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**Who Holds the Steering Wheel in Afghanistan?
The Governor-Governed (Mis) Communication for Power, Human Rights, and Prosperity**

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The Governor-Governed (Mis)Communication for
Power, Human Rights, and Prosperity**

Hossain Ali Ramoz

Thesis
Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for
M.A. in Communication

Department of Communication,
Faculty of Arts,
University of Ottawa

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395, rue Wellington
Ottawa ON K1A 0N4
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Your file *Votre référence*
ISBN: 978-0-494-74156-6
Our file *Notre référence*
ISBN: 978-0-494-74156-6

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Abstract

This thesis examines the interrelation of the government of Afghanistan's quality and communication against a theoretical framework that draws on Bertrand Russell's (1961) *Authority and the Individual* and Niklas Luhmann's (1990) *The Political Theory in the Welfare State*. Theories of governance, communication, and participatory democracy are investigated to explore the role of media, people's political participation, citizenry, and civic activism, in good governance. The objective of this thesis is to investigate how communication influences good governance. A qualitative research design is employed, utilizing content analysis of government and non-government documents and in-depth interviews with national and international field experts. The thesis finds that effective communication can enhance the degree of responsiveness, accountability, and transparency in Afghanistan's governance system. It is argued here that effective communication between the government, external players, and the people, can improve governance quality. This thesis provides a formulation of the communication activities of the government of Afghanistan, the Afghani people, and the international community that can play a critical role in changing Afghanistan's current status as a failed state.

Dedication

I would like to dedicate this thesis to my mother, Mamlakat Najibi, who taught me patience and endurance, and to Dr. Sima Samar, who continues the brave struggle against injustices in Afghanistan.

Acknowledgement

I would like to thank my supervisor, Dr. Mahmoud Eid, for his instructions and support throughout the course of writing this thesis. I also thank my committee members, Dr. Denis Bachand and Dr. Rukhsana Ahmed, for their valuable input which enriched this thesis.

Research for this thesis was supported by the Afghan Communication Scholarship Program, funded and administered by the Open Society Institute (OSI) and the University of Ottawa. The opinions expressed herein are the author's own and do not necessarily express the views of OSI.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Preamble

A study published by United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) in January 2010, revealed a growing non-transparency and corruption in Afghanistan's governance system. The study states that miscommunication by the government, combined with a low level of awareness of the people about administrative procedures, are part of the problem.

Non-transparent administrative procedures and services of low quality also represent possible sources of dishonest conduct: two thirds of citizens stated that they do not have the necessary information to understand the administrative procedures and almost half of respondents were not satisfied with the treatment received by civil servants.

(UNODC, 2010:10)

Prior to the UNODC research, another national poll conducted jointly by the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), American Broadcasting Company (ABC), and ARD¹, published on February 9, 2009, also shows similar results. For example, it argues that half of the poll says that "corruption among government officials or the police have increased in the last year. Sixty-three percent now say corruption is a big issue in their area, compared with 45% 12 months ago" (BBC Press Office, 2009: para. 5).

¹ ARD: Arbeitsgemeinschaft der öffentlich-rechtlichen Rundfunkanstalten der Bundesrepublik Deutschland [Consortium of public-law broadcasting institutions of the Federal Republic of Germany] is a joint organization of Germany's regional public-service broadcasters.

As reflected in the studies mentioned so far, it is now assumed that after almost nine years of effort by national and international actors to implement good governance and democracy in Afghanistan, transparency and effectiveness still lag in the country's governance system. The voice of the people remains unheard in decision-making because of the absence of reciprocal communication between the people, the international community, and the Afghanistan government. There are consequences when a government stops communicating through the media and does not participate in public debates. When the opinions of those governed are ignored, corruption and poor governance prevail, as the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) reports:

Corruption flourishes in the silence. An open and frank debate is a formidable way to nurture antibodies to fight corruption. Traditional opinion leaders, such as tribal elders and mullahs, regularly address corruption-related issues but not everywhere: in the South, for example, 52% of respondents reported that community leaders rarely or never address corruption publicly. Moreover, 43% of the population reported that the media deal with corruption rarely or never.

(2010:10)

The international community took over power from the Taliban in 2002 and promised freedom of expression, democracy, human rights, and good governance. As a result, the number of Afghani visual, audio and printed media (many of them funded by the international community) increased dramatically, and the fundamental principles of freedom of expression and human rights were enshrined in the constitution according to *Hashte Sobh Daily* ("Editorial", 2009). Following democratic elections, a new government was installed, international aid flew in, and a "dependent state" (Suhrke, 2008: 643) with a donor-proposed model of good governance started to manage social, economic and cultural life. However, UNODC assumes that corruption, coupled with the

absence of a vibrant public sphere have reversed the anticipated outcomes of nine years of international aid. As a result, the government faces a mounting rejection by its people of public dishonesty, unemployment, and lack of safety (UNODC, 2010).

A precarious approach by the government toward the main pillars of the Afghanistan development strategies and the core elements of good governance have degraded the quality of the governance even more. For instance, Afghanistan's constitution commits to the promotion of freedom of expression. However, according to the BBC News ("Afghan blasphemy death sentence", 2008: para. 5), a journalist was sentenced to death by the judiciary "after downloading materials from the internet relating the role of women in Islamic societies" (2008: 1). Such contradictions between policy and practice, on top of generally poor government public relations, disengage the public even further. Corruption and lack of accountability thrive.

The presidential elections of 2009 show the degree of mismanagement and poor governance on the part of the government of Afghanistan and the lack of coordination of the international community. The United Nations Assistance Mission Afghanistan (UNAMA) is an influential partner body to Afghanistan's government in leading the political and reconstruction processes. In its report to the United Nations General Assembly Security Council (2010) states that:

It is the weaknesses in the state-building process so far, including the ongoing culture of impunity, the still inadequate security forces, corruption and the insufficient pace of institution-building that undermined the electoral process.

(2010: 11)

UNODC (2010) also comments on the lack of public debate about corruption, combined with insufficient media scrutiny. A culture of impunity thrives and the rule of law is undermined.

In many countries, particularly where the rule of law is weak, national media acts as a watchdog on good governance. This does not seem to be happening in Afghanistan. Country-wide, 43% of city dwellers say that the media rarely addresses corruption issues. In the South, two thirds indicated that corruption is seldom, or never, in the news. Considering that corruption is the greatest public concern, there is surprisingly little public debate about it: a circumstance that the vast majority of those surveyed consider as a serious impediment to remedial action.

(UNODC, 2010: 5)

Research Problem and Objectives

In a 2007 study, Coffey International Development states that communication enhances the quality of good governance when “communication, information dissemination and dialogue are identified as key components of governance and a positive correlation between communication and good governance is assumed” (2007: 2). Communication, according to the same study, positively interacts with good governance by promoting capability, responsiveness, and accountability. Good governance and an engaged citizenship become enhanced when the people feel their voices are being heard. Engaging people and stakeholders may slow down some of the decision-making process, but its rewards may come with the quality of the resulting decision. When people are involved in the early stages of policy formulation it enhances the possibility of more effective, efficient, and sometimes faster, decision-making (Downing & Hanf, 1983; Susskind & Cruikshank, 1987; Weidner, 1995).

The purpose of this study is to investigate how effective communication can interrelate with good governance in Afghanistan. The thesis looks into the public relations practices of the Afghani government to identify how information is disseminated. It examines the role media play in ensuring that the voices of the people are heard. It examines the way people's priorities are reflected in a vibrant civil society and if their voices were part of the policy development process from its initial formulation.

This research utilizes an extensive qualitative content analysis of the relevant institutional documents as well as in-depth interviews with field experts. It concludes that poor accountability, non-transparency, and absence of effective communication have undermined the professionalism and effectiveness of Afghanistan's government. For example, the voice of the Afghani people remains to be heard in the country's decision-making and policy building processes. No effective public-relations strategy is in place to reach out the general public in a professional and proactive manner. The research indicates miscommunication between the Afghanistan government and the international community. It shows the detrimental effect on governance of poor interaction between civil society and government. Furthermore, non-governmental organizations, funded by external sources for service delivery, have been mistakenly understood as civil society, and therefore, constructive civic debates on issues and policies do not take place.

The research also shows that miscommunication has hindered the application of a major pillar of the Afghanistan National Development Strategy (ANDS), which is good governance. This has reduced Afghanistan's political and managerial life to a state where corruption, on-going conflict and insecurity, growing poverty, underdevelopment, disillusionment of the Afghani people and international actors, absence of rule of law,

and the violation of people's basic rights and essential freedoms prevail. The international coalition forces and Afghani army have not won the war against insurgency and the people's personal security remains jeopardized.

In the absence of a vibrant civil society, the constructive discussions to cause "rational critical" (Calhoun, 1992: 9) debates do not exist. This makes it difficult to address the pressing national issues and to reinforce a reform agenda which is people centered. As UNODC (2010) implies, what is required to strengthen the integrity of the Afghanistan government is the increased engagement of civil society:

The media, civil society and educators must become more engaged in anticorruption campaigns to help change a culture of corruption into an environment of integrity. Religious and tribal leaders—who are the most respected members of society—need to spread the word.

(2010: 6)

Moreover, Afghanistan's government does not provide sufficient public information to civil society and media, discouraging media from focusing the public issues. Some outlets are driven by commercial pressures and tend to ignore the public broadcasting role to democratize and to raise public awareness. In the absence of a clear public relations approach, people are left without appropriate information concerning their government's managerial and political performance. The citizens' awareness is important in combating corruption, since uninformed citizens are less able to hold their government accountable, or demand more justice and less corruption.

When it comes to policy implementation in the areas of communication, the government commits to more than it has actually delivered. For example, the five year strategy of Afghanistan Ministry of Communication, Information and Technology (2008)

implies the establishment of a strong and well-functioning Communications Sector to benefit the citizens and the economy of Afghanistan to fulfill the following objectives: (1) Empower the government to execute its duties; (2) Improve quality of life and national unity; (3) Drive economic development; (4) Enhance national and civil security; and (5) Endorse transparency and accountability. The strategy also promises expanding the use of electronic governance which potentially leads to more transparency and efficiency in governance overall.

On the whole, the research proposes that the government needs to address the communication policies which are already committed to in ANDS in order to improve good governance, which is one of its central pillars. For instance, for the enhancement of transparency, responsiveness, and accountability, it is recommended that the government take three steps: promote freedom of expression, provide an environment that empowers free media and civil society, and launch e-governance.

Thesis Overview

This thesis comprises five sequential chapters: introduction, literature review, design and methodology, findings and analysis, and conclusion.

The next chapter, the literature review, argues that theories of good governance can highlight the importance of effective communication in the enhancement of accountability, transparency, and responsiveness. Concepts of communication, miscommunication, governance (especially good governance), public relations, media, transparency, accountability, corruption, civil society, public opinion, and democracy are investigated in the scholarly sources and defined. In terms of governance, the seminal

work is Bertrand Russell's *Individual Social Ethics* (1961) in which he assumes that in a society the individual's excellence should be preferable to administrative excellence. He asserts that an administration is a means to ensure the prosperity and welfare for each individual. In this work, Russell argues that governments are not the only vehicle through which a society attains prosperity and appropriate levels of welfare. It is through the efforts of each individual, supported by their government, that excellence and a good life might be attained. The second epistemological root is found in Luhmann's *Political Theory in the Welfare State* (1990) which identifies "political inclusion" (1990: 34) as an important factor in the formation of a welfare state. For Luhmann, inclusion encompasses the entire population to perform as a single functioning system. A democratic system gets its legitimacy from active participation of the people. Politicians attain their public offices and win elections only when they receive the approval of the people who have made their wishes known through the ballot boxes. The democratic process obliges politicians to meet the needs of the people and requires them to address the people's priorities. This has the potential to expand the welfare of the population in a steady manner. Based on Luhmann's principle of inclusion, communication is necessary when people try to attract political attention concerning their demands and how they articulate their demands by such actions as demonstrating or voting, for example.

The third chapter addresses the research methodology and design and its analytical study tests the central question of the thesis. The themes flowing from this central question, as well as from the extensive scholarly reviews, are further investigated through in-depth interviews and analysis of documents and reports from national and international institutions. The chapter describes the design of the research as qualitative,

consisting of two main methods of data collection: in-depth interviews and review of institutional documents. The thesis follows a two-step linear investigation of governance and communication in Afghanistan. The chapter also explains how in-depth interviews were conducted with senior employees in the Afghani government, Afghani civil society activists, and foreign activists who have field experience in Afghanistan.

Chapter 4 provides qualitative analysis of the empirical data. Both, the in-depth interviews and institutional documents are analyzed using qualitative methods. The chapter concludes with the major findings of the empirical data. Chapter 5 is the conclusion. It begins with a description of the significant findings of the thesis. It also provides a brief overview of the thesis including an explanation of the literature review and methodology. The limitations and implication of the thesis are discussed at the end of this chapter.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

In the words of one practitioner: 'Democracy will live where there is free communication of dependable information.' This problem raises anew a question posed by Aristotle centuries ago: 'The environment is complex and man's political capacity is simple. Can a bridge be built between them?' Certainly, the foundation stones of Aristotle's bridge must be informative, candid, continuous reporting by government and more accessible channels to government for all citizens, not just those with an 'in'.

(Cutlip & Center, 1958: 351)

This chapter examines how communication has influenced accountability, transparency, and responsiveness of Afghanistan's governance between the years 2002 to 2009. Based on an analysis of scholarly literature and a study of the reports of credible national and international organizations, this chapter describes theories of good governance and communication, and highlights the importance of communication in relation to good governance. The literature review presents an overview of communication, public relations, public opinion, media, good governance, democracy, civil society, and people participation. The epistemological roots of this chapter are found in Bertrand Russell's *Individual and Social Ethics* (1961), and Niklas Luhmann's *Political Theory in the Welfare State* (1990).

Epistemology: Russell and Luhmann

In a 1948 broadcast for the BBC, *Individual and Social Ethics*, which was later published, Bertrand Russell implies that prosperity of individuals is the ultimate goal for a society (1961). He states that an administration is a means to ensure prosperity for the individuals who comprise that society. Russell stresses the importance of the individual's initiative in driving society toward progress, saying that:

Administration of political and economical and social organizations in a society is not an end in itself, but a mean to bring a good life to the individuals who compose it. It is in the individuals, not in the whole, that ultimate value is to be sought. A good society is a mean to a good life for those who compose it, not something having a separate kind of excellence on its own accounts.

(Russell, 1961: 361)

For Russell, a government is not an end in itself, but the means by which a society attains its prosperity. He assumes that progress is result of individual excellence and that a good society is one where individual accomplishment is not interfered with by government. Russell opposes the idea a state is superior to the individuals who live within it. He disagrees with assumptions that deny an administration's commitment to serve as the means of securing the welfare of its citizens. He argues that "the State is an abstraction; it does not feel pressure or pain, it has no hopes or fears, and what we think of as its purposes are really the purposes of individuals who direct it" (1961: 361).

Russell is not the first to argue this point. Long ago Aristotle (2003), proposed that a true form of government is one that addresses the common interest, no matter how few or how many people actually do the governing. A pro-public government is one that

seeks to find appropriate approaches to govern based on the principle that government is not an end in itself, but a means to serve the public interest.

The second epistemological root is traced in Luhmann's *Political Theory in the Welfare State* (1990). In this theory, he implies that the realization of the principal of political inclusion directs the society toward the formation of a welfare state. For Luhmann political inclusion brings improvement in the minimal standards of well being in a steady and progressive manner and is able to address any new problems as they arise. By inclusion, Luhmann means "encompassing of the entire population in the performances of the individual function systems" (1990: 34). The active participation of people in a democracy coupled with the need of politicians to win the approval of the population to attain and maintain their office requires them to address the people's interests, to propose improvements, and to work with them bring an end to their problems. This approach has the potential to expand the population's welfare in a steady manner. According to Luhmann, people receive the political attention they demand, assuming they are able to communicate what they want and that they will be heard. In this way he links the action of politics to the process of communication. In particular, media shift the role of the public from an invisible to a more visible one, and by highlighting the importance of public opinion, they play an important role in communicating the public's voice within a government and opposition structure (Luhmann, 1990).

Based on Luhmann's theory, contemporary political systems are structured "on the threefold differentiation of politics, administration and public where authority and command hierarchies can be completely integrated, especially in the domain of

administration” (1990: 47). Luhmann affirms the role of internal communication in “the threefold differentiation” (1990: 47) by stating:

Progress lies in a considerable expansion of the type of communication, in a greater dependence on internal communication and, accordingly, in a more rigorous differentiation of subsystems within the political system that, with increasing reciprocal interdependence, view and treat one another as environment so that they can simplify and filter the communication process.

(1990: 47)

In short, the application of the two above-mentioned theories to this thesis commonly describes that in order to serve the people’s common interest governments have to provide for public participation in decision-making. Both Russell’s and Luhmann’s theories help this thesis to discuss how a pro-welfare and pro-people administration, when augmented with effective communication within the administration and with the people, and through other relevant institutions, can enhance the quality of governance.

Overview of the Interrelation of Governance and Communication

The entire discussion of this thesis is placed in a framework that assumes communication’s role as pivotal for good governance. Discussing good governance reveals various findings. These include: how communication serves the interests of both the government and the people; how the engagement of civil society in policy building is formed; and why dialogue and interaction enhances transparency, accountability, and the degree of participation by the people. The researcher uses the term *good governance* in this thesis because, according to Suhrke (2008), Afghanistan is a dependent state. Afghanistan receives its financial and managerial strengths from the UN, the World

Bank, and other external donors for whom good governance is seen as the benchmark for successful management in post-conflict countries. Moreover, the researcher wants to address the version of governance which is a reality in today's Afghanistan.

Governance and Good Governance

Among the different definitions for the term *governance* Plumptre (1999) defines it as the context for safeguarding the people's liberties in the way it implements the rule of law within a constitutional framework. He states that:

Governance is concerned with how power is exercised among the different sectors or interests in society such that traditional freedoms may be enjoyed, commerce may occur, the arts and culture may flourish. That is, governance is important in itself in that it provides the context for things which, as history demonstrates, people value enormously: personal liberty and freedom of assembly, whether for social, commercial, religious or other purposes, within some kind of overall social framework such as the rule of law and a constitution.

(1990: 8-9)

Accordingly, government is defined as the "traditions and institutions by which the authority in a country is exercised for a common good" (Kauffmann, 2005: 42). These traditions and institutions exist not only to manage resources effectively in order to ensure the citizens' will, but also to receive scrutiny from political monitors to ensure that sound policies are actually being delivered (Kauffmann, 2005). When a government's activities are being monitored by its citizens it is an indication that the common good is being safeguarded in a society.

Scholars such as Back and Hadenius (2008) believe that a state, in addition to ensuring order and justice, should achieve the ideals of social peace and efficiency in accordance with the citizens' wishes and the principles of democracy:

In order to guarantee order, social peace, justice, and efficiency, society needs a functioning state. We need a state that works well—which does what it does in the right way, administratively speaking. But we also want a state that does the right things. By the latter we normally mean that the state conducts activities in accordance with the wishes of the citizenry. And the best way to ascertain the wishes of the citizenry is to apply the methods of political democracy. The ideal state, then, both functions well in an administrative sense and are democratic.

(2008: 7)

Roy and Prasad (2007) suggest additional roles and authorities for governments, a comprehensive sets of roles that include supporting the welfare, rights and interests of its constituents, the creation and enforcement of policies and laws, the administration and deliverance of programs and services, the management of natural, social and cultural resources, and negotiation with other groups.

The western donors and development agencies view governments not only as an institution, but they also want to include mechanisms and processes through which citizens and groups can articulate their interests, exercise their rights, meet their obligations, and mediate their differences in defining a government (United Nations Development Program, 1997). That is how the term good governance was introduced by the donor agencies to define government as an institution that must prove its accountability and responsiveness and should establish mutual relationships and dialogue with media, civil society, parliament, and the judiciary (Department for International

Development, 2006). Coffey International Development (2007) identifies the United Kingdom's DFID requirements for good government as:

1) state capability—the extent to which leaders and governments are able to get things done; 2) responsiveness—whether public policies and institutions, respond to the needs of citizens and uphold their rights; 3) accountability—the ability of citizens, civil society and the private sector, to scrutinize public institutions and governments, and hold them to account.

(2007: 3)

Scholars such as Plumptre and Graham (1999) have developed a comprehensive list of factors which constitute good governance. This list includes such factors as: constitutional legitimacy, democratic elections, respect for human rights, rule of law, political openness, predictability and stability of laws, tolerance, equity, public participation, public expenditures directed to public purposes, judicial independence, transparency, absence of corruption, active independent media, freedom of information, administrative competence, administrative neutrality, merit-based public service, and accountability to public interests on issues of public concern. But the notion of citizenry at the heart of this long list implies that Plumptre and Graham look at good governance from the perspective of the citizens' role in bringing about social and economic outcomes. They believe that "good governance might be defined as a mode or model of governance that leads to social and economic results sought by citizens" (1999: 8).

Citizens' views are assumed to play a central role in establishing an active environment of people participation, effective communication, and dialogue with policy makers and executives. Bourgault (cited in Corkery, 1999) assumes the role of citizens' voice to have central importance when listing the bases of good governance. Bourgault's

four-part list includes: (1) perception of the legitimacy of power of the public authority, (2) citizens at the centre of decision-makers' concerns, (3) a "society-centered program" (173) based on listening to citizens, and (4) rapid adaptability of public administration to citizens' needs in dispensing public funds. In the absence of such reciprocal communication between state and people, the quality of governance is diminished due to citizens' absence in decision-making, as Cutlip and Center (1958) emphasize: "The gulf between citizen and his (*sic*) government tends to deepen as decision-making moves away from him (*sic*). Centralization and concentration of government produces a vitiating sense of remoteness" (1958: 350).

The roles and effects of good governance are not undisputed. There are scholars and organizations that see the efficiency component of good governance as controversial and understand it as a means whereby donor agencies can become more prescriptive towards recipient countries. Munshi and Abraham (2004) state that:

With the end of the cold war the term 'good governance' came into circulation, which signified prescriptions by donor agencies for crying out economic and political reforms by recipient countries. These prescriptions were presented by international donor agencies such as the World Bank and the IMF as 'conditionalities' and were expected to be met with compliance. They have proved controversial.

(2004: 17)

In the same trend, there are also objections against using good governance as a precondition for aid or imposition of ideological and political order. Good governance will be limited if it is declined as a precondition of aid and donor assistance.

Bandyopadhyay (1996) objects strongly to the way multilateral and bilateral aid agencies have used the term good governance as a precondition of reform. Similarly, Guhan

(1998) criticizes the approach of the World Bank on the issue of governance, pointing out that neutrality is not undermined if governance is defined as the exercise of the political power to manage a nation's affairs. He says that it is impossible to suggest a one-size solution will fit all factors and priorities in bringing about good governance for all countries. Guttal (2005) assumes the imposition of the idea of good governance to be neo-liberal political order, debilitating the national capacities of the post-conflict countries, and causing them to remain in a continuing condition of state failure.

In addition to the external donors' contribution and influence, promotion of good governance requires the support of internal actors so the political participation of the citizens is ensured and the relevant institutions' monitoring authority to watch the government is thereby legalized. Among the internal actors, the roles of state and the political parties are essential to underpin good governance with political will and administrative competence. Both political will and administrative competence are needed for ensuring good governance (Myrdal, 1968). A government which fails in showing a political will to commit responsiveness and accountability to the citizens cannot succeed in delivering good governance, and will, therefore, be unable to serve the common interest or to bring about the welfare of society. Gupta (1996) takes up the same understanding when writing that "the crisis of governance is by large written with the ink of political failure" (1996: 41).

(Mis)Communication: Social Cooperation or Social Distortion

Rosengren defines communication as “our shared knowledge” (2000: 1). He implies that communication can occur between and within individuals, groups, organizations, social classes, nations, countries. For Rosengren, communication can be verbal and non-verbal, while various media are used to transmit that communication using materials such as wood and paper, and delivery systems such as radio, TV, and digital transmission. Today, communication has broader meaning beyond media channels, as Coffey International Development (2007) states, “communication is the means by which issues are diffused through society, for example through media channels, and the means by which the public participate as change agents through the articulation and delivery of communication messages”(2007: 5). Active debates on issues among the people, civil society’s critique of government, parliamentary debates, e-governance, public opinion studies, government’s public relations and the dissemination of its activities, election campaigns and debates, etc., can all function as the means to encourage public participation. They achieve this through the delivery of communication messages between state, people, and other societal subsystems such as economic society, and civil society.

Miscommunication occurs when communication fails:

Habermas identifies three broad types of communication failure. These failures take place across multiple dimensions of linguistic and social interaction, and they result from the following social causes: everyday communicative errors, misunderstandings, and confusions; systematically distorted communication; and colonization of the lifeworld.

(Hove, 2007: 1)

What is more relevant to this research is the systematic distortion type of miscommunication which can occur as a result of “failed social interactions” (Hove, 2007: 3).

The Interrelation: Communication and Good Governance

Communication between the state and its environment (people, civil society, and private sectors) is an inevitable phenomenon. According to Luhmann (1990) the state is one of the functioning systems inside the society and it is, therefore, subject to the unavoidable inter-communication forces that happen alongside such other subsystems as religion, family life, education system, etc. Furthermore, Luhmann asserts the continuity of the need for communication between the state and the people in describing the never-ending demands of people in a democratic environment, as he states that

The realization of the democracy meant the end of the theory of the limited state goal. The constantly expanding inclusion of the needs and interests of the population in the domain of possible political themes resulted from this. Since politicians have to win the approval of the population to attain office, it is advisable for them to address its interests, to propose improvements and to point out problems.

(Luhmann, 1990: 36)

When a government is set in a communicative relationship, the political power acts its facilitating role to deliver content that speaks to the equality and freedoms of the people. Such communicative relationship makes it clear that equality and freedom could not exist outside the exercise of political power. Or according to Bauman (2001), when state and

people are set in dialogical and cooperative relationships in governance, they are empowering each other and ruling together successfully.

Communication enhances the quality of governance by including people in discussions of the daily issues and by causing transparency in a government's activities. Coffey International Development's 2007 study identifies the pillars of good governance as capability, accountability, and responsiveness, and suggests that these are strengthened when information is exchanged within the societal subsystems that Luhmann identifies (religion, state, political parties, family, etc.) and when "they focus on the need for the full participation of citizens and civil society actors in governance and are predicated on the effective flow of information and dialogue between citizen, governments and other actors" (1990: 2). The same study affirms that "communication, information dissemination and dialogue are identified as key components of governance and a positive correlation between communication and good governance is assumed" (1990: 2).

The interdependence of institutions and individuals in today's political environment has changed the conventional top-to-bottom political authority structure. Now it is assumed that "political authority is no longer associated with relations of subordination and one-way control only, but also with a set of flatly operating networks of political communication, where institutions and individuals are interlocked in multiple, reciprocal relations of autonomy and dependence" (Bang, 2003: 9). This makes the role of civil society and the media prominent in monitoring and promoting transparency, reducing corruption, and delivering better services. Moreover, it also enriches the level of expertise and contributions that governments can obtain from the society in a dialogical interaction. This idea, reinforced by a study of Overseas Development Institute (2006),

shows that in many countries good governance has enhanced overall development and economic growth, including improvement in investment, literacy rate inclination, alleviation of corruption, and effective service delivery.

As mentioned before, communication, in addition to its monitoring role, can also build the people's capacity. For instance, through effective communication people can gain awareness of issues and the ability to participate in public affairs with more knowledge and with a greater sense of responsibility. Dakroury, Eid, and Kamalipour (2009) expand on the role of communication in promoting people's access to basic rights by stating that "recognizing, implementing, and building on communication rights will create 'enabling environment' in which structural, political, economic, and cultural obstacles can be identified in order to take appropriate action to improve the lives of people in different communities" (2009: 146). The authors also imply that in an environment of unfettered access and free flow of information, all the segments of society can participate in a fair, just and collective way of solving issues (2009).

According to Wilson and Kitty (2007), exchange of information and dialogue on social, political, and economic issues bring about the existence of a public sphere that acts as the heart of good governance. Such a public sphere enables a multilateral exchange of information and debates at the different layers of the society—including state, people, civil society, and political parties—that ultimately can lead to the production of sound policies.

Any concept of good governance must also include the existence of an active public sphere in which social, political and economic issues can be openly debated, consensus reached or disagreements managed, and genuine social participation and political responsibility established. This dynamic, ongoing process puts information exchange and multiple

communication flows at the heart of the challenge of establishing and maintaining good governance, for governments and citizens alike.

(Wilson & Kitty, 2007: 11)

Communication between a state and its citizens should be objective, two-way, and effective, since a government's decision-making improves with input from the people. If citizens start to monitor their government, the government's performance will improve in making decisions and in creating sound policies. Similarly, political parties need to be watched by citizens to ensure they produce better analysis of their opinions and their issues. Other institutions such as the legislative and judiciary will also be more productive once people make them accountable for any wrongdoings. Dissemination of information itself will not bring about governance quality improvement unless the people's views are collected and their contributions analyzed according to relevant policies and decisions. "In most government programs the emphasis is on disseminating information. Less attention is given to opinion analysis and policy making" (Cutlip & Center, 1958: 363). Eid (2008) has also noticed that communication is related to the process of government decision-making in these two important areas: "political decision-making at the governmental level, and news-writing decision-making within the media" (2008: 19). However, he suggests that the main focus should be given to the latter.

Communication improves governance with certain significant tools: media, civic activism, and electronic governance. These tools raise the capability, accountability, and responsiveness of governments. For instance, communication in the form of civic-activism, by promoting the level of interactions between civil society and by raising the citizens' awareness, result in increased government transparency.

The Role of Media in Good Governance

Media, in particular independent and free media, are a cornerstone of communication and can play a direct and positive role to improve the quality of a government. Akhtan, Malla, and Gregson (2000) argue that the promotion of good governance is one of the central roles played by an independent media. Norris (2007) identifies three key roles that media play in the promotion of democracy and good governance: “watch-dog over the abuse of power (promoting accountability and transparency), as a civic forum for political debate (facilitating informed electoral choices), and as an agenda-setter for policymakers (strengthening government responsiveness to social problems)” (2007: 68). Tharor (2005) believes that the relationship between free media and good governance is so integral and tangible that one cannot survive without the existence of the other, but together they can be used as an approach for nation building.

Also, the media play an essential role in raising public awareness and in encouraging responsible citizens to contribute to the building of effective policies and the making of sound decisions. Dakroury (2009) says that “the mass media are one of the key players in raising public awareness of the importance of the right to communicate as a social value and, at the same time, as a channel in which to exercise it” (2009: 173). According to Sen (1999), media through an independent press, assist in strengthening the essentials of a democracy: freedom of expression, thought, and consciousness. These democratic basics have the potential to raise the level of a government’s accountability in the eyes of a pluralistic society.

It is assumed that the role of media has not been shallow in changing societies for the better. Media have played an important role in communicating the ways in which citizens have managed to change the power relationships with their governments. For instance, in their 2004 work, Bardoel and D'Haenens state that this power has in fact shifted and is no longer in the hands of the sender but the receiver. The power shift they describe is one that disrupts the typical two-way fight for public attention between government and commerce, by changing the dynamic with the introduction of the voice of the people, especially with the advent of new media.

Aid agencies are very aware of the importance of media in facilitating good governance and democratization. They have allocated specific assistance to support independent media in aid-recipient countries. Kumar (2006) believes that the United States and European countries have been providing assistance to build and to strengthen the independent media. The recipient countries have, for the most part, been societies in transition or in post-conflict status during the past two decades. The purpose of such assistance is to promote democratization by facilitating the free flow of information, transparency, accountability, and economic growth.

Some scholars believe that, in the meantime, media have a role in the delivery of awareness, in raising accountability, and in promoting responsiveness among the citizens. They also assert that there is a need to make media institutions accountable in order that they deliver a professional service. Otherwise, media's role may lack professionalism and lead to crisis. Evidence of mass media involvement in exacerbating crisis is so widespread that "in many nations, political leaders and government officials have

periodically denounced the press and electronic media for their alleged roles in creating conflict” (Arno, 1984: 3). According to Bardoel (2001, cited in Bardoel & D'Haenens, 2004), to ensure media accountability, media should undergo: (a) political accountability, through formal regulation of the structure and function broadcasting companies and newspapers; (b) market accountability; (c) public accountability, referring to the media’s assignment of maintaining more direct relationships with citizens; and (d) professional accountability.

Communication Encounters Corruption: Agenda for Transparency and Reform

According to Coffey International (2007), communication strategies challenge corruption and promote transparency in government systems by encouraging civic activism, an increased sense of responsibility within the media and an increased use of e-governance. Absence of effective communication tools can lead to a decline in public interest and can undermine transparency and accountability. Transparency International (2005) assumes corruption to be the personal misuse of a delegated power. Corruption thrives in the absence of transparency and rule of law.

It is important to mention that corruption does not limit itself only to governments but can also occur among non-government organizations when external donations are used for personal interests or when money is assigned to unimportant projects with less oversight. Scholars such as Della Porta and Vannucci (1997) make the link between corruption and the overall reduction of efficiency as valuable resources are squandered.

The World Bank Monograph (2007) addresses the effects of corrupt governments on economic growth, arguing that good governance plays an essential role in building sound policies because efficient markets and economic development require predictability and accountability in government policy development and in its administrative affairs. In short, economic growth does not occur in the absence of efficiency, predictability, and transparency.

Communication's contribution to the accountability and responsiveness of governments is based on the role that communications play in increasing transparency. Transparency is thought to be pivotal in promoting the integrity of governance. The effect of the World Bank's request that member states show more transparency and accountability is claimed to have actually lessened corruption. The World Bank has asked member states to apply the principles of good governance, characterized by professional administration, transparency of processes, accountability of executive actions, and civil society's vibrant contributions to public sector (World Bank, 1994).

Good governance should verify the accountability of governments to those they govern, should promote the rule of law, and must introduce political systems that allow for popular participation and communication during the decision-making processes. It is assumed that the effective implementation of institutional reforms and the realization of good governance are essential in building up public and investor confidence, in order to ensure equitable distribution of the benefits of growth, and the reduction of poverty (Kiriti, 2005). Without equitable distribution of the benefits and promotion of good governance poverty will not be alleviated and economic growth will not be achieved.

The fight against corruption requires a collective and multifaceted effort involving such credible entities as an autonomous anti-corruption authority, an accountable parliament, watchful civil society organizations, and a responsible media. Such collective action would result in the emergence of an informed and responsible public sphere that would eventually build itself into a sizeable obstacle that would challenge corrupt individuals and their activities (Zafarullah and Siddiquee, 2001). The role of public opinion is very significant in combating corruption, especially when, according to Lewis (1996, cited in Roy and Prasad, 2007), it is augmented with awareness raising and active participation in decision-making.

A democratic state, in the presence of a strong parliament that respects the voice of the people, makes the executive accountable and ensures transparency. An active parliament is an important institution in a democracy when it holds meaningful debates on issues and legislation, and makes extensive use of media and communications. But Suhrke (2008) sees no hope in restraining the executive unless the parliament has sufficient authority and holds objective debates. He writes that “a parliament without the power of the purse was destined to remain more a forum for debate than an instrument for channeling popular demands into national-level decisions and for holding the executive branch accountable” (2008: 644).

The voice of the people is important in keeping pressure on the government to implement its due reforms, specifically, in fighting corruption in frequently-failed states, in post-conflict governments, or in developing countries. Polidano (2001) concludes that most reforms in government fail because they never pass the implementation phase.

Scholars identify two approaches to fighting corruption. Caiden (1991) favors using existing structures as far as possible, while Wilenski (1986) argues that a much more interventionist approach is needed, one with a reform agenda and a team in place to actually implement it.

Effective reform requires more than documents: It calls for honest and actual implementation. To tackle corruption and promote transparency, a reform agenda needs to give priority to public opinion and should be supported by an active civil society.

Communication: Democracy and Political Participation

There are controversial notions concerning the ways in which good governance is empowered in a democratic environment. For some scholars, such as R. Brown (2003), democratic governance is increasingly perceived by governments around the world as a precondition for sustainable peace and development. Other scholars state that even in authoritarian governments performance has improved, despite the absence of control from below, due in part to a satisfactory measure of one-way communication from above:

At the opposite end—in an authoritarian setting—a satisfactory measure of direction and review from above can at times be accomplished, especially if the state is able to draw on a flourishing resource base and to take harsh measures against low performance.

(Back & Hadenius, 2008: 17)

A good example can be the monarchies of Middle East which with access to profitable oil resources, have established well-functioning administrations, though repressive and undemocratic (Bellin 2004; Herb 1999; Ross 2001).

For Plumptre and Graham (1999), achieving desirable conditions for a government is not limited to the technocratic capacity of government ministries, but to such other facets as the level of a government's relation to its citizens, the vibrancy of the civil society, and the existence of those sectors in the society that interact and deal with issues of public concern. For Plumptre and Graham democracy is an end for the purpose of governance. No matter how strong and capable a government is, when democratic norms are not in place and citizens are not able to enjoy their freedoms and rights, the public interest remains disregarded.

When the control from below exists and essential democratic institutions are established, communication flows from the bottom to the top and the role of democracy becomes supportive and reinforces the capacity of the government. Back and Hadenius (2008) believe that control from below needs democratic institutions and sufficient societal resources. They describe how democracy strengthens administrative capacity, stating that, "looking at two resource measures, press circulation and electoral participation, we find that these, combined with democracy, enhance state administrative capacity" (2008: 1).

The political inclusion of people and the creation of an environment of listening to the wishes of the citizenry are an essential component of any democracy. The concurrence of democracy, based on listening and respecting the wishes of its citizens, with a well-functioning administration, can guarantee order, social peace and justice. As Back and Hedenius state, "the best way to ascertain the wishes of the citizenry is to apply the methods of political democracy. The ideal state, then, both functions well in an administrative sense and is democratic" (2008: 1).

Back and Hadenius believe that at the outset of a democratization process, where there is an absence of a free press and a poor political participation, lack of democratic institutions, and the dominant influence of government over resources and electoral processes, administrative competence falls accordingly (2008). However, Diamond (1999) in addressing the concerns of the period of transition to democratization, assumes that the role of political elites is critical in advancing any democratic transition through developing a pattern or building models of a culture of moderation, accommodation, cooperation, and bargaining, among political elites.

In contrast, there are also exceptional examples that undermine democratization's role in determining the apparatus required for combating corruption. For example, Hariss and White (1996) imply that political corruption can be a significant element within industrialized and democratic societies. The same scholars assume that when corruption is widespread it may not produce economic growth. As an example, they explain that "the process of democratization in China, Latin America, the Philippines and Thailand since the beginning of the 1980s has 'actually increased sources and scales of corruption without strengthening countervailing political and institutional capacity'" (1996: 3).

Communication in the form of political participation secures the legitimacy of democratic governance. Without public participation, democracy loses legitimacy since its legitimacy is achieved only through people's political inclusion. This component is more important to identify when the democracies in developing countries face crises of popular legitimacy. According to Liberatore (n.d.), democracy does not mean legitimacy. However, a non-legitimate democracy undermines the true participation of people in policy making and can cause a deficit which further hinders the establishment of a

capable government. Democratic legitimacy can have different effects on the quality of governance according to different scholars. For example, for critics such as Eriksen (2001), democratic legitimacy tends towards efficiency rather than accountability.

It is assumed that democratic governance is competent only when it is genuinely grown out of the people's participation in the decision-making process. Enterline (2008) says that an imposed democracy is fragile and will not survive because its institutional legitimacy is undermined by the presence of foreign sources of intervention. In addition, he says that an imposed democratic government survives only in relation to its ability to manage ethnic and religious divisions.

Civil wars—and in particular terrorism—can hamper democratic participation and the effectiveness of governance considerably. Wars and conflicts shut down rational communication and violate the political rights of citizens by opening the door to violence and coercion. McEldowney (2005) believes that political security and democratic rights cannot live side by side in the presence of terrorism. The importance of peace and conflict are assumed so high in applying democracy and good governance that scholars such as Paris (cited in Nixon & Ponzio, 2007) argue that work on stability and institution building come first before making any other effort to rebuild democracy.

Political inclusion of the people and the role of relevant institutions in a society, such as political parties, are necessary for any democracy. According to some scholars, political parties are important evidence of democracy and their existence indicates an efficiently functioning state because of the link between them, their promised platforms and their constituencies once they are in power (Breiner, 1996).

Political inclusion in the form of partisan activities is not always a source of optimism for scholars of good governance. One growing concern is that political parties can affect the impartiality and competence of a government since they tend to direct the administration toward their own party interests. Most likely, such examples have led Las (cited in Roy & Prasad, 2007) to argue that a courageous, ruthless and perhaps undemocratic government is required to ride roughshod over these newly created special interest groups. But, it can also be argued that since the role of political parties is important in the establishment of a democratic environment and the introduction of political platforms for the society, their contribution can be more beneficial when they focus on the political area rather than administrative affairs. That is how Heredia, Ross, and Schneider (2003) imply that the political parties should avoid intervening in the very specific administrative affairs of the government such as recruitment.

A Two-Way Communication: Citizenry and Civil Society

Communication can strengthen the agenda of good governance by encouraging the growth of civil society and supporting the role of civic activism. Meanwhile, it is assumed that the promotion of a strong civil society is an important step in building a pro-people and democratic government. Cohen (1998) assumes that civic culture, social solidarity, and a state that is governed by the will of its citizens form the prerequisites of democracy. Civil society owes its essence to citizenship and that, according to Putnam (2003), is the active participation of citizens in the public affairs.

Munshi and Abraham (2004) suggest that involvement of civil society in decision-making can be seen as a key feature of “governance” (2004: 76) where the question “who governs” (2004: 76) is not that simple to answer and can even lead toward the privatization of government. Civil society, according to some scholars, refers to a space of actors between, and distinct from, state and market (Crouch, Eder, and Tambini, 2001). This definition of civil society assumes that the plural and diverse layers of society are essential to handle the governance system.

In modern governance systems, private sectors and civil society are part of governance. Absence of their voice in policy making and in the implementation processes will disrupt modern methods of governance. The potential trade-offs between participation, efficiency and effectiveness, and experience and research, are elements in the mediation of public disputes and policy implementation. Communicating this message about the early involvement of stakeholders in policy formulation process will prevent decisional impasse and implementation failure (Weidner, 1995).

According to Robinson (1995), civil society empowers the poor by putting the government under pressure through certain mechanisms of checks and balances such as ensuring the participation of the poor in poverty reduction programs, and by reducing the cost of social and economic transactions. Civil society requires better communication within the government to produce coordination and harmony in the leadership and, ultimately, to promote good governance itself. Meanwhile the communication between the government, civil society, the people, and international stake holders, should be multilateral in order to increase the levels of competence.

In summation, communication affects good governance positively. It enhances people's inclusion in the overall political life, and it also speeds up the democratization process. Communication raises the awareness of people by providing them with access to information about the actions of the government. Reciprocally, the people can provide the government with their expertise and thoughtful opinions in order to improve the decision-making process. As the result of effective communication and increased media awareness, government will be more transparent and accountable. Ultimately, dialogue, debates, and interactions among people will result in the establishment of organized movements within civil society. Such movements can pressure the governments toward making pro-people policies and sustainable reforms.

Main Problematic: Communication and Good Governance in Afghanistan

Afghanistan was promised a better governance system once the Taliban regime was toppled through the military intervention of international coalition forces. According to Suhrke, Afghanistan became a dependent state since its establishment after the collapse of the Taliban regime (2008). Suhrke states that “the international community took the lead in creating a democratic framework for the post-Taliban order. The extreme dependence of the new Afghan state upon external support gave international actors significant influence, but incompatibility among policy objectives, produced conflicting directions” (2008: 644).

However, (The World Bank, 2005) states that, “the state building agenda is at the heart of Afghanistan's economic, political, and social reconstruction” (2005: 4), it is

assumed that Afghanistan still does not have a capable and effective government after seven years struggle for democratization. Afghanistan is at the outset of its democratization phase and still lacks the necessary institutions for democracy. Neither the intervention nor the presence of the international community has yet proved to be successful in building an effective governing system. However, according to Katzman (2009), part of the international policy toward Afghanistan was to build “strong governing institutions, functioning democracy, and economic development” (2009: 8) to fight terrorism. Katzman explains that the process of nation-building has proved “more difficult than anticipated because of the devastation that years of war wrought on Afghan local governing institutions, on the education, and on the already limited infrastructure” (2009: 8).

A general assessment of the Afghanistan’s governance achievement is clearly depicted in the 2008 Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC) in its Annual Report. In one section the report states:

The Afghan people are anxious and worried about the future of the process initiated seven years ago with the support of the international community. The process sparked hope and expectations for a country shattered by over two decades of war and bloodshed. This process was expected to end the suffering of the Afghan people—deliver good governance, the rule of law, and full enjoyment of fundamental rights and freedom to the Afghan citizens. Instead, there are growing concerns, among the Afghans, of relapse into violence and conflict.

(2008: 5)

Basic rights and freedoms are still jeopardized and women remain vulnerable and unable to exercise their full human rights. According to Farhoumand-Sims (2008), after three

decades of devastating war, growing insecurity, poverty, and poppy cultivation, Afghanistan experiences another major social problem: gender inequality.

Despite the donations of billions of dollars to rebuild the country, the Afghanistan National Human Development Report (2007) shows that the human development index for Afghanistan is still among the lowest in the world:

The status of human development in Afghanistan remains poor. Nonetheless, achievements that will enhance human development have been made. Afghanistan's human development indicators reveal that the country remains one of the poorest in the world, with one of the lowest levels of human development.

(2007: 18)

Another study by Kaufmann, Kraay, and Mastruzzi (2009), shows that Afghanistan is ranked among the lowest in the list of countries for its poor governance indicators. In their study, Kaufmann et al. focus on the quality of governance based on the following six indicators: voice and accountability, political stability, government effectiveness, regulatory quality, rule of law, and control of corruption.

Corruption within the Afghanistan's government and the illicit economy of narcotics are among the impeding factors that prevent actualization of good governance in this country. The NATO Afghanistan Report (2005) states that "The capacity of the Afghan Government at the national, provincial and district levels remains limited and suffers from corruption. Continuing insecurity, criminality and, in places, the influence of the narcotics trade further impede efforts to improve good governance" (2005: 5).

Insecurity resulting from the revival of ethnic fractionalization and Taliban insurgency has challenged the government's normal activities and has hampered the

realization of a true democratic government. According to Amnesty International (2009), insecurity caused by a variety of factors such as Taliban's insurgency, local militias, and absence of rule of law, is a major issue for all Afghanistan, in particular for those living in southern and eastern Afghanistan:

Millions of people living in southern and eastern Afghanistan, terrorized by the Taliban, other insurgent groups and local militias ostensibly allied with the government, suffered insecurity that further restricted their already limited access to food, health care, and schooling. Indiscriminate attacks, abductions and the targeting of civilians reached unprecedented levels.

(2009: 1)

That insecurity is partly the result of the ethnic fractionalization of politics and administration in Afghanistan. If ethnic fractionalization leads to civil war, as has happened in the recent history of Afghanistan, then democratization will be jeopardized. Collier (2003) stresses on the role of security in building a democracy by stating that "in many low-income countries, reducing the risk of civil war is thus a necessary precondition for democracy rather than the other way round" (2003: 163).

The role of Afghani warlords not only increases the level of insecurity, but also undermines the efficiency of the state. Presence of the warlords in the administration has increasingly damaged the integrity of governance and the democratization process. It is assumed this happened because of the initial mistake of including the warlords as the locomotives of democracy in a process set-out in the Bonn Accord. For instance, Rubin (2006) says that, in part, the Bonn Accord indicates an agreement by Afghanistan that in order to address its security problems it would somehow introduce democracy to its warlords and disband and disarm the country's armed groups. However, Maley (2006)

recognizes another factor which is the strategic location of Afghanistan that makes this country susceptible to interference by insecure neighbors. He says that more than the historic, recurring problems with Pakistan, it is interference from Iran that Afghanistan must be especially concerned about because as Maley warns, when Iran feels mounting pressure from elsewhere it might simply choose to take it out on its neighbor, Afghanistan.

The role of political parties is another of the essential tools for strengthening democracy with political pluralism and political competition that is non-violent. However, in practice this does not comply with the situation in the newly democratic Afghanistan. For example, the use of Single Non-Transferable Voting System in the election system could easily hinder the genuine growth of the political parties after 2002. This situation also had the unintended outcome of causing a decline in internal democracy within the political parties. When parties merely aim to grab power and implement self-interest and partisan programs, the level of transparency, accountability, and responsiveness, decline consequently. Mitra and Singh (1999) believe that in the democracies of less-developed countries political parties undermine all institutional capacities for good governance solely to maintain their own power. Afghani political parties, lacking a genuine internal democracy, see their business only in terms of power and as a result transparency and accountability are eroded. Some of Afghanistan's political parties have a military background and see their survival in terms of anarchy and absence of rule of law.

The limited capacity of Afghanistan's government is another factor in its poor democratic integrity. According to M. Brown (2003), the international community

adopted an innovative strategy to build local capacity for sustaining peace, despite the fact that the government of Afghanistan does not yet have enough capacity to implement the firm leadership, sound consensus, and the commitment to democratic governance that such a strategy requires.

Lastly, Afghani people have lost their confidence in their government's honesty and ability to deliver. According to Neumann (2009), Afghanistan's government lacks "greater public clarity" (2009: 3) and is in need of honesty and commitment to revive hope. Neumann gives equal emphasis to the importance of policies and their implementation and policies and sees poor management in both performance and implementation of the complex policies in Afghanistan. The Afghani people have a trust deficit in their political process, as evidenced by their low turn-out in the 2009 presidential elections. The World Bank (2009) also commented on the low turn-out, describing it as a decline in the Afghanistan people's political participation, as "observers estimated that 40 percent of the electorate turned out; much lower than the 76 percent who voted in the first Presidential election, in 2004" (2009: 1).

Expanding upon the arguments presented above, this research aims to investigate whether it is communication—or rather miscommunication—that influences the quality of governance in Afghanistan. The central research question leading the proposed study is: "Does communication enhance good governance through promoting accountability, transparency, responsiveness, and people-participation, in Afghanistan?" This theme, drawn from extensive scholarly reviews, will be addressed and further investigated through interviews and in an examination of reports and documents by local and

international institutions. The next chapter explains the in-depth interview process and the methodology and design.

Chapter 3

Research Design and Methodology

This chapter describes the employed research design and methodology of this thesis. It gives a full description of how the literature review is conducted, how qualitative interviews are managed, and how the national and international reports and documents are examined. The chapter also describes the conceptualization of working ideas and concepts and explains research questions. Moreover, this chapter highlights the process of in-depth interviews and the qualitative analysis used in the research. An explanation of the criteria for choosing the interviewees and the criteria in selecting the participants (informants) are introduced.

Concepts and Conceptualization

According to Neuman (2007), “in qualitative research, conceptualization largely flows from the data” (2007: 212). Neuman also assumes that “qualitative researchers refine rudimentary “working ideas” during the data collection and analysis processes” (2007: 212). This thesis formed its concepts from working ideas and empirical data, in-depth interviews, and analysis of credible institutional documents. In refining the working ideas and concepts, the research conceptual definitions were produced. The formulated concepts (good governance, governance, accountability, corruption, transparency, democracy, communication, miscommunication, public relation, media, public opinion, and civil society) and their conceptual definitions are as listed below:

Good Governance: *Governance* is simply institutions that exercise authority for public interest (Kauffmann, 2005). While the empirical data and the scholarly reviews show that good governance sets broader ideals, in particular for the post-conflict, third world countries, to provide better responsiveness, accountability, and transparency mechanisms in comparison to the term *governance*. In good governance, it is not solely the exercise of authority, but it is the quality of the governance to serve the people's interest by listening to them that is most required. Good governance, as a model of management, is a choice of international donors in aiding the underdeveloped countries too. This concept, and model, is introduced by the researcher here since the Afghanistan National Development Strategy uses it. ANDS is intended to guide Afghanistan's overall development project from 2008 to 2013. Also, according to scholarly sources and empirical data, Afghanistan's government depends on international assistances and therefore *good governance*, as an administrative model, has been promoted by the donor agencies in their policies. The empirical data assumes that international community assists Afghanistan militarily, economically, and politically.

Accountability: This is an important component of good governance. The in-depth interviews of the field experts indicate that public and non-government institutions are not accountable to either the laws or people. The analysis of the scholarly sources assumes that committed media, effective public relations, and vibrant civil society enhance the level of accountability in a government.

Corruption: This is defined as misuse of public assets for personal interests. The empirical observational data reveals that corruption is a growing concern in

Afghanistan's governance system. The literature review assumes that media, effective communication, and transparency can affect government corruption and promote good governance.

Democracy: This is defined as a government by the will of the citizenry. However, democracy and good governance are not two sides of a coin: It is the voice of the people that ties these together. Integrating the voice, or will of the people, ensures legitimacy of a democracy and promotes the elements of responsiveness, transparency, and accountability in good governance. The in-depth interviews in this thesis show that there is not enough mechanism to raise the voice of the people in an Afghani public sphere. These data also show that mismanagement of Afghanistan's democratic procedures is threatening the democratic participative processes such as the elections. The data show that the poor management of the presidential election of 2009 damaged its integrity.

Communication: This is about the dialogue and exchange of views between the international community, Afghanistan's government, people, and civil society, in order to build policies and make decisions. The thesis identifies that the Afghani people's voices are not considered to influence the quality of the policies and their implementation in the Afghanistan's managerial sphere. Defining the concept of communication led the researcher to examine and expand on further elements of communication such as public relation, media, and public opinions. In Afghanistan's case, there is one more body considered significant in decision-making processes: the international actors. The research empirical data also suggest that lack of coordination between the international community and the internal actors in steering Afghanistan's administration affairs are also significantly important in further reducing the governance quality.

Miscommunication: This is defined as a communication failure. Miscommunication happens when the cooperation, mutual understanding, and social interactions are distorted between the societal actors. The empirical observations of this thesis indicate that absence of coordination between the international donors, Afghanistan government, and Afghani people undermines the integrity of governance delivery. For instance, the various external actors have their different and uncoordinated priorities while Afghani civil society is not taken into consideration in building public policy and in setting the national priorities.

Public Relations: This is defined as the ways the government and the external leading bodies reach out to the public, disseminate their achievements, and work to influence Afghani public opinion. The research empirical data observe that the government is not proactive in its public relations.

Media: This concept includes public and private Afghani local media in their printed, visual, and audio forms. It analyzes how the media play their role as professional and enlightening entities in order to engage public participation and to enhance government transparency. The empirical observations suggest that Afghani laws and legislation that protect freedom of expression, and the government's attitudes toward free media and freedom of expression cannot ensure freedom of expression or free access to that media information by the public.

Transparency: It is an element of good governance. The research indicates how committed media, proactive public relations, and vibrant civil society enhance the level of transparency in a government.

Public Opinion: This concept is defined as: what people think about issues and solutions, what their priorities are, and who serves to address those issues. The researcher's empirical data indicate that the role of public opinion is acknowledged in the Afghanistan government's public policies. However, in practice, priorities, decisions and policies are developed by local and international decision makers in the absence of political will and without due mechanisms for responding to public opinion.

Civil society: According to Cohen (1998), civil society is a civic culture, social solidarity, and a state that is governed by citizens' will, making it a prerequisite of democracy. It is observed that there are no organized Afghani civil society groups to facilitate the process toward democratization and to pressurize the government for developing pro-public policies and decisions. Civic activism, public debates, a free and committed media, and monitoring the government's activities cannot occur unless a genuine civil society is born within Afghanistan.

Rationale and the Research Questions

The central research question of this thesis is:

Does communication enhance good governance through promoting accountability, transparency, responsiveness, and people participation in Afghanistan?

1. Further, there are six sub-questions to help in addressing the central research question: What roles can media play to promote good governance in Afghanistan?

2. How can Afghanistan's civil society and the people's voice improve decision-making?
3. Has the public opinion been given a role in developing policies/decisions and in implementing the policies/policies in Afghanistan?
4. Is there communication and cooperation between the government, international community, and the people in Afghanistan?
5. What is the importance of impartiality and professionalism in Afghanistan's desired good governance?
6. Are democracy and good governance the best options for Afghanistan and what are the interrelations of these two?

This research has both exploratory and explanatory purposes. McLeod and Tichenor (2007) states that "sometimes research is conducted for exploratory reasons, that is, to get a rough sense of what is happening on a particular topic for which we do not yet have enough information" (2007: 29). The research explores the inter-relation of the government's quality and communication in Afghanistan. The researcher does this by collecting and analyzing the data, by providing qualitative analysis of in-depth interviews with field experts, and by analyzing various documents and studies from relevant public and non-governmental organizations. Since this thesis "explains the relationship, to uncover the reasons 'why' and 'how'" (Ibid) the quality of governance and the quality of communication are interrelated. Therefore, it is also an explanatory study.

Research Design

This thesis utilizes a qualitative approach. According to McLeod & Tichenor (2007), “two types of logic are commonly used: induction and deduction” (2007: 10). They also state that “the process of generalizing from a given set of evidence to a larger set of evidence or circumstances is largely an inductive process” (2007: 10). Similarly, Neuman (2007) says that “qualitative researchers primarily begin with empirical data, follow with abstract ideas, relate ideas and data, and end with a mixture of ideas and data” (2007: 207). This research, according to the scholarly views already mentioned, applies inductive reasoning: The research begins with collecting and analysis of empirical data, the in-depth interviews with the field experts and analysis of institutional documents, and follows with abstract ideas obtained from a review of the scholarly theories. This thesis examines cases of effective communication or miscommunication between the Afghanistan government, people, civil society, political parties, and the international community in order to build the general theory of the role of communication in Afghanistan government’s quality.

The techniques implemented for this empirically-focused and partially- theoretical research are as follows:

1. The in-depth interviews are used to discover the experience of the national and international field experts.
2. An analysis of the local and international governmental and non-governmental documents and studies is conducted to access the relevant institutional data.

The researcher carried out extensive reviews of the relevant scholarly theories of governance and communication as its theoretical foundation. The critical examination of around 100 scholarly sources and studies by credible organizations helped the researcher in formulating the key themes and the central research question. Review of the scholarly resources also provided the researcher with the appropriate questions used in the interview guide (questionnaire). The researcher selected the relevant scholarly sources from many existing sources addressing communication and governance. It required an extensive research and review of the relevant scholarly articles and journals to find the most relevant arguments and citations. Once they were chosen, the citations and findings were then placed in their appropriate place in the thesis.

To insure reliability in a qualitative research, the researcher should record his or her observations consistently (Neuman, 2007). This is what the researcher did in this case, recording research observations throughout the in-depth interviews and analysis of governmental and non-governmental documents. Neuman also states that in applying techniques of recording the observations, “qualitative researchers use a variety of techniques (e.g., interviews, participation, photographs, document studies, etc.) to record their observations consistently” (2007: 222). Based on that, this research employs such techniques as in-depth interviews with the field experts and document study of government and non-governmental documents to record his observations. All the observations have been precisely noted and used in the research process that evolved.

Further, in a qualitative research more emphasis is made on authenticity than on the idea of a single version of truth (Neuman, 2007). For Neuman, “authenticity means giving a fair, honest and balanced account of social life from the viewpoint of someone

who lives it every day” (2007: 222). Accordingly, the participants’ viewpoints describe their account of the subject just as the researcher uses his lived experience in the areas of governance and communication in Afghanistan.

Data Collection and Analysis

This research employs a qualitative data analysis. The data collection methods utilized in this thesis are in-depth interviews and content analysis of the institutional documents.

The in-depth interviews have been conducted with national and international experts who have had significant field experiences in Afghanistan. Furthermore, the reports and studies of credible national and international organizations that are relevant to the governance and communication areas in Afghanistan have been analyzed. The researcher uses qualitative analysis to analyze the collected interviews. Berg (2007) implies that the observational data and interviews can be transcribed in written text for the researcher’s analysis and the researcher will interpret the text based on his or her theoretical orientation. The analysis of the reports and researches that are relevant to the central question of this thesis played a significant role in data gathering.

The in-depth interviews were conducted in English with six experts including national and international activists, and officials. All the interviews were structured by an interview guide to obtain the interviewees’ experiences and viewpoints accordingly. An extensive literature review also provided the researcher with the necessary knowledge of related theories.

As mentioned before, the researcher, in addition to the in-depth interviews, collected data related to the central research question from Afghanistan government documents, United Nations (UN) reports, and other international non-governmental organizations (INGOs) documents and reports. For example the documents, reports and the research of relevant international and national stakeholders, including United Nations Development Programs (UNDP), World Bank (WB), North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), United Nations Assistance Mission Afghanistan (UNAMA), Amnesty International, United Nations General Assembly Security Council, the Constitution of Afghanistan, Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission Annual Report(AIHRC), Afghanistan National Development Strategy (ANDS), General Independent Administration for Anti-corruption for the Afghanistan National Development Strategy, Millennium Development Goals Islamic Republic of Afghanistan Country Report, Ministry of Information and Culture for Afghanistan National Development Strategy, Ministry of Communication and Information Technology for Afghanistan National Development Strategy, and National Human Development Report (NHDR), provided practical insights around the central question of this thesis.

During the last seven-year experience of state building in Afghanistan, international organizations, national NGOs, and academic institutions in the country have run a considerable number of studies on the problems and issues of the government of Afghanistan. Analyzing these reports and documents, many of which are accessible online, further guided the researcher around the central research question of the thesis. The documents not only guided the researcher theoretically, but also provided the

relevant insights obtained from these institutions' practical engagement with Afghanistan's governance challenges.

The in-depth interviews were conducted with the six experts. The number *six* is explained with these details: First, the research does not focus solely on the empirical data obtained from in-depth interviews. The researcher also relies on the analysis of international and national institutions including Afghanistan government and UN bodies to provide the thesis with empirical data. In addition, the six interviewees have highly significant positions in the government, Afghan civil society, or international institutes engaged in Afghanistan. They provided the researcher with very thoughtful observations and data that would have been impossible to obtain from junior sources or documents alone. At the same time, the researcher also had access to senior activists, whose experiences and insights are both precious and informative. These participants are also very difficult to access given the complexities of life today in Afghanistan. The researcher initially enlisted eight nominees (six to be interviewed and two more as alternative replacements in case any interviewees withdrew). The researcher selected these experts based on one or more of the following criteria: (1) their experiences as government senior employees with a position related the governance and communications; (2) their active participation in the civil society and human rights spheres; (3) their public profile in the media because of their positions on issues of governance reforms; (4) their experience with those national or international organizations which have been prominently engaged with governance and communication in the reconstruction process of Afghanistan; and (5) their willingness and availability to participate in the interview.

Blumler (1969) assumes preference to those participants who are well-informed and acute observers in the sphere of life. That is how in this thesis, the participants are also chosen from senior government officials and outspoken civil society personalities who have a vast amount of experience and engagement in Afghanistan and were able to provide substantial contribution and data to this research. Based on the aforementioned criteria and the importance of the participants' expertise, the researcher interviewed the following six experts: (1) Dr. Daud Saba, former National Human Development advisor to Afghanistan President; (2) Abbas Noyan, Afghani Member of Parliament; (3) Nader Nadery, commissioner of Afghanistan Human Rights Commission (AIHRC) and chair of Foundation for Free and Fair Election of Afghanistan (FEFA); (4) Eileen Olexiuk, Canadian diplomat and former Canada Deputy Head of Mission to Afghanistan; (5) Farishta Sakhi, Afghan civil society activist; and (6) Commissioner Abdul Karim Azizi, Commissioner at Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission.

After the interviewees were informed about the research and gave their consent, the interviews were planned in the agreed time frame. They were also asked if they were willing to conduct the interview through e-mail. The researcher also preferred to conduct the interviews via e-mail because of its cost effectiveness. Another benefit of e-mail correspondence which was especially helpful for the researcher, was that it enabled the interviews to be conducted individually, and given the limited resources available did not require the additional recruitment of research assistants for face-to-face or phone interviews. Neuman (2007) identifies other advantages of this approach, since “[m]ail questionnaires offer anonymity and avoid interviewer bias. They are very effective, and

response rates may be high for a target population that is well educated or has a strong interest in the topic” (2007: 400).

The informants have on-the-ground experiences, either as government officials or as civil society activists and reformists, and their insightful views about Afghanistan governance systems and communication proved beneficial to this research. The aim was to obtain first hand information related to the central question of the thesis from the people experienced with Afghanistan and with its decision-making in the last seven years.

Prior to conducting the interviews through, the semi-structured questionnaires with open-ended questions were provided and sent to the interview subjects. However, according to Neuman (2007: 407), an interview with open-ended questions makes the job of the interviewer more difficult. For example, in such interviews, the researcher should avoid summarization, or should have legible writing ability and record the interviewees’ verbatim, without grammar or slang correction. However, the interviews through e-mails relieved the researcher from the burdens of transcribing grammatical or linguistic mistakes since the interviews were written by the interviewees. Moreover, according to Flick (2002), use of a questionnaire “increases the compatibility of the data and that their structuration is increased as a result of the questions in the guide” (2002: 93). When sending the questionnaire, the researcher gave the interviewees enough time to elaborate on them with their expertise. This also allowed the interviewees to provide structured and compatible answers to the relevant questions.

The interview guide (interview questions) sought to collect the interviewees’ opinions on good governance, democracy, civil society, accountability, transparency,

mutual communication, media, public opinion, public relations, and other themes coming out of the literature reviews. In cases of need for more clarity for an ambiguous answer, the researcher could probe with a neutral request to get further clarification or to obtain a relevant response by sending an extra e-mail to the interviewees. The interviewees' opinions are quoted in the relevant part of the thesis in original text.

For research involving human subjects, Zillman and Bryant (1982) assert the importance of having a committee that approves these procedures and debriefs the results with the researcher when the work has been completed. Therefore, this thesis requiring interviews with human subjects needed ethical clearance from the University of Ottawa Research Ethics Board. Moreover, as suggested by Greenberg, Eastin, & Garramone (2007),

[f]our legal standards are involved in informed consent to participate in research: (1) the capacity to make a rational, mature decision; (2) information about what is to occur; (3) comprehension of the possible effects, and (4) freedom from coercion or undue pressure.

(2007: 74)

Considering these legal standards, the researcher ensured the following ethics consideration and commitments in interviewing the human subjects to meet the ethical required norms: (1) The interviewees received the questionnaire in advance and their interviews were scheduled only after receiving their e-mailed or oral consent by phone. (2) Coercion was not imposed on such senior officials and civil society activists who are already in power or defending others' rights. (3) The interviews were kept and transcribed and with accuracy. The interviewees sent their answers by e-mail. (4) The listed experts are already famous publicly and internationally through media on the same

topics or similar to this. (5) The interviewees were ensured by e-mail what information would be selected from their interview and they had the opportunity to review the transcripts and their quotes. (6) In cases where participants confided any information to the researcher, such information has not been shared unless the interviewee agreed.

Neuman (2007) asserts to avoid the ten “question writing pitfalls” (383) in writing a questionnaire. He identifies these pitfalls as follows: (1) slang and abbreviations, (2) vagueness, (3) emotional language and prestige bias, (4) double-barreled questions, (5) leading questions, (6) issues beyond respondent capabilities, (7) false premises, (8) distant future intentions, (9) double negatives, and (10) unbalanced responses. The researcher considered strictly all the above mentioned pitfalls and principles of good question writing in preparing the interview questionnaire.

Neuman also states that an open-ended question “asks a question ... to which respondents can give any answer,” (2007: 387-388). Therefore, in order to provide a free response opportunity for the interviewee and to respect his/her choice of giving an answer out of many options, the questions are open-ended. The open-ended questions has many other advantages such as,

(1) they permit an unlimited number of possible answers; (2) the respondents can answer in detail and can qualify and clarify responses; (3) unanticipated findings can be discovered; (4) they permit adequate answers to complex issues; (5) they permit creativity, self-expression, and richness of detail; and (6) they reveal a respondent’s logic, thinking process, and frame of reference.

(Neuman, 2007: 388)

Chapter 4

Findings and Analysis

This chapter focuses on field experience. It includes a qualitative analysis of the institutional documents and the in-depth interviews conducted with the participants. The data obtained from the in-depth interviews are presented according to the themes which were outlined in chapter 2. These guiding themes are: a) the role of communication and media in Afghanistan's governance quality; b) Afghanistan's Civil Society and the role of people's voice over decision-making, impartiality and professionalism; c) coordination between stakeholders; d) transparency, corruption, and reform; e) governance quality, democracy and good governance. It should be mentioned here that the anonymity committed as the ethical pledge in this research means that all the informants' citations will be quoted without mentioning the relevant names of these sources and this why their comments appear in the text without citation or reference.

Each of the informants has field experience in Afghanistan and each comes from a diverse background of working with government or non-governmental organizations. The researcher sent a copy of the interview guide, containing questions related to the discussed themes, to each of the participant before the interviews were scheduled. The informants' citations are used with full accuracy.

Communication as Prerequisite of Good Governance: The Forgotten Public Policies

According to the United Nations Secretary General Reports (2009), “four priority areas: strengthened security, improved economic growth, good governance and enhanced regional cooperation, with detail recommendations for each area” (2009: 1) are pointed as initial tasks to lead Afghanistan’s development process toward a successful direction. Some of these areas are addressed in the five-year Afghanistan National Development Strategy document though not implemented fully. Good governance, with the role of communication as one of the core elements in achieving good governance, is one of the pillar goals in this strategy. A 2005 study by The World Bank identifies those areas where the government of Afghanistan has managed to achieve some measurable accomplishments. These include: a new constitution, improved security, currency reform, monetary policy, revenue collection, budgets that are driven by policy, and a commitment to co-ordinate restructuring and reform. However, the participants’ accounts of the general situation in Afghanistan show that there are still many more steps needed to be taken in order to improve the overall quality of governance.

Afghanistan’s government and international community have achieved a quantitative increase in the number of new media in its visual, audio and printed output, and show a major achievement following the Bonn Accord. For example, Kumar (2006) suggests that the privatization of media and ending the state’s monopoly over media are considered success stories for Afghanistan’s communication. He states that:

In Afghanistan, international media assistance played an important role in the emergence of media outlets that are relatively independent of state control. For example, USAID helped to establish 30 community radio

stations which are now broadcasting news and information in distant areas of the country, promoting political discourse.

(Kumar, 2006: 661)

According to *Hashte Sobh Daily*, in 2009 Afghanistan had approximately 500 printed media, 30 TV channels, and 100 radio channels (“Editorial”: 1). However, the same newspaper complains that the government of Afghanistan could not establish a cooperative relationship with the media. According to this source, the government recruited directors with little professional experience and the Ministry of Information and Culture acted very violently against the free media in certain cases.

Aside from poor implementation, in the realm of policy, it was the Afghanistan National Development Strategy (2007) that stressed the role of communication in improving the governance quality. Among others, for instance, ANDS had committed the following communication- related measures to enhance the goals of good governance from 2008 to 2013:

The Government will increase the amount of information available to the public. The public will have greater access and rights to publicly held information... The Government will pursue the development of a single national identity document so as to enhance public accountability and transparency and reduce corruption. ...The Government will enhance the flow of information between all government entities related to national policy, strategy and national budget procedures.

(2007: 7)

Similar to the approaches of ANDS, the General Independent Administration for Anti Corruption Strategy (2007) also stresses the importance of communication. For example, it identifies three major approaches that the fight against corruption relies on: (1) Raising public awareness, (2) Establishing public monitoring mechanism, (3) Raising awareness

of the government's staff. All the above mentioned approaches embrace communication in one way or another.

Further, Afghanistan's national development strategy is in alignment with the Millennium Development Goals (MDG). The MDG Islamic Republic of Afghanistan Country Report (2005) also commits to engage the civil society, parliamentarians, media and the general public in debates on human development. This communication-friendly document states that the main purpose of the MDG is two-fold: "public information and social mobilization. It is a tool for raising awareness, for advocacy, alliance building, and renewal of political commitments at the country level, as well as to build national capacity for monitoring and reporting on progress" (2005: 1).

In alignment with Afghanistan's MDG report and ANDS, a report from the Ministry of Information and Culture (2007) also describes the importance of media and information in the development processes as:

The re-emergence of Afghanistan on the international stage has coincided with rapid growth and development of information technology. Media convergence and development as well as geopolitics have meant that regional centres of innovation have emerged and returnees have been crucial in mediating between the wider technological context and actors in Afghanistan. Surveys of the media environment in Afghanistan reveal that Afghan users have become sophisticated users of the media and there is a high level of trust in the media.

(2007: 3)

Another important public institution addressing the agenda of communication is Afghanistan Ministry of Communication and Information Technology. According to its strategy document for ANDS, (Ministry of Communication and Information Technology, 2007) a strong and well-functioning communications sector will benefit the citizens and

the economy of Afghanistan in order to: (1) Empower the government to execute its duties; (2) Improve quality of life and national unity; (3) Drive economic development; (4) Enhance national and civil security; and (5) Endorse transparency and accountability. The strategy also promises to expand the use of electronic governance which potentially can lead to more transparency and efficiency in governance by stating that, “the applications will make the provision of government services more efficient and transparent, this reducing fraud and corruption. Examples include automated procurement and logistics, drivers’ license and passport renewals and fiscal services (payroll, budget, customs)” (Ministry of Communication and Information Technology Strategy for ANDS, 2007: 14).

These examples suggest that the government’s policies realize and commit to the importance of communication in delivering good governance. All the aforementioned documents, including ANDS, are five-year strategic documents and should guide Afghanistan’s development project up to 2013. Similarly, the Constitution of Afghanistan (2004) understands freedom of expression as a basic right. But, in order to examine the practical effect of communication in Afghanistan’s government practices, the following paragraphs include a description of the participants’ field experiences.

In general, the interviewees show an overall discontent with the quality of governance, particularly the way communication has been utilized in Afghanistan. All of the informants realize the importance of communication in improving the quality of administration. The government’s public relations are evaluated as a non-proactive experience and the misuse of media has been criticized. The interviewees describe an absence of mechanisms to assess Afghani public opinion, poor civic debates, and

violations of freedom of expression by the government that undermine good governance. However, most of the interviewees describe the quantitative increase in the number of media as a government success in addressing the role of communication.

The Role of Communication in Afghanistan's Governance Quality

Media in Afghanistan

Schudson (1995) says that “without accurate information about the views and values of candidates for office, a citizenry cannot cast intelligent ballots; without adequate coverage of the operation of government between elections, the attentive populace cannot effectively monitor the performance of their chosen representatives” (1995: 26).

Accordingly, media play an important role in the flow and exchange of information in Afghanistan. Now, different types of media are being used in great numbers in this country, including visual, audio, and printed media. However, despite a growing number of outlets, the media have yet to play their anticipated role. There are many reasons for this, including the lack of Afghanistan's commitment and ability to provide media with full access to public information.

As discussed in the beginning of this chapter, Afghanistan's policy documents show that the relevant policies endow a significant role for communication and media to improve the quality of governance. In particular, this is assumed with the ANDS document that proposes a five-year development plan. Moreover, the Afghanistan constitution supports a free media and realizes freedom of expression as an Afghani citizen's basic right.

But, most of the participants did not have optimistic opinions about the communication and media status in Afghanistan. These different accounts of the media's role from the field experts reveal the existing gap between the policies and the laws toward realization of the role of free media in Afghanistan. For instance, as discussed in the literature review in chapter 2 of this thesis, media can play a more vibrant role in improving the quality of government when access to information is warranted in both laws and in practice. In general, the informants assume that free and independent media in Afghanistan can enhance the levels of transparency, integrity and non-corruption, accountability and responsiveness, civic debates, awareness building, effective policies and accurate implementations, sustainable reforms, and security.

Quantitative Progress, Qualitative Flaws

Despite the general discontent with the media's performance, the informants assume approbation of the Afghani media law as an endorsing tool of freedom of expression in Afghanistan and as a major achievement for the government, Afghani civil society and the international community. "Within eight years, one of the best achievements of the Afghan government was supporting media in the country, because the Parliament passed the Media Law... accepted by the journalists and International communities and civil society –organizations in the country" (Anonymous, personal communication, December 28, 2009). Under the protection of the media law, tens of audio, visual and printed media flourished around the country. However, radio has the largest audience. One of the interviewees suggested that "given the levels of illiteracy and poverty in Afghanistan,

many Afghans have little access to conventional media, although radio could be used much more effectively” (Anonymous, personal communication, December 17, 2009). Illiteracy, in particular, has hindered use of printed media, but private media outlets have provided several TV channels to reach out the remote and even illiterate population. “Private media and foreign media such as BBC in particular, give Afghans an opportunity to witness freedom of press, freedom of expression, and generally other forms of socio-political structure” (Anonymous, personal communication, December 17, 2009).

Aside from the quantitative progress in the number of media, the free and independent media’s growth in Afghanistan experiences some flaws because it is frequently denied access to public information. As Schudson (1995) states, “the news media should provide citizens fair and full information so that they can make sound decisions as citizens” (1995: 28). Media access to public information is essential in their role as providers of full and fair information to the citizens. The inability of Afghani media agencies to get full access to such information limits their role. “The information that the Afghan media has is based on who they talk to, rather than a systematic procedure to get to the core of the documented information” (Anonymous, personal communication, December 27, 2009). The information that Afghani media disseminate is mostly “superficial/anecdotal and with no factual or documentary value” (Anonymous, personal communication, December 27, 2009). Such information cannot enhance transparency and is not able to assist the democratic development agenda in the country.

Awaiting Mission: Elevating Transparency and Fighting Corruption

According to Benn (2007), transparency and free access to information are the essential indications of good governance because a transparent and open government can take better decisions and build more effective policies. Access to information enhances the people's awareness and promotes civil society's understanding of their government's policies and performance. Reciprocally, awareness of civil society and the citizenry can provide the government with precious expertise and knowledge to solidify the integrity and professionalism of their government.

As discussed in chapter 2, corruption is a significant problem in Afghanistan's governance system. Media can affect and influence this culture of corruption by sharing the information with people and raising critical voices against the wrong doings of the authorities. People need to know the government's policies and deserve a government whose processes are transparent. "It is the right of each and every citizen to be aware of its government policies in a democratic system. Afghan citizens have voted to elect their president who shall be committed to deliver services with transparency and accountability" (Anonymous, personal communication, December 15, 2009).

In response to the questions whether there is a trust deficit in the country and if media have a role to address it, they all believe that there is indeed a growing trust deficit in Afghanistan. "I see a huge trust deficit to the point of there being no trust at all because the people have been lied to and manipulated repeatedly. Media could be the medium whereby citizens can communicate the priority areas where trust must be built" (Anonymous, personal communication, December 17, 2009). Or, it is believed that the

widespread corruption in Afghanistan has brought a trust deficit in the government's achievements and as a result people "have lost their trust and hope in this government due to little progress made in the past eight years, when hopes were high, and also the widespread knowledge and acknowledgement of widespread corruption" (Anonymous, personal communication, December 30, 2009).

Another significant role that media can play to improve the quality of governance in Afghanistan is to promote the role of public opinion in decision-making. Building public opinion requires communication about the issues and developing a willingness to take responsibility for bringing about change. It was indicated that after a long history of despotism, the emergence of independent media in Afghanistan has created optimism about broadening the public's education and making the government accountable and transparent:

Public opinion is limited by lack of education. Throughout history the people, under various authoritarian regimes, have failed to understand their rights and/or fight for them. Although now the media has been lauded great achievements in making the government more accountable and transparent, they have a long way to go in becoming independent, objective and for the public.

(Anonymous, personal communication, December 30, 2009)

Media can collect public opinion in an organized way in order to reach out to the policy makers for their consideration. It is assumed that the committed media should initiate debates on behalf of the people to raise their voices, since "the moral responsibility of media is to act as the voice of the people. Media, especially radio which is more widely accessible than print or television, could be

used to solicit views from the people on government programs and decisions”

(Anonymous, personal communication, December 17, 2009).

Media can also raise the level of the accountability of the government to achieve good governance because “the media (if provided access to fact-based information) will give the people the tools to voice their concern and express their needs and grievances and make the GoA [Government of Afghanistan] accountable to what they promise and what they deliver” (Anonymous, personal communication, December 27, 2009).

Otherwise, “without people’s voices through a responsible media, Afghanistan will never be able to break the tyrannical structure of the power...the media has the potential to move towards that goal, only if needed legal frameworks are put in place” (Anonymous, personal communication, December 27, 2009).

Media are the means to improve the quality of governance and to raise the voice of the people. However, once media lose this enlightenment role and their commitment to reforms, they can become a liability for democratic and good governance. There are many examples of how media have been playing both productive and non-productive roles in the development and democratization processes in Afghanistan in the last years:

Media can play an active role as far as it is not very commercialized. Currently, TOLO [a popular private TV broadcast in Afghanistan] network has the highest number of viewers in Afghanistan. But they are working purely on commercial basis. Civil society has to pay a high sum of money to broadcast a social program; the fees are not affordable for many activists and human rights organizations. No doubt many other programs in TOLO have contributed towards opening the space for different voices to emerge.

(Anonymous, personal communication, December 15, 2009)

Independent and free media should also notice professionalism and impartiality as the cornerstone for obtaining the people's trust. Dividing into ethnic rifts or reinforcing political ideologies can threaten their productivity. "[T]he negative side of the Media was the lack of impartiality, most of the visual media in Afghanistan has been supported by the neighboring countries, they have worked less to create national Identity and national Interests and have been somehow counterproductive" (Anonymous, personal communication, December 15, 2009).

The Ignored Means of Mobilizing Public Opinion

Despite the challenges of determining public opinion because of low levels of education among the people, Afghani public opinion is not considered to be as important as the viewpoints and priorities of international and the viewpoints of Afghani elites concerning the overall development of Afghanistan:

It doesn't seem that public opinion in the broad sense has much effect on governance reform. Governance in terms of delivering goods and services to the people still seems to depend on a group's access to individuals in power—whether elected or unelected local powerbrokers with ties to Kabul ("the Palace" in particular). It appears that reform is driven more by the international community which still operates in a very fragmented uncoordinated way.

(Anonymous, personal communication, December 17, 2009)

Likewise, it is implied that Afghanistan's government ignores the voices of the people and their demands in their decision-making and that preference is given to the priorities of international and regional forces. "Afghanistan is a divided society; [p]ublic demands are mainly labeled as partisan. Therefore, politicians do not pay attention to those

opinions... Part of the reason is also because of accommodation of regional and international interests” (Anonymous, personal communication, December 15, 2009).

Civic mobilization is required in order to incarnate public opinion in the government’s policies and priorities. It is indicated that public opinion cannot become a valuable input in the building of policies unless it is advocated by an active and united civil society. As one participant explains, “public opinion makes a difference only if it is organized and focused on the points and advocated by certain civil society groups, all of which are lacking in Afghanistan” (Anonymous, personal communication, December 27, 2009).

Media can play a significant role in mobilizing and formulating public opinion. For example, there are assumptions that the trust deficit between government and the people can be overhauled if media start to publicize debates about corruption and provide the public with information about human rights and social justice. “Media can carry an active non-violent movement through publicizing the corrupt officials, opening debate around Transitional Justice, in specifically opening the floor for the victims to share their stories, raise awareness in terms of human rights and good governance” (Anonymous, personal communication, December 15, 2009).

Potential Awareness Raising Tool for Government and People

In a democracy the role of media is important in raising the level of awareness and participation of its citizens. For example, it is believed that during the last seven years Afghani media were limited in their ability to inform the voters about the details of the

platforms of the candidates and to explain the issues clearly to the Afghani people. They could have unveiled how fraudulent the presidential and parliamentary elections were but they were limited by the information that was made available to them by the government. However, the media were able to play a prominent role in the 2009 presidential elections by raising awareness and by bringing about debates between the competing candidates for the first time in the history of Afghanistan's politics:

Generally during the elections media played a vital role to conduct a massive civic education among the people, uncovered incidents of fraud and technical problems in the process. Presidential candidates TV dialogue brought a good chance to raise issues about good governance in Afghanistan.

(Anonymous, personal communication, December 15, 2009)

Also, there are claims that a campaign process, when broadcast by media, helps to make politicians more accountable because of the additional public scrutiny they receive. If the proposed platforms are not implemented by the winning candidates, people will make them accountable for their promises. "[P]eople will of course put pressure on government if these promises are not met. Unless people are not empowered to raise their concern, the government will not respond" (Anonymous, personal communication, December 15, 2009).

Access to information is the Afghani people's constitutional basic right. The Afghani people will look to the media to protect that freedom only when they have learned that the media reflect their interests. The sustainability of freedom of expression in Afghanistan relies on the support of the people. It is believed that more cooperation between local communities and governments is needed to increase the feeling of ownership among those people who can potentially protect the maintenance of media:

In doing so broadly to the nation via national media an effort should be made to demonstrate the contribution of local residents to the achievements as an indication of what can be accomplished when there is cooperation between government and communities; this also shows local 'ownership' and hence responsibility for protection and maintenance.

(Anonymous, personal communication, December 17, 2009)

Reactionary Public Relations

The role of government in listening to media's voice is critical in order for it to address the dominant issues in Afghanistan. The interviewees state that Afghanistan's government does not listen to the suggestions and criticisms raised by the media.

Afghanistan's government not only proved to be reluctant in supporting the media and in building a supportive environment for them, but also, according to most of this researcher's interviewees, the government lacks a proactive public relations policy to reach out the public and to inform them about the government's achievements. The government and the international community established a "costly media center" (Anonymous, personal communication, December 24, 2009) to conduct their public relations; however, the center failed to shift from a reactionary position to a more proactive status.

Most likely, one of the reasons why the government has not established a supportive stance toward media is the lack of an appropriate overall communication strategy and an active public relations department. It is assumed that Afghanistan's government lacks a dynamic and proactive commitment to public relations that results in the kinds of negative sentiments against the Afghani media that are stated here:

While the government to some extent respected free press, it has developed more of a negative sentiment toward the media especially in the last two years and tried to impose some restriction on free reporting of government failures. This negative attitude is a direct consequence of government's failure to effectively communicate its achievements and to proactively conduct effective public relations.

(Anonymous, personal communication, December 24, 2009)

Expounding on the same issue, during the interviews, the researcher noticed comments that describe the Afghanistan government's public-relations as reactionary in its responses to public opinion. For instance, participants stated that government does not have a proactive approach when dealing with challenges. "Public relations seem to be defensive only after a crisis rather than forward looking and accountable for achievements and challenges" (Anonymous, personal communication, December 17, 2009). Accordingly, the absence of effective public relations by government and international donors, have also left the people of Afghanistan unaware of the progress of development projects as stated below:

The same is true for development work that ... [Government of Afghanistan] or donors are doing in...and the government does not have the power to convey the message in a positive way to the people...the GoA [government's] strategy of one way communication, whatever... [it] thinks is appropriate for that day is conveyed, without seeing into the long term impact of what they communicate or how they communicate issues to public.

(Anonymous, personal communication, December 27, 2009)

Miscommunication: Instable Security and the Triumphant Insurgents

Afghanistan has been in a counter-terrorism war against Al-Qaeda and the Taliban for the last seven years. Therefore, an important duty of Afghanistan's government is to ensure Afghani citizens' personal security as its fundamental obligation. Afghanistan's

government cannot deliver other needed services unless security is ensured. The role of security is very important in Afghanistan because the country is already in a war against Taliban and Al-Qaeda insurgents. As discussed in the literature review, communication and media can play a role to mitigate conflicts and to limit insecurity.

“In this milieu, media play an integral part and vital role both in the conduct and even in the commencement of war” (Webster, 2003:1). The media’s role in information is equally important in fighting terrorism in Afghanistan. According to R. Brown (2003), each side in the Afghan war, including “Al-Qaeda and its leaders and Taliban... seek to use the media to frame agendas and mobilize opinion. These battles take place in multiple media fields aimed at multiple audiences” (2003: 94). It follows that information during warfare must devote great attention to “perception management” (2003: 94) of the population at home. Despite the importance of media in fighting terrorism, the Afghanistan government’s approach is to limit media access to information, resulting in media communication that is imbalanced or untruthful. In this context, insurgents are strengthened and the people’s security is further threatened.

Lots of information that could help mitigate or help prevent disasters is filtered for the sake of keeping or protecting individuals or government institutions, and this attitude in communication by government has clear negative implication for the state. Overall, the negative communication by government is more outstanding than the positive, thus creating an imbalance between the government and the insurgency communication strategies, benefiting the insurgency propaganda. A balance could be created by passing the Access to Information Law to ensure the right of people in access to truthful information, as guaranteed by the Constitution.

(Anonymous, personal communication, December 27, 2009)

Shrinking Civic Debates: The Unrealized People's Voice in Decision-Making

As discussed in chapter 2, civil society groups are necessary to promote transparency and accountability through monitoring the government and mobilizing the people. The establishment of civil society groups cannot be accomplished unless there is effective communication between citizens. As Wilson and Warnock (2007) observe, “the fabric of civil society is woven from the ongoing communication and exchange between people—through interpersonal, informal and cultural processes as well as through formal institutions and official channels” (2007: 4).

Participants were asked about the relationship between good governance, civil society and communication in Afghanistan. In general, all the informants see the role of civil society as significant in raising the voice of people and in bringing transparency and accountability to the system of governance. However, they also stated that a true civil society that reflects the voice of the people remains to be born in Afghanistan. Most of the informants believe that the NGOs that deliver services and implement the reconstruction projects are misperceived as the civil society in Afghanistan. Some of the informants also believe that despite the existence of some genuine civil society organizations, the lack of communication and coordination within civil society groups and the reluctance of the international community and Afghanistan's government to value these groups have mitigated the civil society's effects.

The role of communication is assumed to be pivotal in establishing civil society movements in Afghanistan, but some of the participants believe that the one-way

communication approach used by the Afghan government, which has had a historic root in the despotic tradition of ruling Afghanistan, hinders the development processes:

A civil society...cannot be perceived without free flow of information through a democratic communication among its citizens and their government. In Afghanistan, one of the core problems in creating a civil society based on mutual trust between the citizens and their government is a lack of free communication based on democratic principles.

(Anonymous, personal communication, December 27, 2009)

The voice of the people and the role of civil society can be respected when a two-way communication begins and the people become a source of democratic power. In a feudal Afghanistan, people are powerless and, therefore, they are receivers of a one-way communication from their government. Because Afghanistan's government is not listening to people's voices, "this is a total lack of mutual communication between the state and the citizenry, thus creating the foundation for the continuous failure of the governments in the country" (Anonymous, personal communication, December 27, 2009).

It is important to note that promoting communication between Afghani civil society and the government is not necessarily the government's responsibility. This task should also be part of role of the civil society in bridging the government with other actors and the people. Lack of a vibrant civil society marginalizes the people's demands, especially those people from the rural areas and those who are uneducated:

Certainly, civil society could do much more to act as an interface between citizens' voices and government. There does not seem to be a focal point in government to whom civil society can report, hence the prevalence of 'clientalism'. Also, it seems the civil society of Kabul is somewhat divorced from possible partner organizations and people outside Kabul and other urban centres.

(Anonymous, personal communication, December 17, 2009)

Moreover, it is believed that the problem is mostly within Afghani civil society itself, as individuals do not understand their priorities and roles, or within those non-governmental organizations that are wrongly identified as civil society:

The Afghan Civil Society is mainly based on NGO mentality and percepts, thus being focused on projects rather than taking a position on serious issues in the society and defend the right or plight of people. The project seeking, NGO culture among the civil society must be ended, and make the civil society more responsible and accountable in what is going on in the country.

(Anonymous, personal communication, December 27, 2009)

There is a growing need for reforms to improve the way Afghanistan's government is administered. Since the role of civil society is mobilizing the people to monitor the government, civil society can play an important role in reforming the administration of government. The absence of a genuine civil society movement has slowed down and hindered the reform processes as stated here:

Indeed, a reform process cannot be initiated without a civil society that take a position on issues, stand for that value and put pressure on the ...GoA [government of Afghanistan] to cave into the reform based demands of the people...So far, such demands lack, and the... [civil service] is fixed on sharing the power with GOA or sharing the wealth that comes in from donors, rather than working towards a reform agenda in governance.

(Anonymous, personal communication, December 27, 2009)

The presence of funds from external donors has made the Afghani civil society donor-driven. A civil society funded by international donors, or that receives assistance from government, potentially loses the authority of monitoring the integrity of the processes guided by government and international community:

The new model of development in Afghanistan has also changed the active civil society to passive recipients of donor money. They are not watching the government and monitoring the nation and state building process but are delivering a service which has blurred the line between the government and the NGOs.

(Anonymous, personal communication, December 15, 2009)

Civil society can use several communication methods and approaches to make their needs known to government. There are other ways of communication if the government chooses not to listen to their demands, such as protest and pressure through organizing demonstrations. But, it is the role of civil society to teach people peaceful ways to demonstrate and to demand their rights non-violently. "I believe it is the mandate of the civil society to help the public understand their rights. ...There is a tremendous need to educate public on their right to protest, and more importantly on HOW to protest"

(Anonymous, personal communication, December 27, 2009).

Miscommunication between the Governor and the Governed

Poor mutual communication between government, international actors, civil society and the people, undermines security, professional administration, and priority setting in the rebuilding process of Afghanistan. For instance, it is the responsibility of Afghanistan's government to ensure the people's security and to introduce safe conflict management programs. In other words, the international coalition forces, NATO, and the Afghan Army have taken the responsibility for fighting terrorism in order to ensure the security of Afghani people. Otherwise, in the absence of a mutual understanding and cooperation, people will turn away from their government and stop supporting the state. But, mutual

communication between the government and the international community is needed in order to coordinate the security measures. There is miscommunication between the forces which create a situation where the insurgents become stronger as security deteriorates. “Trust breakdown is the major cause behind people joining anti-government forces in Afghanistan. The stronger the coordination among different stakeholders for building peace, the weaker the anti-government forces will be” (Anonymous, personal communication, December 15, 2009). It is also assumed that communication between people and the government can empower people and can raise the support of people behind the government in fighting against Taliban insurgents. “The current turmoil in Afghanistan is because of lack of communication between government and the people.... So people feel more empowered being part of a system where their concerns are heard and efforts are made to solve” (Anonymous, personal communication, December 15, 2009).

In addition to these complications, disengagement and marginalization of people can also result in unrealistic decision-making in Afghanistan. The international donors set their priorities without consulting the Afghani people. While it should be the role of Afghanistan’s government, the people, and the civil society, to lead the reconstruction process, instead:

The current situation of Afghanistan unfortunately does not allow the Afghans to raise their priorities. This is very clear in the last three World Conferences (London, Berlin and Tokyo) held to draw a roadmap for future stability and development of the country. Unfortunately, Washington and London are setting priorities for Afghanistan other than Afghans themselves. Even for the coming conference in London in January [2010]... [the priorities] are set up in advance. The Afghan delegation will just symbolically endorse those decisions.

(Anonymous, personal communication, December 15, 2009)

Although the role of communication is important in enhancing the quality of good governance, it is assumed that the same role is not committed in practice by local and international actors who are engaged in Afghanistan's state building:

Since communication has the key and important role between any two parties; senders and receivers of the messages, government and people-community/ government and donors, government and International organizations, etc. in the country. But unfortunately there is no any mutual and understanding communication role in Afghanistan government system between the parties which are mentioned above.

(Anonymous, personal communication, December 17, 2009)

The cooperation and communication between the government, the civil society and other non-governmental organizations are significantly important in addressing development in Afghanistan. “[W]hile government-to-government aid and political advice and accountability have their place, non-governmental, civil society organizations have been sorely neglected” (Anonymous, personal communication, December 17, 2009). The absence of the coordination between external donors and Afghanistan governments is also a major factor in making the donors' priorities as the drivers of the projects.

Further, the communications from the international community are narrowed down to those Afghan officials who have English language skill, thus, the rural population is excluded from the overall process:

Unfortunately there is very poor coordination, perhaps because communications are with those government ministers, parliamentarians and senior ministerial officials who speak English. How can the cooperation among the international actors, Afghanistan government can enhance the administration quality? Of primary importance is that both the IC [International Community] and Afghan government get out to the

rural areas and understand the language and cultural makeup of the people there.

(Anonymous, personal communication, December 17, 2009)

Ethnicity, warlordism, and the imposition of external preferences are factors that interfere with coordination of the reconstruction process. “International actors have the power position and they say the final word. The Afghan government figures are more engaged with their ethnicity issue. Additionally, the government was not built on democratic principles. We still have the warlords... in power” (Anonymous, personal communication, December 30, 2009).

There is also a need to establish a balance between the priorities of the foreign countries and those of the Afghanistan government. The challenging fact that the international community has to account to their taxpayers also creates a dichotomy of priorities: those of the Afghani people, and those of the donor nations. Moreover, a miscommunication between the donors’ delegates can further undermine the coordination. “The International Community (IC) whose taxpayers are financing operations in Afghanistan on almost all fronts must agree first among...[themselves] regarding conditionality of aid and hold their diplomats and aid agencies accountable back to their taxpayers” (Anonymous, personal communication, December 17, 2009). It is assumed that enhancing the coordination between the external and internal actors is important in addressing the developmental goals in Afghanistan:

Cooperation and coordination can create similar goals for both the government and the international community to achieve. It will reduce the misuse of funds and enhance administration effectiveness in Afghanistan. Furthermore, cooperation can enhance trust among the government and the international community. In terms of WAR on Terror, cooperation will

reduce the civilian casualties and will ultimately reduce anti-government and anti-foreigner's sentiment.

(Anonymous, personal communication, December 15, 2009)

To address the coordination between the external and internal sources of decision-making, the Joint Coordination and Monitoring Board (JCMB) was established.

However, the JCMB was under-resourced and this body could not function as it was set out to do. This situation led to a major failure in the government system in Afghanistan.

During the course of the interviews, it surfaced that because of the major managerial mistakes by Afghanistan government and the international players in the course of the last nine years, challenging situations in Afghanistan were not addressed. These include such issues as the absence of rule of law, the inclusion of conflicting secular and religious values simultaneously in the constitution, and the appointment of meritless employees in the administration. For instance, “on the political front, instituting democratic process and rule of law were retarded by the ambiguity of the constitution and its references to ‘in accord with Islamic law’—what Islamic law/as defined by whom?”

(Anonymous, personal communication, December 17, 2009)

Degraded Democracy: Undermined Good Governance

As discussed in chapter 2, democracy, in realizing the people's participation in the decision-making processes, strengthens good governance. Afghanistan uses a democratic system as the basis of its political structure. Throughout the last seven years, Afghanistan has carried out two presidential elections, has established a representative parliament, and has enshrined human rights in its constitution. Democracy is perceived by the

interviewees as a better model of governance for Afghanistan, provided that freedom of expression and citizenship rights are practiced and accountability and transparency are strengthened. “In a democracy citizens also have responsibilities which define their relationship with the rest of society and with their government. Transparency and accountability are also important for democracy to function effectively” (Anonymous, personal communication, December 17, 2009).

The in-depth interviews also revealed that there are some concerns about the quality of democracy that is being applied in the country. It is assumed that the project to embrace democracy deviated from its true route under pressure from fundamentalists and human rights violators in Afghanistan, who did not believe in democracy and just went along with it superficially. “Democracy must be practiced by those who believe in it, and not by fundamentalists who claim to be practicing it now. At present, the fundamentalists, the human right violators and criminals have the strong hand in the government” (Anonymous, personal communication, December 30, 2009). The deviation from democracy that is genuine and has quality not only failed to bring about economic policies intended to end poverty, but also it revived the past ethnic rifts, because of the approach it took toward freedom of expression:

In Afghanistan democracy came without putting in place proper measure or safeguards. ... Democracy is also affecting negatively the peace process in Afghanistan, for example, freedom of speech is dividing the society along ethnic, linguistic and religious lines. Since the government is weak and divided several regional and international powers can influence their power through supporting NGOs and Media to create further hatred among the people.

(Anonymous, personal communication, December 15, 2009)

Good governance and democracy require the full support of the people in Afghanistan.

Good governance can be an effective model for Afghanistan only if it is not forced from outside and if it answers the realistic needs of the people:

While most UN and World Bank agendas and plans on various topics present logical, rational and expert solutions, they often prove unable to work in practical settings. The current ‘good governance’ agenda is another example. It is not possible to force any reform effort from outside, it has to be organic. And it can be organic only when there is a working and legitimate system in place.

(Anonymous, personal communication, December 30, 2009)

Democracy cannot take root in Afghanistan unless social justice and equity among different sections is respected and “people’s education, good governance, equality among the people of the country in all affairs, participation of people in all decision-making of the government policies and plans without considering race, religion, language, nationality, ethnics, etc.” (Anonymous, personal communication, December 28, 2009) are prerequisite.

On the same note, the participants reinforced that any agenda to introduce the political and governance models for Afghanistan needs to be one that is originated by the people, and should be promoted by the civil society for gaining support throughout Afghanistan:

Any successful good governance agenda must originate in the mind of the public in Afghanistan and being promoted by Afghan advocacy groups. Experience in Afghanistan and other countries proved times and again that imported reform agendas coming from western minds into third world countries do not work, as they do not match the realities of these countries.

(Anonymous, personal communication, December 27, 2009)

Good governance needs more transparency from the international actors, as do their commitments in Afghanistan. Because a considerable portion of resources and funds are implemented directly by the international donors in Afghanistan, the effectiveness of such projects is very important to improve the quality of development in the country. However, it is assumed that an insufficient level of attention has been paid to the degree of corruption committed by the international organizations and donor agencies in Afghanistan. “Most of the aid money is spent through the international organizations other than the government. Therefore, one could say that the international community has a high stake in carrying corrupt activities on the ground” (Anonymous, personal communication, December 15, 2009). The same assumptions about the absence of government’s commitment in tackling the poverty, the injustices, and the insecurity are seen as significant failures for Afghanistan’s government, since

Poverty is a major contributor of petty corruption in Afghanistan ...
Furthermore, security is a big challenge, nobody [can] trust the future of Afghanistan, which creates ‘Short Horizons’, so officials are only concern to collect as much as possible and escape the country.”
(Anonymous, personal communication, December 15, 2009)

Fighting Corruption: Transparency, Accountability, and Reform Agenda

Governments are the institutions to promote accountability and transparency. They should provide efficient systems and establish mechanisms to avoid misuse of the public funds and assets. According to John Kenneth Galbraith (1973), “the role of the government, when one contemplates reform, is a dual one. The government is a major part of the problem; it is also central to the remedy” (1973: 242). The level of governance

inefficiency and the pace of political progress in the last seven years required an agenda of reform in Afghanistan. Consequently, some reforms were addressed, which, undergoing many fluctuations, have not produced convincing outcomes. There are many factors in the failure of these reforms. Among them is the way the basic needs of the people continue to be ignored:

In terms of meeting the expectations of the people the reform agenda, such as it was, has not been successful. Many say it is because expectations were too high; there is some truth to this. Implementation of the reform agenda has failed to meet the basic human needs of a fairly large majority of the population: food, clothing and shelter, or to institute fairness before the law. It seems that impunity still reigns supreme.

(Anonymous, personal communication, December 17, 2009)

It can also be argued that the failures of the government's reform agenda were mostly due to insecurity, unqualified recruitment in the reformist institutions, and absence of communication among the key national and international players:

Unfortunately most reform agenda of the Afghan government were failed so far, due to security in the country, intervention of the countries, not having qualified staff for implementing them including lack of coordination and cooperation between the governments of Afghanistan and international organization.

(Anonymous, personal communication, December 28, 2009)

An agenda of reform will not succeed unless the fundamental rights and the basic needs of people are considered as equal priorities. Addressing human rights, education and basic needs of the people are the most necessary priorities for the agendas of change and reform in Afghanistan. But some of the participants stress that the role of people should be at the center of any reform agenda: "In terms of what should be done as next steps—simplify and prioritize the basic necessities for a functioning society by keeping the

possible effects on the people front and centre of every decision” (Anonymous, personal communication, December 17, 2009).

To tackle the corruption, it is not enough to rely solely on political will, but also on an appropriate mechanism that will authorize the right people and the right institution to address the challenge of corruption. Although Afghanistan has tried to fight corruption the commissions and institutions that were authorized to address it, due to absence of independence and non-transparency in their appointments, could not achieve the ideal reforms. “The independent commissions to bring reforms were not independent and authorized to carry certain reforms. The appointment of the members of these commissions was not transparent. Furthermore, security for the commission members was a big deal” (Anonymous, personal communication, December 15, 2009). The role of political will should not be ignored in any reforms while in Afghanistan yet “the international community did not put enough resources and moral support to strengthen these commissions. Furthermore, Afghan government did not show a political will to make the commission effective” (Anonymous, personal communication, December 15, 2009).

Public participation and public institutions are important elements in a reform process. Among the participants’ views, establishment of a joint institute comprising international and national personnel is considered to be necessary in order to counter the corruption in Afghanistan: “We need a hybrid structure of both nationals and internationals expert to carry reforms. The current High Oversight Office (HOO) shall have the independence, full authority with both national and international security forces, and enough resources to carry reforms” (Anonymous, personal communication,

December 15, 2009). However, the duty of the international donors is to ensure the integrity of their funds, but at the same time, they are required to be more committed to Afghanistan priorities rather than to their related government's political interests, as stated here:

From a donor point of view, we must cater more to the Afghan people than to our government while strongly encouraging the Afghan government to do the same. At the same time we should stop using Afghanistan as an instrument of domestic political policy and debate. Be honest with domestic audiences.

(Anonymous, personal communication, December 17, 2009)

It can also be argued that the accountability of government to the people and to the civil society can improve the governance quality. "The role of civil society and government shall be very clear in Afghanistan. I think people see government as a legitimate body to deliver services" (Anonymous, personal communication, December 15, 2009). Similarly, interviewees identified the importance of the people's voice in fighting corruption. Once their voices are heard and they become more aware of corruption and the responsible hands behind it, the people "collectively develop the courage to question their representatives and use the power of their vote without fear of reprisal" (Anonymous, personal communication, December 17, 2009) to end it.

Impartiality and Professionalism

Chapter 2 contains a number of criteria, including impartiality, as indicators of good governance. Among other indicators, impartiality, "based on analyses of political theory" by Rothstein and Teorell (2008: 165), is assumed as "a more coherent and specific

definition of quality of governance: the impartiality of institutions that exercise government authority” (Ibid: 165). They identify impartiality as an “input side which relates to the access to public authority” (Ibid: 169), is also described as political equality by Robert Dahl (cited in Rothstein & Teorell, 2008).

Discussing the need for impartiality in Afghanistan’s governance system is important because a government can be composed of conflicting interest groups and various partisan affiliations, such as ethnic, ideological and regional identities. These influential groups can compromise the professionalism and the public interest with their sectarian interests which undermine the criterion of impartiality. Access to public authority sometimes bends more toward certain groups which undermines the political equality and furthers the decline of the quality of governance. The role of citizens is important to keep pressure on the government to operate professionally and impartially:

Impartiality of government enhances the quality of government in all societies. Realistically however, governments are rarely wholly impartial as they must always give preference to serving their client base. Citizens understand this and will tolerate a certain degree of skewing. It is good for citizens to understand the decision-making process and to hold their government accountable even when it has not been impartial.

(Anonymous, personal communication, December 17, 2009)

Furthermore, it is also assumed that the “impartiality of the government can enhance the quality of the government when it has qualified, dedicated, and experienced ministers in each area and its plans must be based on the need of the people and applied democratically in the country” (Anonymous, personal communication, December 28, 2009). Another factor that helps reduce the level of qualitative governance in Afghanistan is the ethnic affiliation of the senior government employees, in particular, when such

affiliations undermine the major policy implementations in the government. That is how ethnic approach is identified as one of the hindering factors for realization of reform agenda in Afghanistan, “since ethnicity is a very sensitive issue in Afghanistan, any reform shall be carried out with fairness without any hidden agenda to disarm and sideline one or other ethnic group” (Anonymous, personal communication, December 15, 2009).

Wrapping Up

In general, the review of the government’s documents and the e-mails from the participants unveils the extent of the distance between the policies (such as ANDS) and what is implemented in practice. Almost all the relevant government’s strategy-related documents stress the significance of communication in promoting Afghanistan’s governance quality. Both the in-depth interviews and analysis of institutional documents also emphasize that various dimensions of communication, such as debates, free media, respecting public opinion in setting priorities in decision-making, promoting e-governance, raising the voice of the people through civil society movements, etc, must be utilized and promoted. At the same time, it is also found that the government has achieved a great deal in promoting the number of media in its visual, audio, and printed forms. The research also addresses some of the significant development accomplishments in Afghanistan. However, analysis of documents and interviews, both, show that the government has not yet committed a meaningful pledge toward the use of communications in its overall processes. For instance, it is revealed that, a proactive

public relation strategy is missing and that the achievements of the government and the international agencies have not been communicated effectively. This is happening at a time when billions of dollars have been spent in Afghanistan and while public opinion is dissatisfied with the low level of access to information, poor dissemination, and miscommunication.

The miscommunication between the international actors, the Afghanistan government, and the Afghanistan people has led to an overall failure of the development processes and the realization of good governance. Some of these failures were identified by participants as: a) growing insecurity because of the increasing Taliban insurgencies; b) absence of people's priorities in the development projects; and c) evolution of a pseudo civil society movement in Afghanistan. Such civil society groups are mostly engaged in service delivery rather than contributing to their main mission: enlightenment and advocacy of people's rights.

In summary, the review of the Afghanistan National Development Strategy and other public policies, and the interviews of the participants show that there is still a wide window of opportunity to bring about reforms. These reforms can enhance good governance if they tackle corruption, bring accountability and responsiveness, and widen transparency in the overall administration system. Lastly, these reforms should begin by engaging the people's voice in the decision-making processes and by giving a proper role to communication.

Chapter 5

Conclusion

This chapter briefly discusses the significant findings, provides a general overview of the thesis, and introduces its implications and limitations.

Significant Findings

The study of the government's documents and the analysis of the in-depth interviews with the experts result in a central finding: Communication can play an essential role in promoting good governance in Afghanistan. However, there is a wide gap between what the Afghanistan National Development strategy has promised in terms of good governance and communication, compared with what is actually practiced by the government. The thesis also finds that ANDS (2007) is a major strategic document for development in Afghanistan. This document presents a road map for the ways in which communication can improve transparency and accountability, control corruption, help build civil society, and launch e-governance. ANDS sees the availability of information as a means to fight corruption, stating that "the Government will increase the amount of information available to the public. The public will have greater access and rights to publicly held information" (2007: 7).

On the other hand, the interviews with the field experts indicate that the suggestions contained in ANDS have been abandoned without due follow-up and implementation. For instance, ANDS contains a commitment to promote communication

within government: “the Government will enhance the flow of information between all government entities related to national policy, strategy and national budget procedures” (2007: 7). On the contrary, the thesis finds that the government’s internal communication is neither proactive nor effective. The role of communication in Afghanistan’s governance system, according to the point of view of the majority of the participants, has lagged behind public expectations. This is simply because the government has not fulfilled its commitment to achieve accountability and transparency as promised in its policies.

At the same time, it is worth mentioning that the government has achieved a great deal in promoting the number of media in its visual, audio, and printed forms. The participants’ e-mails and other relevant documents also highlight a number of accomplishments in the development of a new Afghanistan. However, the in-depth interviews also show that the government has not yet committed to a meaningful use of effective communication in their overall processes.

The major findings on which most of the participants agree describe how the absence of communication (or perhaps what might be better described as miscommunication) has subverted the quality of good governance in Afghanistan as follows: (1) the absence of a proactive public relations strategy in the government and among the international agencies; (2) the insufficient amount of dissemination to inform the public about the achievements of the government and the accomplishments of the international agencies; (3) the miscommunication and poor coordination between the international actors, national players, and the people; (4) the media’s inability to fully access to the public information; (5) the acclaimed role of media in raising the awareness

during the 2009 presidential elections; (6) the absence of an active civil society to raise the voice of the people and in the absence of people's priorities in the government's decision-making; (7) the corruption, lack of transparency, poor accountability, and trust deficit, in the absence of an effective communication; (8) the need for impartiality and professionalism to replace ethnic and ideological criteria in the administrative affairs; (9) the absence of an informed public; and (10) the need for reforming the communication system of Afghanistan so that it might potentially improve the delivery of good governance and to editorial the legitimacy of democracy.

The miscommunication between the international actors, the Afghanistan government, and the Afghanistan people, has led the country to an overall failure status and has undermined its development process. Informants identified some common causes of these failures as: a) growing insecurity because of the Taliban insurgencies, b) absence of people's priorities in the development projects, and c) evolution of a pseudo civil society in Afghanistan. Such civil society groups are mostly engaged in service delivery rather than in maintaining their main duty which is enlightening the people and advocating their rights and freedoms.

The above-mentioned list of malfunctioning communication practices of the Afghanistan government has also been manifested in the high level of corruption, insecurity, disillusionment of the population, fraudulent elections, absence of the rule of law, and numerous violations of human rights. The review of the Afghanistan National Development Strategy (ANDS) and the interviews of the informants suggest that there is still a window of hope to bring about reforms. Such reforms may never be realized unless

corruption and non-transparency are challenged by stressing the role of communication in Afghanistan's governance system.

Thesis Summary

Extensive review of the scholarly articles was done to investigate how good governance and communication are interrelated. Bertrand Russell's 1961 work, *Authority and the Individual*, and Niklas Luhmann's 1990 work, *Political Theory in the Welfare State*, led the researcher through an extensive review of scholarly articles, institutional documents, and other studies on good governance and communication.

Russell's essay explains that governance is not an end in itself but a means toward another goal, an excellent one, one that serves the public interest. The administration should provide justice, welfare, and an environment that enables progress for the individuals who are also members of a bigger society. Meanwhile, Luhmann's theory stresses the role of political inclusion of the population in the formation of a welfare state. Luhmann's political inclusion can occur through certain interaction and communication between the societal subsystems such as government, people, civil society, etc. Such interaction can cause the establishment of a mechanism to monitor the governing institutions. Therefore, communication happens internally within the political subsystems as well as within and between the spheres of administration, politics, and the public. In a welfare state, the structure of government and opposition, always benefits the public and the wishes and never ending demands of citizens will be met steadily.

The literature review finds that communication can enhance the quality of good governance. In most of the scholarly studies, it was assumed that communication is a core component of good governance. The pillars of good governance were defined as transparency, accountability, and responsiveness. But these are not achievable unless there is sufficient monitoring of the government's activities. Who else can play the watching role better than an active civil society comprised of people from every sector of the population? In the same chapter, the role of citizenry is identified as an essential component of good governance. How citizenry plays a prominent role in both good governance and democracy and are therefore interrelated was also discussed. Citizens give legitimacy to governments, watch the administration, and pressure the government to adopt their policies to reflect the priorities of the people.

The relationship of citizens to government is held together by their communication with each other. This relationship is facilitated by media, public debate, civil society, and other communication tools. Dialogue between all the subsystems of a society is an essential component of good governance because it interrupts a government's tendency toward one-way communication. Furthermore, the literature review implied that communication is the citizen's basic right in a democratic government. Communication, in promoting economic development, strengthening democracy, and seeking an end to poverty, reinforces the agenda of good governance. Communication in its media and electronic formats can play a tangible role in strengthening transparency and accountability in government. Finally, the literature review also showed another important role of communication in supporting the fight against corruption.

Regarding the research design and methodology, Chapter 3 explains how the design and methodology of the thesis were set. It also explains that the thesis follows a qualitative approach. The researcher started with collecting empirical data: the in-depth interviews were carried with six national and international field experts including government officials and civil society activists. Then, an analysis of relevant institutional documents as the secondary source was carried out.

This research aimed to investigate the relation between good governance and communication in Afghanistan. There are two significant elements of the current research that make it an exclusive contribution to knowledge. First, this is not only the first research to dig into the relation between communication and good governance in Afghanistan, but it is also one of the first academic works to explore the concept of communication in Afghanistan. The country has recently come out of a chronic despotism and isolation. In a matter of a few years, a dramatic influx of TV channels, the establishment of many radio stations, the emergence of hundreds of publishers of printed media, the arrival of modern digital communication technologies, and the influence of information into the political culture, when combined, call for an academic work to address communication and its role in Afghanistan's governance system.

Limitations and Implications

The most challenging part of this research was the empirical data collection from the field. Discussing the governance and the role of communication in Afghanistan required first-hand and credible sources of information from the field, and required access to

public documents. The long history of war and instability has disrupted the archiving and documenting capacity of the government's institutions in Afghanistan. However, a small number of the newly established institutions in Afghanistan enjoy better documentation practices and even provide online access to users. The researcher was able to access some of the required documents through online sources. This in itself is a sign of recent successes in advancing the electronic governance project in post-conflict Afghanistan. The country is now growing very fast to digitalize its communication capacities. ANDS has also promised expanding e-governance in the future, however investing on e-governance, with regards to the existing high level of illiteracy and under-development in Afghanistan, may not generate successful outcomes. Therefore, this research can be followed up in the future by another study to explore how e-governance changes the efficiency, transparency, and integrity in Afghanistan's administration, rising out of its war and traditional context.

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