

## **Confronting Afghanistan's Security and Development Challenges: A Contribution of the European Union**

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### **Abstract**

Afghanistan is confronting the complexity of security and development challenges for the last several years, and that is affecting the Afghan's lives and livelihood. Over the past years, it has continuously increased, and due to lack of security as well as the country has faced several incidents after 2014. The war created several problems, and there are major challenges by the Taliban, ISIS, and other critical terrorisation. The study aims to define a system approach that how a fragile system operates and functions. Afghanistan emerges as an example of a fragile state which can be explained through the concept of system approach. The article also looks at the concept of system approach and method takes the case study of Afghanistan to demonstrate the perils of a fragile state since 2014 following international military drawdown. Besides, it also looks at how the EU is responding to these challenges as part of its security and development strategy towards Afghanistan. Concluding remarks observed that a fragile system lacks developments and economic growth which consequences in displacement, emigration and instability in the country consequential in the community or the case of Afghanistan tribal warfare. In past over years, the EU contributes its development and humanitarian aid to Afghanistan, which is bringing a significant change.

**Keywords:** Afghanistan, Development, Security, Humanitarian, Fragile State, European Union.

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## **1. Introduction**

Security and development are a major concern for Afghanistan, as the country is confronted with myriad challenges both influenced by internal and external factors. Given its important geographical positioning, Afghanistan serves as a bridge between Central Asia and South Asia. Afghanistan has a diverse population, with ethnic groups consisting of Pashtun, Hazaras, Tajiks, Uzbeks and Turkmens to name a few. These groups represent the population of the neighbouring countries highlighting the involvement of external actors in the security of Afghanistan. The present-day borders of Afghanistan are the result of the 19th century ‘great game’- to create a buffer space between British India and the Russian Empire. With the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979, the country has gone through an upheaval of security challenges which has left its mark on the development of Afghanistan. The Afghan ‘freedom struggle’- the movement against the Soviets- saw different ethnic groups planned an organised fight in what is now known as the ‘Afghan Jihad’ in order to push the Soviets out of the country.

The Soviet intervention changed the dynamics of security in South Asia. The success of Afghan jihadi groups in pushing the Soviets out of Afghanistan did not result in peace and stability for the country. Instead, what followed were a series of conflicts among the different splintered groups who were now divided over the political ideology of the country.

Extremism and terrorism that Afghanistan has suffered over the years have led to serious questions about the security and development of the country. More than half of the land is under the control or influence of the Taliban. The Taliban region of Afghanistan is ruled as per the Islamic sharia law, which remains controversial in itself and among the different ethnic groups residing in the country. This has led to serious questions over the sovereignty of Afghanistan where the government after series of negotiations has not been able to bring the country under its control. What emerges out of Afghanistan is a divided land wherein half of the country is subjugated to the whims and fancies of the warlords and their way of governance. This study would provide an overview of issues and challenges related to security and development. The discourse would look into the factors that are impeding the socio-economic development of Afghanistan. Furthermore, the study would also assess the role of the European Union as

far as the stability and economic development of Afghanistan is concerned. An assessment of these questions would be in line with the system approaches.

## **2. Understanding of Security and Development: An Application of Systems Approach**

Justus Moser (1720-1794) was the first to mention the word 'development' in the discipline of social sciences. which was later reflected in the works of Johann Gottfried Herder (1744-1803). They used development as a homogenous way of change in society. Subsequently, 'development' has become synonymous with transformation, change, growth, evolution, advancement and so on. The concept of development was shaped as the discourse after the speech of Harry Truman on 20 January 1949 focused on development and underdevelopment. In his speech, Truman stated that "we must embark on a bold new program for making the benefits of our scientific advances and industrial progress available for the improvement and growth of underdeveloped areas." However, before Truman, Wilfred Bendon used "economically backward areas" in the report by the International Labour Organization (ILO) in 1942. Since then, development has featured in the documents of the United Nations (UN). 'Development' connected with economic development where it has occasionally taken discourse in the international relations then it was contained as 1960s UN's first development decade.

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) was established on 22 November 1965 for connecting developing countries into the development network and the programme advocates change through knowledge, experience, and resource, which helps people in developing countries to build a better life. 1990 was a significant year for the world when the UN introduced the first Human Development Report (HDR) as a new approach for advancing human well-being. In 2000, the United Nations launched Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) for the years 2000-2015. The HDR assessed human development achievement by measuring inequality in the distribution of health, education, per capita income within countries and poverty through the making of the Human Development Index (HDI). The MDGs covered eight goals ranging towards the majority of countries that included the leading development institutions agreed on the blueprint of MDGs (The United Nations,2020a).

In 2015, the new development strategy was adopted by the UNDP as 17 goals set for Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to achieve by 2030 as part of the 15-year plan. The plan is widely known as the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Its strategy is based on three levels of actions: global, local and people which proposes engagement among several sectors of the society to achieve the goals set forward for the 2030 plan. The SDGs focuses on tackling poverty, empowering girls, and women and mitigating the challenges of climate change. As mentioned on the UN website, “Sustainable development has been defined as development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (The United Nations,2020b). In short, UNDP defines it as an approach towards “building an inclusive, sustainable and resilient future for people and planet (UNDP,2020) in the context of three core elements such as economic growth, social inclusion and environmental protection.

Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI,2015) mentioned about security and development have been a ‘traditionally formed distinct’ debate in international relations (SIPRI Yearbook,2015). Recently, development have been described as economic growth, however, now the concept of development has expanded in its approach and thinking to reflects ideas of capabilities, opportunities, and choice. This thinking was reflected in the work of Amartya Sen (1999) who defined ‘development as freedom’. Freedom is explained as both the primary objective of development and the principal means of development keeping humans at the centre of change. Though, when it comes to international relations the idea of development finds its meaning in the context of security. Generally, when menace level often risked in human being. International relations discourse interpreted security in various ways such as individual, human and state security. There are different actors, which has focussed on different challenges as internal, external, existential and others in the concern of the above policy domains. These all menace differs accordingly, whereas development challenges are affecting generational efforts ‘security challenges are often immediate. But issues of sovereignty are significant for the state to ensure its territorial integrity, which is focussing on ‘the menace, use, and control of military force’. While, when a country is suffering from

both challenges respectively, security and development mean a state is under great danger.

The systems approach is the identification of more complex administrative challenges related to social, political, security, economic, humanitarian and environmental.

"These situations are described in *Systems Approaches to Public Sector Challenges*, an OECD report that provides examples of systems strategies in action... to strengthen the links between citizens, end-users, stakeholders and policy designers. A systems approach brings together interviews, dialogue, openness to perspectives from public and private sectors, and people at all levels of an institution's hierarchy. Although Aristotle could never have anticipated Anna's dilemma with the lift, the disruption of the service industry by the sharing economy, nor the need for and concept of a universal basic income, his point holds true that an understanding of all parts within a system make complex problems more easily solvable." (Catalan,2018:1-3).

It provides a critical and analytical approach that is making an administrative system more complex and 'looking at the big-picture process' and its fundamental practices. A systems approach makes an organisation more functional due to the identifications of problems and challenges occurring to the administration. The systems approaches were developed in the 1950s in the field of social sciences, and it is an application of systems as a network of interdependent components that are working together to achieve common aims through empirical dimensions for policymakers and administrators. David Easton described the systems approach as a conceptual framework for all political systems, where a political system and decision-makers are facing challenges in the political environment such as the local, national and international in the context of demands and supports (Easton,1955). It provides a policy that uses support to cope with demands as the policy impacts which is experienced by leaders as per demand and supports. Harold Lasswell extended the systems approach as per "basic values" that provide an understanding of human interaction through identifying of "varying degree by people and their institution" (Lasswell,1950).

Lasswell explained eight basic values and divided them into two types as “welfare” and “deference”, which attributes wealth, health, (means “well-being”), enlightenment and skill; defence values attributes power, affection, respect and rectitude. Abraham Maslow defined systems approach consists of “hierarchy” as the five identifiable goals such as survival, safety, belongingness, self-esteem and self-actualisation (Lasswell,1950). Richard W. Chadwick reinterpreted this as the survival (psychological needs), security (anticipated survival), community (in the case of Afghanistan to as “identity” politics by certain groups), responsibility (the role component of social positions) and fulfilment (sense of completion in life, it is referred as self-actualization by Maslow) (Chadwick, 2003).

Gary Milnate, Suyoun Jang and Alison Burt (SIPRI,2015:299) defined security and development through a systems approach. They looked at how countries were being affected by war and instability which they referred to as fragile states. Hence, several challenges are faced by a fragile state, such as developmental, environmental, humanitarian and other complex issues. These authors examined the above complexity through a systems approach to fragility. Contemporary trends have been focusing on development outcomes and the international policy response of fragile states in the context of emerging SDGs. In this condition, the system approach provides an understanding of the fragile state’s complex challenges and engagement of all strategic actors through a process to give outcomes. Afghanistan is a perfect example of a fragile state country facing complex challenges related to security and development; these complex challenges are social, political, security, economic, humanitarian and environmental. These complex challenges created inter-ethnic grievances when they contested elections creates political violence which leads to an economic slowdown. It causes displacement where the country is already facing environmental challenges such as water shortage and others. These cause and symptom are creating complex fragile systems, and this all affects essential compounds of security and development.

In the early 1990s, the approach of a “fragile state” came into the light in the wake of the cold war and the discourse on “fragile state” identified and described the state due to ‘new sources of threats and state failure’ (Marten,

2010:2012-22). The fragile system is pictured due to violence and several complex challenges that have brought the concept of fragility. The system approach would apply fragility at the level or levels incorporated with sub-national, national, global and (a-) sectoral. This approach provides a better picture to identify complex problems and challenges and a better way to identify solutions. The setting of fragile systems is based on low security and low development, which interacts with complex challenges in the context of both security and development. These are outcome as the international community came with development aid and its effectiveness in support of the fragile state in order to ensure security and development for a better country (SIPRI,2015:302). In this study, the system approach is applied to Afghanistan that thereby defines its fragility.

Katherine A. Sullivan, Emma Bjertén-Günther and Rachel Irwin (SIPRI, 2015:322-332) explain security and development through the concept of 'human security' and 'fragile systems' to define the state to the individual in international relations. This approach provides an "understanding of the linkage between local, national and global security and development processes." This approach also includes gender insights about how security and development are linked to empowerment of the people as per gender norms, culture and roles in the society. However, security and development are increasingly interconnected in a more precise way, and it is making a complex world, which is inextricably linked in least-developed countries (LDCs, it is described by UNDP as per low-income countries).

When security challenges are interconnected with socio-economic roots, those menaces also impact development in the form of economic and social inequalities, economic and political migration and natural and human-made disasters.

The lagging development leads to poverty, instability, and intimidations on different levels of development. The MDGs was focused on the countries, and those are affected by conflict, instability and displacement for mainly, it was run for a fight against poverty. The MDGs got some success in reducing poverty from LDCs. So, the next new global development agenda set for these countries as SDGs. The SDGs emphasis on greater focus to bridge security and development through more comprehensive research to brings expertise to mitigate those challenges, which are faced by developing countries. The international institutions, government, NGOs, civil societies

and the supranational government intervened as per SDGs indicators to bring change in developing countries. This study is focused on the European Union's contribution to LDCs as per the case study of Afghanistan; as it one of the less developed countries in South Asia.

### **3.Fragile States Index: A fragility of Afghanistan**

The Fund for Peace (FFP) is an international organisation and world leader in “developing tools and approaches for reducing conflict, that brings clear picture on the nexus of human security and economic development as per instrument of system approaches. It aims for more peaceful and prosperous societies through engineering system such as “smarter methodologies and smarter partnership”. FFP also empowers policymakers, practitioners and people of the community (context-specific), which diagnose risks and vulnerabilities. It has also developed solutions through collective dialogue (Fund for Peace-FFP,2020). The FFP forecasts the Fragile States Index (FSI) based on a conflict assessment as per four key components, which is also known as “CAST”. The CAST framework measures “vulnerability of the states related to pre-conflict, active conflict and post-conflict solutions, which is used widely by policymakers and others. The methodology uses for the FSI, both qualitative and quantitative indicators. The CAST comprises 12 conflict risk indicators to analyse the measurement condition of a state, which ranking defines whether a state is fragile or not. 1) Cohesion Indicators- C1: Security Apparatus C2: Factionalised Elites C3: Group Grievance,2) Economic Indicators- E1: Economic Decline E2: Uneven Development E3: Human Flight,3) Political Indicators- P1: State Legitimacy P2: Public Services P3: Human Rights, 4) Social and Cross-Cutting- S1: Demographics S2: Refugees and IDPs X1: External Intervention (FFP,2020).

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OCED, 2020) suggest 10 fragile states principles for the reconstruction of a country such as the “1. Take context as the starting point, 2. Ensure all activities do no harm, 3. Focus on state-building as the central objective, 4. Prioritise prevention, 5. Recognise the links between political, security and development objectives, 6. Promote non-discrimination as a basis for inclusive and stable societies, 7. Align with local priorities in different ways and different contexts, 8. Agree on practical coordination mechanisms



between international actors, 9. Act fast... but stay engaged long enough to give success a chance and 10. Avoid pockets of exclusion (“aid orphans”). The FFP forecast the FSI in every year and Afghanistan’s ranking is 9th on the table, which is falling under the world’s top 10 fragile state. However, Afghanistan has made significant improvement in FSI in the previous five years. Currently, Afghanistan’s FSI score is 102.9 and ranks 9th out of 178 countries in 2020. The country has seen some positive outlook in the fragility index as it has seen a change of 1.0 points from last year, -5.0 points change over five years and -6.4 points change over ten years. If we see the detailed indicators trends of FSI, Afghanistan’s except cohesion indicators trends and other indicator trends are improving slightly (Table 1).

**Table (1): Afghanistan-Fragile State Index 2014-2020**

Years	Fragile States Ranking	Fragile States Index
2020	9 <sup>th</sup>	102.9
2019	9 <sup>th</sup>	105.2
2018	9 <sup>th</sup>	106.6
2017	9 <sup>th</sup>	107.3
2016	9 <sup>th</sup>	107.9
2015	8 <sup>th</sup>	107.9
2014	7 <sup>th</sup>	106.5

(Source: FFP, <https://fragilestatesindex.org/country-data/>)

Nivi Manchanda argued that “Afghanistan is a ‘failed’, ‘terrorist’ or ‘rogue’ state, which is themselves politically expedient and ethically problematic” (Manchanda,2017). Post-conflict reconstruction talks about continuous efforts to establish democracy in a fragile state. However, in the case of Afghanistan, such is not the case. The country as mentioned is divided between the government and Taliban rule and parts of Afghanistan continue to face attacks by terrorist groups, most recently the May 2020 attacks which serve as a grim reminder of the dark reality. Even, after the completion of the mission of the International Security Force (ISAF) that is formally ended in 2014 fragility is continued in Afghanistan. The European Commission’s final report on “Evaluation of EU Support to Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment in Partner Countries” can also be analysed that Afghanistan is a fragile and conflict-affected country with an increasingly unstable political settlement in place. The report argued that even after the 2014 election result, which was a lengthy and complex process in itself, the new National Unity Government was not able to form the government, due

to varied interest among the government officials. The country was governed by acting officials. This political instability has been the outcome of security and development instability (European Commission,2015).

The LSE-Oxford Commission on State Fragility, growth and development stated “Afghanistan remains fragile and highly susceptible to shocks... state fragility have their roots in Afghanistan’s modern history”. The Commission exhibits five main characteristics of state fragility: 1. The Afghan government suffers from a deficit of legitimacy, 2. The state has weak fiscal and legal capacities, 3. Private investment and economic growth, especially since 2014, has fallen dramatically 4. Insecurity has reinforced both the state’s weakness and deficit of legitimacy. And 5. The state exhibits low resilience to political, security and economic shocks (Bizhan,2018:4-5). Vygaudas Ušackas (2019) argued in his article “In Afghanistan, a fragile hope emerges” on the U.S. and Taliban official meeting in Doha. He argued that “Many of the soldiers, diplomats, and aid workers who have worked in Afghanistan agree that there is no “quick fix”.

#### **4.Security and development challenges in Afghanistan**

It has been more than 40 years, Afghanistan is facing challenges of security and development challenges, which have become “a symbol of a state traumatized and destroyed by war” (Stavrinou and Waller,2020). This was started with the invasion by the Soviet Union in 1979 and remains the main reason behind political and security instability. The political and security situation has worsened following the rise of the Taliban that has resulted in more severe challenges in Afghanistan since 1990. The insurgency and political transition led the state through insecurity in the country over the past decades. Afghanistan has remained involved in conflict and instability, which has been continued to deeply affect the nation’s security and development. These all-affected economies and economic development of Afghanistan where the state has failed to bring democracy on the road.

As per the World Bank’s Afghanistan Development Update, Afghanistan has been experiencing slow growth since 2014, It averaged a 2.3 per cent GDP growth rate between 2014-2017. The poverty on the other hand has increased from 38 to 55 per cent respectively from 2011/12 to 2016/2017 with a major proportion of Afghanistan, where people are living below the national poverty line. Afghan’s living standards are continuously threatened due to rising drought situations that are affecting agriculture such as wheat

harvests, and food insecurity in many parts of the country. Since 2015, More than 1.7 million Afghans have been displaced within the country and more than 2 million left for other neighbourhood countries mostly in Iran and Pakistan. Overall, Afghanistan's remain involved with conflict and instability that have increasingly influence its human and economic development.

All these social and economic development crises have been started with the drawdown of the international military from Afghanistan since 2014. It led to the rise of insurgency and a fraught political transition, which is escalating the risk and insecurity of Afghanistan's future. It has seen a fast expansion of the resurgent Taliban across the country. In some eastern districts, the country has witnessed the presence of other militant groups such as the Islamic State-Khorasan (IS-K), which has an affiliation to the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS). There were internal disagreements and dysfunction for the National Unity Government (NUG). It was created to prevent the 2014 election to avoid the presential election of 2014, where Afghan National Defence and Security Forces (ANDSF) tackle the insurgency. The U.S. Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR) stated, there were only 57.2 per cent of 375 districts under the control or influence of NUG till 1 February 2017 but the end of 2015 it was almost 15 per cent declined. The Special Inspector General stated, 6,785 Afghan forces were killed and 11,777 were injured between January to November 2016. The human security and fragile system are defining that Afghanistan is losing significant of security and development; even its security forces are struggling for their retention. According to the UN Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), 3,498 civilians were killed and 7,920 were injured, so the casualties rate increased by 3 per cent in 2016 in the comparison of 2015. The severe attacks have also been increased, including high profile terror attacks such as suicide bombers and 2017 have seen many serial attacks on the Afghan army and civilians. In March 2017, two attacks took place at police stations and military hospital, when 73 killed and over 240 injured (International Crisis Group,2017).

Human security is one of the core responsibilities of any state, but Afghanistan was the fourth least peaceful country as per the Global Peace Index in 2016. The country is facing a major humanitarian crisis due to conflict has been continuously increased over the years, and the UN Office

for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) showed more than 670,000 people internally displaced within 2016. According to the record of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, there are 3,403 civilians killed, 6989 injured (UNAMA,2020) and more than 1.1 million people internally displaced in 2019 (Refugee Youth Service,2021). Total civilian casualties have been reached 10,000 in six straight years.

The World Bank's recent report also states that Afghanistan's poverty status is going more vulnerable and at risk. The bridging of security is leading to a danger to human security and making the country a fragile system and Afghanistan is starving for stability in order to go on the path of development (The World Bank,2018). The failure of political order is leading to political violence, and security is one of the key safety walls of any state which is already broken in the case of Afghanistan. Those are affecting economic development and growth, and the country is going under a worse economic situation. GDP growth was 1.8 per cent with some improvement; it was 2.9% (estimated) in 2019 (The World Bank,2020). As per UNDP's HDI rank Afghanistan was 170 out of 189 countries in 2018 and as stated by the World Bank country's biggest economic challenge is finding a sustainable source of growth. All these failures lead to humanitarian crisis due to huge internal displacement of the Afghans, and basic amenities have become the biggest challenge for the region. The country has been already facing environmental challenges such as water shortage. These all are cause and symptom of fragile systems, and Afghanistan is an excellent example of this systems approach and all those variables testifying the argument of this study.

### **5. Contribution of the European Union in the mitigating challenges**

On 17 November 2016, the European Parliament's Committees on Foreign Affairs (AFET) and Development (DEVE) jointly organised a workshop "Afghanistan Challenges and Perspectives Until 2020" with the European Parliament's Delegation for relation with Afghanistan. Its main aim was to build greater awareness of the European Parliament' engagement in security and development concern in Afghanistan. This workshop mainly focussed on three situations such as "1. the political situation, 2. the security situation, lastly 3. socio-economic development. This Brussels conference was bringing 75 countries and 26 international organisations included with agencies together for fundraising to the building of Afghanistan and

approx.". 13.6 billion euros' amount committed by the international community. There was around 5 billion euros (1/3) contribution determined by the EU and its Member States. The European Community is in support of a functional, accountable and sustainable way for Afghanistan, and its effort is reaffirmed in its commitment to the betterment of the country over the upcoming decades. With the initiative of the international community to support three main pillars in Afghanistan, which are 1. institution-building through the Afghanistan National Peace and Development Framework (ANPDF) and the Self-Reliance through Mutual Framework (SMAF), 2. making sure aid effectiveness incorporation by sustained international support and funding at least coverage of 2020 and 3. regional and international support for economic development, regional economic cooperation and a political process towards a wave of lasting peace and reconciliation (European Parliament/Workshop,2017:9-10).

The European Union and Afghanistan have close ties since the 1990s. it was increased after 9/11 so as far before it. The European Commission supported more than 500 million euros and at that time; the EU was the largest single donor. But after the 1990s, extremism and terrorism was on high. The 9/11 attacks in the United States marked a turning point in as far engagement with Afghanistan was concerned. After 2001, Al-Qaeda, the Taliban along with ISIS, spread a strong presence not only in Afghanistan but even across the Middle-Eastern and South Asian region. In the following years, EU countries saw their security compromised as Europe become home to some of the deadliest attacks. After the 2004 Madrid train bombings, the EU developed a counter-terrorism approach and its international aid support to mitigate these challenges. In the recent Brussels conference on Afghanistan (5 October 2016), the EU has been committed to continuing its support to Afghanistan through politically and financially year of 2017-2019. The EU is in favour of the realistic implementation of assistance in order to "impact of aid and NUG effectiveness in Afghanistan." The conference also discussed Afghanistan-EU migration issues as well as a concrete political solution in order to achieve peace with the Taliban. The ANPDF presented a roadmap for 2017-2020 to achieving self-reliance over these periods under the framework of state-building and development issues. So, the EU wants to play an active role in Afghanistan and Pakistan by contributing to a dialogue between these parties. The EU collaborated with other members of

the international community, and they have set tighter parameters and matrices for the function and accountability of NUG in such areas of unity, public goods provision, corruption and migration (Ghiasi/European Parliament,2017:19-24).

In Afghanistan, there is an increase in the unsatisfactory ethnic situation, which this led to many violent incidents. Due to the increase of militant actors in the country, there is occurring a menace for internally displaced people who are returnees from the EU, Pakistan, Iran and other parts of the world. The EU is concerned for the internal securities of the people. Consequently, the EU launched a project named the European Union Police Mission in Afghanistan (EUPOL) in 2007. The project aimed to strengthen the internal security of Afghanistan in order to bring peace and reconciliation. According to the data, there are more than 545,000 Afghans arrived at applied for asylum-seeking to the EU between 2008-2017. In 2019, 52,500 Afghan asylum seekers registered, which is the second-highest after Syrian. The failure of the political system created several problems and challenges that are making Afghanistan an example of a fragile system. These are problems and challenges but not limited to, 1. divided loyalties and desertion, 2. mismanagement and corruption, 3. violations of human rights and 4. poor intelligence. The EU support has been focussed on the Afghan National Police through EUPOL and the project was run by the European External Action Services (EEAS). It was a quite successful project as per the statement of EEAS, in the process of dealing in criminal policing, training institutions, leadership, good governance and female policing. But this project has ended in 2016 without reaching the aim of capacity-building (Sheikh/European Parliament,2017:29-30).

The peace negotiation is essential for the people of Afghanistan. Though, the European Community has been continued its technical and financial support to Afghanistan under the umbrella of development policy. The EU is planning to send back almost 80,000 Afghani refugees to Afghanistan, their request for asylum already got rejected so an Afghan-led peace and reconciliation process would be the only solution for the EU and that was part of its strategy for Afghanistan between 2017-2020. The Afghans migration towards Europe could not stop by the previous technical and financial commitment to Afghanistan Between 2014-2017. The EU spent more than 600 million euros until 2010. The three key priorities areas are

rural development, alternatives to poppy production and health. In 2007, the EU launched EUPOL as part of the aid support to Afghanistan and the programme terminated on 31 December 2016. However, the EU has committed to engage its support through civilian policing by its MIP 2014-2020. Now, the EU wants to deal with migration issues under bilateral cooperation through the regional dimension. So, the EU and Afghanistan signed a "Joint Way Forward on Migration Issues. The bilateral document aims to work on a comprehensive framework to deal with the migration issues and facilitate the return of the rejected asylum seekers to Afghanistan. The European Union has specific Regional Programming for Asia, where South Asia is a sub-region and Afghanistan is one of the beneficiaries of the Multiannual Indicative Programme (MIP) for 2014-2020 under the EU Development Cooperation Instrument (DCI). The EU's MIP 2014-2020 is targeting to support and supplement the ANPDF through dialogue with the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan. The ANPDF 2017-2021 incorporated with EU's MIP have four development strategy priorities: 1. governance and state effectiveness, 2. social capital and nation-building, 3. economic growth and job creation, and 4. poverty reduction and social inclusion. These are the thematic priorities under ANPDF. But the EU's MIP is supporting 1. agriculture and rural development, 2. health, 3. policing and the rule of law and 4. democratisation and accountability (European Parliament, 2017:29-30). These are incorporated with ANPDF's key areas to achieve through a sustainable development process.

Overall EU has strategic objectives for the implementation of its development policy through MIP 2014-2020. Those objectives are 1. promote peace, stability and security, 2. reinforce democracy, 3. encourage economic and human development, and 4. foster the rule of law and respect for human right particularly in the context of the rights of women and children. The EU's aims to provide its intervention as per bridging of security and development to engagement in fragile Afghanistan. There is EU's development policy as the instrument under the umbrella of Agenda for Change 2030 to mitigate challenges. Besides, the EU's MIP 2014 is also focussing on cross-cutting priorities incorporation with ANPDF such as 1. gender sensitivity and human rights, 2. sustainable economic growth and creation of jobs, 3. transparency in the management of public finances and

ant-corruption, and counter-narcotics (Strand/European Parliament,2017:32-41).

The EU and Afghanistan have signed their first legal framework in 2017 as the EU-Afghanistan Cooperation Agreement on Partnership and Development (CAPD). The EU is contributing its support operation with both a military presence and helping through the government of Afghanistan to ensure both security and development in order to bring peace and stability. Before the military drawdown, 24 out of 27 Member States were involved in the International Security Assistance Force of NATO. The US leading Operation Enduring Freedom was a coalition strategy operation for counterinsurgency and counterterrorism, and separately many EU member States contributed (Dash,2015:1). Another legal framework confirms the EU's commitment towards Afghanistan's future development and a political document entitled the "Decade of Transformation" from 2015-2024. This framework aims to hold a regular dialogue on the following topics: political issues, human rights, including with rights of women and children. The development strategy focuses on the rule of law, health, rural development, education, science and technology; and action to combat corruption, money laundering, terror funding, organised crime and narcotics. The cooperation agreement also emphasises enabling the EU-Afghanistan jointly to address global challenges in order to nuclear security, non-proliferation and climate change (CAPD,2016).

The European Union's contribution is mitigating challenges in Afghanistan's security and development, which is effectively managed with its political and economic assistance and incorporation of technical and financial aid. The EU commitment towards Afghanistan expressed by Federica Mogherini summarises the EU's future commitment to Afghanistan:

The European Union has always stood by the Afghan people and will continue to do so...The Cooperation Agreement we have signed today will allow us to build on the areas that we already engage with the Afghan authorities on, such as human development, anti-corruption, state-building, and the rule of law, as well as cooperation on migration. This agreement is a partnership agreement by name and by nature. The European Union will keep working with our Afghan partners for the



stability and the sustainable development of the country, for the sake of all Afghans. (EEAS,2017)

The European Union's development strategies to Afghanistan is also focusing on gender mainstreaming for women political participation, health and literacy, exchanging of experience and best practising in order to promote gender equality as well as the promotion of the adoption of positive measure in favour of women. The policy instrument for the promotion of gender mainstreaming is empowered women and prosperous Afghanistan in the context of their involvement in decision making in order to conflict resolution (Tripathi and Ferhatovic,2017:38). Moreover, The EU regional integration programme for South Asia is also covered to support Afghanistan for active participation in SAARC. After 9/11, The EU increased its active role in South Asia through areas of trade, commerce and development aid. Due to hostility in Afghanistan and Pakistan, there cannot peaceful regional integration of South Asia (Bharti,2020a,283, 290).

#### **6.The Current EU's Engagement in Afghanistan**

On 29 May 2020, the Council of the European Union's General Secretariat of Council Delegation concluded the "Council Conclusions on Afghanistan" and stated its principled political commitment towards Afghanistan. The EU-Afghanistan Strategy reaffirms its last Council Conclusion on Afghanistan to support the people of Afghanistan through its engagement towards peace, security, stability, democracy, prosperity and self-reliance. The EU is committed to a peaceful and prosperous Afghanistan that would be free of terrorism, which is a cornerstone for the country's security and development through bringing peace and stability. After 19 years of political negotiation, it has reached an end for the settlement through leading with a peace which could bring democracy and human rights. The recent peace dialogue and political negotiations would bring stability in the region and Afghanistan is looking for the political process in order to strengthen the sovereignty, independence, territorial integrity, constitutional order and national unity of Afghanistan. The EU strategy is also focused on the slight dependency for the gradual reduction of support on the international political and financial support to Afghanistan.

The conclusion of the Council also "calls on the Taliban to trust and confidence, allowing the prompt start of intra-Afghan negotiations." The negotiations are taking place based on releasing prisoners and already a

significant number have been released. The EU is expecting the Taliban to respect the spirit and letter of the bilateral agreement with the US, which was signed in Doha on 29 February 2020. The EU is also concerned about recent global pandemic such as the COVID-19 and “it calls for an immediate humanitarian ceasefire” in order to fight this pandemic and health safety of all lives. The “Council Conclusions on Afghanistan” is given priority for the EU’s commitment to supporting with the political and financial assistance for the people of Afghanistan that are the following:

1. Supporting the Geneva Ministerial Pledging Conference.
2. Strengthening EU assistance for tackling the COVID-19 pandemic.
3. Using all instruments available in full cooperation and complementarity with the UN, NATO and regional partners, to contribute to the stabilisation of the country.
4. Supporting institutional reform and capacity-building, including in the sectors of security and defence, based on the principles of democratic governance and human rights.
5. Assisting with the reintegration of former fighters as well as their families, the victims of conflict and the most vulnerable, including through specialised child protection programmes.
6. Promoting regional cooperation, stability, peace, trade and sustainable connectivity in line with “Connecting Europe and Asia – Building blocks for an EU Strategy” as adopted by the Foreign Affairs Council in October 2018. (Council of the EU,2020)

Before this, the European Union has donated 2.7 million euros to UNICEF in support of “emergency affected children” for Afghanistan in April 2020. This fund supports access to education during the current COVID-19 pandemic for emergency affected children. It provides life-saving treatment, and especially for those kids who are affected by acute malnutrition in the remote area of Afghanistan (UNICEF Afghanistan,2020). The Covid-19 has been brought lockdown of the local economy and mainly people from marginalise and deprived section affected badly. There would be an important role of EU’s aid and foreign investment also for Afghanistan’s reconstruction (Bharti,2020b:76).

### **7. Assessment of Afghanistan's Security and Development**

After the 2014 drawdown of the military, Afghanistan has faced several challenges that have not only weakened the democratic institutions in the country but have also negatively affected the overall security and development of the country. The complex challenges that Afghanistan is facing and its inability to cope with these challenges have turned Afghanistan into a fragile state. The complexity of the system has drawn interconnected challenges those underpinned with social, political, security, humanitarian and environment due to bridge of security and conflict. The social system initially failed due to the rise of inter-ethnic grievances that helped to the creation of complex because the social satisfaction of ethnic community has been abandoned and this has been turned into the several extremist and terrorist groups in Afghanistan. The social system (states and societies) is likely 'interconnected through borders, trade, tourism, financial markets, migration, internet, environment and porous boundaries' (SIPRI, 2015:300).

These sub-domains of the social system produce the 'edges of a complex system', and this is an intricate part of defining. In the case of Afghanistan, the outcome of the inter-ethnic grievances as the 2014 election become very threatenful that turned into political violence. The political conflict causes violence across Afghanistan, and it has witnessed several horrific attacks on civilians, health security and military personnel with a chain of events in the last several years. It leads to industry shutdown and interruption of activities related to economic activities those causes result in significant economic losses.

The internal displacement of the Afghans took place due to ongoing conflict and violence in the last years, where Afghanistan is suffering environmental crisis such as the availability of limited water resources. In systems, the core values of this approach are "heightened grievances" and "more displacement", which is not only a problem for Afghanistan and it is also for the other countries or regions in the context of social and humanitarian domains. The European Union is well aware of this because of the fleet of refugees in Europe. The demonstration of Afghanistan's complexity of the relationship is resulting in instability between security and development. Systems are overlapping each other that outcome Afghanistan as a fragile state due to a fragile system. Security and development of Afghanistan are

related to domains such as humanitarian, security, development, justice, politics and environment.

In the case of Afghanistan, “problems and solutions are associated with state-building and peacebuilding”, which is related to domains of the system. The international community, alongside the EU that created both challenges and opportunities for them, which resulted in the Taliban is ready for political and peaceful dialogue. The systems approach is instrumental in the case study of Afghanistan for identifying complex problems as well as challenges. The sustainable development approaches of the UN are providing a possible solution for the fragile state, but dialogue and negotiation are essential incorporations with grievances of the Taliban. The EU and other institutions adapted both approaches to finding a possible solution to Afghanistan’s security and development challenges.

The EU has recognised the delicate security and development situation of Afghanistan, where the country is facing fragile economic challenges. The new EU strategy on Afghanistan supports peace and prosperity to address its challenges and bring stability to the life of Afghans. The EU’s strategy towards Afghanistan incorporated with 1. peace, stability and regional security- the EU is supporting and promoting an inclusive “Afghan-led and Afghan-owned peace and reconciliation process”. That is focussing on a negotiated settlement between Afghanistan and the Taliban. The security sector reform emphasis supports civilian policing and skills building and the professionalisation of Afghan police as well as develop a mechanism to fight against corruption. The EU is working with the government of Afghanistan to support its priorities of strategic policy as per peacebuilding and SDGs. 2. democracy promotion, the rule of law and human rights- the EU’s assistance is focussing on reforms in Afghanistan’s “electoral system and strengthen the integrity of the electoral process” and fight against corruption as well as the promotion of human rights concerns in respect of rights of minorities, child protection and fight against impunity and women rights. 3. Economic and human development by providing technical and financial assistance to Afghanistan in cooperation to implement SDGs.

The EU has a particular emphasis on rural economies and agriculture development in order to reinforce its role in Afghanistan to increase the contribution of the private sector and enhancing resilience. 4. Migration- the EU is working together with Afghanistan to fully implement the “Joint Way

Forward” to deal with migration issues based on the bilateral memoranda. To find out the solution to address the root causes of irregular migration and forced displacement and the EU wants to enable sustainable reintegration of returnees from Europe as per “community-based approach”. And 5. empowering women- the EU is supporting the intervention of the national action plans for the UNSC resolution, which is based on women, peace and security. The support is also focused on the implementation of national women’s empowerment legislation as well as additional measures that would “prevent, combat and criminalise violence against women” and sexual harassment as well as strengthening the role and rights of women in order to prevent and conflict resolution; and democratic participation and roles in SDGs.

These are the strategy of the European Union to deal with a fragile state such as Afghanistan, and its complex problems and challenges. The EU is mitigating those complexities through its development policies for Afghanistan under bilateral and multilateral cooperation. Currently, the EU’s Regional Programming for Afghanistan is incorporated with the Development Corporation Instrument and MIP 2014-2020 that is focused on security and development. The EU recently held a high level of political and security dialogue with Afghanistan, and they signed the EU-Afghanistan Cooperation Agreement for Partnership and Development (CAPD) in February 2017. The EU is hoping for fruitful impact through the US-Taliban peace talks that was taken place in Doha but ongoing attacks in Afghanistan, and it is raising a serious question on it by the Union. However, the EU is committed to its support for the people of Afghanistan that it keeps supporting in the time of emergency. The EU is concerned about the safety of children, and it is helping in the time of global pandemic COVID-19 with the cooperation of UNICEF.

### **8. Conclusion**

Despite the billions of dollars of development aid investment for the reconstruction of a fragile state, Afghans are still craving for security and development in Afghanistan. The recent peace agreement between the US and Afghanistan has been almost failed. The militant and terrorist attack are continuing, so there is no peace in Afghanistan. It has been resulted until now aid is the least effective development instrument in a fragile state. The European Union has not the legitimacy to directly implement and intervene

in its development policy in fragile Afghanistan. It is incorporated with the Government of Afghanistan and international organisations such as the UN and other international NGOs. There is an urgent requirement necessary to address the emerging crisis and conflicts in order to promote fundamental change. Due to the lack of underlying security, international aid by other institutions and the EU's development assistance were not very effective for developmental changes in Afghanistan. The system approaches are defining that Afghanistan's security and development has been bridge due to ongoing conflicts. It is also suggesting reconstruction and stability in a fragile state, but there is no stability and peace in Afghanistan. The EU has committed its development aid for fragile Afghanistan will continue. It is needed for the EU to make sure; there should be at least some peace and stability in order to send back asylum seekers to Afghanistan who was fleet and applied to the European States.

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