subnational level as well as an increase in the number of reform efforts, which would naturally require extra staff, (2) the effort on the part of the administration to show the donors it was committed to achieving the benchmarks and promises given through various strategic documents and events discussed in section 5.2, and (3) the change in the leadership of the Commission in 2004 that consequently led to the politicization of the organization and unnecessary recruitments to provide employment opportunities to favored individuals or fulfill the interests of specific groups.

Elaborating on the last factor, the fact that almost two years after its creation, the Commission in 2004 recruited only one-third of the projected number of its employees indicates that while the roles and functions of the Commission were ambiguous, the recruitment processes of the Commission staff were conducted more thoroughly. As suggested by an interviewee, Dr.

Arsala,[38] and his close circle at the leadership of the Commission, "though we cared about the suggestions of the World Bank and the USAID, they were keen to create a professional organization that could be a role model for the rest of the civil service" (IntV22, October 4, 2016). However, due to its crucial role in the appointment of senior officials in all ministries at both the national and subnational levels, dominant figures and political parties soon began to interfere in the affairs of the Commission. In an interview conducted for the research, an Afghan Parliamentarian, who had also worked as a minister in the previous government, suggests that the first leadership of the Commission (2002–2004) was "very competent but partly not interested and partly afraid of losing its popularity due to increasing political interference in the affairs of the Commission. That is why Mr. Arsala preferred to leave the Commission" (IntV02, September 2, 2015). The source continues to explain the problem by adding that the 2004 elections gave an opportunity to Mr. Arsala to leave the Commission. The person who replaced him and eventually became the second head of the Commission (2004–2017) had been initially nominated as the Minister of Interiors, but as he did not hold a higher education degree,[39] his rejection by the upcoming Parliament was recognized as a problem. On the other hand, due to political reasons, he needed to have a ministerial position within the administration, and as the CSC was an important organization equivalent to a line ministry and the appointment of its head did not require the approval of the Parliament, he was appointed as the new chair. This move was a clear violation of a previous Presidential decree issued by the same President that civil service commissioners—the chair being one of them—would be "appointed based on their scientific expertise and years of experience."

Consequently, under the new leadership, only two years after its establishment, a period of decline started. The Commission became even more politicized; recruitments became unprofessional, and certain political parties and ethnic groups were given privilege. Tamas (2010),

[38] Along with his responsibilities as the Vice President, he (who is 'he') chaired the Commission from its establishment in 2003 until December 2004 when he was appointed as Minister of Commerce. As a senior employee of the WB, he had more than 20 years of work experience with the bank and was also one of the 25 main participants of the Bonn Conference.

[39] Enrolled as student of medicine in one of Afghan universities in 1980s but quit his studies to join Afghan Jihad

a senior international policy advisor who has worked with the Afghan government for several years, describes the situation in the aftermath of the leadership change as follows:

> Committed leaders and mid-level officials were harassed by those in power who wanted positions of privilege for their friends, and they soon began leaving the Commission. Its senior leadership was replaced by people whose values were not consistent with the requirements of their positions. Political pressure and appointment of incompetent leaders in a number of key posts retarded the country's rehabilitation process, with serious consequences. (p. 10)

Thus, although the IARCSC was the organization in charge of implementing the reforms to introduce, promote, and institutionalize norms such as meritocracy, competence, the separation of politics from civil service appointments, it was criticized for being committed to none of these norms. Moreover, according to an internal document of the IARCSC, shared during one of the interviews in the organization, 69% of the Commission's personnel in 2007 were on approved PRR positions at Grade-2 level or above, and 9 AEP and 4 LEP appointments had been made to key roles within the Commission. This indicates that although the Commission urged the line ministries not to upgrade their positions for the purpose of securing more financial resources and doing so only if it was necessary for a better performance, it exempted itself from the rule. According to regulations, the Commission approves the grades of civil service positions and in all line ministries. The question is who approves the positions of the Commission. Moreover, based on the existing laws and regulations, unlike Afghan line ministries, which are accountable to the Parliament and several other state organizations, the Commission is accountable to no entity, except the head of state.

According some interviewees of this research, owing to the politicization and corrupt practices, the capacity of the Commission, after 16 years of operation and securing millions of dollars of aid, is perceived to be low, which consequently created three major problems: (1) the inability of the Commission to deliver its extensive mandate, which is an arduous task even for an efficient and ideal Commission; (2) the high dependency of the Commission, caused by the lack of capacity, particularly until 2009, on both local actors, such as the MoF, which as the second custodian of reforms usually dominates the whole process, and international players such as the WB, which generally has an active role wherever the MoF is involved; and (3) the inability to

enforce the Commission's legal authority and increase its credibility, due to its low capacity. Hence, line ministries, particularly those headed by powerful ministers, continue to ignore the Commission, its decisions, and its policies. The review of documents and interview data suggest that such undermining of authority happens regularly and has various forms, including not complying with the regulations and policy documents introduced by the Commission, choosing not to officially respond to the Commission's letters and official requests for weeks and months, not sharing data on the number of actual staff, not activating or updating the Human Resources Management Information System (HRMIS) on purpose, securing approval for a desired Tashkeel by keeping the Commission out of the loop and directly approaching the Presidential office.

To conclude, the establishment of the IARCSC has undoubtedly paved the way for reforms and facilitated the implementation of multiple reform programs over the past 16 years. Thus, the current civil service is in no way similar to that of 2002. However, structural problems, an extensive mandate, politicization, and alleged corruption even brought the Commission to the edge of dissolution. In addition, an internal document of the IARCSC from 2007, which was shared by an interviewee, provides a long list of problems and inadequacies existed in the Commission, which is partially reprinted below:

- Lack of an updated and regularly reviewed strategic plan
- Lack of a clear civil service model and vision for the future of the Afghanistan civil service to work toward
- Insufficient communication with international consultants on issues such as the revision of civil service law, among others, where their inputs would have been invaluable
- Insufficient coordination amongst its departments, and with the line ministries
- Suitability problems with the works done to date
- No national staff counterparts have ever been nominated to work closely with international consultants to gain valuable coaching and mentoring skills transfer.
- International consultants have been frequently treated as staff and asked to perform ad-hoc duties such as conduct research, provide papers, assist with

budgets, write reports for benchmark requirements, etc. Usually, after the papers have been presented, further follow up has been nonexistent.

- Many senior management personnel have benefited from training and development not relevant to their job.
- The termination of some team leaders and consultants without due process or adequate explanation

Owing to the above-mentioned reasons and many other issues, according to two senior officials of the Commission, President Ashraf Ghani upon his inauguration in 2014 decided to dissolve the Commission; however, the sources add that due to legal obstacles and the objection of the international community, the President in 2016 decided to delegate the executive authorities of the Commission to the respective line ministries and, meanwhile, change the entire leadership of the IARCSC. Nevertheless, the fact that it took about one year for the new leadership, despite the existence of a Presidential order, to take office explains the scale of the problem. The UNDP's (2014) *Assessment of Development Results* states that the IARCSC "was created with the aim of building a public administration that is sound, functional, transparent, effective, accountable, responsible, apolitical and impartial" (p. 59). However, as discussed in this section, the opposite of these norms largely holds for the 2004–2017 period of the Commission. The situation of the rest of the civil service will be discussed in the next section and chapter.

5.4 Main Reform Programs and Their Outputs and Consequences

> Whether making policy, delivering services, or administering contracts, capable, motivated staff is the lifeblood of an effective state. Civil servants can be motivated to perform effectively through a combination of mechanisms to encourage internal competition: a recruitment system based on merit, not favoritism; a merit-based internal promotion system; adequate compensation. (World Bank, 1997, p. 9)

This section introduces and discusses the main post-Taleban CSR programs inspired and guided by the above-mentioned rationale. Moreover, it explores the main outputs and (unintended) consequences of the programs, which were designed and implemented in the form of expensive three-year projects, funded by donors, and technically assisted by the World Bank and IGOs.

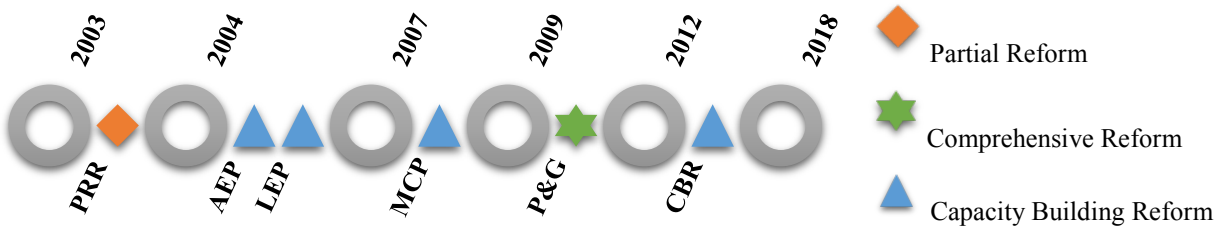

Figure 5.13. Timeline and Types of Afghan CSPAR Programs (2003–2018)

In Figure 5.13., the reform programs are categorized into three groups: partial reform (PRR), comprehensive reform (P&G), and reforms under capacity-building schemes (AEP, LEP, MCP, and CBR). In the following sections, I review and explain each of these reform programs.

5.4.1 Priority Reform and Restructuring (PRR)

The reform of the Post-Taleban civil service practically started in July 2003 when the PRR program was launched and eventually became a core element of the Afghan PAR (GoIRA, 2006, p. 35), as its implementation was later defined as a precondition for the major upcoming reforms (IARCSC, 2008a, p. 4) in every line ministry. According to the PRR Decree[40], the overall aim of the program was "to design and implement comprehensive reforms of structures and pay and grading schemes of civil servants for the central as well as provincial administrations of the country." Suggesting the mechanism previously discussed in section 5.2.4. and demonstrated in Figure 5.9., article one of the decrees invited line ministries to forward their proposals for the reform and restructuring of their key directorates or the whole ministry to the Civil Service Commission. Furthermore, the proposals had to be accompanied by a list of "competent candidates, selected based on merit," to fill the positions in the reformed units on "temporary" but relatively high salary top-ups (art 2). These proposals would then be assessed by the MAC (art 3), which would approve only the proposals that met the following conditions:

- The proposed positions for salary top-ups were characterized by the following:

[40] Decree No. 33 of the head of Afghanistan Transitional State, dated 12 July 2003, and published in Official Gazette No. 810 on 21 August 2003

    - strategic importance
    - a substantial role in the effectiveness of organizational performance
- The proposed candidates were characterized by the following:
    - selection based on merit
    - proven competence

Directly designed by foreign advisors (IntV01, July 16, 2015; IntV21, September 7, 2016) and having "some elements in common with the more advanced reforms implemented by many OECD countries" (Hakimi et al., 2004, p. 2), a "persuasion rather than coercion" approach of Scandinavian countries (Christensen et al., 2007, p. 132) was adopted to encourage the participation of line ministries in the PRR program. But what exactly did the program require the ministries to do and what was offered in exchange?

Within the framework of the PRR program, the participating line ministries and departments had to take concrete steps toward the standardization and modernization of their organizational structures and internal procedures as per the agreed plan. Updating and, if absent, developing vision, mission, and strategy documents as well as reviewing and developing a clear and logical Tashkeel, and job description in line with those documents are the examples of the kind of tasks the ministries were asked to do. In exchange, the PRR program offered a much higher remuneration scale for civil service positions in those reformed units and ministries. Before exploring the PRR remuneration system, it would be useful to examine the existent remuneration scheme, which was first revised and raised in late 2003 as shown below in Figure 5.14.

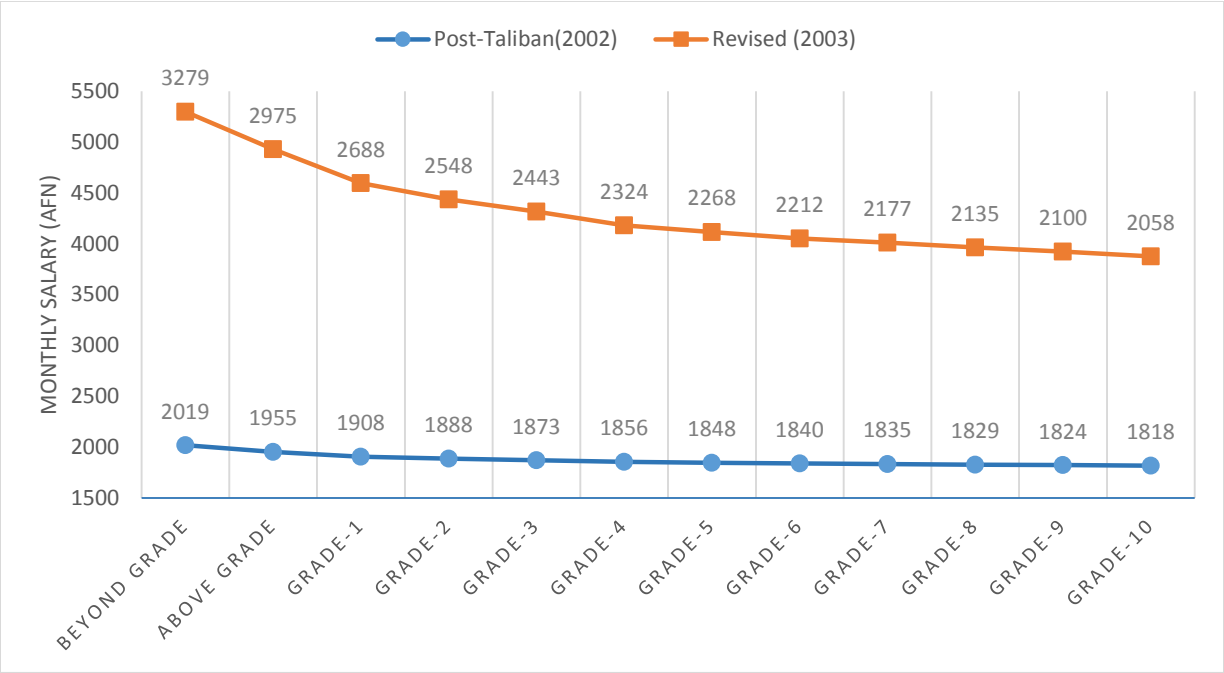

Figure 5.14. Pre-Reform Monthly Salaries of Afghan Civil Servants as per Grades, 2003. Adapted from Evans et al. (2004, p. 53)

Also, as shown above, the pre-2002 Afghan administration used a 13-grade remuneration system in which the most senior position in a given ministry belonged to the minister, who was politically appointed and thus had the official status of *out-of-grade*. The next step in the hierarchy was the *beyond-grade* status, mostly used for deputy minister and general directors and followed by *above-grade* status, which was used for directors. Following these three statuses, ten grades were used for the remuneration and promotion of civil servants, with grade-1 being the senior most and grade-10 the junior most. Without changing the grading system, the PRR program introduced a new and increased pay scale officially titled as *Interim Additional Allowance* (IAA). With the essential aims of retaining the existing capacity within the civil service and preventing civil servants from going to NGOs and the private sector, the PRR program through its IAA scheme first decompressed the pay scale (See Figure 5.15.) and then introduced financial incentives to motivate civil servants and ideally improve service delivery.

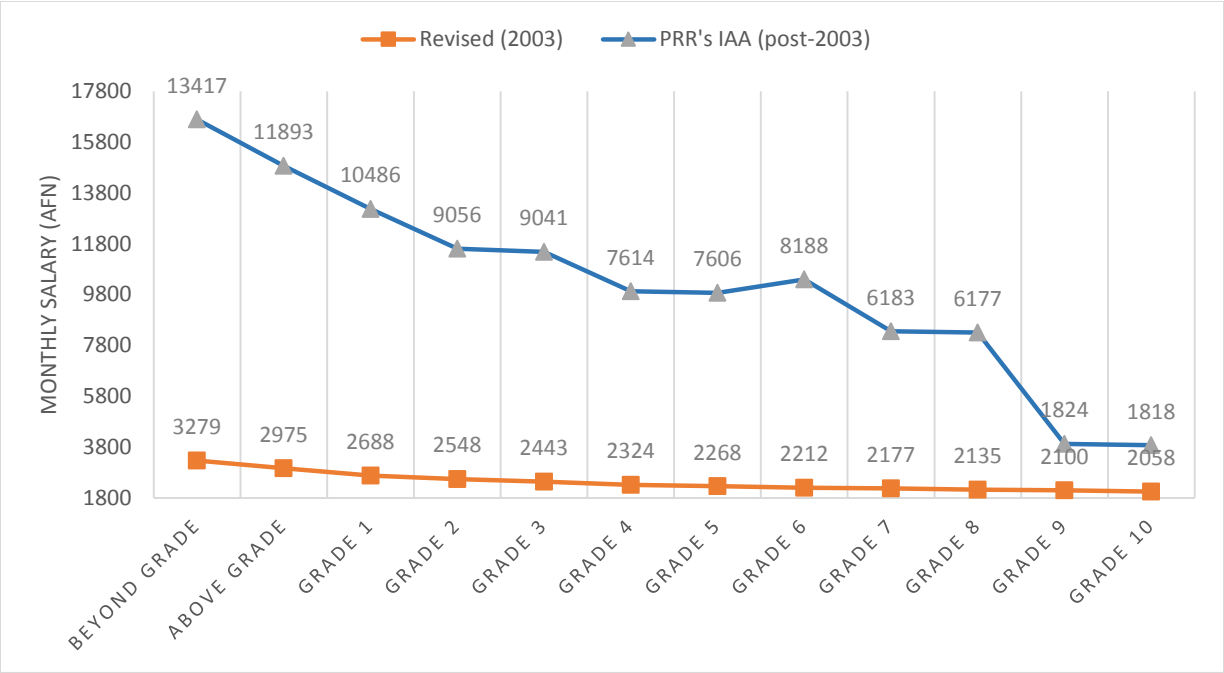

Figure 5.15. Comparative Salaries of Afghan Civil Servants Before and After the PRR Program. Compiled from Evans et al. (2004, pp. 53, 54)

On the other hand, the European Commission, DFID, and WB were the major contributors to the PRR (ADB, 2003, p. 2) and pledged a total of $52 million for the first two years of the program implementation, which would be managed through *Civil Service Reform Fund*. Based on official reports, by 2003, a total of 1653 civil servants were placed on PRR's IAA pay scale, a number which by the end of the same year would increase to 5,000 (ADB et al., 2004, p. 60). Finally, the total number of civil servants supposed to benefit from PRR' upraised pay scale was planned to be 30,000 (Tondini, 2007, p. 350).

Regarding the implementation of the program, although the official PRR decree suggested the voluntary participation of all line ministries with no exception, priority was given to the key ministries responsible for reconstruction and major service deliveries. Grouped as first-tier ministries, they were the MoF, Ministry of Rural Development, MoE, MoPH, and Ministry of Communications (ADB et al., 2004, p. 103). By the end of 2004, the source adds, the proposed reform plans of each first-tier ministries were received and approved by the IARCSC. According to the same source, the second-tier ministries to adopt PRR were key infrastructure ministries such

as the Ministry of Energy, MoPW, Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation, and Ministry of Urban Development (p. 103). In general, the MoPH, MoPW, MRRD were the leading ministries to use PRR for an "organizational-wide reform" (p. 61).

However, the review of documents and interview data suggest that the implementation of PRR was neither smooth nor as planned. Tondini (2007, p. 350) reports that by the end of 2004, out of the planned 30,000 staff, only 8,017 in 10 line ministries and two independent agencies were covered by the PRR scale. An overview of the National Development Strategy (GoIRA, 2008a, 2008b) shows that almost six years after the start of the PRR program in 2003, the long-delayed implementation of the program in some line ministries, such as the MoMP and MoE, has been an important concern of the government. Thus, the strategy defined the implementation of PRR as one of the first priorities of these ministries for 2009. Years later, in 2016, the situation was not much different either. Although the majority of top officials interviewed in the 2015–2016 period suggested that the program was never entirely implemented, they were unable to provide concrete data on the scale and degree of its implementation.

Regarding the reasons, first, no consensus exists on the timeline of the PRR program, which resulted in contradictory statements and reports about when and which ministry adopted the program. Second, implementation, generally in the context of Afghan CSR over the past 16 years, neither means that the target organizations necessarily met the conditions and benchmarks defined by the program nor it means that the prescriptions of the programs were applied as instructed. In addition to various reports, the majority of experts and civil servants interviewed for this research pointed out *superficial implementation,* particularly in the ministries that were not the first tier. Interview data suggests that superficial implementation has been a serious issue with respect to the PRR and resulted mainly due to the following factors: (1) PRR implementation being set by international donors as a precondition for their financial and technical support to individual line ministries, (2) the pressure from the center of the government, (3) the trend of following the majority and thus gaining legitimacy in the eyes of national and international stakeholders, and (4) the lack of follow-up and tracing mechanisms to check if the ministries had really implemented what they officially reported.

Results and consequences of PRR. Contrary to the initial optimism that the PRR program would lead toward a "better trained, better paid, and more highly motivated pockets of high

performance in the administration"(ADB et al., 2004:59) and despite the fact that almost all the Afghan senior officials, including those interviewed in the course of this research, consider it as "the most successful reform program of Afghan CSR," which hoped to contribute to "keeping the lid upon further and unsustainable levels of migration of large numbers of good government employees into a highly distorted post-conflict donor-funded labor market… referred to as the parallel administration" (Hakimi et al., 2004, p. 29,30), the real success and achievements of the program are questionable. Considering it an "asymmetric reform," the country's I-ANDS, in 2006, asserted that "the PRR process have delivered only partial improvements" (GoIRA, 2006, p. 124). Furthermore, from the perspective of an "extended concept of effects" (Christensen et al., 2007, pp. 144–163), introduced in section and Table 3.2., and based on the findings of this research, the PRR program raised serious concerns and had consequences. As demonstrated below in Figure 5.17., mainly due to its unsustainable and ad-hoc approach, the program led to a further decrease in the already low number of female civil servants and, more importantly, contributed to the growth of an already troubling parallel civil service.

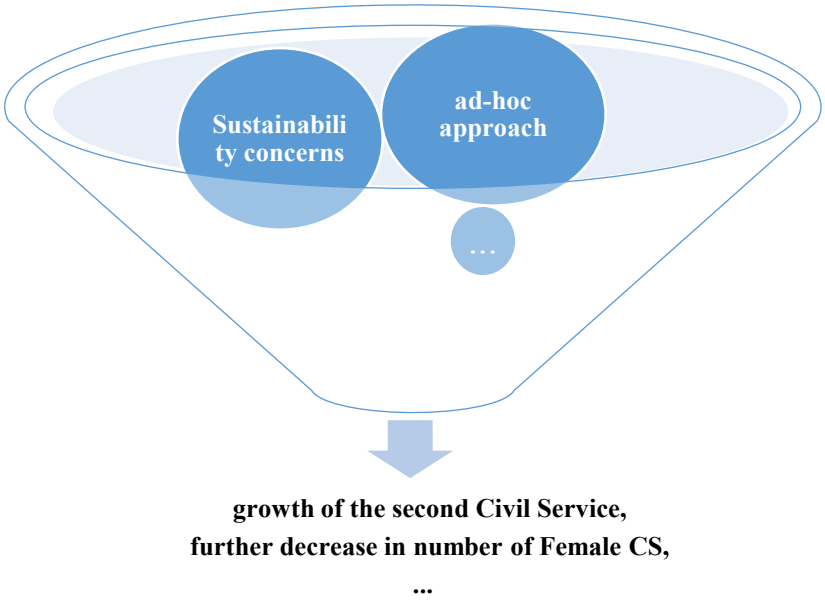

Figure 5.16. Main Challenges and Consequences of PRR.

The growth of a parallel civil service. Following the establishment of the AIA in 2002, and in the absence of an appropriate coordination mechanism, the international actors including

IFIs, NGOs, and IGOs began supporting individual line ministries involved in traditional government works, including service delivery, coordination, monitoring and implementation of projects. Therefore, in addition to assigning their international staff, the international actors started to inject capacity into the civil service by hiring or re-hiring some local personnel to work as civil servants or paying salary top-ups much higher than the original salaries to a portion of already existing civil servants. The establishment of the so-called Project Implementation Units in almost all line ministries is just an example of such arrangements that created a second civil service within or outside the existing civil service. In the absence of clear mechanisms, the interviewees of this research suggest that not only the recruitment of these individuals were directly performed by the donors but also the payment of their salaries were made without proper involvement of the Afghan government. Moreover, the sources add, the donors chose specific departments, such as HR or finance, or particular groups of civil servants, such as directors, under-directors, and managers, to pay additional allowances multiple times more than the usual salary paid by the government. According to the Commission, the second or parallel civil service composed of "a large number of Afghan professionals who were on the payrolls of bilateral donors or who were donor-funded consultants and contractors but who were, in fact, working as de-facto civil servants in various line ministries" (2010, p. 3).

It was under these circumstances that the PRR implementation was started. Identified as bringing the official fragmentation of the pay system in the Afghan civil service, the PRR through its ad-hoc approach added a second layer to the pay scale for a small part of the civil servants, which according to the interviewees, created serious tensions within and among the departments and employees of the civil service. Resultantly, three separate pay scales and two types of civil service positions started to co-exist: a non-structured pay scale for mostly temporary positions directly funded by the donors, permanent positions on the PRR pay scale, and permanent positions on the general civil service pay scale. Moreover, some interviewees suggested that due to the lack of coordination and proper tracking mechanisms, some positions or servants benefitted from direct donor payments while being on either the PPR or general pay scale. As a result of these three layers of payments for personnel, who were sometimes doing the same job, a hostile working environment was created in which a majority of experienced civil servants, who financially became the most disadvantaged, began showing resistance toward the reforms and/or decided not to cooperate with the departments as well as employees benefiting from higher pay scales. As a

final note in this regard, it is essential to acknowledge that the elimination of the already existing second civil service due to the uncoordinated ad-hoc intervention of the donors was precisely one of the main objectives of the program. However, the principal criticism is that the PRR program not only failed to reduce the size of parallel civil service but also enlarged it by adding another layer of the pay scale, leading to a more fragmented pay system.

Further reduction in the number of female civil servants. Although it is unclear how, it seems that as an unintended consequence of the PRR program, a considerable number of the already few female servants were dismissed from the civil service. The issue was officially acknowledged almost five years later in 2008 when the government through its *ANDS* urged some line ministries to re-recruit female civil servants laid off as a result of the program. For example, both the MoE and MoHE were tasked to train "all female teachers who were separated from service during the PRR process and re-employ them" (GoIRA, 2008a, pp. 224, 225), and the IARCSC was tasked to include "women laid off by the PRR processes" in its Capacity Building Program by 2010 (GoIRA, 2008a, p. 194; 2008b, p. 417). However, no official evidence is publicly available as to what extent these plans were followed.

Ad-hoc approach and sustainability problem. Immediately after the advent of PRR implementation, owing to the financial incentives it offered, more and more departments and line ministries submitted their proposals to the CSC so that their staff could benefit from its high pay scale. Another explanation for the enthusiasm of the line ministries toward the PRR program can be explained by the general tendency of public organizations of following the trend to ultimately gain more legitimacy in their institutional environment (Christensen et al., 2007, p. 124,129), which, in this case, consisted of other line ministries and the donor community. Consequently, the number of qualified proposals and positions to benefit from the IAA increased unexpectedly as, "ministries started to compete [with] each other," (IntV22, October 4, 2016) which was a positive effect. Indeed, one of the main objectives of the PRR program was to pave the way for voluntary reforms of the ministries, rather than forcing them. However, the unexpected increase in the number of departments willing to implement the PRR program in the first year (2003) became a serious problem in terms of management and financing. Thus, in 2004, the IARCSC was instructed by the Presidential not to approve further proposals from those ministries and units whose PRR costs exceed the amounts provided for this purpose in the last year [2003]" (IntV22, October 4,

2016). Therefore, although civil servants on PRR composed only a few percentages of the overall civil service positions, sustainability was a major question. On the other hand, as discussed in section 5.2, the deepening and widening of the PRR program to the entire civil service were defined as an overall PAR strategy, which would mean that the scale of the problem would enormously grow in the course of next years. Although reaching the PRR goal of "retaining capacity and having motivated civil servants" through financial incentives was expected to be costly, the argument is that the reforms and restructuring efforts in the line ministries were mostly superficial, and the PRR program turned into a tool by which specific groups of civil servants could gain more financial benefits.

To conclude, as shown below in Table 5.6., the PRR program had partial "expected results, plus risks" (cell 3).

Table 5.6.

Outputs and Effects of PRR (2003)

		Main Goal(s)		
		Positive	***None***	***Negative***
Side-Effects	***None***	(1) Expected result	(4) No result	(7) Negative result
	Positiv	(2) Expected result plus bonus	(5) No expected results, plus bonus	(8) Negative results plus bonus
	Negative	(3) **Expected result plus risk** (+) initiation of the structural and functional review (+) partly motivated civil servants (-) dismissal of some female civil servants (-) the growth of a parallel civil service (-) fragmentation of the remuneration system	(6) No expected results plus risk	(9) Negative results plus risk

As discussed, the program tended to pave the way for future reforms by encouraging line ministries to review, rationalize, and standardize their structures and positions. Although the implementation quality is questionable, many line ministries followed the instructions of the program. Moreover, at least those employees who directly benefited were motivated by the financial incentives of the program. On the negative side, the fragmentation of the civil service pay system by adding a different pay scale led to the growth of a parallel civil service, which

consequently demotivated the majority of the civil servants. Interestingly, according to an internal document of the IARCSC, in 2007, some of these issues had already been noticed in the early years of the program's implementation, and despite the internal suggestions to introduce proper management mechanisms to improve the program, no particular action was taken.

5.4.2 Reforms to inject capacity

In 2004, parallel to the implementation of the PRR program, the Afghan government and its international partners launched a series of programs that aimed at accelerating the reforms and, more importantly, addressing the existing capacity gap at the senior and middle levels of the civil service. The programs were the Afghan Expatriate Program (AEP) (2004–2007), its complement the Lateral Entry Program (LEP) (2004–2007), the Management Capacity Program (MCP) (2007–2011), which was a merger of the previous two, and the Capacity Building for Results (CBR) (2011–2018). In the following sections, I discuss each of these projects in more detail.

Afghan Expatriate Program (AEP) and Lateral Entry Program (LEP). Considered as the two essential components of Afghanistan's reform strategy, the AEP together with the LEP primarily involve the "recruitment of qualified Afghans… [as advisors and officials] in senior and middle management line positions in government ministries and agencies" (IARCSC, 2006, p. 1) to address capacity problems and "normalize [the] terms and conditions for the second [parallel] civil service" (IARCSC, 2010, p. 4).

Approved in May 2002 and launched in July 2004, the AEP would hire about 60 expatriates to work as advisors in line ministries for a period of two years (Scanteam Analysts and Advisers, 2005, p. 28). Thus, a total of $15 million—$10 million at the beginning of the project in 2004 and $5 million in 2006—was allocated through Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund (ARTF) mainly to cover the salary payments of these individuals. It's worth noting that in comparison to the existing salary scales in the civil service, which was approximately $60/month on the regular scale and $200/month on PRR's *Super scale* for the highest civil service position (Grade 1), the AEP recruits secured much higher salaries varying from $500 to $7,000 per month. On the other hand, the LEP, which was approved in December 2004 would recruit a total of 1,500 individuals (Scanteam Analysts and Advisers, 2005, p. 28) —100 during its 6-month-long pilot phase and 1,400 during the second phase. These individuals would be assigned to "Civil Service Grades 2 to

4 on two-year contracts attracting an enhanced salary of up to $2,000 per month" (IARCSC, 2010, p. 3). Thus, the IARCSC requested a total of $64.7 million, out of which $3 million (granted in December 2004) would be essential to meet the target of recruiting 100 staff during the pilot phase.

On the other hand, with respect to the management of these projects, Figure 5.17. shows the working structure defined for the implementation of the project.

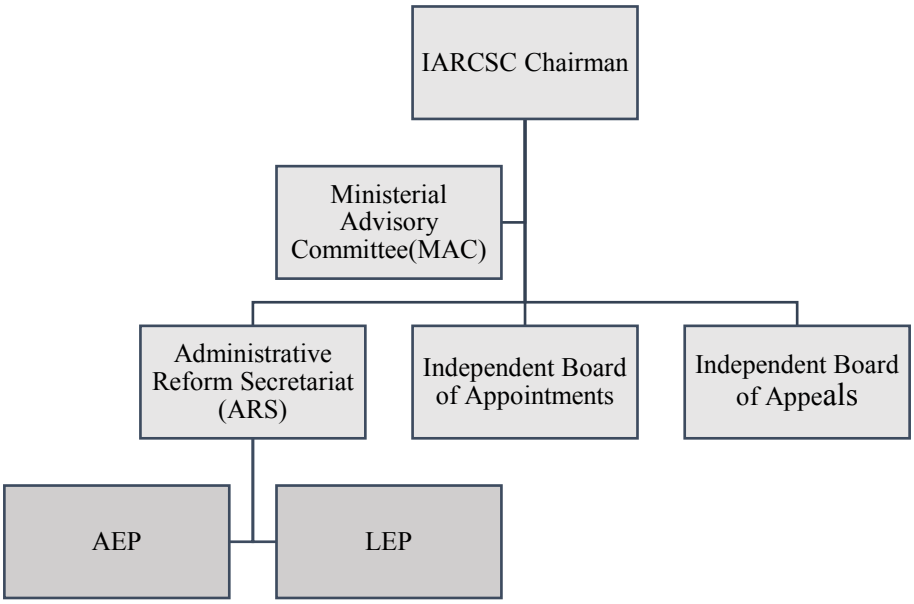

Figure 5.17. Defined Working Arraignment for AEP and LEP. Adapted from IARCSC (2006, p.

5)

Officially, the Chairman of the IARCSC, assisted by the already existing MAC, was in charge of the project. Moreover, two independent units of AEP and LEP were established under the structure of the Commission's Administrative Reform Secretariat (ARS), to manage each of the programs. Finally, due to the fact that both the programs fundamentally concerned recruitment, the Commission's IAB-1 and IAB-2 were defined as the close partners of the AEP and LEP units. However, contrary to the official documents and the working mechanism demonstrated above, with their "own management structure and resources" (Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund, 2007a, p. 5), the individual AEP and LEP units "were directly reporting to, and consulting with, the ARTF" (IntV18, March 28, 2016). Additionally, the source adds, factors such as the program being directly funded by the WB and largely implemented through International Organization for

Migration (IOM) further undermined the leadership of the Commission over the processes and left little room for the head of the ARS or the Chairman to control and supervise.

Regarding the target organizations of the project, while all line ministries could benefit from the AEP, the LEP intended to target only those ministries that had undertaken the PRR program. Indeed, one of the essential objectives of the program was to facilitate PRR implementation in these ministries through its highly qualified recruits. However, the Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund (2007a, p. 5) discusses the "misunderstandings" that happened during the implementation of the LEP and states that "recruits, at times, have been placed in positions in PRRed ministries and proposals have also been made to rehire existing civil servants at the higher pay level," both contrary to essential aims of the program. Moreover, contrary to the objective of the LEP to facilitate the implementation of the PRR program, the source adds that "utilization of LEP seems to have enabled some ministries to avoid participation in the PRR."

Regarding the implementation results, providing the data reprinted below in Table 5.7., the IARCSC (2010) finds both the programs "successful."

Table 5.7.

AEP and LEP Implementation Results

	Target	**Achievements**	**Percentage of Achievements**
AEP	60 Expert Advisors	98 Expert Advisors	163% Achievement
LEP	100 Experts	138 Experts	138% Achievement

Reprinted from the IARCSC (2010, p. 9)

According to the Commission, the AEP unexpectedly recruited 98 individuals, 63% more than the planned target of 60. Similarly, the LEP, at the end of its pilot phase, recruited 38 people more than its target of 100. Regarding the ministries that benefited from these programs, Figure 5.18. below demonstrates the distribution of AEP and LEP recruits among the Afghan line ministries and central organizations.

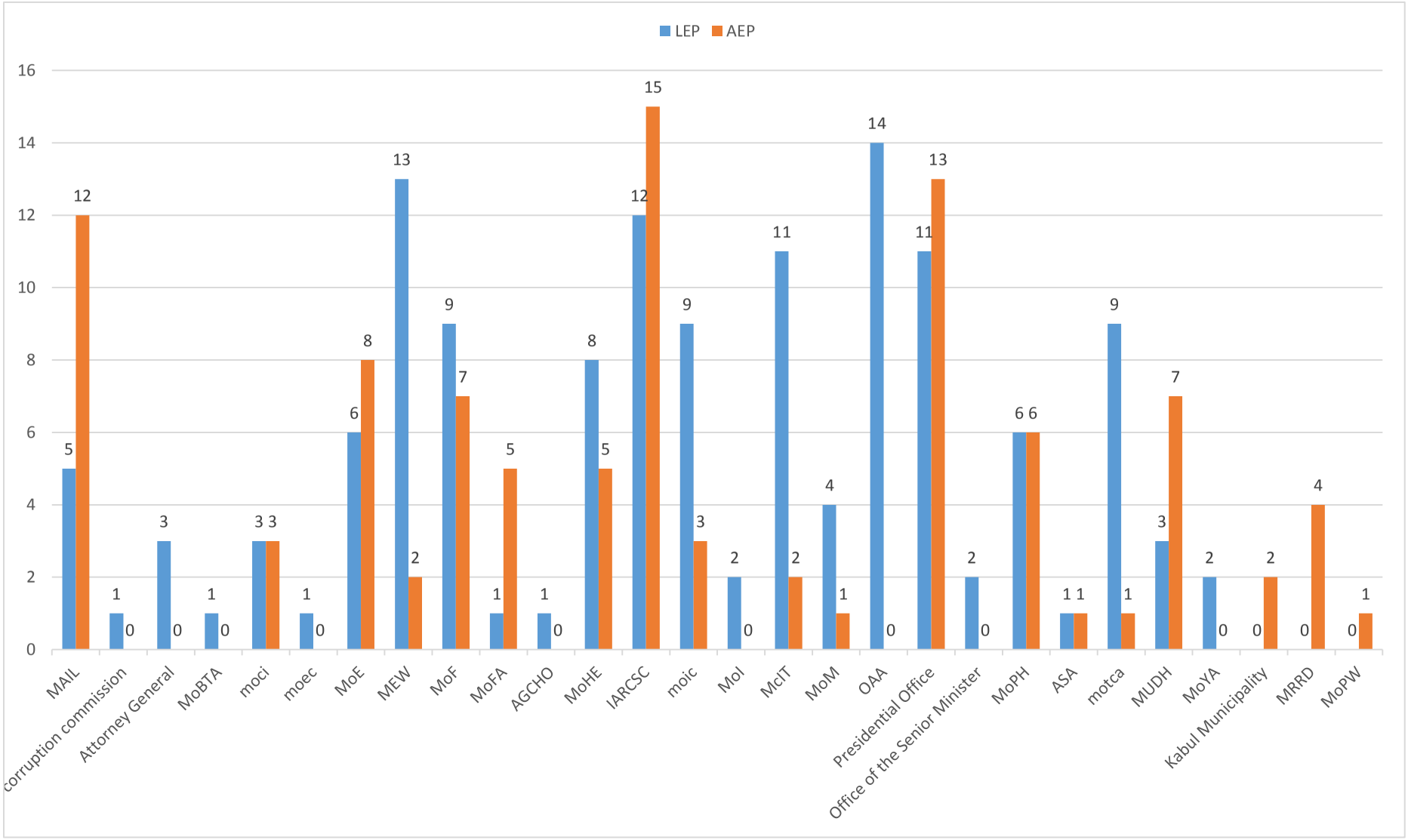

Figure 5.18. Distribution of AEP and LEP Recruits among Line Ministries, 2004–2007. Accumulated from IARCSC (2010, p. 6, 9).

Considering the above distribution of recruits, the IARCSC and the Presidential Office, together with its Administrative Office, benefited the most from both the programs. The Commission is on the top of AEP beneficiaries, with 15.3% (15) of 90 AEP recruits, and in the second place with respect to LEP, with 8.7% (12) of the total 138 program recruits. While the high share of benefits reaped by the Commission from these programs is justified by the overall PAR strategy of strengthening the IARCSC as the leader of reforms, it is also an indication that the Commission used them for its own benefit. Thus, even though the Commission had the smallest Tashkeel—with a total number of around 500 staff—due to lack of a proper oversight mechanism, it decided to allocate the highest number of AEP and LEP staff to itself and its only superior, the Presidential Office.

Furthermore, two points need to be considered with respect to the number of AEP and LEP recruits. First, while the Commission boldly demonstrates the high number of recruits as 163% and 138% achievements, the real explanation for such a high number is the financial benefits these programs offered. As some interviewees mentioned, ministries were in competition to have a higher share of these programs, not because they wanted to have highly qualified staff to trigger reforms in their departments, but to hire or re-hire specific individuals so that they benefit from enormous salaries, of up to $7,000 for AEP and $2,000 for LEP. Second, an inconsistency exists in the data; both the AEP and LEP were terminated in 2007 and merged into a new program called MCP. An official internal document of the Commission indicates that in 2007, out of planned 1500, the LEP recruited only 102, while the officially reported number by the Commission was 138. Moreover, the internal document suggests that both the programs **"**have had mixed success in terms of their implementation" while the formal implementation report of the IARCSC calls the LEP "extremely successful" and adds that "it has been well acknowledged that in comparing with the proposed targets, the achievements of AEP and LEP were well above the objectives" (IARCSC, 2010, p. 9).

Regarding the achievements of both the programs, by giving examples of 10 project recruits, the Commission argues that the central objective of *injecting capacity* into the civil service was achieved, as many of the project recruits remained in the civil service after termination of the project in 2007 (IARCSC, 2010, p. 10). However, this conclusion is strongly contested, as it is unclear what happened to the remaining 226 recruits of the project. While there is no mechanism

to trace, most of the interviewees suggest that over time, most AEP and LEP recruits left the civil service, which questions the sustainably of the capacity built as a result of these programs. Moreover, even those few recruits considered as retained capacity were indeed not civil servants. They had become politicians holding important political—not civil service—positions and used the AEP and LEP to climb the ladder of hierarchy to serve their own interests rather than acting as the agents of reform in the assigned positions of line ministries.

Finally, as demonstrated below in Figure 5.19., according to the CSC, the AEP and LEP had multiple shortcomings that led to the failure in achieving the ultimate goals of creating capacity, facilitating reforms, implementing PRR, and normalizing the second civil service.

Figure 5.19. Major Shortcomings of the AEP and LEP. Accumulated from IARCSC (2010, p. 10,11).

Similar to the case of the majority of Afghan CSR projects, the AEP and LEP had many shortcomings and problems, some mentioned below by the IARCSC (2010, pp. 10-11): first of all the source mentions that there has been "no evidence that an in-depth needs assessment took place

prior to design of both projects and all aspects of the project, including the ToRs of recruits, have been based on what was "perceived" rather than practically "assessed"; at the same time, the lack of appropriate, if any, mechanisms and strategies for monitoring and evaluating as well as managing the performance of both the projects and its recruits have been an important missing part in the project design; no audit has been undertaken, and there have been no efforts on how one can measure whether, or to what extent, the objectives of the projects were achieved; similarly, in the "absence of an operational reporting mechanism", it is unclear if the recruits of the programs were performing their job or not; on top of all these design and implementation problems, an "overcomplicated and bureaucratic" recruitment policy, which also lacked the proper mechanisms to ensure gender equality, led to "limited synergy, inability and lack of willingness for networking" and "making partnerships" for the recruits to facilitate the reforms; consequently, AEP and LEP recruits became isolated and, in some cases, ended up performing tasks completely different from their ToRs, and "no sustainable capacity [was] built or developed" in line ministries; finally, the implementation of certain essential parts of the programs was assessed to be "at best, patchy".

It was due to the above-mentioned problems that both the programs were terminated in 2007 when the AEP had recruited 98 staff and the LEP 138 out of the planned total of 1,500. Consequently, a new program called MCP, considered by many experts to be a merger of the AEP and LEP, was launched mainly to continue striving to achieve the objectives of these two programs.

***Management Capacity Program- MCP (2007–20*12).** Based on the lessons learned from the AEP–LEP (2004–2007), with the overall aim of assuring sustainability in the capacity-building efforts of the Afghan CSPAR, the government with the help of its international partners, in 2007, decided to continue the "injection of experts" in the form of a "more solid and well-defined project" (IARCSC, 2010, p. 11) called MCP. The program would recruit officials "at higher levels of remuneration than those presently existing within the civil service" (IARCSC, 2009, p. 5) to "undertake common management and executive functions" (Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund, 2007a, p. 1) in the key departments of line ministries and other civil service organizations. As a precondition, the source adds, positions these recruits would be appointed to needed to be

"approved Tashkeel positions" on Grades 1 to 341 (p. 9). Moreover, according to the same source, the program intended to bring all donor-funded pay schemes, "including the Afghan Expatriate Program (AEP), the Lateral Entry Program (LEP), TAFSU [Technical Assistance and Feasibility Studies Unit], the PRR 'Super Scale', and numerous experts mobilized by donors in specific sector contexts" (p. 4) under a unified program.

With respect to the management of the program, contrary to the previous arrangements for the AEP and LEP, which were managed under the ARS of the Commission, the lead implementer of the MCP was the newly established General Directorate of Programs' Design and Management (GDPDM). Having "a special status and report[ing] directly to the IARCSC Chairman," the GDPDM was considered the main implementing partner of the World Bank for the program (IARCSC, 2008b, p. 3).

Regarding the financial aspects of the MCP, upon the official proposal of the then Afghanistan's Minister of Finance, the government requested $30 million to fund the recruitments of approximately 240 staff over a period of three years (2007–2010). In response, the ARTF granted an amount of $10 million, adding that the requested additional $20 million could be granted in the future, subject to a satisfactory evaluation and the further approval of the ARTF administrator (Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund, 2007b).

As for the outputs and consequences of the program, as shown below in Figure 5.20., the MCP recruited a total of 559 civil servants in the grades 1, 2 and 3 of 34 line ministries and central agencies.

[41] According to the 8-grade system of the P&G program

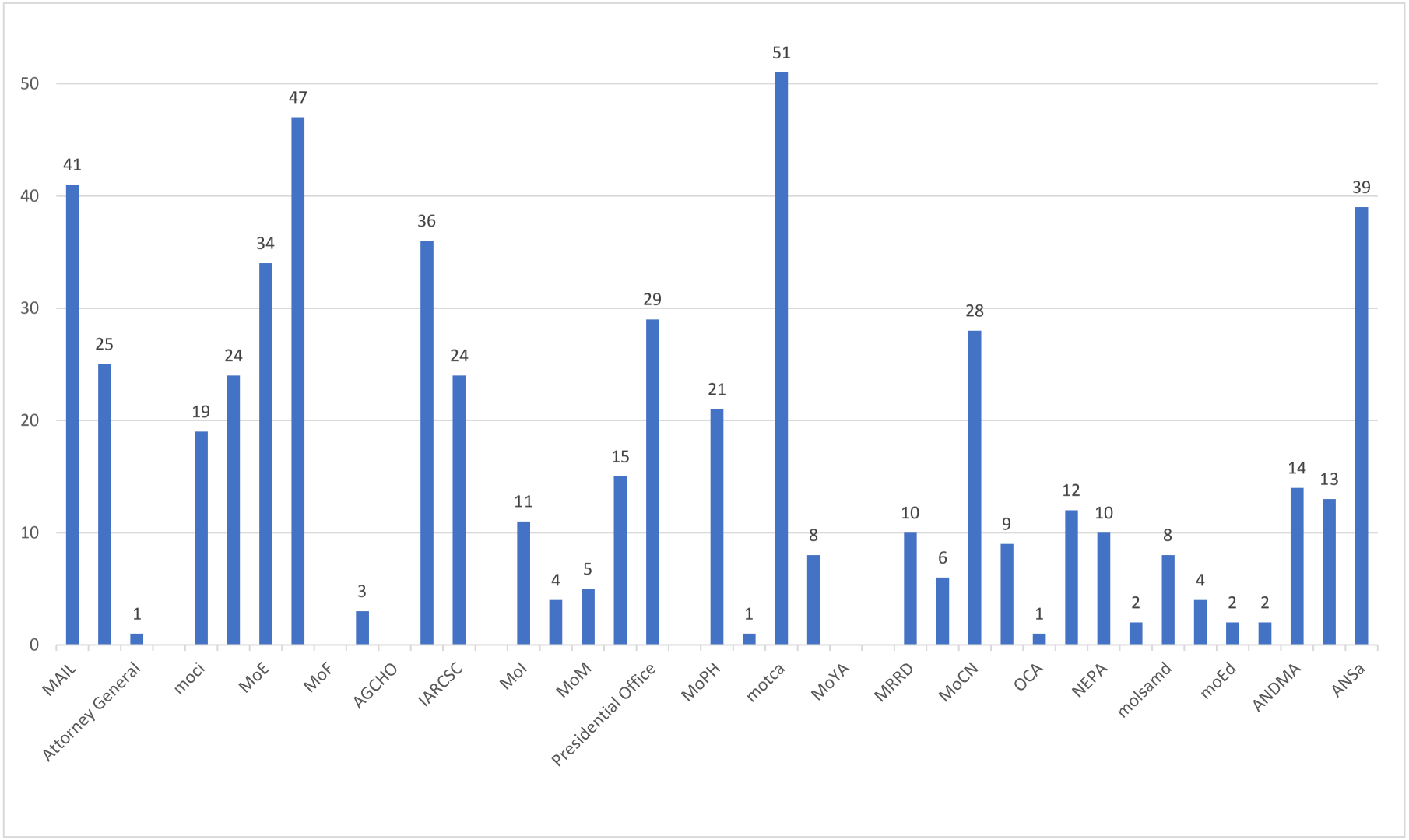

Figure 5.20. Distribution of MCP Recruits among Afghan Civil Service Entities. Adapted from IARCSC (2011, p.6)

Finally, although the MCP's overall aim was to bring sustainability to the efforts of its predecessors, the project itself was highlighted as "a very expensive program, without a clear exit point or funding commitment from government and donors" (Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund, 2007a, p. 3). Consequently, even before its implementation, the source had predicted that by the end of the program, regular civil servants would not be ready to take over the functions of MCP recruits. According to a senior Afghan official who worked on the program, such fear came true and "as soon as MCP recruits were out, departments went back doing businesses the same way they were doing before" (IntV18, March 18, 2016). However, the source adds, trapped in a vicious circle, the government and its international partners continued with their capacity injection strategy by "changing the MCP to CBR," which intended to be a more comprehensive program to gain more tangible results than its predecessors.

Capacity Building for Results-CBR (2012–2018). The GoIRA (2012, p. 31) defines the Capacity building for Results (CBR) program as below:

> Building from the MCP program, a more strategic approach to establishing a senior civil service cadre will be adopted, through CBR. As noted in the CBR project document, recruitment will "target suitably qualified Afghan nationals and will use remuneration levels that, while still competitive, are significantly lower than the prevailing inflated rates offered by donors and others. The salaries will be combined with fixed term appointments of up to five years subject to satisfactory annual performance review.

The CBR program was a successor of the MCP, which was launched in 2012 and planned to be completed by the end of 2017 (Jackson et al., 2016). The program comprised four main components, among which the recruitment of civil servants for the key positions in the Afghan line ministries was the second and most important part.[42] Thus, implementation of CBR in practice

[42] The other components were "(i) Technical Assistance Facility for Preparation and Implementation of Capacity Building Programs; (iii) Civil Service Training; and (iv) Project Management, Monitoring and Evaluation" (World Bank, 2011, p. 13).

meant that specific positions in grades 1 to 5 would be announced as vacant and filled through the CBR program's own recruitment mechanisms. Furthermore, the holders of these positions would receive comparatively high salaries based on a new National Technical Assistance (NTA) pay scale. A comparison of the CBR pay scale with the regular civil service pay scheme (P&G) for respective grading levels is shown below in Figure 5.21.

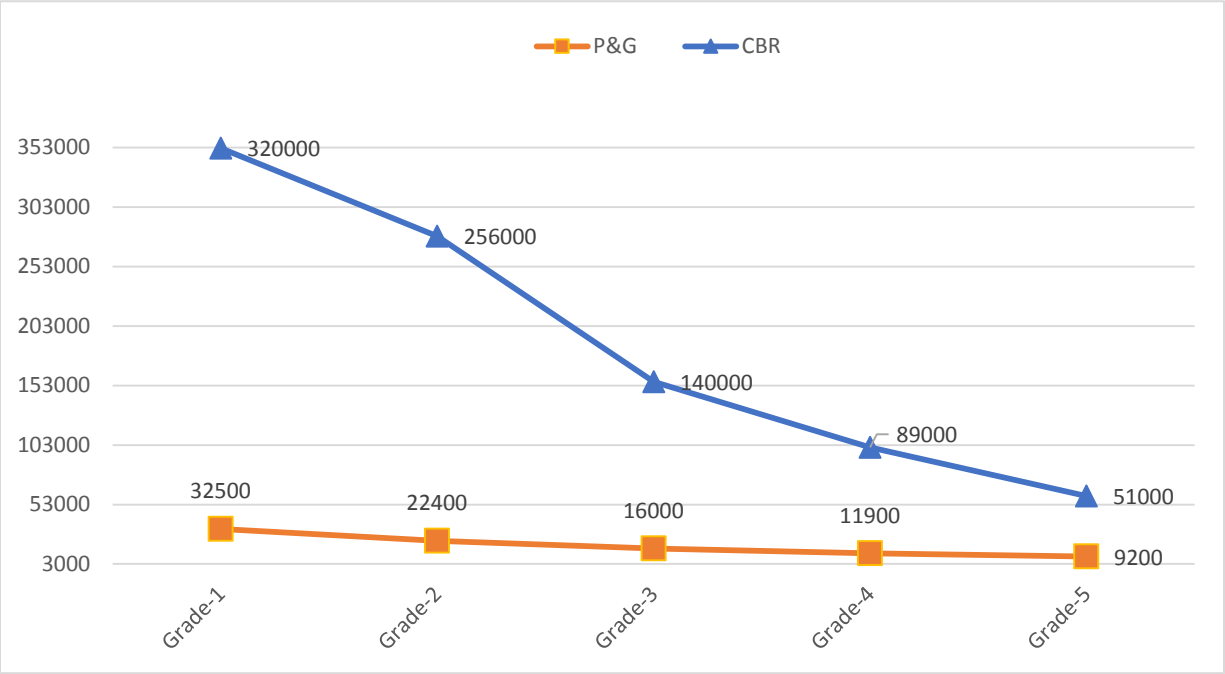

Figure 5.21. CBR vs. Regular Civil Service Pay Scheme (P&G).

According to the World Bank (2011a, p. 19), the program faced several risks, including "biased recruitment and selection of senior management group staff; unethical behavior in the civil service; politicization of CBR project funding allocations; misuse of project funds, inter-cadre competition; weak service delivery accountability; limited impacts of technical assistance; and pay setting risks." Interestingly, almost five years later, in 2016, most of the senior Afghan officials, as well as international consultants, interviewed in the course of this research named exact points as major implementation challenges.

Regarding the results and consequences of the program, although the majority of data collection activities of this research was done when the program was still in its extended

implementation phase, most of the interviewees considered it one of the most unsuccessful CSPAR programs with no significant results. First and foremost, contrary to its original supportive role, the issue of recruitment dominated the whole program. Resultantly, the other components, which were, in fact, the essential ones, were forgotten somewhere during the process. A senior IARCSC official (IntV22, October 4, 2016) describes the situation as follows:

> When people [ministers and HR directors in line ministries] hear about CBR, the first thing they think of it is another opportunity to receive high salaries. We had meetings with every single ministry, and in most cases, even the ministers and their deputies had a wrong perception about the program... we were repeating again and again that the program was about capacity development and not recruitment... but we had ministers who asked, "How many people will you pay for and how much?" so it was clear that they didn't care about reform or capacity building or anything close to these things. The only thing they were interested in was recruitment and how much their share would be. We faced the same situation in all ministries we met... however, the main problem was that when they were showing their proposed positions for CBR, we noticed that almost everyone was put on Grade 1 [qualifying for a monthly salary between 160,000 AFN-320,000 AFN], but you know that Grade 1 is for general directors... it was impossible... they were just asking us to confirm so that they could get more money. As I said, the main intention was to receive a high salary rather than system building or anything similar.

On the other hand, out of the total $350-million program budget, $246 million was allocated for the salaries of about 1,500 civil servants that the program would recruit to fill the leadership and management levels of the line ministries. However, as of September 2016, a few months before the original completion date, the program had used less than 40% of its allocated budget in this regard, and by March 2017, the number of recruits had reached only 328 out of the planned 1,500. However, many of the ministries and agencies failed to attain their targeted recruit numbers, with some unable to recruit even 15 staff over 12 months. According to the project's guidelines, the recruitment process of a CBR-approved position had to be completed in a maximum of 48 days. As a result, although the quality of recruitments, mainly due to the strict monitoring by the international actors, has reportedly been much better than any comparable processes in the

past, and issues discussed above together with the significant failures in achieving the program's targets question the success of the program.

As a conclusion, altogether the four programs (AEP, LEP, MCP, and CBR) launched to inject capacity into the Afghan civil service can be located in cell 6 of Table 5.8., which would mean they had "no expected results, plus risks."

Table 5.8.

Outputs and Effects of AEP, LEP, MCP, and CBR (2004–2018)

		Main Goal(s)		
		Positive	***None***	***Negative***
Effects	***None***	(1) Expected Result	(4) No result	(7) Negative result
	Positive	(2) Expected result plus bonus	(5) No expected results, plus bonus	(8) Negative results plus bonus
	Negative	(3) Expected result plus risk	(6) **No expected results plus risk** <u>NO significant PROGRESS</u> (on increasing capacity, facilitating PRR implementation, normalizing the second civil service; at least 3 (AEP, LEP, CBR) of the programs ended before reaching their target number of recruitments) (-) particularly the LEP enabled some ministries to avoid participation in the PRR (-) more fragmentation of the pay system by adding several layers of very different pay scales (-) further politicization of civil service recruitments, mainly through the CBR program	(9) Negative results plus risk

As shown above, in Table 5.8., the findings of this research show that while these programs created short-term capacities in line ministries by offering relatively higher salaries (see for example Figure 5. 22.), there is no indication that those capacities were retained in the civil service upon the termination of the projects. Moreover, these programs failed to normalize the parallel civil service by introducing even more layers of payments and resulted in replacing the pay scheme created by the previous program. By the end of data collection activities for this research in 2016, the Afghan civil service had at least four official pay scales. More importantly, review of documents and interview sources, as well as a continuous failure to meet the targeted number of

for recruitments, indicate that the recruitment processes of these programs, particularly the CBR's, were politicized even more than the regular recruitment processes. Finally, facilitation of the core PAR Programs such as the Pay and Grading (2009) was amongst essential objectives of these programs. However, no official source within the Afghan civil service is able to provide any evidence suggesting that these programs provided such support.

5.4.3 Pay and Grading (P&G)—The most significant reform program

Launched in 2009[43], the P&G reform program is considered the most comprehensive post-Taleban CSR program. It was indeed due to its whole-of-government approach that a change of law seemed inevitable. Therefore, a new *Afghanistan Civil Servants Law* (2008) was prepared and ratified to facilitate P&G reform implementation. Notably, some interviewees involved in the process provide a slightly different view, suggesting that the law was the principle, not the program. In any case, it is important to acknowledge that the P&G reform program (2009) and the *Afghanistan Civil Servants Law* (2008) are inseparable parts of one another. Therefore, discussing and analyzing one's implementation, shortcomings, and achievements pertains to that of the other as well.

According to a senior international advisor who worked on the program (IntV20, October 6, 2016), the main policy of the Afghan government with respect to the P&G program comprised four key elements: (1) focus on outputs rather than inputs, which meant more importance had to be given to performance rather than qualifications and experience, (2) meritocracy in recruitments to choose the best and most suitable person for each position, (3) equal pay for equal work, meaning civil servants would be paid according to the value of their work, and (4) every civil service position had to have a job description. Thus, the source adds, the centerpiece of the IARCSC's strategy on staffing system was "to establish a single grade structure… with clear differences between the main responsibilities of each grade, and which is applicable to all civil servants." Consequently, the P&G program and the *Afghanistan Civil Servants Law* (2008) replaced the old 13-grades system with a new grading structure composed of 8 grades and 40 pay

[43] based on: article 5 of the Presidential Decree No. 32, Appendix 3 of *Civil Servants' Law* (2008), and Article 50 of the Constitution of Afghanistan (2004)

steps—5 in each grade. Moreover, all civil service positions and deputy ministerial positions were divided into four categories: Leadership (grades 1 and 2), Management (grades 3 and 4), Executive (grades 5 and 6), and Technical and Service (grades 7 and 8). Through the P&G reform, ToRs of all civil service positions would be developed and utilized based on a generic job description for each of these categories.

Furthermore, through 40 pay steps, the salaries would be increased and decompressed, and civil servants would be appraised annually to link salaries with performance. This would mean that following a positive annual evaluation, employees would move to the next pay level, and in the case of a negative feedback, they would remain in the same pay step for one additional year and had to go through a training and capacity development program. At the end of the second year, based on evaluation results, employees would move to the next pay level or be dismissed from duty, and the position would be announced as vacant. Furthermore, the new law blocked promotion from one grade to another, which in practice would mean an official end to tenure nature of the civil service employment. Notably, as these aspects of the program have been indeed the main components of Afghanistan's overall PAR strategy, the details of the content, shortcomings, and consequences of the program can be found in the next chapter (section 6.1), where I elaborate on the recruitment, promotion, and remuneration of civil servants.

It is found that contradictory reports exist concerning the degree of progress in the implementation of the program. On the one hand, according to Public Administration International (2011, p. 4), by July 2011, the P&G program was wholly implemented in 25 line ministries and agencies, which would mean that out of the total 370,555 civil service positions, for 325,499 positions, clear job descriptions were developed, and the positions were filled through open and merit-based recruitment competitions. However, according to Elmahdi (2011, p. 6), even six months later, in January 2012, only eight ministries completed P&G implementation, which indicates a considerable gap in 17 ministries. Similarly, a senior IARCSC official interviewed in the course of this research mentioned that based on the official reports of the Commission by 2016, out of 43 ministries and agencies, 29 had completely implemented the program (IntV30, March 30, 2016), a number which is again contested by Elmahdi (2018, p. 3) reporting that even two years later, in June 2018, only 23 ministries had completed P&G implementation.

To conclude, as shown below in Table 5.9., although the implementation of the program took much longer than the original schedule of three years (2009–2012) and had several negative effects and shortcomings, it officially met some of its primary objectives. Thus, the program can be located in cell 3 of our framework that indicates "expected results plus risks."

Table 5.9.

Outputs and Effects of the P&G Program (2009–Present)

		Progress on the Main Objective(s)		
		Positive	***None***	***Negative***
Effects	***None***	(1) Expected result	(4) No result	(7) Negative result
	Positive	(2) Expected result plus bonus	(5) No expected results, plus bonus	(8) Negative results plus bonus
	Negative	(3) **Expected result plus risks** (+) a comprehensive review of the grading and remuneration system (+) further rationalization of organizational structures and civil service positions (+) development of job descriptions for all civil service positions (+) further increase and decompression in the salaries of regular civil servants (-) ended the tenure of civil service employment, which paved the way for the unfair dismissal of officials to recruit favored candidates (-) ambiguity about the status and future of thousands of civil servants, who have reached the final step of their grades (-) meaningless and superficial annual performance evaluation for those who are already at the highest step of their grade	(6) No expected results plus risk	(9) Negative results plus risk

Chapter 6: Results and Drivers of Reforms

This chapter discusses the implementation results and factors that influenced success and failure of the previously introduced reforms in three main areas of the Afghan CSR, which are the recruitment, promotion, and remuneration of civil servants. First, in section 6.1, it presents the outputs of all reform programs through a descriptive perspective and answers the question of whether or not the intended strategic objectives (see section 5.2) were achieved. Second, in section 6.2, it discusses the reasons behind the failure and success of those reforms or factors that led the reforms to achieve the outputs they did. Doing this, I will use the same framework, which was presented in section 2.3 to identify the most influential elements in the previous CSPAR experiences in conflict-affected and developing countries. Categorizing reform factors into three groups of contextual, programmatic, and external, the aim is to observe if and to which extent the lessons learned from previous similar experiences match the case of the CSR in Afghanistan and what are the unique or more important ones. However, first, I explore if the reforms succeeded in achieving their intended objectives.

6.1 Did the Reforms Achieve Their Intended Objectives?

An overview of the policies and strategies for post-Taleban CSR programs (Chapter 5) since 2003 showed that HR reforms were at the center of almost all CSR initiatives (see section 5.4). For example, the GoIRA (2008a) in the country's National Development Strategy states that "public administration reform will focus on pay and grading reforms to increase competitive recruitment, hiring of a trained and capable public sector workforce, strengthening merit-based appointments, and conducting performance-based reviews" (p. 63). Consequently, these three areas—recruitment, promotion, and remuneration—became the major focus of HR reforms. Thus, the success or failure concerning these aspects determines the overall success or failure of the reforms. Below, I focus on the outcomes of the reform programs discussed in section 5.4 with respect to these three areas and compare them with the intended reform objectives and benchmarks introduced in section 5.2 to see if and to which extent they were achieved.

6.1.1 Recruitment

As already mentioned throughout various sections of this research, recruitment has been one of the most important areas of all CSR programs. In fact, ensuring "merit-based appointment" was the single original reason for establishing the country's Civil Service Commission (Bonn Agreement, 2001, art III-C-5). Furthermore, later in 2003, when the scope of work of the Commission was expanded to include reforms and the organization evolved to become the Independent Civil Service and Administrative Reform (IARCSC), recruitment became one of the foremost areas of the country's reform agenda. Therefore, all strategic documents of the Afghan CSPAR (see section 5.2) as well as all major reform programs (see section 5.4) had recruitment as one of their main pillars. Beginning with a brief discussion on the changes in the recruitment system of Afghan civil servants, in the following section, I explain the post-reform recruitment process and then analyze the achievement of the reform objectives on meritocracy and the size of the civil service. This section ends with a final analysis of the recruitment component of the reforms and uses quotations from five in-depth interviews conducted in the course of this research to highlight the major problems related to civil service recruitments. It should be noted that throughout this section, the focus is on what the Afghan CSR has done in terms of recruitment and whether the strategic benchmarks in this area were achieved or not. Explanation of the reasons, however, is left for the second part of this chapter.

Shift to an open recruitment system. The first practical step in this area was changing the recruitment mechanism of the civil service from a closed system to an open one. As discussed in Chapter 4, ever since the official birth of the Afghan civil service in the 1920s, the general policy for the appointment of civil servants at almost all levels has been to give priority to internal candidates. Thus, until the implementation of the first reform program—the PRR program in 2003—entry to the civil service was possible only from the lowest positions of the civil service, which was grade-10.[44] Consequently, almost all remaining mid-level and senior appointments were carried out internally. What CSR changed in this regard is that it made the entry into the civil

[44] However, if the recruited person had higher education, the starting remuneration grade would be as: Bachelor: grade-8, and depending on the level of experience with Master degree: grade-6 or 7, and doctorate degree: grade 4 or 6

service possible at any grading level by blocking promotions from one grading level to another. For example, before the reforms, the appointment of a Manager (a grade-5 position), would be carried out internally by the promotion of a successful Officer (grade-6 position). However, since the enforcement of the Afghanistan Civil Servants Law (2008) and a consequent implementation of the P&G Program (2009) such appointments can be made only through open competition, in which qualified internal candidates, such as grade-6 officers, have to compete with candidates from outside the civil service. As a result of this change in the recruitment system, promotions could no longer be granted. Thus, Afghan civil servants at any grading level either receive an annual salary appraisal, for a max. five years, or compete with external candidates for higher positions in the hierarchy, through the new recruitment system. However, what does the new recruitment processes look like? And what were the specifics?

Post-reform Recruitment Process. According to the Afghanistan Civil Servants Law (2008) which was part of Afghanistan PAR Portogram, aiming at providing "equal opportunity" to all qualified Afghan citizens, "embedding meritocracy," and ensuring "competent civil servants," a competition-based recruitment mechanism, similar to that of the private sector was introduced in 2009. Through this new mechanism, irrespective of being an internal or external candidate, all candidates fulfilling the requirements posted in the respective job announcements could enter the competitive recruitment process, which is described below in Table 6.1.

Table 6.1.

Post-Reform Recruitment Process for Afghan Civil Servants

Step No.	Process Details
1	The vacant or to be reformed position in approved Tashkeel[45] of the ministry/administrative unit is defined by the HR department of the respective line ministry.
2	The job description or ToR of the position is drafted/developed/updated by the HR department.
3	The position is announced through the announcement boards of line ministries and the IARCSC. The defined period the call would remain open is two weeks for Grades 8–6, three weeks for Grades 5–3, and four weeks for Grade 2 and above.

[45] Officially, line ministries are obliged to annually send their Tashkeel proposals to the IARCSC, which will be reviewed and forwarded to the Presidential Office for confirmation. Thus, the positions need to be in the already approved Tashkeel of the line ministry. In case a ministry wants to create new position(s), the whole process is repeated over the year.

Step No.	Process Details	
4	Applications are received **For Grade-1 and -2 positions** by the IBA-1 of the IARCSC	**For lower than Grade-2 positions** by the Recruitment Department of the HR Directorate (This step practically takes about 21 business days)
5	A Recruitment Committee is established **For Grade-1 and -2 positions:** All five members of the IBA-1 plus a representative of the respective line ministry, which is generally the HR director, compose the Recruitment Committee.	**For lower than Grade-2 positions:** Depending on the perceived importance or seniority of the position, a 3–5-member recruitment committee is created: The head of the committee is the HR director or his representative; the second member is a representative of the IARCSC (IBA-1), and the third member is from the department to which the position belongs. Usually, if any female applicant exists, the representative of the *Gender Unit* ministry is added to the members of the Committee. Again, depending on the sensitivity of the position, the *Admin and Finance Deputy Minister*, the minister himself, or both of them are added to the committee.
6	The shortlisting procedure starts: The Recruitment Committee shortlists all applications meeting the job requirements. While in the case of senior positions (Grades 1 and 2), the shortlisting process is done by the IBA staff. There is contradictory information about who in the line ministries undertakes the process for recruitments of lower grades. However, the general practice is that due to the high number of applications—sometimes more than 200 for a single position—and as a majority of the committee members are high-ranking officials with several other duties, the HR department screens applications and provides the names of already shortlisted applicants to the Recruitment Committee. Although, as a norm, there should be a minimum of three shortlisted applicants to proceed, the number of candidates who proceed to the next stage is much higher.	
7	A written examination is held, and all shortlisted candidates are invited for the written test. Each member of the Recruitment Committee proposes one question, which officially is supposed to be based on the job description. However, **for Grade-1 and -2 positions:** Exam questions are partly based on general knowledge and certain paragraphs of the Constitution and the *Afghanistan Civil Servants Law* (2008), which are specifically chosen to facilitate the selection of favored candidates. Usually, the favored candidates are informed about these questions in advance. Moreover, apart from the IBA members, almost everyone interviewed in the course of this study agrees the questions have nothing to do with measuring the competence of the candidates to successfully perform the job, as they are generic and mostly irrelevant.	**For lower than Grade-2 positions:** Excluding the representative of the CSC, all members of the Recruitment Committee are from the line ministry for which the candidate is recruited. Thus, exam questions are more specific to the job. However, this also has an adverse effect. As a recruitment specialist mentioned during an interview, "the IARCSC observer is just an observer, they [line ministries] recruit whomever they want." The problem of the advanced sharing of exam questions exists here as well.

Step No.	Process Details
8	The interview or oral test begins: According to the interviews with two HR directors, all the candidates who attend the written exam are also invited for an interview, and the final selection is made based on the total score (50% written exam and 50% interview) a candidate receives. However, to proceed faster, the general practice is that only those candidates who score more than 50% in the written exam or the top 3 are invited for the interview. Officially, the interview aims to assess communication, reasoning, and other skills, which cannot be tested via written exam; however, the same issues mentioned above about the written test hold for the interview phase too.
9	Results are announced, and the request for the approval of the ministry leadership is sought: The applicant who receives the highest score is officially introduced as the selected candidate of the position. In some cases, details of the second and third candidates are also provided in the final form, which is signed by all the members of the Recruitment Committee. **For Grade-1 and -2 positions:** The IBA officially informs the line ministry about the result of the recruitment process, and the line minister approves. **For lower than Grade-2 positions:** The Recruitment Committee informs the Admin and Finance Deputy and/or the minister for the approval of the candidate.
10	A 10-day appeals period starts: While the decision of the Recruitment Committee is pending for the approval of the minister/deputy minister, the examination participants can appeal the decision. According to some sources, both in the CSC and also some of the line ministries, it is very rare to have no appeals. In most cases, several candidates fill the appeals form, and thus, the confirmation of appointment is delayed weeks, sometimes months.
11	The line minister confirms and officially appoints the candidate (only for Grades 1–3). Officially, after resolving all complaints, the ministry confirms the candidacy and informs the IARCSC.
12	Appointment of the candidate: **For Grade-1 and -2 positions:** The IARCSC forwards the decision of the Recruitment Committee to the President's Office of Administrative Affairs (OAA), and the President officially appoints the candidate. The appointment letter comes back to the IARCSC, which, in turn, forwards it to the line ministry. **For lower than Grade-2 positions:** The line minister appoints the candidate and informs the IARCSC about the completion of the process.

Different from the pre-reform recruitment system in which line ministries had total control over their internal recruitments, the above-mentioned recruitment process divided recruitments into two categories: (1) appointments of high-ranking officials on grade-1 and 2, and (2) appointments for the remaining civil service grades (Grade 3 to 8). For the recruitment of senior civil servants, the Commission was given the authority of processing and appointing, while for the lower grades, the Commission had a mere monitoring role, leaving respective line ministries as the main actors during the process.

Although the roles and responsibilities of each involved actor in the process are defined by the relevant regulations and the above-described mechanism is relatively clear, the interviewees

of this research and the review of existing documents indicate the existence of several challenges and problems that prevent the process from achieving its intended objective of having a merit-based recruitment process. The most critical issues raised by the interviewees are: (1) the lengthiness of the process, (2) the manual processing of all steps, and (2) the lack of professionalism during both written and oral examinations. Altogether, these challenges have made the process vulnerable to corruption. In fact, even the senior officials involved in the process, such as a recruitment specialist of the IARCSC and an HR General Director of a line ministry, consider the process "very [open] to corruption" (IntV23, March 27, 2015; IntV03, August 5, 2015). Although the reasons for the existence of these problems and their effects on the overall process will be explained later in section 5.2, it is worth mentioning at this point that depending on the perceived importance or seniority of a position; it takes months to get a candidate recruited.

Moreover, the manual processing of all steps not only contributes to the lengthiness of the whole recruitment process but also makes it even more vulnerable to corruption. Last and most important, mainly due to the lack of professionalism and willingness, the process is too far from giving priority to merit, which has consequently led to serious capacity problems and a continuous blame game among stakeholders. The line ministries blame the Commission for delaying the process by being unprofessional and corrupt. The Commission, in turn, blames the line ministries, arguing that more than 90% of civil service positions are below grade-2, and their recruitments are done under the direct control of the line ministries themselves. This leaves the Commission with a mere "monitoring role, which is by the way very superficial" (IntV23, March 27, 2016). Thus, according to 14 interviewees with the senior staff of the Commission, it is the line ministries who should be blamed and not the Commission. On the other hand, external actors, including the Parliament, civil society organizations, citizens, and, in some cases, the international community, including some international experts interviewed in the course of this research, blame both the Commission and the line ministries.

Having explained the process on the ground, the question that needs an answer is 'What were the strategic benchmarks on recruitment and were they achieved or not?' To answer this question, below, I will discuss the implementation results of the reforms in the area of recruitment compared to the defined strategies and benchmarks (section 5.2).

Reform Objectives on Meritocracy in Recruitments. First of all, achieving "meritocracy" has been one of the common objectives of all reform strategies (Bonn Agreement, 2001; ADB et al., 2004; The Afghanistan Compact, 2006; GoIRA, 2006, 2008a, 2008b). The *Bonn Agreement* (2001) perceives the merit-based recruitment of senior civil servants as a means "to ensure competence and integrity" in administration. ADB et al. (2004) state that "in ten years [by 2014] almost all civil servants [will be] appointed based on merit." Similarly, Afghanistan's Interim National Development Strategy defines "merit-based appointment of civil servants at Grade- 2 and above, [and] monitoring ministerial appointments at Grade-3 and lower" (GoIRA, 2006, p. 105) as one of the core tasks to be done through reforms; emphasizing that "civil service recruitment must conform to the Afghanistan Civil Service Law *[2005]* which requires all recruitment to be based on merit according to clear criteria" (p. 106), the source defines that for all senior level appointments "a clear and transparent national appointments mechanism will be established within 6 months, applied within 12 months, and fully implemented within 24 months" (p. 107). Finally, the GoIRA (2008a, p.241) in its National Development Strategy sets March 2011 as the date by which "civil service positions at all levels of government" would be filled through merit-based appointments.

However, according to all interviewees of this research, the reforms have failed to achieve this goal and the civil service is still far from ensuring merit-based recruitments. This conclusion is in fact confirmed by multiple local and international sources including some official reports and statements by the Afghan government. For example, four years after the initiation of the reforms in this area, the GoIRA (2006, p. 58) states that "many civil servants are still recruited through a system of patronage and rarely by merit"; two years later, the GoIRA (2008b, p. 158) mentions that "Corruption continues to threaten the initial gains in government capacity and effectiveness, and encourages a culture of patronage and involvement in illegal activities, damaging the credibility of the state". Additionally, the official statements of the recently appointed chairman of the IARCSC, such as his press conference in 2nd of November 2017, asserting that the "ToRs of civil service positions were drafted in a way to facilitate recruitment of pre-defined individuals", adding that "17,000 positions were found to be filled by ghost employees" indicate that the problem of non-merit recruitment has continued after 2008 as well. Alternatively, reports and studies by both local and international organizations also confirm findings of this research regarding the failure of reforms in achieving a merit-based recruitment process by reporting the

widespread practice of bribery, cronyism, patronage, and nepotism in the recruitment of public officials (Independent Joint Anti-Corruption Monitoring and Evaluation Committee [MEC], 2013; UNAMA, 2017; UNODC, 2012).

As a conclusion, the promises to bring about a merit-based and transparent process remain only on paper, and even years after the target timelines, non-merit appointments on the ground are evident. Finally, all expert interviews conducted for this study suggest that the scope and extent of non-merit recruitments have spread to almost all grades and levels of the administration, including the service positions. Most of them also suggest that the situation with respect to ensuring meritocracy in recruitments during 2003–2017 has been even worse than the pre-reform era.

The low education level of the current civil servants is another indication of the ignorance of meritocracy in practice. As all interviewees of this research suggest, with few exceptions, by 2016, all the positions in the core civil service were reportedly filled through open and merit-based competitions of the P&G reform, which was launched in 2009. Moreover, according to Afghanistan *Civil Servants Law* (2008), with the exception of grade-8, which is for service personnel, all candidates had to meet the below-mentioned (Table 6.2.) minimum education criteria so that they can be considered for civil service employment.

Table 6.2.

Education Requirements for Civil Service Employment

Grade	Position	Minimum Educational Level
1	General Director	Bachelor's
2	Director	Bachelor's
3	Under-Director	Upper-Bachelor's (14 years)
4	General Manager	Upper Bachelor's (15 years)
5	Manager	12 years
6	Officer	12 years
7	Technical persons	Certificate of graduation from vocational training/ or experience/ or a specific skill
8	Servicemen	Not Required

Accumulated from the Afghanistan Civil Servants Law, 2008

According to the data received from the IARCSC's Civil Service Reform Secretariat (2015), excluding the considerable number of technical and service personnel—who are on grades

7 and 8, and mostly have no higher education—only 45% of the current civil servants have higher education. As shown below in Figure 6.1., out of this number, 14% have graduated from vocational school (14 years of education), 27% have a bachelor's degree, and 4% have completed their education at the master's level.

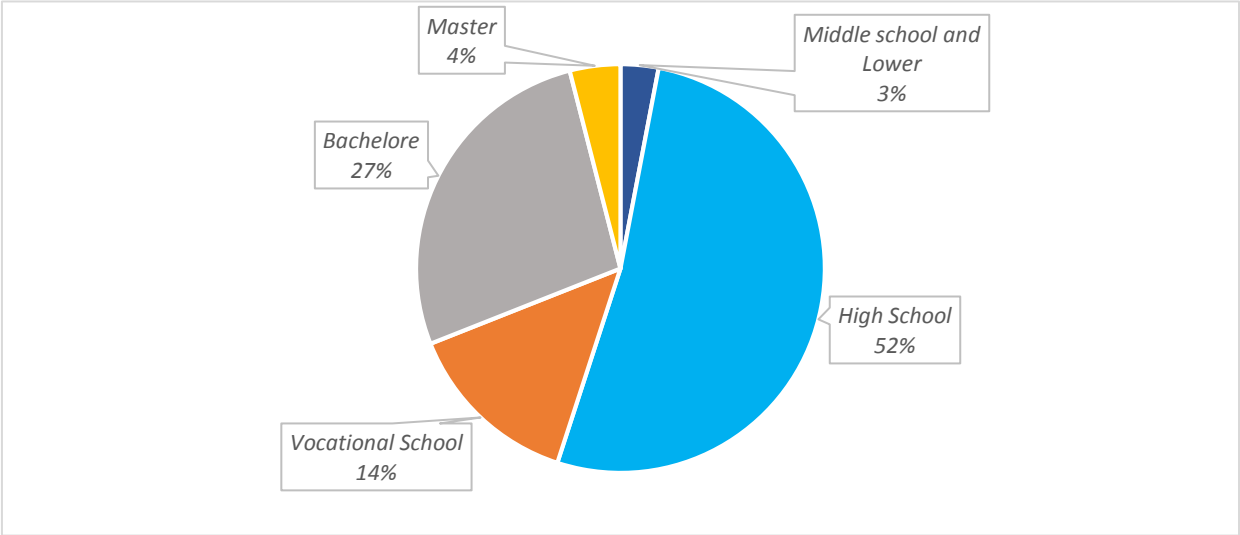

Figure 6.1. Education Profile of Afghan Civil Servants, 2016 (Source: Administrative Reform Secretariat, IARCSC, 2016).

Alternatively, according to Afghanistan's Central Statistics Organization (2017), by adding Grades 7 and 8 to the analyses, only 15% of the approximately 400,000 Afghan public officials would have higher education.

The purpose of providing the above data is that following the implementation of the *Afghanistan Civil Servants Law* (2008), as a general policy, the level of education is given priority in the recruitment of civil servants. However, a serious contradiction emerges upon the comparison of such statements with the above-mentioned statistics on civil servants' level of education. The most positive rate of 55.4% of civil servants with no higher education further strengthens the counter-argument that the reforms, particularly those regarding the recruitment, were only superficially implemented. Otherwise, it would not be possible to have only 50% of higher-educated servants when, as a part of the PRR and P&G programs, all positions were reportedly re-recruited through open competition. This is in a situation where, as mentioned by a senior official in charge of the application pre-screening, most of the candidates for civil service employment

have been university graduates (IntV13, September 6, 2015) and at least since 2008, thousands have been annually graduated from higher education institutes and universities. Therefore, either university graduates, which according to the Ministry of Labor constitute the majority of unemployed citizens, have been scoring very low in recruitment exams[46] or contrary to official statements, instead of education and other merit-based criteria, other factors such as patronage, bribery, nepotism, and cronyism influenced the *processes*.

Reform objectives on the size of the civil service. In addition to meritocracy, establishing a limited civil service has been a central element of the reforms. It is estimated that in 2002, before the implementation of any reform, the Afghan civil service had around 170,000 civil servants, a number which would increase to 250,000 after re-hiring the officials dismissed during civil wars (Afghanistan Preliminary Needs Assessment for Recovery and Reconstruction, 2002, p. 6). Two years later, the total number of civilian government officials was reported to be 276,255 (Afghanistan Central Statistics Organization, 2017), suggesting no significant increase in the number of staff since 2002. Consequently, during Tokyo Conference-I in 2002, both the Afghan administration and its international partners agreed that over a 10-year period (2002–2012), the first priority of the civil service would be to keep size of the civil service stable at about 1% of the country's estimated population, meaning the number of civil servants had to remain at about 270, 0000. However, due to multiple reasons, questions such as 'What is the real size of the Afghan civil service?' or 'Are teachers (who compose almost 50% of public officials) included or not?' are answered differently. Although the *Afghanistan Civil Servants Law* (2008) considers teachers as civil servants, officials have approached the issue selectively. For example, concerning the point that the reforms have failed to keep the civil service small, the number of whose staff has increased from 250,000 before the reforms to around 400,000 afterward, they argue that teachers—whose numbers have increased from about 50,000 in 2002 to 200,000 in 2017—are not civil servants, and thus the size of the civil service has been stable. However, the same officials consider teachers as civil servants to serve their political purposes. For instance, in December 2017, the IARCSC announced the recruitment of 17,000 civil servants as a successful and transparent example of the

[46] Which is by the way not logical considering the content and method of the examination, which is based more on knowledge and not on practical skills.

recruitment in the civil service. However, breaking down the number, it appears that about 8,000 (47%) of them have indeed been teachers. Having said that, if teachers are considered as civil servants, then as shown below in Figure 6.2., the size of the civil service has gradually increased since 2002, meaning the reforms have failed to achieve their objective of keeping the size of the civil service limited.[47]

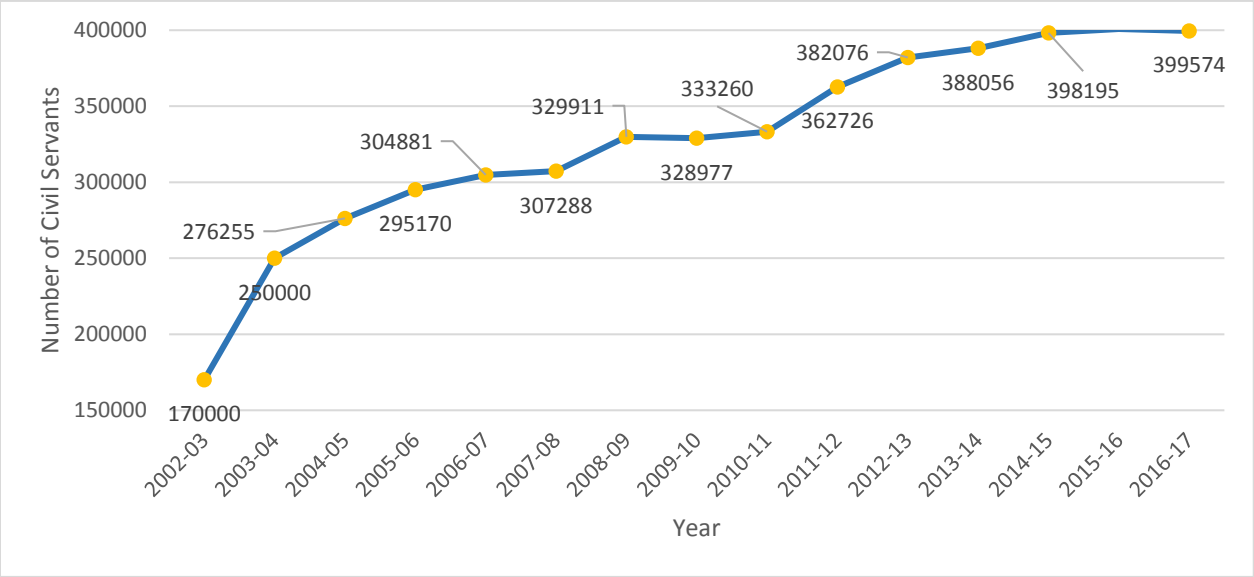

Figure 6.2. Change in the Number of Afghan Civil Servants, 2002–2017. Accumulated from Afghanistan Central Statistics Organization (20017), Afghanistan Preliminary Needs Assessments for Recovery and Reconstruction, 2002, p. 6).

The following are two important points with respect to the size of the Afghan civil service: (1) The exact number of existing civil servants is unknown. Officials in the respective departments of line ministries and the IARCSC are partly unable and partly unwilling to identify and/or share precise information on the number of civil servants. Therefore, when discussing the size of civil the service, the problem of what is known as the *ghost or imaginary employees* should be considered. A recent assessment of the commission, presented during the press conference of the

[47] The more dramatic increase during the 2002–2003 period is the due to implementation of the government's policy to re-hire civil servants who either were forced to leave or did it voluntarily during the civil wars of 1990s and the Taleban era.

IARCSC Chairman on November 2, 2017, identified 17,000 civil service positions that either had imaginary employees[48] or were simply unreported vacant positions. Second, based on the numbers provided by Afghanistan's Central Statistic Organization (2017), even by the largest reported number of 399,574 public officials on the payroll, the civil service would make about 1.3% of the total population (29.7 millions), while in comparison with its neighbors and counterparts in the region, the Afghan civil service is considered a small one. Therefore, although the specific benchmarks of the reforms on the size of the civil service were not achieved, it cannot be concluded that Afghanistan has a large civil service.

Final analyses on recruitments. Findings show that the most vulnerable step in the current recruitment process (see Table 6.1.) is the examination phase and most manipulations happen during the written test and oral interview. According to the senior officials interviewed for this research, the generic rather than job-specific questions asked by recruitment panels, illegal negotiations and bargaining among panelists, selling or sharing the exam questions in advance to specific candidates, and the open support of the minister or superiors of committee members by instructing them to select a specific candidate have been very common. However, maybe the most interesting case is what the officials call 'teamwork'—a group of applicants is shortlisted, while there is only one genuine candidate among them; as a result, when the committee holds the examination, only the genuine candidate tries to answer the questions, and the rest of the candidates deliberately give wrong answers. This way, the favorite candidate gets appointed in an apparently transparent way. Below, I list five quotations from the interviews with senior Afghan and international officials to provide a clearer picture of the scale of the problem at the selection stage:

(1) IntV22, Senior HR Specialist, October 2016. For several times, I've seen that recruitment panels receive notes from their superiors to use questions written on the note during the exam… or one panelist passes notes to others to ask questions he wants [instead of their own questions]. In one case, even the minister came in, took a piece of paper out of his pocket, and gave it to the panel, instructing them to use his questions for the interview. What does it mean? Do

[48] While the salaries for these positions were regularly paid, due to the lack of tracing mechanisms, it is not clear who in the chain, from the MoF to the department where the position is, actually receives the salary.

you think that a minister or deputy minister has that much time to sit and prepare exam questions? No, he just wants to be sure that his favorite candidate will get recruited.

(2) IntV16, Senior HR Director, October 2016. When you go to the HR departments, they would never say they are called and forced by the minister or other influential people to share exam questions with specific people in advance. But this is a usual practice. One of the first questions to the HR directors should be whether or not they have been asked by their minister to support a specific candidate. If they say "Yes," then you understand that the director is honest and frank and if they say "No," then you should know they are lying. I can promise that there is no exception!

(3) IntV30, Acting Director, March 2016. The [examination] process should be transparent. But the problem is that there is no system to assure it. So, if someone says money is involved, I would say it's correct. For example, for the interview, I am present in many selection panels… I don't know how they take money but personally am very suspicious about the way they are doing it. People come and go; the phones of panel members are on; they talk a lot on the phone; they go out frequently. Probably, the caller is an MP, someone from the ministry or another influential person asking for specific treatment for one of the candidates. But the point is that everything on paper looks fine. They do it very professionally. No one with a blank exam paper is selected. However, favoritism exists, and it is, unfortunately, a culture, something that people are not even ashamed of. I have not personally witnessed any bribery, but favoritism, I've seen it a lot.

(4) IntV12, International HR Advisor, March 2016. Merit-based exam? [A big laugh.] There is no such thing. Listen! There are no standards! What are the merits? How can you recruit when you do not know what recruitment is about? Or when you do not know the mandates? How are you supposed to create indicators that actually justify if a person is useless or not…? I know that the system is not working and that they select whom they want… and for your information, it's not just me, everyone else here knows that they are doing things differently. But what are we supposed to do? Challenge the deputy or his director? That's not going to work! They are buying their positions, and they have to pay the favor back one way or another. We were so mad that these people were buying and buying… we can't challenge the [recruitment] committee members either. Those poor guys will be kicked off immediately if they don't follow the instructions.

(5) IntV29, General Director, October 2016. One very important thing in recruitments is that let's say 200 people apply for a position; all of them, I mean all of them try to manipulate the system by finding someone to support them. A candidate will meet each and every single person he knows... even if he is a good person, he thinks that others will manipulate the process anyway, so if he doesn't, he will not be even shortlisted. And it continues like a circle; once recruited, he is in depth of his supporter or as we call his 'connection'. Then he has to pay back the favor the same way his connection did for him. You see! That's why [we] can't end it; the perception of corruption and lack of trust spoil everything!

To conclude, based on what is presented above and using the framework of *Evaluating Public Management Reforms: Principles and Practice* (Boyne et al., 2003), which was introduced in section 3.2, it can be concluded that the reforms, particularly P&G, failed to achieve what they promised in terms of merit-based recruitments. As shown below in Table 6.3., although considerable progress has been made regarding the development of the laws and regulations for merit-based recruitments in the civil service, which means a high extent of change in policies (cell I), evidence indicates that the practice on the ground remains similar to that of pre-reform and to some extent is even worse, meaning a very low extent of change in practice (cell IV).

Table 6.3.

The extent of Change in Reforms on Recruitment

New Regime \ Old Regime	Policy as adopted	Policy in action
Policy as adopted	**(I)** **The extent of change in policy** **(HIGH)** - new Afghanistan Civil Servants Law - new recruitment processes	**(II)** **The extent to which new policy formalizes the old practice** By putting experience as a core condition for civil service employment, the priority same as before was given to internal candidates (indirect)
Policy in action	**(III)** **The extent to which practice continues to reflect old policy**	**(IV)** **The extent of change in practice** **(VERY LOW)** e.g., the same as before: - recruitment priority is given to internal candidates through the implementation of the P&G program - examination questions are rather general than job specific - manipulation and favoritism in recruitments are dominant

6.1.2 Promotion

In addition to merit-based recruitment, the Personnel Management pillar of the Afghan government's PAR strategy (see section 5.2.4) emphasized the need to establish the necessary mechanisms to link the annual salary increases of civil servants to the results of their performance evaluations—a PRP system. Consequently, a *performance-driven* civil service was defined as one of the core visions by both *Afghanistan Compact* (2006) and the *Interim Afghanistan National Development Strategy* (GoIRA, 2006, p.106). The practical step to realizing this vision began in 2009 with the P&G program, which essentially pertained to the implementation of the new *Afghanistan Civil Servants Law* (2008). According to GoIRA (2008a, p. 241), "by March 2011… [the new] annual vetting procedures and performance-based review for civil service positions at all levels of government would be implemented". Before delving into the details of what was done in this regard and whether this benchmark was achieved or not, it would be useful to shortly explain the pre-reform scheme.

The pre-reform HR system of the Afghan civil service composed of 13 grading levels, each having three steps, which was used for the determination of both salaries and promotions. Regarding the latter, civil servants could be promoted either for years of successful service or receiving *appreciation certificates,* which would qualify the employee with extraordinary service for one-step or one-grade promotion,[49] depending on the title of the certificate. Promotion based on the years of service would mean that civil servants on grades 10 to 1 would be promoted to the next upper grade following every three years of evaluated successful service. The servants in the *above-grade* level would need four years of service to get promoted to the next level, which was *beyond-grade*. And those of *beyond-grade*, due to the fact that they were already at the highest possible grade, would be entitled to a salary increase of 15%, 25%, 50%, and 75%, for 1 to 4 years of actual performance in that grade (Civil Servants Law of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, 1999, art 22).

[49] More details can be found here: Official Gazette No. 797, published in May 2001, Appendix of Law on Signs and Medals of Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan

Moreover, the determining factor for promotions and appraisals was the score each civil servant would receive in their annual performance evaluation form titled *Competence Evaluation Form for Appraisal of Civil Servants*.[50] According to the law, in every line ministry, two months before the date of appraisal, the minister or a senior official on out-of-grade status would create the *Appraisals' Commission*, and the evaluation form would be sent to the direct supervisor of each civil servant. The supervisors were required to "responsibly evaluate" the qualifications of their direct subordinates within ten days and send the form to their supervisor, as indirect supervisor of the evaluated servant. The second supervisor was required to review and evaluate according to their own judgment and then send the form to the Appraisal's Commission for confirmation. Upon confirmation, the person would receive a one-step appraisal. In case the employee had already worked for one year at the highest step (step 3), they would be then promoted to the first step of the next grade. In practice, however, interviewees suggest that all these processes were rather bureaucratic and almost all civil servants would be promoted automatically.

On the other hand, the post-Taleban reforms, mainly the *Afghanistan Civil Servants Law* (2008) and P&G (2009) program, which were initially drafted by British and other international consultants and inspired by NPM principles, aimed to introduce a PRP system (IntV01, July 16, 2015). While retaining the salary increase through appreciation certificates, in substance, the term "promotion" was technically removed from the civil service vocabulary when the Afghanistan Civil Servants Law (2008) stated that "…an employee may hold a higher Grade [only] on the basis of competition" (art 23.1). Thus, what in some studies and English translations of the law referred to as 'promotion' is indeed a mere annual increase in the remuneration of civil servants.[51] Based on the new staffing system, civil servant positions are on eight grading levels, each having five steps. Furthermore, all civil servants are subjected to an annual performance evaluation, which qualifies the person for a one-step salary appraisal. Thus, after five years of successful

[50] "Civil Servants Law of Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan," Official Gazette No. 790, published on November 1, 1999, Appendix, pp. 125–130. (athttp://moj.gov.af/content/files/OfficialGazette/0701/OG_0790.pdf)

[51] The term used in the Afghanistan Civil Servants Law (2008) in this regard is pronounced as "Erteqa" (in Dari), the closest translation of which would be upscale, while promotion in Dari is "Tarfi,"and it's not used anywhere in the document.

performance, the position will be announced as vacant, and the person, together with all potential internal and external candidates, is supposed to enter the recruitment competition, as explained in the previous section, for another position at a higher grade. However, this is the biggest flaw or miscalculation of the new policy and the main reason the Commission in 2015 wanted to ratify a new Civil Service Law. According to the interviewees of this research, by blocking promotions from one grade to another, the idea was to push civil servants to acquire different skills and prevent an employee from spending an average of 40 years of service doing the same job. Additionally, the assumption has been that every five years, each civil service position would be deemed vacant, which would enable the organization to update the ToRs regularly. However**,** it seems that none of these good intentions were realized. On the contrary, blocking promotions did more harm than good. Due to the problems in recruitment mechanisms and a rather superficial and bureaucratic annual performance evaluation, in 2014, five years after implementation of the new measures began, thousands of civil servants had already reached the utmost step of their grades. It was only then that the decision-makers realized they did not have the capacity to make thousands of positions vacant; even in cases where capacity existed, it seemed neither logic nor legal, as the same law clearly indicated that "civil servants are… employed on a [a] permanent basis" (art 3). In an interview with the HR General Director of a line ministry, the interviewee expressed his frustration with the new policies as follows:

> What would be my justification for calling a position vacant, when its holder has been positively evaluated for five consecutive years? Particularly if I cannot offer him another position. Those who made these rules expect me to tell my employee that "I fire you because you have worked well;" does it make sense to you? (IntV03, August 5, 2015)

Out of several flaws and shortcomings of the P&G program and the law, three contradictions were the most important ones on the issue of promotion: (1) Art 23.1 that bans promotions from one grade to another, (2) Art 3 that assures the security of tenure, (3) Art 16.3.2 that indicates an employee can remain at any grading step for a maximum of two years. Thus, the government came up with a pragmatic yet illegal solution, which allowed the line ministries to approve annual salary increases, even if the employee had remained for more than two years at the final step of any grade. However, while the solution temporarily addressed the stalemate on

appraisals, it created many other challenges. Most importantly, it discredited the performance evaluation process. The issue was explained by a senior director as follows: "for many employees, the performance evaluation is meaningless; the central question that majority of managers pose is 'What can be the benefit of an annual performance evaluation that does not affect appraisal process?'" (IntV30, March 30, 2016). This is in a situation where by 2017 most of the civil servants had reached the highest step of their grades, and thus, irrespective of the positive or negative result of their performance evaluation, some of them received a salary increase anyway. Consequently, the performance evaluation has become a lengthy bureaucratic procedure, which is perceived as useless and a burden for the HR departments of line ministries. In turn, with a slight difference for new recruits and those in the initial steps of their grades, *Performance Appraisal Forms* are filled with long delays (sometimes months), without motivation or seriousness.

With respect to the quality of annual appraisals in practice, almost all interviewees agree on the "superficiality of the process." Some, including a Director at the IARCSC, consider the annual performance evaluations more damaging than useful by stating as follows:

> Evaluations are done based on friendship and personal connections. It's also done based on ethnicity. A Pashtun or Hazara evaluates another Pashtun or Hazara positively but does the other way if the person is not from his ethnicity. It's the same with all other ethnicities. Favoritism, patronage, all kind things exist in performance evaluations. The evaluations are mostly delayed; forms are prepared wrongly; the way of scoring is wrong. So, you can't really name it an evaluation of performance. (IntV07, August 22, 2015)

Furthermore, according to an international HR advisor, even if commitment exists toward a real performance appraisal, current mechanisms and processes are unable to be productive:

> The idea about performance evaluation is that you have to be clear on competencies, and in performance management, ToR is the starting point because the skills and competencies to evaluate are mentioned there, and don't forget that they need to be observable. But there is a gap. ToRs are not connected at all to the appraisal system. There is one general appraisal form for all civil servants of the country at all levels. So how do they appraise? It's general appraisal like "Did he do his work properly?" or "Did he do this and that?" But there are no clear

indicators, and even if there is, they are not in congruence. (IntV12, March 12, 2016)

In line with above view, it is useful to take a closer look at the 'Competence Evaluation Form for Appraisal of Civil Servants' used during the Taleban time and compare it with the 'Annual Performance Evaluation Form' used in the post-reform civil service. It can be observed that while the latter has more elements of flexibility and participatory approach by including the evaluated civil servants in the evaluation process and providing them with the opportunity to write their own feedback on the form, the first one has more concrete and standardized factors of evaluation. For example, the pre-reform evaluation form asks the direct and indirect supervisors of the evaluated employees to asses them on a total of 15 skills and competencies in 5 categories, which the post-reform document has removed. These skills or factors include communication and administrative skills, the ability for innovation, speed and quality of work, customer satisfaction, honesty, teamwork and cooperation, commitment, discipline, among others. It is unclear why these factors have been removed.

To conclude, although it can be said that the strategic objective of the reforms on implementing "annual vetting procedures and performance-based review for civil service positions at all levels of government" (GoIRA, 2008a, p. 241) has been achieved, the essential question is 'what would be the use of an annual evaluation if it stays only on paper and bears no negative or positive consequences?'. Thus, as shown below in Table 6.4., the reforms on the appraisal process have contained a moderate extent of changes in policies and a very low extent of change in practice.

Table 6.4.

The extent of Change in Reforms on Appraisal

		Old Regime	
		Policy as adopted	Policy in action
New Regime	Policy as adopted	**(I)** **The extent of change in policy (moderate and +/-)** (-) blocking promotions (+) adding the self-evaluation component in the process (-) removing the previous 15 factors of evaluation	**(II)** **The extent to which new policy formalizes the old practice**

Policy in action	**(III)** **The extent to which practice continues to reflect old policy** - Annual performance evaluation in practice continues to be superficial and bureaucratic	**(IV)** **The extent of change in practice** **(VERY LOW and -)** - no indication of improvements in the performance of employees as a result of the introduction of new performance evaluations (-) annual performance evaluations are used as a leverage to put pressure on disliked subordinates

By blocking the promotions from one grade to another, the P&G program and the *Afghanistan Civil Servants Law* (2008) not only abolished the promotion mechanisms of the civil service but also did not offer a working replacement. The appraisal mechanism has reached a stalemate for a large portion of civil servants, and the evaluation process cannot be used for the intended purpose of establishing a real PRP system. Thus, as same as before, annual performance evaluations have turned into a bureaucratic pre-condition for an automatic increase in salary, implemented superficially and with long delays.[52] Thus, almost all civil servants receive appraisals, and the forms are filled without paying serious attention and for any purpose other than undertaking a real evaluation of performance and increasing efficiency and/or effectiveness. Furthermore, although the addition of self-assessment in the process is positive, the new mechanism is criticized for removing the 15 factors previously used for evaluations and offering no clear or better replacements, under the excuse of creating flexibility. This is in a situation where the government and the commission are yet to find a solution, and the ratification of a new Civil Servants Law which is perceived to address the problems of both promotion and performance evaluation is being delayed for several years, with no indication that it will happen in the near future.

6.1.3 Remuneration and Grading

The third and equally important area of the CSRs since 2002 has been the remuneration system of Afghan civil servants. As presented in section 5.2, the overall strategy of the reforms

[52] During an interview with a senior Afghan official (IntV25, Oct 8, 2016) an employee from HR department came in and handed over a document to the official. The interviewee then turned to me stating that "*look, this is the annual performance evaluation of the last year. This should have been done at least 7 months ago. But I'm receiving it now. Now guess how serious these evaluations are!"*

toward remuneration was mainly focused on increasing and decompressing the pay scales. The AIA and its international partners in 2002 defined "designing and implementing a salary structure for regular government employees that pays a living wage and is fiscally sustainable" as a priority for "restoring a sound civil administration" (Afghanistan Preliminary Needs Assessment for Recovery and Reconstruction, p. 16). Similarly, "increasing [the] wages and benefit packages" (GoIRA, 2006, p. 106) of civil servants was set among the main benchmarks of the 2006–2013 PAR strategy.

On the other hand, with the vision of having civil service salaries that are competitive with that of the private sector and thus creating a motivated civil service resistant to the temptation of corruption, the mission was defined to carry out a "comprehensive, cross-Government pay and grading review" (ADB et al., 2004, p. 61) to decompress and increase the pay scales of all civil servants. The need to take such an action was also supported by evidence on the ground. As shown below in Figure 6.3., in 2003 and before any reform, the salary levels of Afghan civil servants were very low ($43–$77 per month) and extremely compressed, with the salary of the most senior civil servant being about 1.5 times more than that of the lowest grade.

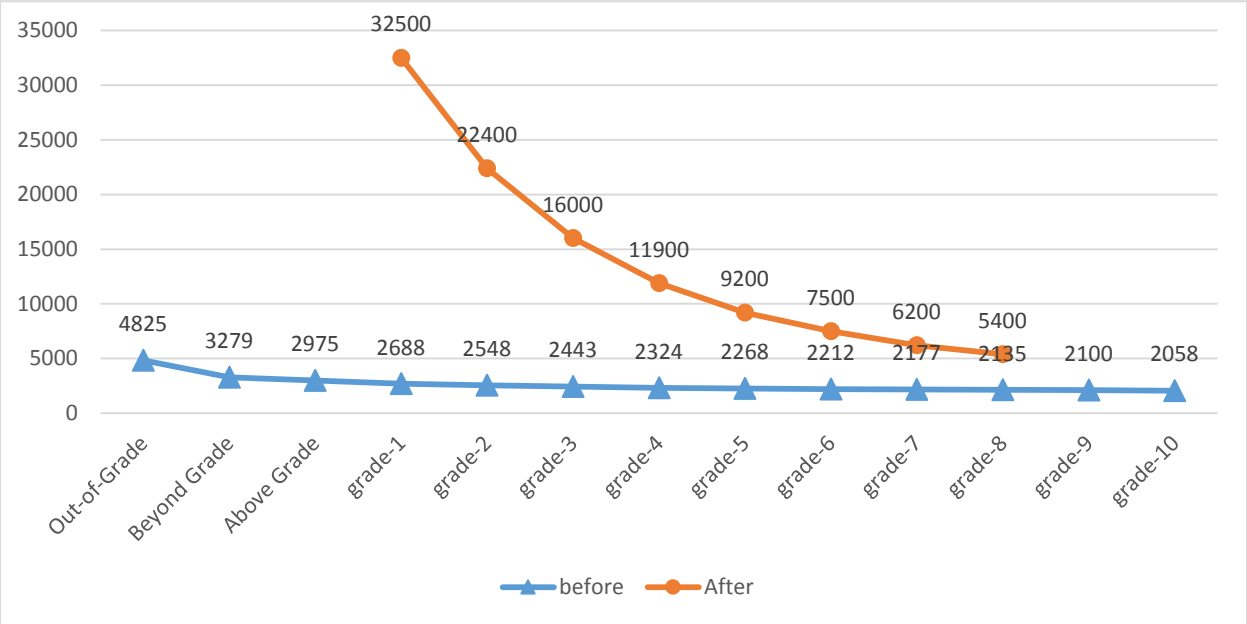

Figure 6.3. Comparative Monthly Salaries of Afghan Civil Servants Before and After Reforms (2003–2018). Accumulated from Evans et al. (2004, p. 53) and Afghanistan Civil Servants Law, (2008, p. 58)

Before delving into further discussions, it should be acknowledged that although the post-reform salary scales, particularly for the lower level of administration (grades 5–8), are still low, it can be seen from Figure 6.3 above that the reform objectives pertaining to the decompression and increase of salaries have been achieved, and following the launch of the P&G program (2009), the salary of the most senior civil servant became six times more than that of the lowest grade.

A crucial element that defined the overall approach of the government toward the remuneration reforms was the high dependency of the Afghan administration on foreign aid. In 2003, when the reforms were initiated, the entire government budget, including the salaries of approximately 250,000 civil servants, was paid by the international community. Thus, despite the intention and need, a sudden and holistic reform to increase and decompress the salaries of all civil servants would be a costly step, which neither the Afghan government nor its international partners wanted to take. As confirmed by the interviewees, the alternative was to proceed with an ad-hoc approach; this way, until a comprehensive pay reform—which happened through the P&G program in 2009—specific parts of the civil service would be selected to receive high salaries so that the capacity could be retained or created in the essential areas of the civil service. These ad-hoc efforts or as the World Bank (2005, p. 65) states the "comprehensive menu of options" were those mentioned below in Table 6.5.

Table 6.5.

Options for Partial Salary Increase in Afghan Civil Service (2003)

	Interim Additional Allowance Under PRR	**PRR Super-scale**	**ARTF Expatriate Window**	**TAFSU**	**LEP**
Parameters	Key officials in PRR agencies	Restricted to key officials [at the leadership level of] PRR agencies	In exceptional circumstances where the case is clearly made, and an exceptional candidate is available	Short-term consultants where the need is clearly justified and a term of reference is submitted to TAFSU	Key positions in each ministry through basic capacity assessment
Salary range	Up to $300 per month	Up to $2000 per month	$3000–$5000 per month	$200–$700 per day and DSA at UN rates	$1000–$2000 per month and in exceptional circumstances higher

Reprinted from World Bank (2005, p. 67)

Notably, the steps taken on the remuneration reforms indicate that instead of choosing one or some out of the above-mentioned options, the involved actors chose all of them through partial reform programs one after another—PRR (2003- ongoing), AEP and LEP (2005-2007), MCP (2007-2012). Moreover, even when the comprehensive P&G (2009- ongoing) reform was launched, this partial approach continued in parallel through the CBR Program (2012-ongoing).

As described in section 5.4, these programs offered a modestly better pay for staff working in the perceived key positions of line ministries. However, the PRR program and its alike targeted only a tiny fraction of the civil service by introducing a higher pay scale alongside the regular pay scheme. While they helped to improve the attractiveness of employment in the public sector, as the majority of interviewees of this study indicated, they caused fragmentation and imbalance in the civil service pay system. Over the following years since 2003, even though the justification for each of the donor-funded reform projects was to improve the remuneration system by replacing all existing pay schemes with a unified and better one, they ended up adding different and higher pay schemes to the pile of various remuneration arrangements.

In addition to the above-mentioned partial remuneration reforms, the comprehensive reform came with the new grading system, which was prepared with the direct technical support of international consultants mainly from the UK's Department for International Development (DFID). The new system, shown below in table 6.6., is comprised of 8 grades and 40 pay steps (5 in each grade).

Table 6.6.

Reformed Pay Grades for Afghan Civil Servants (P&G, 2009)

Org. Level	Grades	Position	Salary (AFN)
Politically appointed	out-of-grade	Ministers, Heads of Independent Agencies, Presidential Advisors (In general, any official who is appointed directly by the head of state)	Varies
	beyond-grade	Deputy ministers, General director, Provincial Governors	Varies
	above-grade	General Director, Provincial Governor	Varies
Leadership	1	Director, Deputy Provincial Governor	32,500
	2	Director, Deputy Provincial Governor, District Governor	22,400

Org. Level	Grades	Position	Salary (AFN)
Management	3	Under-Director	16,000
	4	General Manager	11,900
Executive	5	Manager	9,200
	6	Officer	7,500
Technical	7	Technical personnel (mechanics, drivers, IT staff, among others)	6,200
	8	Service personnel (caretakers/security, non-skilled workers, among others)	5,400

Typically, civil servants start their job from step-1 of any above-mentioned grades, and following a positive annual performance evaluation, they would receive a salary increase of one step. In case the performance is evaluated to be negative, the employees are required to undergo on-job training and remain in the same step, meaning there is no salary increase for that year. At the end of the second year, if the employees' performance is evaluated positively, then they would receive a salary increase and move to the next pay step within grade; if again negative, then the positions are to be announced as vacant, and employees would be dismissed. This process is applied for all five steps within a grade, which means employees could work in a specific grade from 5 to 10 years. In this regard, the Director General of Administrative Reform Secretariat in the IARCSC, interviewed in the course of this research states as follows:

> The basic idea [behind P&G] was to go toward a modern civil service. In a modern civil service, functional clarity is very important. For example, [having] leadership positions responsible for leading and strategy making, positions for professional management, executive and administration… therefore, the P&G is categorizing the civil service positions into 4 groups: leadership (Grades 1–2), management (3–4), executive (5–6), and technical (7–8). This is the logic of the new system.

However, although this grading seems to be simple and straightforward, it bears several problems and shortcomings on issues such as the borderline between civil service and political positions, technical personnel of the civil service, and the nature of civil service employment

tenure. First, an ambiguity exists about the highest level of the civil service and the line that separates civil service recruits from political appointees. The new grading system overlooked the positions of deputy ministers and advisors. Therefore, the same as in the pre-reform grading system, phrases such as *beyond-grade*, *above-grade*, and *out-of-grade* are used to define the statuses of those positions. While a consensus exists about the political nature of ministerial positions, it is unclear whether positions for the respective deputies or advisors are also political or not, as they are technical in nature (e.g., deputy finance, deputy admin, deputy policy), but in practice, they are politically appointed.

Moreover, the reformed system locates technical personnel (such as web designers, IT personnel, among others) in grade-7, which is one before the lowest level of the hierarchy. The main challenge here is that the holders of such positions generally have higher education and more skills than the majority of civil servants in grades 5 to 3; however, legally the highest possible salary for them is slightly higher than that of a non-skilled worker, meaning less than a hundred dollars per month (6200 AFN). This is particularly an important challenge for technical ministries, such as telecommunications, urban development, among others.

Another very important aspect of the post-reform grading system is the issue of tenure. As mentioned in the previous section, although the *Afghanistan Civil Servants Law* (2008) re-emphasizes the nature of the tenure of civil service employment (art 3.3), the same law through a very contradictory article states that "an employee may hold a higher Grade, on the basis of competition" (art 23.1). The interpretation of this article indicates no possibility of the promotion of civil servants. Consequently, after five years of performance, employees are supposed to apply for another position by entering an open recruitment process; otherwise, they will be automatically fired. The findings of this research show the following: (1) The government neither has the capacity to announce all civil service positions as vacant every 5 years and nor is it rational. (2) The number of job openings is much lower than the number of staff reaching the highest step of their grade; therefore, how would it be possible to apply for a job at higher grade when it does not exist? Exploring the possible options, the government decided to temporarily continue annual salary increases for thousands of staff who have reached the maximum step, step five, of their grades. This attempt is clearly in violation of the law, as no servant is supposed to continue working in the same grading step for more than two years (art 16.3.2).

To conclude, as shown below in Table 6.7., although the post-Taleban reforms embedded significant changes in the policies on the grading and remuneration of Afghan civil servants and achieved their objectives with respect to the decompression and partial increase of salaries[53], these policy changes had some negative consequences and also failed to bring about the intended changes in practice. On the one hand, the assumption of the decision makers that a salary increase would bring motivation was simply wrong. Most of the interviewees suggest that the civil servants still lack motivation and will leave the service as soon as they find better-paid jobs. On the other hand, contrary to the objective of reforms, the problematic statuses (out-of-grade, above-grade, and beyond-grade) used for the senior civil service positions and those considered political retained their existence on the practice. Furthermore, findings of this research suggest that by the end of 2017, the Afghan civil service had at least five different pay systems—the old 13-grade system, the P&G's 8-grade system, the PRR's Super Scale and IAA, and the CBR's NTA. Such a selective approach of the reforms which targeted certain parts of the civil service have resulted in: (1) fragmentation of once unified civil service pay system; and (2) creation of an uncooperative and unhealthy work environment in which staff, sometimes performing the same jobs, are paid differently without proper legal justification or explanation. Thus, the issue of salary differences and various pay scales have become one of the fundamental problems faced by the administration, and contrary to the vision of the reforms, the Afghan civil service suffers from the most partial and imbalanced pay systems it has ever had during its history.

[53] However, it should be noted that the majority of the civil servants who are mostly located in grades 4 and 5 (see Figure 5.4. for the case of the MoPW) are still paid much below the amount necessary to pay living costs — approx. $76/month for the lowest grade and about $427 for the highest grade.

Table 6.7.

The extent of Change in Reforms on Staffing System

New Regime \ Old Regime	Policy as adopted	Policy in action
Policy as adopted	**(I)** **The extent of Change in Policy** **(High and +/-)** Change of the system from a 13-grade system to an 8-grade system based on functional classification (+) increase in civil service salaries (+) decompression of the pay system	**(II)** **The extent to which new policy formalizes the old practice**
Policy in action	**(III)** **The extent to which practice continues to reflect old policy**	**(IV)** **The extent of change in practice** **(Low and Negative)** (-) the salary increases (P&G) had no effect on increasing the motivation of civil servants (-) previous problematic statuses (out-of-grade, above-grade, and below grade) remained in place (-) fragmentation of once unified remuneration system and application of several parallel pay schemes for the civil servants without proper justification. (-) a divided and an unhealthy work environment, due to the existence of various pay schemes that are perceived unfair

Lastly, failure to introduce a proper grading system, creating ambiguity about the tenure nature of civil service employment, blocking promotions are the other significant adverse consequences that have emerged either directly or indirectly as a result of reforms of the remuneration system.

6.2 Key Factors behind the Success and Failure of the Afghan Civil Service Reforms

Having explained the outcomes, consequences, progress on the reform benchmarks and the extent of changes in both policies and practice, this section will present findings of this research related to specific factors that led reforms towards those results. Here I will present these factors in two ways. First, through the results of a questionnaire on factors influencing recruitments and performance appraisals of the civil servants; and second, using the methodology previously used in section 2.3 to present factors that affected the success and failure of the post-Taleban civil

service reforms in all three areas of recruitment, appraisal and remuneration of Afghan civil servants.

First, as mentioned in the methodology chapter, in addition to the interviews with senior officials, a questionnaire was prepared to study the specific factors affecting the recruitment of the civil servants. Through this questionnaire, respondents from two different categories—employees of the IARCSC as the official custodian of reforms, and employees of 2 line ministries as the recipients of reforms—were asked to consider their own recruitment processes and other recruitment cases that they had concrete information about, and anonymously give their opinions about the nine factors that were previously mentioned by the interviewees as the essential elements considered during the recruitment and appraisal of civil servants. Furthermore, through the questionnaires, respondents were asked to prioritize the mentioned factors by giving scores from 0 to 9 to each element, where 0 would mean the respondent thinks that factor is not considered at all and 9 would be interpreted as the most critical factor. For the distributed 81 questionnaires, a total of 46 individuals provided valid answers. As presented below in Figure 6.4., *'Personal Connection'* and '*Ethnic Nepotism'* were indicated as the most important factors during the recruitment and appraisal of civil servants. These two factors were followed by *'Political Affiliation'* and *'Money'* or bribery. Moreover, while *'Regional/ Provincial Preference'* was mentioned as the fifth most important factor, *'Education'*, *'Work Experience'* and *'Religious Sect'* were identified as the last three influential factors during the recruitment processes.

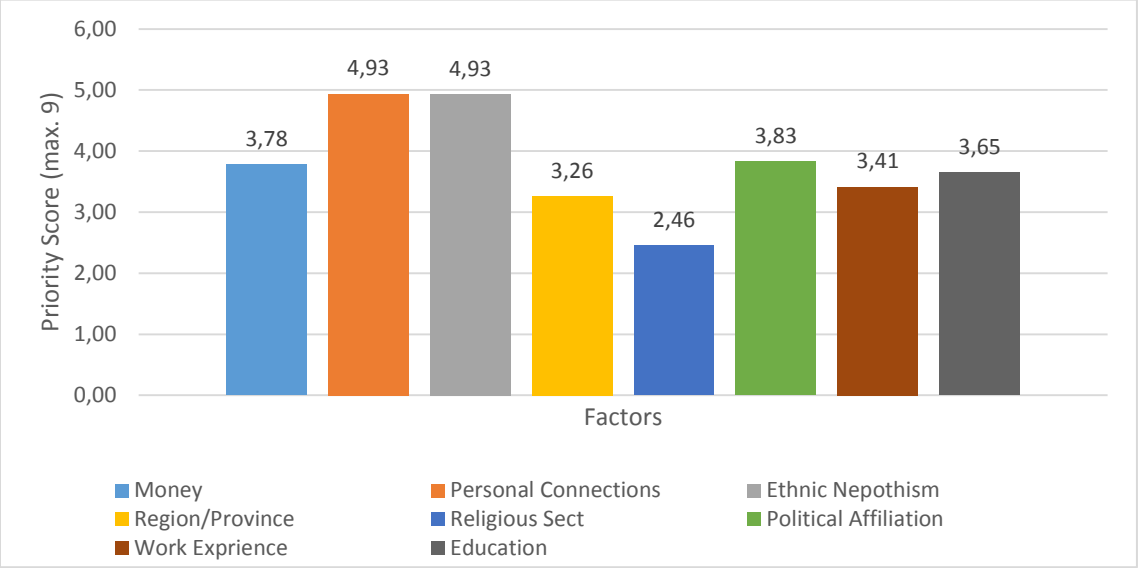

Figure 6.4. Factors Considered in Recruitment and Appraisal Processes of Afghan Civil Servants

Separating the questionnaire results from the IARCSC—the organization in the lead of the reform—from those of the line ministries—one of the reform recipients—the results differ as shown below in Figure 6.6. While the Commission employees find *ethnic nepotism*, followed by *education* and *personal connection* as the most significant factors in the recruitment and appraisal of civil servants, the ministries' employees believe that *money*, *personal connection*, and *ethnic favoritism* are respectively the most important factors. Comparison of the answers provided by the Commission employees (Figure 6.5., left) with those from the line ministries staff (Figure 6-5, right) suggests that the first group assess the process more positive.

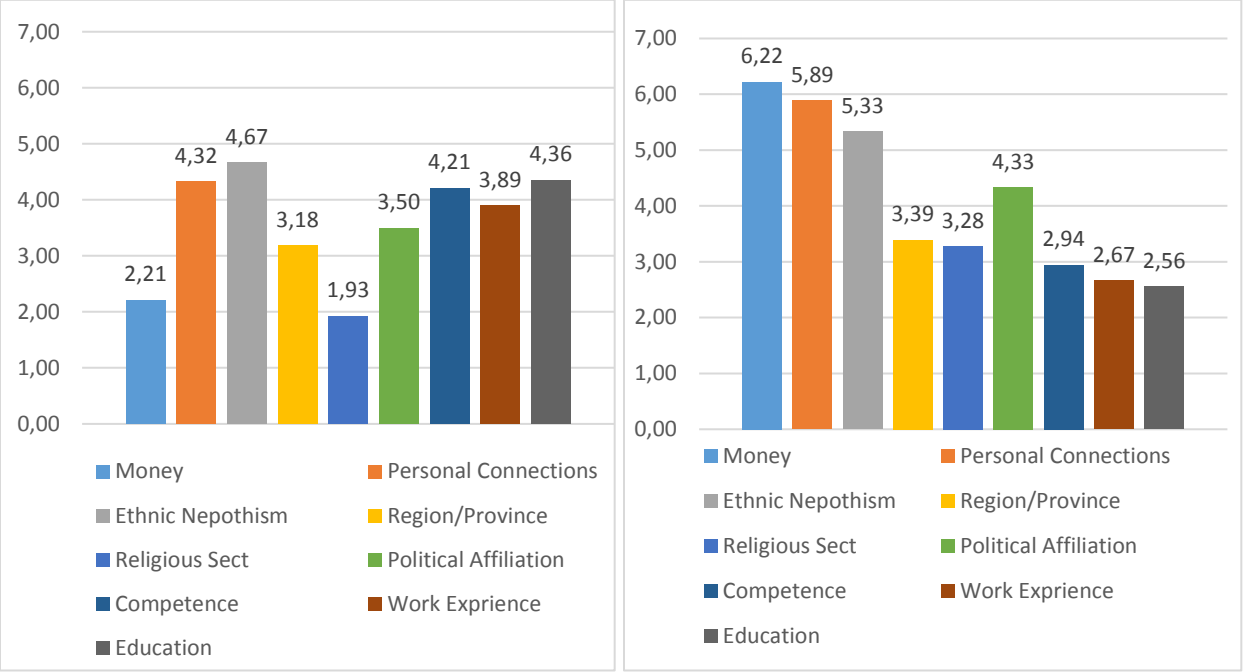

Figure 6.5. Factors Considered in Recruitment Processes according to the IARCSC (left) and the line ministries' (right) Employees.

As shown above, the commission staff believe that money is one of the least significant factors, or that education is the second most crucial element considered during the post-reform recruitment processes. This could be explained through the fact that assurance of meritocracy in the recruitment and appraisal of civil servants has been a core task of the Commission and its staff; thus, its questioning is in a way criticizing the performance of their own organization and even that of their own.

Overall, the results projected in Figure 6.5. partially explain the failures on recruitments and promotions of the civil servants which were discussed in section 6.1.1 and 6.1.2. This means that the post-Taleban reforms failed to achieve merit-based and performance driven civil service mainly because the relevant processes were dominated by non-merit factors such as personal connections, ethnic nepotism, political affiliation, bribery, regional/provincial affiliation, and religious sects rather than education and work experience.

Second, earlier in section 2.3 factors influencing the outputs of the civil service and public administration reforms in Fragile and Conflict-Affected Countries (FCACs) were discussed. These elements then were categorized into three groups of contextual, programmatic, and external (see Figure 2.6 and Table 2.1). Acknowledging that each FCAC has its own complexities and particularities, the same groups of factors have existed in the case of the post-Taleban civil service reforms and their study can reveal the specific reasons behind the achievements and failures of these reforms. Thus, knowing the background of the Afghan civil service and its past HR policies (Chapter 4), the benchmarks, strategies, and contents of the reforms (Chapter 5), and their outputs on recruitment, promotion and remuneration of civil servants (section 6.1), I now present and explain factors behind the reform. Starting with context-related factors, the following three subsections discuss the most important elements that have influenced the success and failure of Afghanistan's CSRs since 2002. These factors are summarized below in Table 6.8.

Table 6.8.

Factors that Contributed to the Partial Failure of Afghan CSRs (2003–2016)

Contextual	Programmatic	External
- political dynamics (lack of support and negative influence) - ignorance of the context Particularities - lack of local leadership and its consequences - corruption (nepotism, cronyism, patronage, bribery)	- lack of an inclusive reform approach - failure in appropriate priority setting and lack of background research - inflexible reform plans - lack of sustainability - ambiguous reform strategy	- the overwhelming influence of the international actors - lack of coordination among international actors - lack of trust between local and international actors - an extensive flow of foreign aid

6.2.1 Contextual factors

As discussed in section 2.3.1, almost all researchers and practitioners agree that the recognition of context is very crucial for the success of reforms. Similarly, the findings of this research re-emphasize that during both the design and implementation of CSRs, the national contextual and their related elements should be understood and recognized very well. Interviews with senior local and international staff involved in the various phases of the reforms as well as the review of documents show that political dynamics, ignorance of the context particularities, lack of local leadership and its consequences, and the various types of corruption including bribery, cronyism, nepotism, and patronage have had the most significant effects on the design and implementation of the post-Taleban CSRs in Afghanistan; and thus are partially responsible for the failure of the reforms to achieve the intended objectives. Below, I describe each of these factors and explain their roles.

Political dynamics (lack of support and negative influence). As already discussed, politically, 2002 was a turning point for Afghanistan in many senses. Most importantly, after experiencing three decades of instability, the system of governance was subjected to a sudden shift toward a western-like democracy. During the Bonn negotiations (2001), which paved the way for a new regime, the issue of the political representation of ethnic groups based on their estimated population was the primary criteria for shaping the future state. As a result, all ministerial positions of the upcoming Afghanistan Interim Authority in 2002 were mainly distributed among the four major ethnic groups of the country (Pashtun, Tajik, Hazara, and Uzbek), a move which over the next couple of months and years became a norm and played a very important role in major decision-makings related to governance. Consequently, the policies regarding the country's civil service were strongly affected by the *ethnicity-based participatory policy* of the government and its international supporters. In turn, having a fair representation of the ethnic groups became an essential criterion for appointments at all levels of administration, including deputy ministers, directors, provincial governors, heads of provincial departments. Thus, even though the number of civil servants from some previously marginalized ethnic groups has been increased, the policy is criticized by local and international experts as the main obstacle in the institutionalization of meritocracy in the Afghan public administration and the elimination of ethnic conflicts.

Notably, although in principle the idea of having a civil service that represents all the ethnic groups of Afghanistan seems noble, framing it as a norm for all civil service matters has created a hostile environment, in which all ethnicities feel disadvantaged. Both the interviews and observations of this study indicate that the appointments of line ministers based on their ethnicity have created negative competition in the civil service, mainly because, excluding a few, all ministers have tried to increase the involvement of people from their own or ally ethnicities in their organizations. Civil service officials, parliamentarians, and politicians from the largest ethnic group(s) generally believe that under the name of *fair ethnic representation*, people from specific ethnicities have been sacked from employment or prevented from securing employment opportunities. On the contrary, similar groups of individuals from smaller ethnic minorities believe in the existence of an *ethnic monopoly* in the whole public sector and blame major ethnic group(s) for preventing candidates from other ethnicities entering the civil service.[54]

In addition to a great many local media reports, the consequences of this conflict could be directly observed during the multiple visits to four ministries and independent governmental agencies undertaken for this study. As soon as one I entered each of these ministries; I could immediately feel the dominance of a specific ethnic group; a conclusion that can be made by any observer without any prior knowledge about the ministry. The dialog and language of the staff interacting with each other, portraits and pictures of specific figures regarded as national heroes by certain ethnic groups hanging on walls or standing on desks are just two simple examples indicating that a supposedly politically neutral line ministry has turned into a gathering point of a specific ethnic group, with their major concern being how they can benefit their own ethnicity more and more. This is, by the way, not specific to a certain ethnicity but a common practice among a considerable number of officials from all ethnic groups. During the field research, three cases in three organizations were observed where a high-ranking official from a different ethnic group was involved in.

Observation 1. The interviewee was a senior official at the leadership level of a line ministry. In the course of an hour waiting to conduct the interview, at least ten people came to

[54] And there is a third but very small group mainly composed of Afghan officials educated abroad, who blame both groups and emphasize that meritocracy should be the main principle, not ethnicity.

interviewee's office, all from the same ethnicity and all asking for (illegal) support or favor. Some took the names of parliamentarians or other influential politicians as their referees. Others tried to justify that their legal requests were turned away by the responsible organization as result of ethnic discrimination, and they knew no one at the high levels of that organization to help them; therefore, they had come or were informally referred to this official, assuming that he would support them because of being from the same ethnicity. After I met the interviewee and asked about the issue, the response I received was as follows:

> Yes, I am aware that some people blame me of having a political agenda for bringing more people from my ethnicity to the ministry. My answer is that you should go to A [anonymized] ministry and see how many of my people are there; Even more interesting, why don't you look at the ministry of B [anonymized]. We are completely discriminated in several ministries, and the only thing I am doing is trying to balance it… equal opportunity works when everyone is applying it. But it further damages if you are the only one applying it (IntV14, September 1, 2015).

Observation 2. In another organization, the interview with a General Director was interrupted by a group of people who had come to congratulate the interviewee on his new appointment. The group's spokesperson was a member of Afghanistan's National Assembly accompanied by three young men, including one who had applied for a civil service job in a ministry different from the visited officer was working in. The candidate believed that he was eliminated during the shortlisting process despite having all qualifications. The remaining two men were fresh graduates, and the MP asked the General Director to find suitable positions for them. In response, the official promised the MP that he would certainly follow up with the requests.

Observation 3. A similar case was observed in another organization in an interview with a senior policy advisor. Following a call in the middle of the interview, a person entered the office, having a paper in hand and saying he was sent by X [anonymized, a well-known politician]. The person explained that he had applied for a position and had not passed the written exam although having answered all questions correctly. The official asked him not to worry and prepare for the next phase of the exam, which was the interview. Then the official called the politician and assured that he would provide the necessary support by placing the name of that specific candidate in the list of qualified candidates for the interview.

These few observations are complemented by many similar statements of other interviewees, which all suggest the high role of ethnicity and native influence by various groups of actors in the HR-related issues of the Afghan civil service.

On the other hand, findings show that politics is an essential element that determines the success or failure of the reforms. In this regard, a senior official stated as follows: "My experience tells me that as much as Civil Service Reform is technical, it is also political! It is highly affected by politics [and] politicians. It has to have the political backing to achieve the technical desires" (IntV07, August 22, 2015). Citing the CBR program as "a clear example of the lack of political support," the interviewee added that in the case of reforms in Afghanistan, politicians not only hesitated their support but also manipulated implementation of the reforms. A very dominant example of this manipulation is the interference of politicians in the enforcement of policies and regulations suggested by the reforms for recruitments of the civil servants. In the course of the interviews, all nine Afghan officials directly involved in the recruitments at various levels stated that for almost all recruitments, including those of the lower-grade positions, the recruitment committees received calls from MPs and/or other politicians asking them to support a specific candidate. In an interview with a senior official of the Commission, the interviewee mentioned this issue to be such a burden that when in 2016, the recruitment authorities of high-ranking officials were delivered from the Commission to the line ministries, he and his colleagues were "so glad that they could finally get rid of extreme pressure from parliamentarians to recruit their favorite people" (IntV22, October 4, 2016).

Therefore, unless there is a strong political support and willingness to implement policies and regulations introduced by reforms, it is not surprising to see reforms fail to achieve their intended objectives. The case of post-Taleban Afghan CSR, particularly concerning the objective of meritocracy in recruitments, is full of examples that indicate the absence of such support.

Ignorance of the context particularities. About the ignorance of particularities of the national context, an Afghan general director who had been involved in almost all reform programs discussed in this study states that "foreigners built our system without really understanding our context" (IntV28, October 8, 2016). Lack of understanding and ignorance of the national context particularly during the design phase of the reforms were mentioned by almost all local and some international interviewees. Similarly, the "import of all [reform] ideas from outside of the country

rather than emerging from Afghan context [and] based on local administrative needs" (IntV03, August 5, 2015) has been an issue criticized by most local officials. While globalization of governance tools and public sector management practices, as well as the involvement of several international actors such as the World Bank, management consultancy firms and development agencies of donor countries in Afghanistan, make importation of reform ideas and concepts to some extent inevitable, they had to be utilized according to the context. It appears that at least during the 2003–2009 period of reforms in Afghanistan, poor knowledge about and ignorance of the historical and intuitional context led to the oversimplification and underestimation of problems reforms aimed to address. According to the interviewees, both Afghan and international actors sought quick fixes so that they could show progress to their audiences. Thus, similar to many other FCACs, they attempted to implement what was believed to be the best practices and designed the Afghan CSR programs mainly on the principles of NPM. A former director at the IARCSC explains the situation as follows: "[referring to the reform programs] Unfortunately all of them were copied from foreign countries. There was no prior research to each of these reform programs. All of them had weaknesses in this regard" (IntV30, March 30, 2016). Superficial implementations, the need for multiple extensions of the reform programs by simply changing the names—AEP and LEP to MCP and then to CBR—as well as serious flaws in the *Afghanistan Civil Servants Law* (2008) and the P&G program (2009) have been a few consequences of such ignorance and indications that the context was not, at least adequately, recognized.

On the other hand, equally important is the overlooking of *path-dependency or* historical context as a crucial element for success. Based on what was presented in Chapter 4, by 2002, when the reforms started, the Afghan civil service had a history of at least 80 years, and most of the reforms implemented since then had direct or indirect antecedents in the past, which could act as good learning points for the upcoming reforms. However, "those in charge of designing reforms had completely forgotten or simply did not even know that the country once had a civil service commission" (IntV24, March 29, 2016). As also discussed in section 4.2, the source adds that some laws, regulations, policies, and mechanisms for competitive recruitments, performance evaluations, capacity development, and reducing administrative corruptions were in place in the pre-2002 administration and those in charge of the reform design could "start building on them." However, due to the lack of knowledge and interest, one can barely find such referrals.

Consequently, appropriateness, long delays, and design issues have been amongst core obstacles towards the success of the reforms.

Lack of appropriate local leadership and its consequences. GoIRA (2006) states "uneven commitment to, ownership of, and leadership for public administration reform exists across government" (p. 123). Findings of this research confirm the continuity of these issues over the following years. The weak leadership during both the formulation and implementation of the reforms, which consequently resulted in the lack of ownership and commitment, has been an essential element that slowed the progress of the reforms down and prevented them from meeting some of their crucial goals. Leadership problems had different causes and effects, some of which are discussed below.

The very low capacity at the leadership level of reforms, particularly in the IARCSC, accompanied by a *'yes, boss!'* and *'taken for granted'* approach of Afghan officials during the design and formulation of the reform programs resulted in a situation where international advisors and consultants had an incomparably bigger role than their Afghan counterparts. Referring to the international actors, a senior Afghan official states that "they were the real leaders of reforms. The [reform] ideas were theirs, the money was theirs, the conditions were set by them, and everything was in English…so they were the real leaders, not us" (IntV30, March 30, 2016). Thus, it is now clear that contrary to the official statements and regulations, at least during the first seven years of the reforms (2003–2009), and mainly due to the lack of competence, the country's civil service commission did not have the leadership of the process; instead, as mentioned by several interviewees, it has been the international actors such as the World Bank and some development agencies of the donor countries, and to some extent, the country's MoF that primarily led the design of the reform programs; thus, almost all interviewees suggest that, excluding the CBR, all reform programs (PRR, AEP, LEP, MCP, and P&G) were drafted and finalized by international actors. The role of the Commission, on the other hand, has been more symbolic than substantive. In addition to the lack of capacity, another reason for the development of such a dynamic has been the leadership's lack of trust in its local staff and a parallel over-trust in foreign consultants. An official with more than ten years of work experience in the Commission explains the situation as follows:

> I was among the first staff for the commission, and I know the organization, its leadership, and its internal issues very well. One of the main problems is that the leadership like directors, [and] deputies… rely a lot on foreigners, but if the person [giving an idea] is [an] Afghan, they don't even listen. (IntV22, October 4, 2016)

Naturally, in a situation where the decision-makers lack the required knowledge and/or expertise on policymaking, in general, and CSR in particular, and believe that their local subordinates suffer from such lack of capacity as well, they automatically tend to agree with the prescriptions of the international actors and take whatever the international actors propose for granted. This is probably the most important reason that almost no one in the line ministries has a sense of ownership for the reforms. Most officials, without even a thorough understanding, believe that the reform programs and policies have been imposed by foreigners by some corrupt people in the Commission. Therefore, when it comes to the implementation, these officials only try to justify that they have followed the reform policies, without even trying to understand the aims and purposes of those policies or explaining them to their subordinates. Even during the initial stages of the reforms, in 2004, it was officially acknowledged that "there has been little or no ownership" (ADB et al., 2004, p. 101) by locals. Multiple interview sources including an official working at the general directorate level confirm suggest that the ownership problem continued for many years ahead, adding that "the ownership was of foreigners and lack of the capacity among us [Afghans] was the main reason" (IntV18, March 28, 2016).

Moreover, the lack of a strong leadership for the reforms goes beyond policymaking and the design phase of the reforms. Findings suggest that as a centerpiece of the Karzai government's (2002–2014) informal strategy,[55] most of the appointed ministers emerged as powerful islands of power considering themselves at a much higher level of hierarchy than the IARCSC. Thus, ministries were unwilling or did not find it necessary to cooperate with the Commission in the actual implementation of reforms. During the interviews, officials from various departments of the Commission complained that, in some cases, it would take months for a line ministry to answer their official requests on, for example, the status of reform implementation or HR data. Most of

[55] Of bringing politically influential figures or as some call 'Warlords' to the center and offering them ministerial positions.

these officials, however, saw the leadership of the Commission equally responsible for the problem due to its inability to use its legal authority over those powerful ministers. Finally, the lack of interest and political ambitions of parts of the leadership were mentioned as the core reasons behind the weak leadership of the Commission for reforms. Although the IARCSC is supposed to be politically neutral, it seems that a majority of the leadership, particularly its commissioners, have had no interest to act as bureaucrats or reform experts. Instead, their preference has been to use their positions as a stepping stone toward securing higher political positions or for accommodating personal interests.

Corruption: Nepotism, cronyism, patronage, and bribery. The increasing corruption in various forms particularly nepotism, cronyism, and bribery are found to be among the essential factors for the failure in the institutionalization of merit-based recruitment and appraisal of Afghan civil servants. Although each mentioned form of corruption is itself a separate topic of research, here, I try to explain their roles and effects during the implementation of the reforms as briefly as possible.

As the leading factor, *Nepotism* is believed to exist in all levels of administration and has affected the implementation of reforms, particularly with respect to the merit-based recruitments. Surprisingly, nepotism in Afghanistan has been socially accepted and thus has become part of the culture. In this regard, a senior Afghan official involved in many recruitment examinations states as follows:

> Culturally it is a big offense if I refuse a close relative, for example, my uncle or my brother, when they ask to [illegally] support them to get a job in the government. Saying "No" is a big disrespect, and I cannot think of many Afghan officials out there able to do this. (IntV28, October 8, 2016)

Regarding the level of existing nepotism, during an interview with another senior official, the interviewee provided a document showing the details of staff in a civil service office. Upon a closer examination of the list, I noticed that several people from the same family were recruited even in the same department. Cross-checking the dates of their recruitments and positions, one could easily find a pattern. The way it is generally done is that following the recruitment of a person to a senior position such as Director or Under-Director, his or her family members are recruited to a lower position in one of the subordinate units. The same issue was observed in

another organization, where about ten first-and-second-degree relatives of an official were recruited one after another. The other common form of nepotism is the lobbying of a senior official for the recruitment of one's family members in a different ministry than the one himself works in. Raising the simple question of 'what is the occupation of your family members?' to senior public officials such as Deputies, General Directors, and Directors explains a lot about the degree of nepotism in the Afghan civil service, as it is very rare not to find at least one first-degree relative who is also a public official. Yet, the interesting question, as suggested by an international HR advisor to a line ministry, is 'How they can do this?' particularly when everything on recruitment exams seems to be in line with the norms and regulations. The answer is that in almost every line ministry there exist officials who have become experts at manipulating the process and getting specific candidates recruited. In the course of this research, I met one of these so-called brokers in a private office, where the person was visited by applicants and potential candidates and negotiate the terms and amounts of payment to get a job in the civil service.

On the other hand, *cronyism* in the context of the Afghan civil service has emerged as networks of interests consisting of various high-ranking officials working in all or one or several line ministries and independent agencies. An interesting fact is the coexistence of cronyism and ethnic favoritism in the recruitment and performance appraisal of civil servants. In the course of this research, several cases were observed where, the same official who strongly favors recruitment of people from his own ethnicity and illegally support them, at the same time, is part of the networks assisting the appointment of cronies in civil service positions. The members of these networks neither share a common ethnicity nor have a common ideology or political interests, yet they are considered to be very close friends and do whatever they can so that a friend or a person referred by a friend gets recruited.

Moreover, *patronage* has made it extremely difficult to bring meritocracy through reforms; thus, as Grossman (2017, p. 5) describes, it "has crippled the government." Further, on the role and influence of patronage in the civil service, a senior official in the IARCSC states that "patronage was and still is in the whole system. We are divided by several non-merit factors, and it has become a socially accepted and respected factor" (IntV28, October 8, 2016); thus, cannot eliminate it simply by policy papers. The findings of this research show that during 2003–2017, two categories of individuals have been behind the existing patronage in the Afghan civil service:

(1) elected politicians consisting of MPs and members of Provincial Councils and (2) ministers. Out of these two categories, parliamentarians have been the greatest contributors to the evil of patronage. Although MPs have often complained about the non-merit recruitments of the civil service, the same people are blamed by the line ministries and the Commission for being the main source of problems with appointments. According to the findings of a local media report[56], only in the course of 2016, members of the National Assembly had visited the line ministries about 9,000 times. Concerning the nature of such visits, the former Minister of Information and Culture mentioned that the majority of MPs were coming for illegal demands such as getting projects or recruitments of their own people in the government. According to a senior official of the IARCSC, the interference of MPs in recruitments was to such an extent that the previous President Hamid Karzai banned parliamentarians from going to line ministries except on Wednesdays and Mondays from 16:00 to 18:00. However, it did not decrease the level of interference in appointments, as the current President Ashraf Ghani in his public statement on December 28, 2017, warned the MPs that "if they do not stop going to the ministries for appointments, I will disclose all details [of their wrongdoings] through media."

On the other hand, as mentioned by several interviewees, civil service recruitment has been one of the main topics in the informal negotiations before MPs' votes of confidence for candidate ministers. While in most cases, it has been the MPs who have used their votes as a leverage and exercised their votes in exchange for future favors including appointments of their favorite people in the civil service, in other cases, it has been the candidate ministers who have promised this, so that they can get confirmation from the parliamentarians. Additionally, according to a senior advisor of a line ministry the Parliament's rights of inquiry and interpellation were also used as a leverage by MPs; therefore, when MPs referred specific individuals to be hired in the civil service or gave names of specific candidates who had applied for certain jobs to be supported, the ministers had no choice other than to provide the requested support (IntV17, March 26, 2016). However, it

[56] tiled as Findings on the anormal visits of MPs from line ministries (3rd Headline of the 6pm News). Tolonews(2017, June 19). Video available on: https://youtu.be/TG-j-qDQ07g

does not mean that ministers did not use patronage to recruit their own favorite people. In fact, some interviewees suggest that in addition to the interference of ministers and their close circle, there have been cases where unnecessary positions were created so that particular people could get a job in the civil service. This was also confirmed by several other interviewees who either had been a member of the recruitment teams in the line ministries or had the knowledge on the issue. All of these interviewees have consensus that in cases where a specific candidate was supported by a minister, the person would be recruited one way or another.

Lastly, *bribery* or, in more concrete terms, the issue of buying civil service employment is another critical challenge toward attaining a meritocracy in the civil service. In addition to the interviewees, Leonardo and Robertson (2009, p. 8) assess the role of money in Afghanistan's public employment as follows:

> Government employment is purchased rather than earned… Stories are widely told about buying jobs, with the highest bidder appointed regardless of merit. While earlier, perhaps people with connections through family, party, or faction were privileged in employment, now Afghans believe that the system is simply dominated by money.

Notably, although the majority of the interviewees believe that the role of money in recruitment is not as important as patronage and cronyism, all accept its existence. In fact, in the course of this research, a case was observed where a candidate was asked by an official to pay an amount of $1,500 for a civil position the candidate had applied for. The official was an intermediary between the members of the recruitment committee and the candidates, who promised to return the money if the candidate did not get the job. After some months, the candidate was told that his money was less than what others had paid, so he was not recruited. He was paid $1,000 back, and $500 was reduced by the official for the so-called process expenses.[57] Findings show that the practice of *informal bidding* has been very common, and most of the negotiations are done during the face-to-face meetings in the side offices of the so-called *mediators*. In another type of arrangement, the bribe is not paid up front. Instead, a specific amount or percentage of the

[57] One year later and after several failed applications, the candidate became a civil servant, when he was assisted by another senior official who facilitated the support of the interview panel in advance.

monthly salary is defined, and once the person is recruited, he regularly pays that amount from his salary to those who assisted during the recruitment process. According to the well-informed interview sources, this method is practiced mostly in the case of civil service positions that deal with procurement, finance, taxation, or monitoring. Arguing that its findings suggested widespread bribery during recruitments including the sale of positions such as district governors and heads of ministerial departments by prices varying from $20,000 to $70,000 (BBC, 2013), the Afghan Parliament's Joint Commission on Evaluation of the IARCSC Performance in 2013 came to the conclusion that the best solution would be to end the operations of the IARCSC (Deutsche Welle, 2013); a decision which was never taken serious by the government, and the issue of buying civil service employment is still considered one of the major challenges of the civil service.

6.2.2 Programmatic factors

As discussed in section 2.3, several decades of CSPAR in many FCACs provide us with a set of critical factors that defines the success or failure of reforms. While most of those factors can be located as either contextual or external, certain elements exist that do not directly belong to either group. These are factors related to the reform itself and can be categorized as a third group, which I call *programmatic factors*. The findings of this research show that in the case of Afghanistan, factors such as the lack of an inclusive reform approach, the failure in appropriate priority setting, and the lack of background research, inflexible reform plans, the lack of sustainability, and ambiguous reform strategy have been the main reasons under this category that contributed negatively. The following subsections will briefly explain each of these drivers and provide examples where available.

The lack of an inclusive reform approach. As the foremost factor of this category, the reform approach has been mentioned as an essential element for the success and failure of reforms by both the local and international interviewees of this research. The majority of officials in the line ministries complain about the approach of the reform programs and blame those involved for introducing various partial reforms that were disconnected and, in some cases, conflicting each other. It is now clear that particularly in 2003 when the first reforms were initiated, the government lacked an inclusive reform agenda. Findings suggest that due to the haste to show progress in the performance of the civil service and thus the effective use of millions of dollars of international

aid and improve service delivery, the policymakers designed and launched temporary reform projects, without an inclusive approach. According to a high ranking official at the IARCSC "during the first two years of its establishment the amount of aid was so huge, and the level of international involvement was so high that almost every week there were delegations from a development agency or representatives of a country visiting the Commission and expressing their willingness to implement a project" (IntV05, October 10, 2016). However, the official adds that they "were not able to sit and take some time to put all existing efforts together and see the whole picture." In another interview, an Afghan policymaker suggested that they did not really know what their approach was (IntV18, March 8, 2016). As explained in section 5.2, most benchmarks and objectives regarding the civil service and its reform were defined during the joint conferences of the Afghan government with its international partners. Thus, after each of these conferences, the government, at least on paper, tried to accommodate the requests of the international community, rather than having a comprehensive approach and aligning those expectations in line with it. An international HR advisor with about eight years of work experience in the implementation of various reform programs states as follows:

> The fact that all reforms emerged as three-year projects explains that from the beginning there was no inclusive approach. If you review official documents of the reform projects, of course [you will see that] they talk about previous efforts, but I haven't seen a single document saying that these are the lists of things that need to be done through reforms, saying that we do A in X years and then shift to B in Y years and finally in Z year we will have all accomplished. (IntV12, March 17, 2016)

Under the circumstances mentioned above, both partial and comprehensive approaches were followed parallelly. On the one hand, several reform programs (PRR, AEP, LEP, MCP, and CBR) targeted certain groups of civil servants by offering attractive salaries. On the other hand, criticizing previous and ongoing reforms for being ad-hoc fixes, the Commission and its international patterns showed their support for broader and more inclusive approaches, through the implementation of the P&G program. However, consensus exists among all the officials interviewed in the course of this research that the overall reform approach and the roadmap were unclear.

Failure in priority setting and lack of background research. In 2002, prior to launching any major reforms, although both national and international actors agreed that "undertaking a comprehensive review and needs assessment for [the] reform of the civil service" (Afghanistan Preliminary Needs Assessment for Recovery and Reconstruction, 2002, p. 25) was essential, study of the relevant documents, as well as interviews, lead to no evidence of such review. As mentioned by an experienced official in charge of the reform implementation, in the pre-reform governance arrangement, the country had a Ministry of Planning responsible for conducting need assessments throughout all line ministries and addressing their needs by formulating the required policies in all areas, including HR (IntV24, March 29, 2016). Moreover, the source adds, the Ministry of Planning in the late 1970s and early 1980s predicted the number of graduates from each discipline as well as the number of experts the civil service needed in a particular number of years and then planned accordingly to fulfill the needs. Thus, the training and education of the existing cadre through the National Institute for Management and Administration as well as recruitment plans were developed based on the needs and capacities of the administration backed by the regular assessments conducted by the Ministry of Planning and the COCSAR in the line ministries. However, following the dissolution of the Ministry of Planning in the initial years of the Karzai administration, the official adds, the job of research, assessment, and planning of the civil service was supposed to be carried out by the newly established Civil Service Commission. Nonetheless, although some interview sources talk about teams of experts visiting line ministries one after another to assess their needs and shortcomings to be addressed by reforms, others suggest that contrary to promises mentioned in the Tokyo Conference-I (2002), no comprehensive need assessment, at least not by the IARCSC, was carried out.

Undertaking a thorough needs assessment and background research of the situation of the civil service and its historical developments is crucial for proper priority setting. However, some high-ranking officials in the line ministries believe that most of the post-Taleban CSR programs did not address the priority areas and essential needs of the line ministries, but rather the interests of donors. In an interview with an IARCSC Director, while the official confirmed that almost all reforms and their priorities were designed by foreigners based on the priorities of the donor community and the international players such as the World Bank, he believed those were the priorities of the Afghan administration as well. Moreover, the source suggests that the problem was not the nature of the priorities but the lack of consistency and follow up. When asked what

the reform priorities were and how they were defined, the response of the interviewee was as follows:

> Once we were told that our priority is to focus on merit recruitments; then we were told that we should focus on the motivation of staff; later they [donors and international advisors] told us that remuneration reforms were more important and we should deal with it first; sometime later, the priority became performance management. And now they say that shifting to a professional cadre is the priority. Personally, I didn't understand how these priorities were set, and I think we did just a bit of all. (IntV30, March 30, 2016)

Supporting the above statement, the General Director of the IARCSC's Civil Service Management, in an interview in 2016, stated that priority setting had been "one of the biggest challenges during the past 14 years. There has been ups and downs about the priority of reform for the government, and priorities have been changed several times."

As a result, it is evident that the involved actors failed to define the reform priorities based on comprehensive need assessments, and in cases where they did define the priorities, they failed to communicate them to the involved stakeholders.

Flexibly as a key factor. CSRs are highly costly and cannot be simply terminated or replaced if serious design flaws are found. Thus, on the one hand, reform plans should be flexible to allow necessary amendments and modifications to address program shortcomings. On the other hand, in the absence of a strong political support, legislative support may seem a powerful tool to assist the implementation of reforms. Therefore, policymakers generally face trade-off of introducing reforms through legislation which will assist implementation but reduces flexibility or without any specific legislation which would bring more flexibility but less support for the implementation. Learning from previous reform programs such as PRR, the leadership decided to amend the relevant legislation—the *Afghanistan Civil Servants Law* —to legally bind the line ministries in the implementation of the P&G program. However, this move affected the flexibility factor to a large extent. Immediately after the implementation of the program in some ministries, it was realized that serious problems existed with several parts of the program, including the newly introduced grading system, the blocking of all promotions, and the rendering of performance management mechanisms ineffective. However, as the reform program had become a law,

addressing the shortcomings would require changing the law and considering the complex legislative procedure and existing political tensions among the involved actors, particularly between the government and the parliament, which became more difficult than its design and implementation. In fact, almost nine years have passed, and various amendments have been drafted, but the new *Civil Servants Law* is yet to be ratified. This is a very important lesson that highlights the importance of the flexibility factor. Had the P&G not been turned into a law, a major obstacle in the related concerns could have been removed much easier.

Lack of sustainability. "Lack of consideration for sustainability and ignorance of long-term feasibility" (IntV22, October 4, 2016) have been among the main problems of the reforms. The same view is shared by some non-Afghan experts such as Grossman (2017) who believes that "short-term fixes have been the bane of the U.S.-led intervention in Afghanistan." Owing to such a strong tendency toward *quick fixes*, the involved national and international actors practically overlooked the essential fact that it takes years for reforms to be fully implemented. Reforms not only have to have long-term visions but also need to have concrete long-term plans and be able to establish connections between various components of reforms to be implemented over the years. Interviews suggest that in the case of Afghanistan, this did not happen. Resultantly, sustainability concerns arose only a year after the implementation of the first set of reforms. Considering the implemented reforms as ad-hoc arrangements, both national and international actors admitted that "a variety of implementation arrangements have been put in place to cater to immediate needs… and hence are not sustainable over the longer term" (ADB et al., 2004, p. 101). However, despite the acknowledgment in 2004, there have been no signs of any practical action afterward to prove adaptation of a substantiable approach as the focus of the international actors remained limited "to 'inject' capacity over the short- to medium-term" (World Bank, 2001c). When the General Director of the IARCSC's Civil Service Reform Secretariat was asked about the above note of the World Bank on the lack of sustainability, the interviewee explained the situation as follows:

> This is completely true! It was actually our argument. We [Afghan counterparts of reforms] kept saying that reform is a long-term process. We started to reform and change the system without having a long-term vision. There was not any long-term vision! At that time [early years of reforms], the main concern was to reach those specific project goals. Not enough attention was paid to the [long term] goals and

how they could be reached. The question we asked at the beginning of each reform program [including PRR, LEP, AEP, MCP, and CBR] was "What happens after 3 or 5 years when the projects terminate?" As a result of these programs, you will have lots of people with excellent salaries, for example, myself. However, what happens after five years? The Afghan government cannot pay such a high salary to me. On the other hand, there are possibilities outside of the government, meaning as soon as my salary is reduced to the previous level, I will get out of the civil service. So, *what is the strategy for sustainability?* The [World] Bank was saying "we are considering two other factors. First, we have considered economic development. Meaning the Afghan economy grows, and the revenue of the government will increase over time, enough to pay the salaries. Second, we will also make the structures smaller so that the government could afford good salaries for its small cadre." See! This is the problem! How much does it reflect the reality? None of them happened! Then there was another justification by the bank, saying "Don't worry! We have thought about it! The labor market of Afghanistan would change; there would not be much of options available for civil servants. So, people would prefer to stay in the government even if salaries decrease." See! Even if this happens, it means being forced to stay in the system. Then how can you talk about motivations, etc.? (SZS, August 22, 2016).

The review of the literature, as well as the evidence on the ground, are in line with the above conclusions. NPM-driven factors and mechanisms such as PRP and motivation are believed to be possible when a civil service becomes smaller in size. On the other hand, as indicated by the above statement, it is generally believed that the downsizing of the civil service paves the way for the payment of higher salaries in a sustainable way. However, what happens if downsizing efforts fail? As stated in the National Budget Document (GoIRA, 2015), Tashkeel of the government has more than doubled in 10 years, increasing from 365,900 in 2005 to 846,436 in 2014. This means that similar to most of the previous international experiences in other countries, the *downsizing efforts in Afghanistan have failed to a large extent*. On the other hand, according to the same source, having around 846,000 public officials in 2015 means that the wage bill of the Afghan public employees constituted almost 55% (USD 2.785 billion) of the government's operational budget, which was more than the development budget (USD 2.678 billion) of the country for the

same year. Considering that a total of 71% (USD 5.311 billion) of the national budget was granted by the international community, one can conclude that even in 2015, the entire wage bill of the Afghan public officials was paid by donors. All these aspects indicate that the reform designers were wrong both on their assumptions—downsizing and the government's ability to pay the salaries.

To conclude, although from time to time, there have been talks about the sustainability of the implemented CSRs, none of the interviewees of this research, including a senior advisor to an Afghan line minister, a policy advisor in the Presidential Office, and multiple senior Afghan officials at the IARCSC believe that sustainability of the reforms was considered during the design phase. In addition to statements such as "there was no sustainability," "no intention to have it," "nobody was even thinking about sustainability," from multiple interview sources, a senior Afghan official who has been in charge of several reform programs, concludes that "there is no sustainability in the system of Afghan civil service! The only sustainable thing is the effort to guarantee personal interests!" (IntV18, March 28, 2016). In light of these observations, it can be concluded that the lack of sustainability of the reforms was one of the main factors that drove most of the CSRs toward failure.

Ambiguous reform strategy. Concerning the strategy employed in the Afghan CSRs, an interviewee states as follows:

> At least for Afghans, there was no vision and no long-term strategy. Everything was completely new. We did not even analyze or think about it. We did not ask ourselves whether the prescriptions of those projects [PRR, PAR, and P&G] were implementable in Afghanistan or not. (IntV15, September 1, 2015)

As mentioned above and understood from the study of the CSR-related strategic documents discussed in section 5.2, the absence of a clear and comprehensive strategy for reform is very evident. Instead, what was understood as a reform strategy "gave a very wide range of goals and duties for the [civil service] commission" without clearly defining how those objectives and milestones would be achieved (DG CSR Secretariat of IARCSC, August 22, 2015). This view was also shared by 27 other Afghan officials at the senior management level of various ministries and organizations. On the other hand, according to a senior international advisor who had worked for

several years with Afghan officials on reforms explain the main reason behind the lack of a clear reform strategy as below:

> The strategy should be to define the needs and address them step by step. They [Afghan counterparts of reform] don't know what their policies are or how to track them. They don't know how to manage, how to formulate, how to implement policies; so, even expectation of having a strategy is not realistic. (IntV12, March 17, 2016)

Above mentioned lack of capacity to develop a clear reform strategy was also evident during the interviews with several high-ranking Afghan officials. When asked what the strategy of the Afghan CSRs was, each gave a different response including keeping the Afghan civil service small, making the civil service effective and efficient, creating a young civil service, making the civil service professional. Although the lack of understanding among the lower-level administration is to some extent acceptable, when those who have been involved in the design and implementation of the reforms don't have a consensus about what and how the reforms actually aimed at achieving, one can conclude that either there has been a severe communication problem or the reforms really lacked a clear and cohesive strategy or both.

6.2.3 External factors

> We must deliver, and deliver soon. As words become deeds, as plans become reality, belief in the possibility of a safe and prosperous future will grow. Delivering rapidly does not mean delivering unwisely. We must internalize the lessons of 50 years of experience of international assistance. Perhaps most important is that the vision for development and reform must be owned by government and people, rather than be imposed from outside. (Afghan Authority for the Coordination of Assitance, 2002, p. 1)

External factors, which are directly related to the financial support and technical assistance of the international community, shape the third and final group of factors that have a defining role in the success and failure of the post-Taleban civil service reforms. ADB et al. (2004, p. 101)

under *Implementation Issues and Constraints* acknowledge the "proliferation of technical assistance" as a major challenge and state,

> … the overall amount of TA included in the portfolio of projects is proving to be excessive and unmanageable. The TA for capacity building provided by different donors also has often been uncoordinated and provided without adequate consideration of absorptive capacity. Moreover, much TA has been accompanied by little involvement of Government staff… In some instances, TA has been provided for studies that have not been of immediate priority, further taxing the limited Government capacity to absorb the outputs.

Similarly, the findings of this research suggest that the overwhelming influence of donors and their technical support teams, the lack of coordination among international actors, the absence of trust between local and international counterparts, and the extensive flow of foreign aid have been the most important external factors that have led Afghan CSRs toward the current situation, where most of the reform objectives set since 2003 are yet to be achieved. Below, I discuss each of these elements and explain their effects on the implemented reform programs.

The overwhelming influence of international actors. A quick look at the literature in the field of CSPAR in FCACs reveals an emphasis on limiting the role of the international actors to a mere supportive and advisory level so that a strong local leadership and ownership can emerge. However, similar to the international experience, where "often there are pressures from external sources as the international community expects developing countries to adopt new practices and standards" (Conteh & Huque, 2014, p. 3), evidence on the Afghan CSPAR indicate "a strong lead from the World Bank" (Bennett, Alexander, Saltmarshe, Phillipson, & Marsden, 2009, p. 62) and other international actors in the processes. Consequently, the high influence of these actors has been among the core issues perceived by Afghan officials as challenges. Complaining about the high influence of the international actors, a senior official at the IARCSC states that "we [Afghan counterparts] were only the implementers. Everything [on reforms] was done based on the WB views and initiated from their side. We were passive partners at least until 2009" (IntV26, August 22, 2015). According to the findings, such overwhelming involvement has had three dimensions: (1) the involvement of a large number of foreign advisors, particularly during the initial periods,

(2) their influence over the leadership of the IARCSC, and (3) their tendency toward being the main actor rather than a supporter.

First, the involvement of a large number of foreign advisers and consultants, particularly during the 2002–2009 period, is an indication and also a reason for the dominance of the international actors in the reforms. An Afghan official at the Commission suggests that at a point, 25 foreign consultants were assigned only to one department of the Commission; adding that 11 foreign advisors were recruited to support only one grade-2 position at the IARCSC (IntV28, October 8, 2016). Moreover, most Afghan officials who have directly worked with these advisors and consultants believe that despite having a high influence, some of them were not even experts in the fields they were assigned to. The main criticism of the Afghan officials in this regard is that although representatives of the international community complained a lot about how corrupt appointments in the Afghan civil service were and suggested that meritocracy had to be the central criteria when hiring, the educational background and work experience of a portion of the international staff were irrelevant to the tasks they performed. Examples are the appointment of a retired military person to advise on the simplification of administrative processes, an electrician to advise on the capacity development of HR reforms, or even a marine engineer for the development of HR policies. While also giving examples of highly competent international staff who have been very helpful, most of the Afghan officials interviewed in the course of this research suggest the inability of less than half of people sent through the Technical Assistance scheme to perform their assigned tasks.

On the other hand, for several reasons, including the lack of capacity and personal interests, foreign advisors have had an enormous influence on the leadership of the Commission. An Afghan official recalls his memories from the time of drafting one of the well-known reform programs by mentioning that whenever some Afghan officials challenged the assigned international team by criticizing parts of their drafts, they would immediately approach the superiors or leadership of the Commission and get their approvals without considering the comments from their Afghan counterparts (IntV07, August 22, 2015). Confirming this approach, another interviewee added that "while the leadership was not even listening to our ideas and suggestions, everything told or proposed by international advisors were accepted. The leadership was thinking that whatever the

foreign advisors were saying was correct and needed to be implemented" (IntV30, March 30, 2016).

Finally, partly due to the above-mentioned two reasons, the international actors and the personnel hired by them to work on reforms, have shown a tendency of becoming the main actor rather than performing the advisory role as they are supposed to. Referring to formulated reform policies, a senior Afghan official states that "actually it was them [international advisors] who drafted the documents we needed for most of the reforms" (IntV26, August 22, 2015). The PRR (2003), the *Afghanistan Civil Servants Law* (2008) and P&G program (2009) are some dominant examples of the laws and policies said to be directly drafted by international consultants rather than the Afghans. Reportedly, foreign advisors worked independently without the proper engagement of their Afghan counterparts. In this regard, a senior local official, who was present during the review meetings of the *Afghanistan Civil Servants Law,* indicates as follows:

> All procedures mentioned in the law, including those for recruitments and appeals, were direct copies that were given by foreign advisors… so the role of Afghan policymakers, or whatever name you want to use, was limited to commenting on drafts; comments which were mostly disregarded." (IntV16, October 10, 2016)

Some other officials complain that they were not even provided with the opportunity to comment, adding that in most cases the foreign consultants drafted the policies and programs in English; and then they would get confirmation of the leadership, and later would forward it to the translation team. It was only after this step that most of the senior Afghan officials had the opportunity to see and understand the contents in detail; at a point when they could change nothing. A former commissioner of the IARCSC confirms this argument in his article stating that "it was a clear conspiracy between the Commission [leadership] and the foreign consultants... the texts were directly translated from English to Dari and became our policies, wage regulations, and job descriptions" (Bayan, 2009).

Moreover, most Afghan officials referred to the exhibition of a sense of superiority by some foreign advisors and representatives of the donors. When asked about the reason, the same official quoted above (IntV16) argues that "they were the ones who paid every single penny spent for the reforms. So, they were the first and also the final ones to talk. You know the famous saying of 'the one who gives bread is the one who gives the order.' This was precisely the case!". Such a

sense of superiority created an unspoken tension between the local and international counterparts of reforms. It was mentioned more than once in the interviews with the officials that on several occasions, Afghans presented ideas and projects that, they believe, could be effective for the administration; however, the proposed ideas were immediately rejected or left uncommented on by non-local actors. Moreover, understanding of the locals from this kind of behavior has been that foreigners had clear objectives and visions that they did not want to give up or alter.

On the other side of discussions, some international staff, who worked with both the IARCSC as well as some of the line ministries, mention that almost all members of the involved international community, for whatever purposes, needed two things: (1) a functioning government and (2) a civil service capable of doing its main job— meaning ensuring service delivery to Afghan citizens. However, these international interviewees suggest that the general impression among the non-locals was that if the processes were led by Afghans, then bringing such a functioning government would not be possible, at least not in the close future. In fact, concerning the reasons for the failure and success of the reforms, a senior international staff working as a team leader stated that "if you want to make Afghanistan fail, then put Afghans in charge" (IntV36, March 17, 2016). In another interview, a senior international policy advisor justified the influence and the high level of the international actors' involvement by stating as follows:

> We [non-Afghan partners of reforms] never felt comfortable leaving Afghans in charge of things. Just look at rare cases where we let them lead the process! Look at the end result of the P&G and Civil Servants Law or even CBR! What did they do to them? I'm sorry to say, but Civil Servants Law [2008] was good as long as Afghans were not involved. It is full of contradictions and flaws the initial draft did not have. (IntV01, July 16, 2015)

Therefore, owing to the impression of capacity constraints and contrary to the official statements that local leadership and ownership were essential, the non-local partners were in the lead of the processes, particularly during the design and formulation phases of the reforms.

Lack of coordination among international actors. While effective coordination has been highlighted as an essential element for the success of CSRs (Evans, 2008), in the case of Afghanistan, the lack of coordination particularly among international actors has been one of the crucial problems. This lack of coordination was evident as early as 2002 when the Afghan

government reported that donors had "focused on isolated and fragmented programs rather than collectively addressing the whole picture from a programmatic and long-term development angle" (Afghanistan National Development Framework, 2002, p. 17). Two years later, the joint report of the Afghan government and the international community in 2004 also stated that "most donor efforts in this area [TA] have been uncoordinated and thus not very effective" (ADB et al., 2004, p. 105). In line with this view, the findings of the research show that some donors and international actors continued to act in this manner for many years after 2004.

In a line ministry visited during this study, evidence was found where a *development partner*[58] had worked to develop an HR policy for the ministry, taking about six months to prepare a draft, which according to the officials was not necessarily bad. However, there were three essential problems: (1) consultants of the developed partner were unaware and uninformed that the same work had been done almost two years ago by another international partner of the Ministry; (2) due to the centralistic feature of the system, it was the country's Civil Service Commission that had the authority of formulating all civil service policies; which means a line ministry could not officially have a distinct HR system for its employees, without discussions in the cabinet and the confirmation of the head of state; and (3) the suggested HR policy was in clear contradiction of various provisions of the *Afghanistan Civil Servants Law* (2008). As a result of these problems, even if the ministry had the intention to use it, all of these factors would make its implementation impossible. That is why, the policy document had ended up in a dusty shelf of the Ministry's library room just beside its similar predecessors, and neither the development partner nor the ministry had bothered to translate any part of it into the local languages. Similar uncoordinated work was done in another organization, where two teams supported by different international actors, worked on the same issues at the same time, without knowing about each other's presence for at least several weeks.

The two main reasons for such an apparent lack of coordination are as follows: (1) the conflicts of interests among international actors. Apparently, each of the involved actors in

[58] The term used by Afghan officials for international organizations, development agencies of donor countries, and consultants hired by them to provide technical support to entities of the Afghan administration.

Afghanistan has had its own priorities and interests, and in some cases, an actor knowingly has chosen not to coordinate its activities with other actors. As an example, gender equality and increasing the share of women in the civil service has been the first priority for some of the donor countries; thus, in some cases, representative of a country has assigned consultants to work with the individual line ministries to develop HR policies facilitating more presence of women through affirmative actions. This has been done in a situation where a parallel initiative on the development of HR policies was going on by other donors to institutionalize meritocracy by rejecting any kind of affirmative actions. Interview sources suggest that the actor working on the gender issue was aware of the parallel initiative and the contradiction in the policy advises; however, it had decided not to coordinate its effort, simply because it believed that its approach was much important. (2) The lack of coordination among international actors emerges also due to the tendency of Afghan administration, including the line ministries, to maximize their gains from the presence of the international community. Thus, each line ministry gets involved in direct negotiations with foreign embassies, UN organizations, development agencies of donor countries, and international NGOs to receive funds and technical support. Doing this, they usually tend to exclude their existing local and international partners from discussions or provide false information to donors particularly concerning the question of whether or not the issue, let's say the support of the HR department, was previously dealt with by another donor/international agency. In this regard, a senior HR advisor hired by a donor organization to support a line ministry, mentioned during his interview that it was only after several months had passed that he had found the tasks given to him were indeed done by another team of international experts some years ago; nevertheless, the ministry had not talked about it mainly because they were receiving financial benefits through the project.

As a result, while some measures to facilitate better coordination were taken at a higher level, including creating the Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund (ARTF) or the donor coordination meetings which are conducted once a while in majority of the line ministries, the lack of coordination particularly during the implementation of the reform programs in line ministries has been a major issue that almost all involved actors agree on.

Lack of trust among and between actors (donors and local partners).

> Trust is the crucial element here [for reform implementation], and that is the first thing one needs to do. However, the International Community never trusted

> Afghans, and never understood them. They forgot that reform is about bringing changes to institutions through changing the practices of people in them. So how can you change when you do not trust the people who are supposed to bring those changes? (IntV12, Senior International Advisor, March 17, 2016)

The above-mentioned lack of trust is not only a reason for the partial failure of the reforms but also one of the main causes for the high influence of non-local actors and the consequent weak local leadership. Establishing trust is a crucial element during the project design, as it is during this phase of reforms that one needs accurate information to draw a full picture of the situation, and trust is the key to secure such information. Trust in the context of Afghanistan's CSR has had three dimensions: (1) the trust of international actors in the Afghan officials, (2) the trust of senior Afghan officials, particularly the Commission in their international partners, and (3) the trust of regular civil servants in the reform policies. With respect to the first dimension— the trust of international actors in the Afghan officials— the same international consultant quoted above states as follows:

> It takes you at least six to eight months to get Afghans to trust you. And you know, in Afghanistan if you are not trusted, you [are not] gonna do anything. They will help you [with] what you want to get, and then you come up with data garbage. [However] once they trust you, they will give you the right kind of information, and then it starts working, but it takes time. But most [international] consultants go this way, and by the time they finish, they don't have resources they need, so what do they do? They create the resources themselves. They will write everything! In X [anonymized] organization, I saw a 300-page strategy in English prepared by an international consultant. It was lying on the shelf gathering dust; they [local officials] don't know it! They don't understand it! Nobody bothered to translate it or even look at it. (IntV12, March 17, 2016)

Gaining the trust of the fellow Afghan partners is a time-consuming yet very important process that an international consultant or advisor needs to consider; this is particularly important if the international staff comes from the so-called *'troops contributing countries'*. Particularly in a country like Afghanistan that has experienced long periods of foreign interferences in its domestic matters, although mid- and lower-level officials try to demonstrate good cooperation

with their foreign counterparts, they are generally reluctant to share their real thoughts and information. Therefore, unless the international staff has succeeded in building the necessary trust, they continue to work based on false information. Alternatively, if the consultants notice that the trust of locals cannot be gained, they decide their best, as mentioned in the above quote, to do the job alone and develop proposals and recommendations that, regardless of their quality and relevance, have no audience among the local officials.

Second, with respect to the trust of local leadership in its international partners, according to a senior Afghan official involved in discussions, contrary to the mid- and lower-level officials, the leadership of the IARCSC has had complete trust in the World Bank and other international actors. The official states that "due to [the World] Bank's many years of experience, we were convinced that whatever they suggest fits our conditions; so, we implemented whatever they [the WB] told us to implement" (IntV07, August 22, 2015).

Finally, and maybe most importantly, there has been a lack of serious trust by regular civil servants as the recipients of reforms in the introduced policies. Mainly due to poor communication, almost all civil servants who have not been involved in the decision-making processes distrust their local superiors and the international partners, including the consultants and advisors hired by them. During the interviews with multiple officials in different line ministries, the interviewees expressed that they were never trusted enough to give their opinion or provide feedback about the reforms. This sense of exclusion led to a shared belief among them that as the policies were not developed to address what they perceived as essential needs, irrespective of the level of their efforts, reforms would not change anything substantial. This has been indeed one of the crucial reasons behind the superficial implementation of reform measures and failure to achieve reform objectives.

The extensive flow of foreign aid. As the last important factor, international aid in the form of direct or indirect financial commitments of donors was mentioned by almost all interviewees of this research as a crucial element for the success and failure of reforms. As suggested by these interviewees, while the aid made it possible to have the reforms in first place, its high amount, the way it was channeled, and the areas it was spent created serious obstacles for the reforms. Probably the most dominant of those problems are increased sustainability concerns and corruption in the civil service.

Similar to the reforms in other countries, the Afghan CSR programs have incurred high costs. As shown below in Figure 6.6., in 2004, it was estimated that the total cost of the government's PAR program for the upcoming 7 years (2004–2010) would be $204.3 million (ADB et al., 2004, p. 67) . Divided into the two categories of the Technical Assistance (TA) and Capital Expenditure, the money would be administered through the IARCSC.

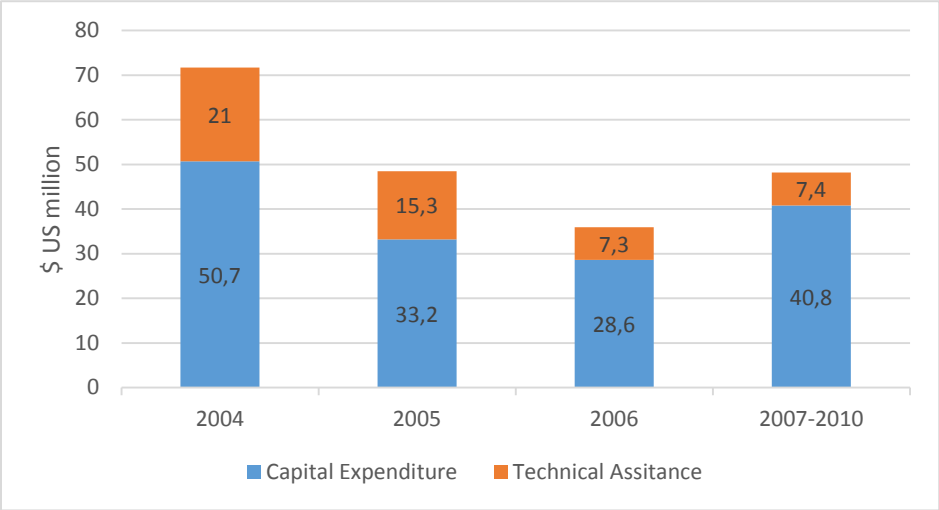

Figure 6.6. Estimated Cost of PAR, 2004–2010. Adapted from ADB et al. (2004, p. 67).

Upon crosschecking these estimates with the actual expenditure, it appears that approximately $210 million was spent through the IARCSC (Wilson, 2014, pp. 355-356). Moreover, a sudden increase is observed during the 2010–2013 period, as the total amount spent during these three years, is thought to be about $910 million. Resultantly, the reform projects implemented through the country's Civil Service Commission during the 2004–2013 period have incurred a total cost of approximately *$1.1 billion.* However, the real amount channeled for or spent in the name of reforms is believed to be much higher. According to the statements of some MPs in the Afghan Parliament's session on 13th April 2013, in the course of first ten years of its operation (2003–2013), the Commission had reportedly spent a total of *$3.5 billion* on reforms (BBC, 2013). Moreover, untraceable amounts of additional money have been directly spent by the representatives of individual donor governments through measures such as salary supplements for Afghan public officials of their choice or various capacity development measures linked to the implementation phase or objectives of the reforms. As a result, regardless of the the real cost of

the reforms, it is clear that due to the availability of financial resources, some part of local decision-makers had an approach of "keeping the flow of money going" (IntV07, Aug 22, 2015) mainly to retain or increase their personal and political interests rather than the real intention of enhancing the civil service capacity,which, in turn, fueled corruption and the misuse of the funds.

Apart from its quantity, the way financial resources were channeled and the areas they were spent have always been two major points of criticisms by the Afghan government. As mentioned earlier, on the topic of prioritization, the main decision-makers about the content of reforms have been the international actors rather than the Commission or any other local partners of reforms. Thus, mostly and similar to other areas, it has been the international partners who defined how and for what exact purposes the allocated aid for PAR would be spent. Moreover, interviewees suggest that most of the money spent under the name of reforms have directly or indirectly benefited the international intermediary organizations such as the World Bank or the development agencies of donor countries. A senior Afghan official who has been present during various negotiations between the government agencies and the donor representatives describes the situation as follows:

> Donors' interest to maintain their control and influence over the processes explains why we have discretionary and non- discretionary budgets. Currently [2015] at least 50% of our developmental budget is non-discretionary, meaning the (World) Bank tells the MoF where it should spend; and all major players, the USAID, GIZ, EU, DFID, etc. back this. Even for the other 50%, which is discretionary, the nature and method of expenditure should be discussed in advance; meaning we don't have complete control of that part either. Again, you need to convince the Bank where you want to spend. This is the same about the reform money; they pay, and they decide what should be spent for and who should be paid. (IntV07, Aug 22, 2015)

The expenditure of the aid by donors through channels and for areas of their preference has been known to Afghan administration since several years ago. An article by the Permanent Mission of Afghanistan to the UN (2008) states that in 2006–2007 alone, "*two-thirds of development assistance was channeled outside of the government's budget*" without the proper involvement of the Afghan side. Close estimates are mentioned by various sources including both versions of the *ANDS* (GoIRA, 2006; 2008a) about the situation in the previous years.

As a conclusion, although the strong tendency of the international actors to keep its control over the nature of aid expenditure is not necessarily bad, and it can be argued that such a tendency will bring more transparency and accountability, it has been used as a leverage to ensure the high influence of the external actors during both the design and implementation of the reforms and impose reform ideas, of which not all were considered by locals as priorities. Moreover, the means and channels donors used to spend the allocated aid money further undermined the local leadership and increased concerns about the sustainability of the reforms. Examples in this regard are temporary arrangements such as the Project Implementation Units (PIU) in line ministries and the Capacity Development Secretariat (CDS) within the structure of the IARCSC for the implementation of AEP and LEP (2004–2007). These were staffed with contracted local and international consultants who were paid outside of the regular remuneration system used for civil servants, had separate budget arrangements, and directly reported to the representatives of the donor community or development agencies rather than the regular hierarchy of the civil service.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

With the involvement of 61 countries and 21 international organizations (Tokyo Conference-I, 2002), post-Taleban Afghanistan witnessed the largest international intervention in a single country. A considerable part of this intervention focused on state-building, in which Civil Service and Public Administration Reform (CSPAR) was at the heart. Above anything, CSPAR aimed to build an effective and efficient administration, which is driven by merit, free of corruption, and capable of appropriate service delivery to Afghan citizens. However, after one and a half decades, contradictory views exist about the nature, results, and drivers of Afghanistan's CSPARs.

On the one hand, the citizens of Afghanistan together with MPs as well as the majority of local and international observers and civil society organizations suggested little improvements in the Afghan civil service, with some believing that the reforms not only failed to achieve their intended objectives but also added to the existing complexities by creating an administration functioning far from merit and even "more corrupt and politicized" (Nabizadah, 2011) than any time before. On the other hand, Afghan governmental organizations such as the IARCSC and international actors such as the WB suggested that thanks to the reforms, Afghan civil service, at least in terms of capacity and service delivery, is far better than it was 16 years ago. Their general conclusion was that similar to the other fragile contexts, reforms in Afghanistan have been as successful as they could be. In addition to these contradictory views on the success and failure of the reforms, a blame game is going on among the major stakeholders about the perceived shortcomings and failures. Among the local stakeholders, Afghan line ministries blame the Independent Administrative Reform and Civil Service Commission (IARCSC) for importing reforms from outside the country without proper consideration of the national context, and for designing nonprofessional reform programs based on nonrealistic goals and objectives. They further blamed MPs for manipulating the reforms to gain personal and political interests. The Commission, in turn, considers the reforms successful and blames individual line ministries for partial failure in implementation, arguing that reforms were well designed by the Commission but poorly implemented by line ministries.

Consequently, the Afghan Parliament blames both the Commission and the line ministries for various issues including wasting the millions of allocated aid for reforms as well as increasing

patronage, favoritism, bribery, ethnic discrimination, and politicization in the civil service. The citizens, however, complain about very poor service delivery and see all of these actors equally responsible for what is perceived as an incompetent and corrupt administration. Finally, the international actors, while appreciating the improvements made, criticize all the local actors for various mistakes and problems.

In addition to the above-mentioned puzzling contradictions, even though the CSPAR in both developed and developing countries has been studied in detail and examined from various perspectives, the case of the reforms in FCACs, particularly that of Afghanistan, is yet to be explored. Thus, apart from the partial information given by the assessments and evaluation reports conducted by or on behalf of the international and donor organizations involved in the various stages of the reform processes, a general lack of knowledge exists about the Afghan civil service, its background, and its post-Taleban reforms.

Owing to the above-mentioned important points, this research intended to be a first-hand academic study that was free of language barriers to explore and explain the processes, contents, progresses, outputs and consequences of the post-Taleban Civil Service Reforms (CSR) in Afghanistan. Thus, it was led by the following essential questions:

(1) How and under what conditions were the reform policies formulated?

- What were the main components and objectives of reforms?
- Who were the main actors? What were their roles and incentives?
- What were the main influential factors during this phase?

(2) How were the reform policies implemented?

- Did the reforms succeed to achieve their intended objectives? Why or why not?
- Which factors drove the reforms toward success and/or failure?

The first question aimed to explore the stage during which the reform ideas turned into policies and programs. Explaining the content, processes, as well as the roles, influences, and approaches of the involved actors, it provided a clear picture of how, under what conditions, and for what purposes the reforms emerged. The second question, on the other hand, concerned the implementation phase of the reforms. Reviewing the reform objectives and examining the extent to which they were achieved, it identified the effects of each reform and the specific factors that led them toward successes and failures.

Moreover, with the purpose of understanding the roots and backgrounds of the reform ingredients, the study first explored the conceptual frameworks of CSPAR in an international context and reviewed the main reform models and their prescriptions (section 2.2). Second, to compare and contrast the challenges and obstacles of the reforms in Afghanistan with those of the international experiences in similar contexts by studying the CSPAR implementation in other developing and conflict-affected contexts, it explored the factors that have challenged or supported reforms the most (section 2.3).

Finally, the study aimed to be part of the "hard evidence" coming from "focused and disaggregated studies, where one can trace complex actions and reactions as the reform unfolds" (Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2011, p. 215). Thus, following a review and presentation of the overlooked developments and milestones of the Afghan civil service throughout its history (Chapter 4), it hoped to serve as a valuable empirical study providing a clear picture of the nature, content, and outputs of the Afghan CSRs, which could benefit researchers and practitioners interested either in the specific case of Afghanistan or the reforms in similar FCACs.

7.1 Summary of the Main Findings

This study started its discussions on CSPAR by exploring the existing explanations for civil service as well as its reforms, nature, and purpose. Highlighting that definitions are highly dependent on the context and even the term *'civil service'* may vary from one country to another, this research adopted a more practical definition of civil service, which was also close to the context of Afghanistan. Thus, in this study, civil service was defined as "a subset of wider public service…[that] consists of government ministries, departments, and agencies, including people who advise on, develop, and implement government policies and programs, and those who manage day-to-day activities" (Rao, 2013, p. 1). Consequently, CSR was clarified to be a set of deliberate and top-down actions, in the form of donor-funded programs, "in areas such as remuneration, human resources, downsizing and operational efficiencies (Repucci, 2014, p. 207). Finally, the definition of success for the purpose of this study was defined as the extent these "reforms are put into effect as intended, are not blocked or watered down" (Polidano, 2001, p. 346) and met their specific and general objectives in creating an effective and efficient, merit-based, and corruption-free civil service in Afghanistan.

On the other hand, with the aim of exploring and understanding the theoretical roots of reform prescriptions, I reviewed the literature to explore the major models internationally used to design and implement public sector reforms. Finding that the majority of academics and practitioners agree on the lack of a "globally recognized conceptual framework… and robust 'theory of change'" (Scott, 2011, p. i; World Bank, 2012b, p. 10), I was inspired by Pollitt & Bouckaert's (2011, p. 75) view of the civil service reform as a "trajectory...an intentional pattern – a route that someone is trying to take. It leads from a starting point (an alpha) to some desired place or state of affairs in the future (an omega)". Using this perspective, it was noted that what today is considered as the *Traditional Public Administration* was the desired state, an omega, called modern administration to shift from the alpha of the nineteenth century, a patrimonial public administration; later, as a result of the desire to move from the then status quo—Traditional Public Administration—many countries launched various reform programs (trajectories) to move toward better states, prescribed by New Public Management (NPM), Neo Weberian State (NWS), among others. These new states of affairs then served "as [the] omegas, destinations, or ideal worlds that certain groups [of countries] wanted to get to" (Pollitt & Bouckaert, p. 76).

Furthermore, from the literature review, I found that while a shift from the patrimonial public administration to that of Traditional Public Administration has been a more globalized trend, the shift from Traditional PA has been in different directions—toward different models. Most importantly, while some prescriptions of NPM became a trend for many western countries to shift from a traditional public administration to a new public management, some Continental Europeans chose a different path by the modernization of the traditional PA and formed a model of NWS.

Contrary to the West, after World War-II, developing and conflict-affected countries followed a different path through the framework of *Development Administration.* The model was specifically developed and practiced by Western countries and international organizations for developing countries (Hughes, 2003, pp. 225-227; Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2011, p. 6; Turner et al., 2015) and was basically "a specialty within the broader field of public administration… to 'modernize' their [developing countries'] economies, accelerating development to become equivalent, eventually, to the West" (Hughes, 2003, p. 225). However, the review of CSPAR practices in developing and conflict-affected countries (section 2.3) showed that once again, based

on the approach of adapting the "best administrative practice available in the developed countries" (Hughes, 2003, p. 225) and as NPM gained more popularity in the West, it replaced the Development Administration model and became the new model for the majority of western-supported reforms for these countries.

Following the discussions on major models and frameworks of reforms, with the aim of exploring and highlighting what could be learned, I looked at the previous CSPARs in FCACs where reforms were designed or supported by IGOs and IFIs. As a result, I identified the factors mentioned by most studies and reports as the most significant elements that directly influenced the success and failure of reforms in these countries. As reprinted below in Figure 7.1., these factors were then briefly explained and categorized into the three groups of contextual, programmatic, and external.

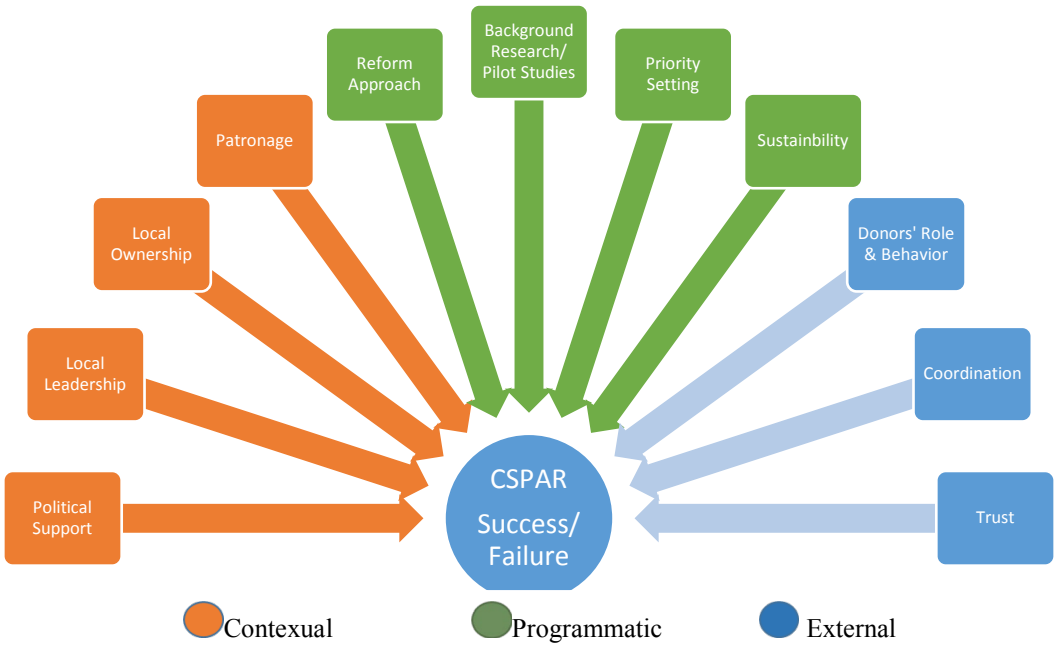

Figure 7.1. The Most Important Factors for the Success or Failure of CSPAR in FCACs.

By providing various examples from their effects on the reform programs of various countries, it was concluded that if these factors are given enough attention during both the design and implementation of reforms, the outputs and outcomes would be in line with the intended objectives. The contextual factors included political support, local leadership, local ownership, and the level of existing patronage in the system. Programmatic factors, on the other hand, concerned

the nature as well as the concept and approach of the reform itself. Being even more precise, the holistic vs. partial approach of reforms, background study and research before and during the design phase, appropriate priority setting, and the appreciation of the long-term nature (sustainability) of reforms composed the ingredients of programmatic factors. Finally, the third group consisted of external factors, which are those elements directly related to the international partners of reforms who provide financial and technical support and have a crucial role throughout reform processes, particularly the design phase; thus, the specific factors concerning this group were identified as donors' role and behavior, coordination among them, and the element of trust.

Moreover, the study acknowledged that civil service is "a branch of the politico-administrative system that has been influenced the most by national traditions and history" (Demmke, p. 6). Thus, as the source adds, "different historical traditions and cultures, as well as HR systems, have a considerable impact on public management modernization paths and on the outcomes of HR reforms" (p. 7). More precisely, it was accepted that "pre-existing institutional structures, and legal, regulatory and cultural factors" (Homburg, 2008, p. 766) are among the core elements that define the direction of reforms. Therefore, although it was discussed in chapter 2 that the number of models or visions for reform are limited, and it is clear what each of them offers, it seemed essential to acknowledge that reforms are "path dependent" (Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2011, p. 42,120,124,213). Additionally, the review of the CSPAR efforts in other contexts partly suggested that background research and the study of the past practices were essential for the success of future reforms. Thus, as another learning point, having a clear picture about the type, characteristics, and development of the administrative system as well as studying the past rules, procedures, and policies were identified as the necessary steps before launching any reform; otherwise, poorly designed and contextually inappropriate reforms and the resultant repetition of past mistakes would be unavoidable. In line with this learning, and aiming to gain a better understanding of the nature and content of the post-Taleban reforms of Afghanistan (chapter 5) as well as the reform results and the factors influencing them (chapter 6), the study through Chapter 4 provided a detailed picture of major milestones and developments of the Afghan civil service and its HR policies since its formal birth in 1923. Using a historical perspective and based on the information secured in the interviews as well as a comprehensive review of the civil service-related decrees and regulations published in Afghanistan's official gazettes since 1921, the pre-reform civil service of Afghanistan was separately studied in three distinct periods of establishment,

development, and decline. In this regard, chapter 4 serves as one of the core contributions of this study, an important overview, which, due to the language barriers of the non-Afghan researchers to access primary sources, and the limited possibility of conducting academic research by Afghans within the country, has the honor of being the first in its kind.

In addition to filling the existing knowledge gap and identifying many learning points for some of the current reform-related issues, the review of past developments questioned the dominant view that prior to the Karzai administration (2002–2014), the Afghan civil service had no policies and regulations in place. Thanks to this research, it is now known that ever since its official establishment in 1923, the Afghan civil service has had policies, regulations, and mechanisms—in some cases, even more, comprehensive than those currently in place. Despite all shortcomings, the constitutional monarchies (1920s–1970s), the newborn Afghan republic (1973–1978), the democratic republic (1978–1992), and even the Taleban Emirate (1996–2002) all had their own regulations and policies regarding various aspects of the civil service and reformed it accordingly. In fact, the review showed that the efforts to introduce and assure principles such as meritocracy, accountability, citizen participation, and capacity development—all among the core objectives of the post-Taleban reforms—have been tried long before 2002. Even the establishment of a central agency responsible for the policymaking, management, and reform of the civil service was already experienced in the past. Therefore, I found that the absence of policies, regulations, and mechanisms has never been a question. This is, in fact, an essential learning point for both designing appropriate reforms in the future and evaluating the success of recent ones. For instance, considering the near-zero presence of women in the public administration due to the Taleban's discriminative policies, criticizing the current low share of women in the civil service (approx. 20%) and concluding that in terms of gender balance, the post-Taleban reforms have failed is a big mistake. On the same issue, carefully studying how and through which mechanisms the presence of women in the civil service of the 1990s was significantly increased to approximately 43% can provide potential indigenous prescriptions and explanations to improve the share of women in the civil service. As another example, knowing and studying the experience of Afghanistan's socialist regime in 1977 with respect to creation of a central agency—the COCSAR—for the reform and policy development of the civil service would have significantly helped Afghan policymakers and their international advisors in the course of their efforts in 2002 to establish the country's Civil Service Commission. The same applies to other efforts toward accountability mechanisms,

meritocracy, performance evaluation, de-politicization of the civil service, and so on. Thus, an essential message of this study is that the historical path and experiences of the past have many learning points and should not be ignored.

Coming to the specific findings of this study on the post-Taleban reforms and with respect to the essential reasons for which the reforms were launched in the first place, the study found that the triggering element was the sudden regime change by a US-led international intervention in 2002, which consequently created the need for increasing the capacity of civil service so that it could adequately use and manage billions of international aid and, ultimately, improve governance and the service delivery to Afghan citizens. Therefore, the study showed that the initial decisions, such as creating an independent agency responsible for the recruitment of civil servants—agreed during the Bonn Conference (2001) even before the establishment of the government—were taken neither with the proper prior study and analysis of the possible options nor in consultation with experts in CSPAR matters.

On the other hand, soon after the establishment of Afghanistan's Independent Civil Service Commission (ICSC), the Afghan administration and its international partners realized that a mere shortlisting of candidates for senior-level positions of the civil service, which was the original mandate of the Commission, couldn't help with the improvement of service delivery and effective management of the international aid; thus, comprehensive reforms were needed. Meanwhile, it was found out that the general judgment of the decision makers was that CSR was not only "strongly interfaced with improved economic management" (GoIRA, 2006, p. 163) but also a "crucial [element] for the overall aim of establishing peace and stability as well as for good governance and economic growth" (ADB et al., 2004, p. 59). As a result, one year after its establishment, the previously established Independent Civil Service Commission, in May 2003, evolved into the Independent Administrative Reform and Civil Service Commission (IARCSC), with design and implementation of comprehensive reforms in the public sector as one of its core missions.

On the other hand, arguing that "hiring and promotion in the civil service… [during the socialist regimes from the 1970s to 1990s] largely depended on the membership in and loyalty to factions and sub-factions of the ruling party" (GoIRA, 2006, p. 31) and "personnel decisions [in the Taleban civil service] were based on neither technical nor professional merit" (p. 32), the post-

Taleban administration blamed and criticized the civil services of the previous socialist and Taleban regimes for almost all the problems it faced and had inherited a partisan civil service low in capacity and far from merit. Therefore, as discussed in section 5.2, the findings suggest that building an effective and efficient administration which is small in size, is paid well, is free of corruption, is capable of appropriate service delivery to Afghan citizens, and is driven by merit in its recruitments and promotions were defined as the central objectives Afghanistan's PAR strategy. To achieve these objectives, the main areas for work were the recruitments, appraisals, and remunerations of civil servants. The chosen path was to begin reforms with a partial program—PRR (2003)—and while preparing and implementing a comprehensive reform through the P&G (2009, to simultaneously inject the required capacity into the civil service via other short-term programs, namely AEP, LEP, MCP, and CBR (2003–2018).

Having established the responsible agency for reform, set the overall objectives, and defined the focus areas, the reforms practically began through the implementation of PRR in July 2003. Aiming "to design and implement comprehensive reforms of structures and pay and grading schemes of civil servants for the central as well as provincial administrations of the country," directly designed by foreign advisors (IntV01, July 16, 2015; IntV21, Sep 7, 2016) and having "some elements in common with the more advanced reforms implemented by many OECD countries" (Hakimi et al., 2004, p. 2), a "persuasion rather than coercion" approach of Scandinavian countries (Christensen et al. 2007, p. 132) was adapted to encourage line ministries to forward their proposals regarding the reform and restructuring of their key directorates or the whole ministry to the Commission. Furthermore, as a reward, the proposals had to be accompanied with a list of "competent candidates, selected based on merit" to fill the positions in those reformed units on "temporary" but relatively high salary top-ups (PRR Decree, art 2, 2003). Theoretically, many ingredients of PRR were in line with the principles of a Traditional model of Public Administration (see Figure 2.2.); supervisions of PRR recruitments through a centralized mechanism, development of clear job descriptions, creating a clear and rational organizational hierarchy, and ensuring political neutrality of the civil servants are such examples. Nonetheless, increasing motivation through financial incentives and decompressing pay scales can be regarded as the NPM-based elements of the program.

With respect to its outputs and consequences, as discussed in section 5.4.1, although PRR commenced a review and update of organizational structures and civil service positions, and its Interim Additional Allowance (IAA) introduced a much-decompressed pay scale (See Figure 5.16.) for a limited portion of civil servants, no indication could be found with respect to an increase in motivation of the civil servants or improvement of the service delivery, which the program hoped to achieve. Moreover, the study found that the implementation of PRR was neither smooth nor as planned. Tondini (2007, p. 350) reports that by the end of 2004, out of the planned 30,000 staff, only 8,017 in ten line ministries and two independent agencies were covered by the PRR scale. Thus, contrary to the initial optimism that PRR would lead toward a "better trained, better paid, and highly motivated pockets of high performance in the administration*"*(ADB et al., 2004:59) and despite the fact that almost all Afghan senior officials, including those interviewed in the course of this research, consider the PRR as the most successful reform program of Afghan CSR which aimed at "keeping the lid upon further and unsustainable levels of migration of large numbers of good government employees into a highly distorted post-conflict donor-funded labor market" (Hakimi et al., 2004, p. 29), the real success and achievements of the program are questionable. Considering it an "asymmetric reform," the country's National Development Strategy in 2006 asserted that "the PRR process has delivered only partial improvements" (GoIRA, 2006, p. 124). Furthermore, from the perspective of an "extended concept of effects" (Christensen et al., 2007, pp. 144-163) introduced in section and Table 3.2., the findings of this research indicate that PRR raised serious concerns and effects including a further adverse effect on the already low number of female civil servants and, more importantly, contributed to the growth of a troubling parallel civil service, by officially commencing the fragmentation of the unified civil service pay system through its ad-hoc approach.

As discussed in section 5.4.2, acknowledging that the design and implementation of a comprehensive reform to achieve PAR objectives would be highly costly and take several years, and aiming to accelerate the implementation of PRR as well as address the capacity gap at the senior and middle levels of the civil service, the Afghan government and its international partners, in 2004, adopted the strategy of recruiting individuals on salary scales much higher than the regular and PRR remuneration levels. The results of such a *capacity injection* strategy were four donor-funded reform programs: the AEP (2004–2007), its complement the LEP (2004-2007), the MCP (2007-2011), which was a merger of the previous two, and finally the CBR (2011-2018). Although

all the four programs shared a common vision of facilitation reforms and the injecting capacity, they had different components and mechanisms.

The AEP (2004–2007) together with the LEP (2004–2007) were designed for the "recruitment of qualified Afghans… [as advisors and officials] in senior and middle management line positions in government ministries and agencies" (IARCSC, 2006, p. 1) to address capacity problems and "normalize terms and conditions for the second [parallel] civil service" (IARCSC, 2010, p. 4). While both the programs were managed through similar temporary units created under the Reform Secretariat of the Commission (see Figure 5.18.), each had different target groups. Contrary to the AEP, from which all line ministries could benefit, the LEP intended to target those ministries that had not gone through the PRR process. Indeed, one of the essential objectives of the program was to facilitate PRR implementation in these ministries through the highly qualified staff it was going to recruit. However, both the programs were criticized for several reasons. For instance, the Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund (2007a, p. 5) talks about "misunderstandings" that happened during the implementation of the LEP and adds that "recruits, at times, have been placed in positions in PRR'ed ministries and proposals have also been made to rehire existing civil servants at the higher pay level," both contrary to the essential aims of the program. On the other hand, again contrary to the objective of the LEP to facilitate the implementation of PRR, the source adds that the "utilization of LEP seems to have enabled some ministries to avoid participation in the PRR" (p. 5).

Furthermore, the scale of shortcomings and challenges were much more than these points. As visualized in Figure 5.20., the IARCSC (2010, pp. 10,11) reported seven major problems with the AEP and LEP: *no needs assessment, no monitoring and evaluation, not being gender inclusive, no performance management, no operational reporting mechanism, over-complicated and bureaucratic recruitment mechanism and limited synergy, no networking, no building partnerships*. It has been due to these issues that both the programs were terminated in 2007 when the LEP was still in its pilot phase. Interestingly, at the time of their termination, both the programs had recruited much more than their plans; according to the same source, the AEP unexpectedly recruited 98 individuals, which would mean 63% more than the planned target of 60; similarly, the LEP, at the end of its pilot phase, had recruited 38 people more than its target of 100 (see Figure 5.19. for the distribution of AEP and LEP recruits among Afghan line ministries and central

organizations). As a final note, although an over-recruitment rate of 168% and 138% for AEP and LEP is interpreted by the Commission as an incredibly "high success" rate, in consideration of the above-mentioned problems, the only explanation for these numbers are the ministries' efforts to benefit from the comparatively high salaries offered by the programs. While civil servants on the highest civil service position (Grade 1) received approximately $60/month on a regular scale and $200/month on PRR's *Super Scale*, the salaries of the AEP recruits varied from $500 to $7,000 per month, and the recruits of LEP could receive up to $2,000 per month.

Following the termination of the AEP and LEP, the government with the help of its international partners, in 2007, decided to continue the "injection of experts" in the form of a "more solid and well-defined project" (IARCSC, 2010, p. 11) called MCP (2007–2012). Introducing another pay scale, again much higher than the regular remuneration scale of the civil service, MCP recruits were supposed to "undertake common management and executive functions*"* (Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund, 2007a, p. 1) in the approved Tashkeel positions of key departments. Unlike its two predecessors, which were managed through special units temporarily created under the ARS of the Commission, MCP was to be managed and implemented through General Directorate of Programs' Design and Management (GDPDM), a directorate which was specifically established for this program and had "a special status, and report[ed] directly to the IARCSC Chairman" (IARCSC, 2008b, p. 3). Concerning the outputs and consequences of the program, by 2012, MCP had recruited a total of 559 civil servants in grades 1–3 of 34 line ministries and central agencies (see Figure 5.21. for the distribution of recruits). Moreover, findings suggest that while MCP was managed much better than the AEP and LEP, the program was considered as a "very expensive program…without a clear exit point or funding commitment from government and donors" (Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund, 2007a, p. 3). Therefore, despite the fact that a central objective of the program was to bring sustainability to the efforts of its predecessors, by the end of the program, regular civil servants were not ready to take over the functions of MCP recruits, and, as an Afghan General Director stated, "as soon as MCP recruits were out, departments went back doing businesses the same way they were doing before" (IntV18, March 18, 2016). However, the source adds, trapped in a vicious circle, the government and its international partners continued with their "capacity injection" strategy by "changing the MCP to CBR," a more comprehensive program to have more tangible results than its predecessors.

Launched in 2012 and built from its predecessor programs (AEP, LEP, and MCP), the CBR program had a "more strategic approach to establishing a senior civil service cadre" (GoIRA, 2012, p. 31) and was reportedly the first reform program designed by Afghans themselves. Citing CBR sub-component 2.2, the same source adds that CBR recruitments would "target suitably qualified Afghan nationals and will use remuneration levels that, while still competitive, are significantly lower than the prevailing inflated rates offered by donors and others" (p. 31) (see Figure 5.22. for the comparison of CBR and regular pay scales). Practically, the program would announce specific positions in grades 1 to 5 as vacant and hire appropriate candidates through CBR's own recruitment mechanisms. However, this was perceived unfair and in contradiction with the provisions of the *Afghanistan Civil Servants Law* (2008), as the incumbent officials had already been recruited through open competitions introduced by the previous reforms and could not be dismissed without any legal justification. Nevertheless, they were asked to once again compete for their positions, this time through a much complicated and more politicized recruitment process.

Moreover, the program had four dimensions, out of which the recruitment of some 15,000 officials on a relatively high pay scale was a complementary element, but what happened is that, similar to the previous capacity building projects, the issue of recruitment and its consequent conflicts among the officials, politicians, and civil service candidates benefiting from the financial incentives of the program undermined all the three essential elements. Thus, despite lowering expectations and extending the program, the program never met its targets, according to the interviewees of this research as well as official reports. At the beginning of the program, the World Bank (2011a) suggested that the program would face several risks including the "biased recruitment and selection of senior management group staff; unethical behavior in the civil service; politicization of CBR project funding allocations; misuse of project funds; inter-cadre competition; weak service delivery accountability; limited impacts of technical assistance; and pay setting risks" (p. 19). Interestingly, almost five years later, in 2016, most senior Afghan officials as well as international consultants interviewed in the course of this research named exact points as major implementation challenges and called it "the most unsuccessful PAR program"—a failure which is also backed by the numbers on the ground. Out of the planned 1,500 civil servants, the program would recruit for the leadership and management levels of the line ministries, by March 2017, almost five years after its commencement, the number of recruits had reached only 328. Some ministries were unable to recruit even 15 staff over 12 months, while according to the project's

guidelines, the recruitment process of a CBR-approved position had to be completed in a maximum of 48 days. Resultantly, mainly due to the strict monitoring by the international actors, the quality of recruitments has reportedly been much better than any comparable process in the past, but significant failures in achieving the program's targets have marred its success.

Finally, as the most comprehensive post-Taleban reform, which was designed to implement the new *Afghanistan Civil Servants Law* (2008), the P&G program's (2009) main targets were remuneration and promotion systems. As discussed, before the P&G program, the Afghan civil service had a 13-grade staffing system that was used for both the promotion and remuneration of civil servants. Using this highly compressed system, recruitments were generally done from the lowest grade, and servants would be promoted to the next grade every three years. However, inspired by NPM principles, the P&G program replaced the existent system with a new one consisting of 8 grades and 40 salary steps with each grade having five steps. Thereby, in addition to increasing and decompressing pay levels (see Table 6.6. and Figure 6.4.), the program categorized civil service positions into four functional categories: leadership (grades 1 and 2), management (grades 3 and 4), executive (grades 5 and 6), and Technical & Service (grades 7 and 8).

Furthermore, in a contrary manner, while the same law assured the security of tenure, by blocking promotions from one grade to another, it practically removed the tenure nature of civil service employment. Through the new system, civil servants were to receive salary appraisals equal to one step after each successful performance evaluation. This way, officials would reach the uppermost step of their grades only five years after recruitment and even sooner in cases of those officials with various levels of higher education. Then, officials were supposed to enter the open competition, together with external candidates, for other position at grades, which may or may not exist, and their positions would be announced as vacant. The findings suggest that several major problems exist with such a mechanism. First, announcing every position as vacant is a clear violation of the law with respect to the security of tenure. Second, no legal justification exists to put employees' positions on vacant when their performance has been positively evaluated for five consecutive years. Third, neither the line ministries nor the Commission has the capacity to re-fill thousands of positions each year, particularly in an environment where most of the processes are managed manually. Fourth, even if the capacity exists and legal obstacles are removed, enough

vacant positions are unavailable to re-recruit all step-5 employees to other grades. Fifth, it unintendedly discredited annual performance evaluations, as these evaluations would not result in any reward or punishment for servants who had already reached the step five of any positions. Despite these shortcomings, the program succeeded in increasing and decompressing pay scales, forcing all line ministries to develop job descriptions for every position in their Tashkeels, further rationalizing Tashkeels, introducing the element of self-evaluation in the annual performance evaluations of civil servants.

As summarized below in Tables 7.1. and 7.2., findings of this study suggest that the post-Taleban CSRs in Afghanistan have had more failures than successes. Although the Afghan civil service, in 2016, when almost all reform programs examined in this study had been implemented, was in no way same as its 2002 version, one cannot argue that the multi-million donor-funded reform projects met their intended objectives. It is true that enormous changes and improvements have been brought about in the policies on the recruitment, appraisal, and remuneration of civil servants. Notably, the elements of meritocracy have been introduced in almost all relevant processes; regulations have been implemented for recruitments through open competition rather than biased appointments; PRP elements have been introduced, and all civil servants are evaluated annually; pay scales are much higher and more decompressed; each and every civil service position has a job description, and Tashkeels are more rational and clearer; the share of women has increased from 0% to 20%, and finally today's civil service is much younger and better educated than that of 16 years ago. However, as these changes and improvements in policies are not reflected in actual practices, there are drawbacks to each and every element of these progress. Recruitments are far from merit-based, and the extents and types of corrupt practices in appointments are not less, if not more, than the pre-reform era; similar to the past, performance evaluations are conducted superficially with long delays and no seriousness or intention to improve performance, and although its extent has been decreased since 2012, a fragmented pay system has disconnected civil servants on the regular pay scale from those on much higher schemes. What strengthens the argument that the changes in the policies have not led to expected changes in practices is the opinions of Afghan officials on the considered factors during actual recruitment and appraisal processes. As demonstrated in Figure 6.5., mid-level civil servants suggest the prioritization of several non-merit factors to the norms and standards mentioned in the regulations and policy documents. Thus, the results of this study show that *personal connection* and *ethnic nepotism* have

been the most influential elements considered during the recruitment and appraisal processes. These two factors are followed by other non-merit factors such as *political affiliation*, *money*, *regional or provincial preference*, and lastly *religious sect*. Therefore, it is clear that after one and a half decades of reforms, the vision of the Afghan administration and its international partners for 2013, which suggested "a motivated, merit-based, performance-driven, and professional civil service resistant to the temptations of corruption and which provides efficient, effective and transparent public services that do not force customers to pay bribes" (GoIRA, 2006, p. 106), is still a far distant reality.

Table 7.1.

Outputs and Effects of Afghan CSRs (2003–2018)

Effects	Main Objectives: *Positive*	Main Objectives: *None*	Main Objectives: *Negative*
None	(1) Expected result	(4) No result	(7) Negative result
Positive	(2) Expected result plus bonus	(5) No expected results, plus bonus	(8) Negative results plus bonus
Negative	(3) **Expected result plus risk** (PRR and P&G) **PRR:** (+) initiation of the structural and functional review (+) partly motivated civil servants (-) dismissal of some female civil servants (-) the growth of a parallel civil service (-) fragmentation of the remuneration system **For P &G:** (+) a comprehensive review of grading and remuneration system (+) further rationalization of organizational structures and civil service positions (+) development of job descriptions for all civil service positions (+) further increase and decompression in the salaries of regular civil servants (-) ended the tenure of civil service employment, which paved the way for the unfair dismissals of officials to recruit favorite candidates (-) ambiguity about the status and future of thousands of civil servants, who have reached the final step of their grades (-) meaningless and superficial annual performance evaluation for those who are already at the highest step of their grade	(6) **No expected results plus risk** (AEP, LEP, MCP, and CBR) NO significant PROGRESS (on increasing capacity, facilitation of PRR implementation, normalizing the second civil service; at least three (AEP, LEP, CBR) of the programs ended before reaching their targets of recruitments (-) particularly LEP enabled some ministries to avoid participation in the PRR (-) more fragmentation of the pay system by adding several layers of very different pay scales (-) further politicization of civil service recruitments, particularly through CBR	(9) Negative results plus risk

Table 7.2.

The extent of Change in Recruitment, Promotion, and Remuneration

New Regime \ Old Regime	Policy as adopted	Policy in action
Policy as adopted	**(I)** **The extent of change in policy (HIGH)** **On Recruitment:** - new Afghanistan Civil Servants Law - new recruitment processes **On Promotion:** (-) blocking promotions (+) adding the self-evaluation component in the process (-) removing the previous 15 factors of evaluation **On Remuneration:** Change of the system from a 13-grade system to an 8-grade system based on functional classification (+) an increase in civil service salaries (+) decompression of the pay system (-) fragmentation of the once unified pay system by introducing various pay schemes	**(II)** **The extent to which new policy formalizes the old practice** **On Recruitment:** By putting experience as a core condition for civil service employment, the priority same as before was given to internal candidates (indirect)
Policy in action	**(III)** **The extent to which practice continues to reflect old policy** **On Promotion:** - Annual performance evaluation in practice continues to be superficial and bureaucratic	**(IV)** **The extent of change in practice (LOW)** **On Recruitment:** e.g., the same as before - rec. priority was given to internal candidates through the implementation of P&G - examination questions are rather general than job specific - manipulation and favoritism in recruitments are dominant **On Promotion:** - no change in the performance of employees as a result of introducing new performance evaluations (-) annual performance evaluations are used as a leverage to put pressure on disliked subordinates **On Remuneration:** (-) previously existing problematic statuses (out-of-grade, above-grade, and below grade) remained in place (-) a divided and unhealthy work environment, due to the existence of various pay schemes that are perceived unfair (-) the general salary increases (P&G) has had no effect on increasing the motivation of civil servants

Regarding the specific reasons that led the reforms toward the above-mentioned situation, chapter 6, particularly section 6.2, provided a detailed description of the specific contextual, programmatic, and external factors that influenced the design and implementation phases of the reforms. The list of these factors is reprinted below in Table 7.3.

Table 7.3.

Factors that Contributed to the Partial Failure of Afghan CSRs (2003–2016)

Contextual	Programmatic	External
- political dynamics (lack of support and negative influence) - ignorance of the context Particularities - lack of local leadership and its consequences - corruption (nepotism, cronyism patronage, bribery)	- lack of an inclusive reform approach - failure in appropriate priority setting and lack of background research - inflexible reform plans - lack of sustainability - ambiguous reform strategy	- the overwhelming influence of the international actors - lack of coordination among international actors - lack of trust between local and international actors - the extensive flow of foreign aid

On the contextual level, the findings suggest the lack of political support for reforms and the interference of political elites, including MPs particularly in the recruitment of civil servants, has been one of the most significant obstacles toward achieving meritocracy in the civil service. Furthermore, the perceived direct import of reform ingredients from outside the country without proper consideration of the national context particularities and indigenous mechanisms of the past, added to a lack of strong local leadership by the IARCSC contributed to failures. Finally, various kinds of institutionalized corruption, including nepotism, cronyism, patronage, and bribery, paralyzed the reforms at the implementation phase.

On the other hand, findings of this research suggest the existence of multiple programmatic factors that complicated the situation even more. An inappropriate and ambiguous reform approach, the failure to define priorities due to insufficient background research, the inflexibility of reform plans, the overlooking of the lengthy nature of reforms, and finally an ambiguous reform strategy have been the main reasons under this category that contributed negatively. As discussed, almost all reforms emerged in the form of three-year donor-funded projects, which in addition to baring sustainability concerns were in some cases disconnected from each other and had unrealistic

objectives. Moreover, owing to the lack of a clear and comprehensive strategy to define the desired state and system of the civil service and provide a clear roadmap to guide how and when it will be achieved, the Commission and its international partners seemed to be trapped in a vicious circle and launched reform projects one after another with the mere hope of temporary improvements.

Last, an equally important group of factors that negatively affected the reforms are external factors composed of the overwhelming influence of the international actors, lack of coordination among international actors, lack of trust between local and international actors, and extensive flow of the foreign aid. The findings suggest that all reform programs were highly influenced by the involved international actors and their consultants. It is clear that, except CBR, all reform programs were designed and drafted by non-Afghans, a move which has been partly due to the perceived low capacity in Afghan policymakers, particularly in the 2002–2009 period, and partly due to lack of trust. Furthermore, the lack of coordination among the international actors led to the repetition of supports not being aligned with the priorities and objectives of PAR. A final yet very important element of the external factors that affected the reforms negatively was the huge flow of international aid. The findings suggest that although the aid helped to launch reforms in the first place, they exacerbated the issue of superficial reform implementation. As certain financial assistance to the line ministries were conditional on the implementation of reform measures such as PRR, sources suggest that in the absence of the appropriate mechanisms to check the quality of implementation, some administrative units implemented the requested reforms in a very superficial manner with the mere purpose of securing more financial benefits rather than improving service delivery or increasing organizational capacity.

7.2 A Short Note on the Findings

Despite their particularities, findings of this research show that the challenges and outputs of Afghanistan's post-Taleban CSRs are largely consistent with the previous studies on CSPAR initiatives in other FCACs. My review of the relevant literature, in section 2.3, showed that while some academics and practitioners suggest a mixed picture of the achievements and failures, the majority of both practitioners' reports and evaluations as well as the academic research on CSPAR in developing and conflict-affected countries concluded that the reforms, in general, were unsuccessful and largely failures (Boyne et al., 2003; Evans, 2008; Repucci, 2014; Scott, 2011).

Examples of such failures are: having a poor or superficial implementation, not having enough outcomes to improve the situation or solve existing problems, and finally not meeting the intended objectives. Therefore, CSR remains "one of the most intractable yet important challenges for governments and their supporters today" (Repucci, 2014, p. 207). Considering the international experience, the failure of the Afghan CSR is not an exception but rather continuance of the general trend. For example, the recognition of context and its subsequent factors has been highlighted by almost all studies on the topic as one of the essential elements for successful reforms (Antwi et al., 2008; Chibba, 2009; Independent Evaluation Group, 2008; Rao, 2013; Repucci, 2014;), same as programmatic factors such as the "design" and "scope" of reforms (Polidano, 2001) or the external factors and its core ingredient of donors' imposition role (Chibba, 2009, p. 97; Scott , 2011). This is to say that many studies can be found to support the argument that one or some of the factors that led the Afghan reforms toward partial failure have been witnessed at least once in another similar context. Thus, the findings of this study are in line with the general conclusion of the previous studies that although the ingredients of successful reforms are known on paper, "actions have not always followed words" (Repucci, 2014, p. 208).

Comparing the international experience in similar contexts (section 2.3) with the factors that led the Afghan CSRs (section 6.2), it can be easily noticed that all the reform factors in Afghanistan were previously identified in the course of similar reforms in other countries. However, what makes the case of Afghanistan unique is the scale and variety of challenging factors, particularly regarding the contextual issues. Moreover, it is the coexistence of all these factors that made the situation extremely wicked, as, in the course of the literature review, I could not find any case, where all these factors have been simultaneously present.

On the other hand, the findings of the research concerning the situation in the post-reform civil service of Afghanistan is in full harmony with the problems of a "patrimonial public administration," which is partly explained by Hughes (1998, p. 24) as follows,

> Personal, that is, based on loyalty to a particular individual such as… a minister, instead of being impersonal, based on legality and loyalty to the organization and the state… practices often resulted in corruption or misuse of office for personal gain… it was once common for those aspiring to employment by the state to resort to patronage or nepotism, relying on friends or relatives for employment, or by

> purchasing offices; that is to pay for the right to be a customs or tax collector, and then to charge fees to clients, both to repay the initial sum invested and to make a profit… the normal way for a young man to gain government employment… was to apply to some relative or family friend in a position to help. There was no guarantee that people employed by the system would be competent in any way

Finally, with respect to the conceptual framework of the reforms, the findings suggest that the Afghan CSR is composed of a mixture of Traditional Public Administration and NPM prescriptions. On the one hand, elements such as the emphasis on the principles of meritocracy, including the reduction and elimination of patronage, open competition to recruit civil servants, a structured examination before the appointment, and supervising recruitments through a central board of appointment, can be observed. In addition, the focus on the political neutrality of the civil service, the efforts to establish clear and rational hierarchical structures, as well as the intention to develop clear job descriptions are all associated with the ingredients of a Traditional Public Administration model (see Figure 2.2.). On the other hand, PRP mechanisms, the introduction of financial incentives to attract and retain capacity, the removal of security of tenure by blocking promotions, the introduction of self-assessment in the appraisal processes, the emphasis on a small but an effective and efficient civil service, as well as the categorization of civil service grades based on the types of functions, are those elements of the reforms rooted in NPM prescriptions.

7.3 Limitations of the Study

First of all, I should emphasize that this study has been primarily concerned with the core Afghan civil service, which leaves a considerable part of the Afghan civil service in the provinces out of the research scope. Notably, due to the centralistic feature of the Afghan civil service's administrative structures, the systems and procedures at the subnational level are similar to that at the center. This means provincial directorates and municipal management units of line ministries have the same HR system and organizational structure of the ministry headquartered in Kabul in relatively small sizes. Therefore, all changes and reforms in the HR system, including the procedures for the recruitment, appraisal and even remuneration level of civil servants, are equally applicable to civil servants regardless of their locality. However, the situation with the implementation of reform measures at the subnational level is thought to be generally more

complex and varies from one province to another. For instance, the factor of political influence in appointments has more significance at the senior- and mid-level civil service appointments of Balkh, where for the past 16 years, the provincial government has been in the hand of a specific political faction, than, for example, Herat or Nangarhar, where the element of being a permanent resident of the province or region is considered a much important factor. Similarly, the factor of ethnic favoritism is thought to be a serious problem in provinces with more diverse ethnicities such as Ghazni or Baghlan than, for example, Bamyan or Kandahar, where most of the residents share the same ethnicity. Therefore, although based on my observations and knowledge in the course of other studies, I can conclude that the implementation of reform measures, particularly with respect to merit-based recruitments and appraisals and the rationalization of Tashkeels at the subnational level, has largely failed, and the conclusions of this study on reform implementation are limited to the national level.

Moreover, of the total 52 public organizations, 25 ministries, and 27 central agencies and independent organizations, in 2016, I visited and spoke to officials from only 8 organizations; these were 3 line ministries, the Afghan Parliament, the Office of the President's Special Representative for Reform and Good Governance (OPSR), the Independent Commission for Overseeing Implementation of the Constitution, Attorney General's Office, the IARCSC. Therefore, although the focus during the data collection activities has been the general civil service at the national level rather than focusing on a specific organization and the analysis and presentation of data through various parts of this study have been done that way, it is possible that in addition to what was discussed, some additional factors exist in some ministries that affected the outputs of the reforms that may or may not be present in others. For example, the exceptional financial and technical support that the MoF has had in the course of the past 16 years and the very high share of the MoE in public employment—as its perceived total employees constitute almost 50% of total civil servants[59]—have had particular effects on the implementation of the reforms in these ministries. Therefore, in the course of this research, I have tried to eliminate such particularities to so that the conclusions be applicable to the whole civil service, which, in turn, may be seen as a failure in undertaking a more in-depth analysis. Therefore, each of the drivers

[59] if teachers are considered as civil servants

identified and discussed in section 6.2 could be further elaborated to provide its direct and indirect links to other mentioned factors.

Furthermore, the number of international interviewees in this study are comparably lower than the local interview sources. On the one hand, this limitation allowed me to explore and explain the implemented reforms more from the perspective of locals. On the other hand, it may have resulted in overlooking some factors that the involved international consultants and advisors find significant. Finally, among locals, the primary source of data has been the senior level of administration, generally at the Directorate and General Directorate levels, which has been beneficial for collecting more concrete and comprehensive knowledge, particularly on the design of the decision-making phases. Its drawback, however, has been the inclusion of the views of few officials at the lower levels of the civil service. Thus, I believe that a more negative picture of reforms will be drawn once more detailed views of those officials are also added.

7.4 Implications of Findings and Recommendations

This study offers evidence that officials and decision-makers have a general tendency to forget or ignore past lessons. Thanks to ample academics' research as well as practitioners' reports and evaluations, in most cases, the factors of failure and elements of success are known; however, it seems that the complexity of the reform environment and wickedness of problems push the front lines of actors toward the same mistakes of the past. Therefore, it is recommended that practitioners systematically address this issue during the initial discussions on future reforms. Similarly, the topic requires further research, particularly regarding the question of why the learned lessons and known measures are overlooked. In the following sections, I discuss the implications of the findings and recommendations for two different categories.

For the Practitioners. First, it is crucial for policymakers to develop and clarify a realistic vision of their desired civil service so that ambiguities in objectives and contradictions in actions be avoided. Moreover, the ingredients of such a desired state should be defined according to the national context; meaning they should clearly explain what their interpretations of norms such as transparency, meritocracy, efficiency, and effectiveness are and how they could be achieved. Of course, all these clarifications should be based on a thorough background research and

comprehensive needs assessment. These are the essential points that require to be clarified in a comprehensive PAR strategy, which is currently lacking.

Second, the study appears to support the argument that as a consequence of their financial support, the international actors such as the World Bank have a powerful role in the design and implementation of public sector reforms during post-conflict interventions. As a consequence of such involvement, an imposition trend has emerged and continued over the decades. Considering the very high aid dependency of FCACs, such an influential role is unlikely to change. However, it is crucial that these actors finally acknowledge that in contexts, such as Afghanistan, with distinct cultural elements from those of the donor communities and a long history of invasion and intervention, even some recommendations and suggestions are interpreted as an imposition. Thus, regardless of their quality, unless the reform prescriptions originate from the local needs and by the locals themselves, the current trend of failure in public sector reforms will continue its dominance.

Third, in line with the findings of previous research, reform initiatives based on short-term *capacity injection* do more harm than good. Short-term capacity injections benefit individuals rather than the system and have several difficult-to-manage consequences, including the creation of unbalanced pay scales, the emergence of false expectations, and the creation of unproductive working relations between regular servants and the beneficiaries of such initiatives. Furthermore, as one of the many justifications, these short-term capacity injections have been conducted to avoid high costs of a comprehensive action; however, the end results of the programs studied in this research suggest that even from financial aspects, a comprehensive reform would be very cost effective in long-term, a point which should be seriously considered by practitioners and policymakers.

Fourth, as already initiated and selectively experienced since 2017 in Afghanistan, the digitalization of civil service recruitment exams to a large extent prevents external interferences and limits corruption-related issues discussed in this research. Concerning its management, there are two choices which trade off each other. In the cases where the processes are managed by a central agency, such as the IARCSC, it is highly likely that the best professional candidates will not be recruited mainly because the existing management of the IARCSC and those who prepare the recruitment questions are not experts in the fields for which they are recruiting. Alternatively,

delivering process execution to line ministries enables them to hire the skills they need; however, the assurance of meritocracy would be then more challenging, and, consequently, the possibility of interferences increases.

Fifth, and equally important, in contexts, such as Afghanistan, where the government remains the major employer, and the unemployment rate is high, it is essential to retain the security of tenure in public service mainly because in the absence of such assurance, civil servants use their assured short-term service to maximize their personal interests by engaging in corrupt practices. More precisely, as is the case in the current Afghan civil service, officials are mostly concerned about two things: (1) how they can secure more money to survive for a while after their dismissal, and (2) how they can stay longer in the office. These elements force them toward establishing personal connections with various levels of the administration and accommodate the illegal requests of those perceived influential. Thus, the security of tenure, complemented by appropriate mechanisms for performance evaluation and oversight, shall eliminate or largely reduces such issues.

For academics and researchers. First, each reform factor mentioned in section 6.2 has direct and indirect links to at least one factor from the same or other two groups; thus, an in-depth analysis of such links and their consequences could benefit practitioners and policymakers to design reforms and have fewer problems during implementation. However, although this research could move in that direction, the addition of such analyses to an already big research agenda would simply be too much. Thus, it should be noted that contrary to the existence of a comprehensive body of literature on the CSPAR initiatives in developed and developing countries, this research and it's few likes on the Afghan civil service and its reforms are just the beginning of the road and thus should be regarded accordingly. Having said that, it is for future research studies to explore the roots of CSPAR problems or the factors for success and failure in FCACs to come up with concrete policy recommendations on each factor.

Second, the findings of this research restate the inability of the existing reform models or conceptual theories to yield substantial progress in the civil service of conflict-affected countries. There are several reasons for this, including a general failure in the enforcement of the norms and standards introduced through the reforms, institutionalized and culturally accepted corrupt practices, which are exacerbated by foreign aid, and the general political instability in such

countries. That is why, although most of the scholars suggest that "there are international currents, and certainly particular models and, at a more detailed level, specific tools (dishes)" (Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2011, p. 215) for reforms, it is essential to acknowledge that FCACs are not among the audiences of these known models. Therefore, in cases such as Afghanistan, one should certainly avoid the direct prescription of such standards and mechanisms. More precisely, NPM was productive only after the removal of the evil of patrimonial administration by what is now regarded as a traditional or Weberian model; similarly, New Public Governance (NPG) or Digital Era Governance (DEG) have emerged only after decades of experiencing NPM. This means that public sector reforms are evolutions rather than actions, characterized by an unending desire for improvement, and it is possible when certain conditions are met, and basic grounds are established. Looking from such a perspective, one can observe that due to several years of civil and political conflicts, countries such as Afghanistan have not had the chance for such evolutions, and are far from the international race. Thus, the situation of the Afghan civil service and its alike reflects the characteristics of a patrimonial civil service that many countries got rid of decades and even centuries ago. As a result, when it comes to the public sector reforms in conflict-affected countries, both researchers and practitioners should go back to some basics. To emphasize some traditional theories and models, even those which according to the rest of the world are considered old fashioned. Such models and theories should be adapted and modernized according to contemporary needs and values based on domestic needs. The closest match, to begin with, is the NWS.

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Appendix A: Interview Protocol

Interview Details

Interviewee Organization: _____ Date: _____ Time: _____

Interviewee Name: _____

Interviewee email: _____ Interviewee Phone: _____

Position: _____

Specific note: _____

Introductory Remarks

Dear Sir/Madame,

First of all, let me thank you for accepting to meet me for an interview for my doctoral research.

I am Mustafa Nasery, an Afghan doctoral researcher based at the Research Training Group on "Wicked Problems, Contested Administrations-WIPCAD" of Potsdam University in Germany. After years of my cooperation with the various international organizations involved in Afghanistan, I am currently working on my doctoral project with the working title "Success and Failure of Post-Taleban Civil Service Reform in Afghanistan."

As I've already provided you with a short description of my research project, I am mainly focusing on the Civil Service component of PAR, and within it, I am more interested in Recruitment, Promotion, and Pay &Grade of Afghan civil servants. First, I am exploring the process of policy (rules, regulations, guidelines, and projects) formulation and then studying the implementation of them within the framework of reforms in Afghan line ministries. Thus, I am conducting interviewees, talking to both Afghan and foreign experts, researchers, academicians, and officials who have been involved or know about the topic. Considering the many years of your experience in this field, undoubtedly, you are one of those experts with valuable insights.

An important point, I would like to mention is that my research is purely academic in nature, and I do not currently work for any Afghan or non-Afghan organization. All data I am collecting will be used only for my doctoral research and will not be shared with any third person or organization. Unless you agree, I will not mention your name, your title, or the name of your organization in any part of my research.

As a final note, I would appreciate it if you let me record our conversation; I can assure it will remain confidential and will be only used to develop my interview summaries better. However, if you do not feel comfortable, I would be glad just to take notes.

Interview Questions:

1) First of all, could you please first introduce yourself?

- Your background: Click here to enter text.
- Years of experience: Click here to enter text.
- Position: Click here to enter text.
- Salary: Click here to enter text.
- Age: Click here to enter text.

2) How and under what conditions were the Civil Service Reforms (CSR) in the post-Taleban era of Afghanistan initiated? Click here to enter text.
3) What were the main reform programs? Click here to enter text.
4) Who were the main actors during the design stage of the processes? Click here to enter text.

5) What about international actors?

    - Who were they? Click here to enter text.
    - What was their role? Click here to enter text.
    - What do you think was the main interest of foreigners? Click here to enter text.
    - What do you think about the performance of foreigners? Click here to enter text.

6) The World Bank in its 2008 report argues that "*there is little to show for the approximately $1.6 billion that has been spent on Technical Assistance (TA) provided by the international community (IC) since 2002*"?

    - What do you think about this? Click here to enter text.

7) World Bank's 2011 report on "Governance and Public Sector in Afghanistan" states that the main concern of the bank and other international partners, mainly the US government, was the "injection of capacity" for "either short or medium term."

    a. What do you think? Click here to enter text.
    b. Was there any long-term perspective? Click here to enter text.

8) A former Commissioner to the IARCSC has stated that "… it was a clear conspiracy between the commission and the foreign consultants… the texts were directly translated from English to Dari and became our policies, wage regulations, and job descriptions."
    a. What do you think about this statement?
    b. How were reform programs and policies drafted?

9) Let's talk about the implementation of reforms. Could you tell me your opinion about each of the reform programs you mentioned (in response to question 3)?

Click here to enter text.

    a. If not already mentioned, what about PRR/PAR/LEP/AEP/MCP/P&G/CBR?

    Click here to enter text.

10) On several occasions, particularly during the implementation of the PRR program, the IARCSC have been blamed as the "men of influence… who had affected the reforms negatively by patronage and nepotism" (Michailof, a World Bank evaluator, 2007a).

    a. To which extent is that true? Click here to enter text.

11) In some cases, the number of recruits through various reform programs is not clear. For example, according to MEC's report in 2012, the Ministry of Education (MoE) has reported that during several phases of reforms, about 11,000 teachers were recruited in provinces, while the report states "… after all, it is not clear whether those 11,000 teachers were really recruited or not" (MEC, 2013; 123).
    a. What is the number of civil servants we have? Click here to enter text.
    b. What about the number of recruits? Click here to enter text.
12) Since we came to the number of recruits, a USAID report from 2009 states that "public employment is now purchased rather than earned." There have been numerous cases of buying jobs, through which "*highest bidder[has] been appointed to a position regardless of merit… the main problem is that before reforms family, party and faction connections were privileged in public employment, and now the whole system is dominated by money*" (p. 16).
    a. Do you agree with this? Please explain why and why not? Click here to enter text.
    b. What do you think about the main factors for recruitment? Click here to enter text.

13) Again, on recruitments, the Afghan Parliament in 2013 mentioned that the Board of Appointment of the IARCSC had "sold" high-level positions such as district governorship and head of ministerial departments by prices varying from $20,000 to $70,000; what do you think?
    Click here to enter text.

14) Reportedly a total of $3.5 billion have been spent by the IARCSC during last decade (Deutsche Welle 2013, BBC 2013) for reforms.
    a. What do you think about the IARCSC in general? Click here to enter text.
    b. What about its role in the processes? Click here to enter text.

15) How many people were fired or replaced? Click here to enter text.
16) What do you think about the leadership of the reforms? Click here to enter text.

17) Who had the main leadership? Click here to enter text.

    a. Who had the lead during the design and implementation phases of the mentioned reform programs? Click here to enter text.

18) What are the most successful and most failed ministries? Why? Click here to enter text.
19) What is the process for recruitment? Click here to enter text.
    a. When were they changed? Click here to enter text.
    b. Are recruitments done according to their respective policies and regulations? Click here to enter text.
    c. What are the main problems concerning the recruitments of

        i. Senior civil servants? Click here to enter text.

        ii. Those at lower levels (3–8)? Click here to enter text.

20) What about the promotions of civil servants? What is the process? Click here to enter text.

   a. When were they changed? Click here to enter text.
   b. Are they done according to their respective policies and regulations? Click here to enter text.
   c. What are the main problems concerning promotions? Click here to enter text.

21) What do you think about the grading and remuneration system we have in the civil service? Click here to enter text.
   a. What kind, and how many schemes have we had since 2002? Which ones still exist? Click here to enter text.
   b. When were they changed? Click here to enter text.
   c. What are the main problems concerning pay and grading of civil servants? Click here to enter text.

22) Why were reforms in few line ministries reportedly implemented successfully whereas the same reforms with the same implementation structure and under a similar leadership style have failed in some others?

Click here to enter text.

23) Who were the main domestic and foreign actors involved in the process?

Click here to enter text.

24) What were the main challenges of the reforms?

Click here to enter text.

25) What were the main achievements of the reforms?

Click here to enter text.

26) What do you think about the patronage and nepotism in the civil service?

   a. How serious are they? Click here to enter text.

   b. What are the main reasons for them? Click here to enter text.

27) Why are there two controversial statements about reform results?

Click here to enter text.

   a. Didn't we have a specific strategy? Click here to enter text.

   b. Did the reforms have specific objectives? If yes, what were they? Click here to enter text.

28) Why are the reforms mostly considered as a failure? Were the reform-related rules, regulations, and policies poorly formulated, unrealistic and unfitting to the context of Afghanistan? Alternatively, it is because of bad implementation? Alternatively, alternatively, is there a problem with both the formulation and implementation? Click here to enter text.
29) Your recommendations for the study? Click here to enter text.
30) Do you know any other people relevant for an interview? Click here to enter text.

Final Remarks:

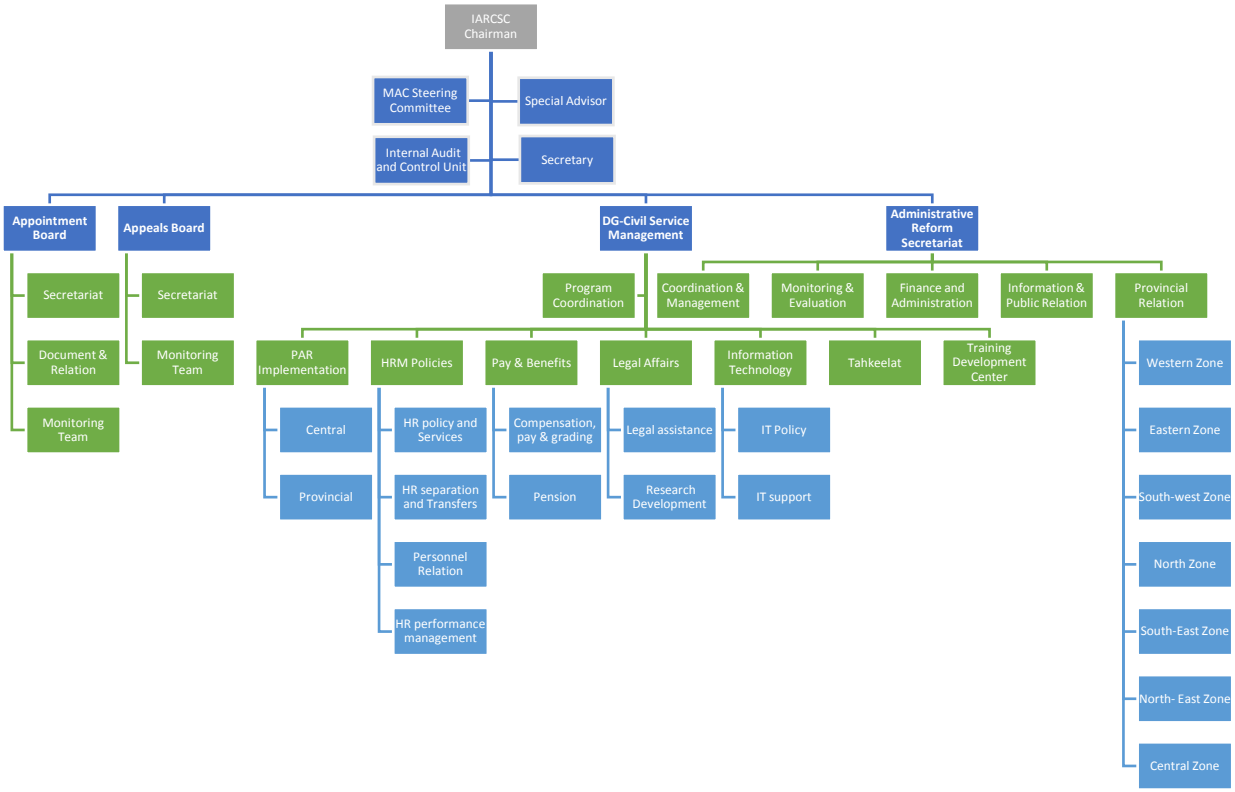
Thank you very much for your valuable time and insights. Is there anything from what we discussed you wish not to be included in my thesis? Any other issue I should keep in mind?

Click here to enter text.

Observations and Additional Notes:

Click here to enter text.

Appendix B: IARCSC Organogram, 2006



Source: IARCSC Strategic & Corporate Implementation Plan 1385-1387