





# Unraveling the Components of Sustainable Security in Afghanistan: A Fuzzy Hierarchical Decision-Making Perspective

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## **Abstract**

Despite a complex history marred by security disputes, the quest for sustainable security in Afghanistan is still an intricate puzzle. A multitude of influential factors and dynamic shifts in political leadership have shaped and characterized this puzzle. This study leverages the Fuzzy Analytic Hierarchy Process (FAHP) technique to identify and rank the crucial components that construct the sustainable security landscape in Afghanistan. Our meticulous examination places political and social elements at the forefront of this landscape. Among political factors, regional cooperation, strategic international relations policies, and the tenacious political will of ruling elites emerge as pivotal. Economically, the spotlight falls on poverty alleviation initiatives and intense economic drive, termed 'economic jihad'. From a social perspective, bolstering internal solidarity across ethnic and religious lines and encouraging citizen participation in security provisions are deemed essential. Concerning cultural parameters, our findings stress the importance of amplifying educational standards and fostering citizens' trust in government. Collectively, these components constitute the bedrock for sustainable security in Afghanistan. This study offers fresh insights into the diverse dimensions of security, providing valuable reference points for policymakers and stakeholders invested in Afghanistan's peacebuilding journey.

**Keywords:** Sustainable Security, Afghanistan, Fuzzy Analytic Hierarchy Process, Poverty Alleviation, Public Participation.

## Introduction

Despite a complex history marred by security disputes, the quest for sustainable security in Afghanistan is still an intricate puzzle. A multitude of influential factors and dynamic shifts in political leadership have shaped and characterized this puzzle. (UNDP, 1994). This fundamental concept not only shapes the quality of life but also directs the trajectory of societal growth. At its core, security acts as a bastion against fear, anxiety, danger, and doubt, fostering a sense of safety, serenity, and certainty, thereby facilitating the unhampered exercise of human rights and freedoms (Ajdari et al., 2011). However, security is a multi-faceted and dynamic construct, with interpretations that are fluid and alter over time and space, reflecting the complex socio-political and economic realities of different societies.

Broadly speaking, security can be understood at different levels: individual (human security), national (national security), or global (international security) (Buzan et al., 1998). Each level has its own referent object, scope, and challenges. For instance, human security focuses on the protection and empowerment of individuals and communities, while national security emphasizes the preservation and promotion of the state's interests and sovereignty, and international security deals with the maintenance and enhancement of global order and stability (Kaldor, 2007). However, these levels are not mutually exclusive or isolated, but rather interdependent and interconnected, as threats or opportunities at one level can affect or influence others.

Within this context, the concept of sustainable security emerges as a compelling strategy to address the interplay and mutual influence among political, social, cultural, and environmental factors that shape the security landscape (Oxford Research Group, 2012). Sustainable security goes beyond the traditional notions of security that focus solely on military power or state-centric threats. It embraces a holistic and preventive approach, addressing the root causes of insecurity rather than just its symptoms. Moreover, it acknowledges the capacity of a population to safeguard sustainable access to essential resources and protect against environmental disasters, all in a climate of peace and political stability (UN-Water, 2013).

Afghanistan, nestled in Central Asia, serves as an apt case study, exemplifying the paramount role of security in determining a nation's trajectory. Over the years, Afghanistan has endured political unrest, civil wars, and foreign interventions, leading to protracted

instability and insecurity (Sargana and Bokhari, 2020). Challenges such as narcotics production, ideological extremism, arms trade, and terrorism have further compounded the country's insecurity and chaos (Faraji Rad et al., 1390).

Given these considerations, the pursuit of sustainable security in Afghanistan demands a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of its multifaceted challenges. This study aims to unravel the components of sustainable security in Afghanistan and rank these components, ultimately contributing to informed policy decisions and robust strategies for the nation's future. The research goal is to identify and rank the key components of sustainable security in Afghanistan. The central research question guiding this study is: What are the key components of sustainable security in Afghanistan, and how should they be ranked to contribute towards the nation's sustainable development?

Hypothesis: Economic development, political stability, and societal cohesion are just some of the factors that determine sustainable security in Afghanistan. The successful ranking and implementation of these components can significantly contribute to achieving sustainable security in the country.

To address this research question and test our hypothesis, we will adopt a comprehensive mixed-method approach. This approach will combine qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis techniques, providing a holistic understanding of sustainable security in Afghanistan.

By investigating this hypothesis through comprehensive research and analysis, this article aims to provide valuable insights for informed policy decisions and the formulation of robust strategies to ensure a secure and sustainable future for Afghanistan.

## 1. Literature Review

Afghanistan's geopolitical context has continually been the subject of diverse studies, given its effects on regional and international security. Omrani and Elhami (1399) analyzed the US's post-9/11 military engagement in Afghanistan, illustrating this as an attempt to democratize the region and further long-term interests. This notion aligns with Seifi et al.'s (1396) research on sustainable security, emphasizing the crucial roles of political and economic factors in shaping sustainable security.

Jalalian et al. (2017) expanded on this, accentuating local factors such as border markets, police supervision, and cultural familiarity in enhancing sustainable security in border areas. The study

highlighted the importance of comprehensive development strategies for promoting sustainable security. This concept resonates with broader discussions on how local politics and socioeconomic conditions impact security (Böhmelt et al., 2020).

On the other hand, Ghadermazi et al. (1396) and Farzanehpour et al. (1396) underscored the external influences, such as government involvement and proximity to volatile regions, on security stability. These studies enrich the wider narrative that geopolitics and international interventions significantly shape regional security scenarios.

In recent times, separate studies by Ahmad (2022), Varma (2022), and De Jong (2022) have spotlighted non-traditional security challenges arising from the Taliban's takeover of Afghanistan, including potential civil war and resettlement issues. These concerns align with the emerging scholarly focus on non-traditional security threats in geopolitical studies (Burgess, 2020).

Applying Barry Buzan's regional complex security theory, Sargana and Bokhari (2020) examined the intricacies of the Afghan peace process, accentuating the importance of trust in conflict resolution (Fey & Ramsay, 2010). Meanwhile, Barfield's (2018) political and cultural history of Afghanistan offers practical insights for organizations striving towards sustainable security, underscoring the importance of historical understanding in conflict management (Lederach, 2015).

Further to this, the works of Collins (2016) and Cooper (2013) highlighted the interplay of internal dynamics, such as power divisions among Mujahideen groups and the illicit poppy trade, in molding Afghanistan's geopolitical context. The importance of these internal dynamics is often understated, yet they are crucial to understanding Afghanistan's sustained instability (Goodhand, 2008).

Lastly, Stevekol's (2008) "Ghost War" offers an account of intelligence activities in Afghanistan, mirroring the broadly acknowledged influence of international politics and clandestine operations on the country's stability (Coll, 2004).

In summary, the reviewed literature illuminates a broad array of factors contributing to Afghanistan's geopolitical instability, including economic, political, cultural, historical, and international elements. Grasping this intricate interplay is crucial to crafting effective strategies for sustainable peace and security.

## 2. Navigating Sustainable Security in Afghanistan

Afghanistan, a landlocked country in Central Asia, holds a historical legacy that has shaped its security landscape over the centuries. Its strategic location has made it a coveted prize for empires seeking to expand their influence (Hastrup, 2019). From Alexander the Great's conquests in the 4th century BCE to the British Empire's attempts to assert control in the 19th century, Afghanistan has witnessed invasions and struggles for dominance, often resulting in protracted conflicts.

This tumultuous history has earned Afghanistan the reputation of being the "Graveyard of Empires," highlighting its resilience and ability to resist foreign invasions (Hastrup, 2019). However, this historical context also underscores the complexity of Afghanistan's security challenges. External interventions have not only caused immense suffering for its people but have also left lasting scars on the country's political and social fabric.

The most recent example of foreign intervention was the Soviet-Afghan War in the 1980s. The Soviet Union's invasion triggered fierce resistance from Afghan Mujahideen fighters, who received substantial support from international actors, including the United States. The war lasted for nearly a decade, resulting in a significant loss of life and leaving the country in a state of turmoil (Rashid, 2000).

The aftermath of the Soviet-Afghan War saw the rise of militant groups, including the Taliban. These groups capitalized on the power vacuum and political instability to establish their presence and pursue their extremist agendas. Afghanistan became a breeding ground for terrorism, posing a threat not only to its security but also to the stability of the entire region (Gopal, 2019).

In the early 2000s, a U.S.-led coalition, with the support of NATO allies, intervened in Afghanistan to oust the Taliban regime and dismantle terrorist networks, most notably Al-Qaeda (Jones, 2019). The military intervention achieved initial success in toppling the Taliban government, but it also led to complex challenges in terms of governance, nation-building, and counterinsurgency.

One of the persistent challenges for sustainable security in Afghanistan is the prevalence of ethnic and sectarian divisions within the country. These divisions have been exploited by various militant groups to fuel their insurgency and gain support from marginalized communities (Kugelman, 2014). Achieving national unity and inclusivity in governance remains a daunting task.

Another crucial security issue in Afghanistan is the opium trade, which has become a major source of funding for insurgent groups

and criminal networks. The illicit drug trade not only finances terrorism but also undermines the rule of law and fuels corruption (Felbab-Brown, 2016). Addressing this problem requires concerted efforts to provide alternative livelihoods for opium farmers and disrupt the drug supply chain.

To achieve sustainable security in Afghanistan, a comprehensive and multifaceted approach is essential. This approach must go beyond military solutions and address the root causes of instability (Mansfield, 2012). Nation-building efforts should focus on strengthening state institutions and promoting the rule of law, while also combatting corruption and ensuring accountability.

Economic development is vital in providing opportunities for the Afghan people, particularly the youth, who are vulnerable to recruitment by extremist groups due to limited prospects (Kugelman, 2014). Investment in education, infrastructure, and vocational training can offer alternative paths to a stable and prosperous future.

Furthermore, regional cooperation plays a pivotal role in Afghanistan's security. The country shares borders with several neighboring nations, and the security challenges are often intertwined (Rasul, 2016). Engaging in dialogue and cooperation with neighboring countries can help address cross-border issues and create a conducive environment for stability.

Counterterrorism and counterinsurgency efforts must remain a priority, but they should be part of a broader strategy that emphasizes diplomacy, development, and good governance. A clear exit plan and transition strategy should also be in place to ensure a responsible withdrawal of foreign military forces while supporting the Afghan government in its efforts to maintain security (Jones, 2019).

In conclusion, sustainable security in Afghanistan is a multifaceted and complex undertaking. It requires a deep understanding of its historical context, a logical analysis of the challenges it faces, and a conceptual framework that focuses on nation-building, economic development, regional cooperation, and targeted counterterrorism efforts. By acknowledging these factors and working collaboratively, Afghanistan and the international community can strive towards a more secure and stable future for the country and the region at large.

### **3. Methodology**

The present study is an applied research endeavor, adopting a

descriptive-analytical approach to explore the complex phenomenon of sustainable security in Afghanistan. The research procedure entails both primary and secondary data collection. Primary data was collected through field studies utilizing questionnaires and interviews, while secondary data was obtained from theoretical-conceptual frameworks, official documents, and prior research.

### **3-1. Research Process**

The research process began with a comprehensive literature review to gather knowledge about the topic, guiding the design of the research questionnaire. Field studies followed, involving surveys and interviews for data collection.

An integral component of our methodology was the Delphi method. The opinions of distinguished experts, scholars, and political thinkers were incorporated to identify and categorize the components of Afghanistan's sustainable security. The Delphi method also facilitated finalizing the indicators and criteria. The Fuzzy Analytic Hierarchy Process (AHP) was then employed to ascertain the weight of these criteria.

### **3-2. Research Tools**

The study employed a range of tools, including academic books and articles, past research projects for the library method as well as researcher-designed for the questionnaires for the survey method. The questionnaires captured demographic information about the respondents and were administered to research participants for completion.

### **3-3. Statistical Population**

The statistical population for this study comprised university professors, policy experts, political experts, security experts, and staff of peace institutions in Afghanistan. A selection of 30 specialists from this population was chosen for participation, and the researcher-made questionnaire was distributed amongst them.

### **3-4. Analytic Hierarchy Process (AHP)**

A typical AHP problem involves three levels: the overarching goal (level one), the evaluation criteria (level two), and the potential alternatives (level three). Each level's components are compared in pairs to determine the relative preference of each concerning the alternatives. The overall weight factor for each alternative, according to the main goal, is calculated, with the alternative

possessing the highest weight being chosen as the optimal option.

### **3-5. Fuzzy AHP**

The Fuzzy AHP method was developed to manage the inherent uncertainty in preferential judgments, which complicates the prioritization of alternatives and consensus on priorities. Fuzzy triangular values replace ambiguous data based on the answers provided by decision-makers to specific questions. For each pairwise comparison in the fuzzy logic approach, the intersection point is determined, and its membership value is equated to its weight.

### **3-6. Software Usage**

The AHP analysis and pairwise comparisons were performed using Microsoft Excel, coded with MATLAB. This software, extensively used across diverse scientific disciplines, including management science, is particularly prevalent in Iran for AHP analysis. Therefore, it serves as a crucial tool for researchers looking to conduct AHP analysis and paired comparison questionnaire analysis in the region.

## **4. Findings**

This research study focused on identifying the elements of Afghanistan's sustainable security from the perspective of political experts and scholars. A comprehensive approach was adopted, involving both library studies, including articles, dissertations, and books, and primary data collection through a Delphi questionnaire distributed among the expert panel.

The expert panel consisted of university professors, political analysts, security specialists, and peacekeepers in Afghanistan, all possessing extensive experience in their respective fields. Elements with a mean of less than 3 on an 5-point scale were omitted from the questionnaire and the experts did not propose new ones, which led to the determination of the elements for sustainable security of Afghanistan based on their consensus

The Fuzzy Analytic Hierarchy Process (FAHP) equations were used to determine the weight and importance of each factor. MATLAB software was employed for hierarchical analysis and pairwise comparisons to analyze the data and draw meaningful conclusions.

**Table (1): Final Elements of Afghanistan's Sustainable Security**

	Indicator	Research Questions	Spectrum of Importance				
			Very low (1)	Low (2)	Medium (3)	High (4)	Very High (5)
1	<b>Political factors</b>	Government attention to internal security issues	1	2	3	4	5
2		Government attention to security issues in border areas	1	2	3	4	5
3		Increasing military security capabilities	1	2	3	4	5
4		Involving people in political affairs	1	2	3	4	5
5		Developing a comprehensive public security policy	1	2	3	4	5
6	<b>Economic factors</b>	Poverty alleviation	1	2	3	4	5
7		Implementation of the regional development plan with existing capacity	1	2	3	4	5
8		No hesitation in the face of external shocks	1	2	3	4	5
9		Economic Jihad (redoubled effort)	1	2	3	4	5
10		Attention and support for private sector investment	1	2	3	4	5
11		Stability of government markets	1	2	3	4	5
12		Free trade	1	2	3	4	5
13		Avoiding and dealing with speculative attacks on the market	1	2	3	4	5
14	<b>Social factors</b>	People's participation in providing security	1	2	3	4	5
15		Strengthening correlations or internal links (ethnic, religious)	1	2	3	4	5
16		Increasing popular institutions	1	2	3	4	5
17		Creating a sense of national belonging between groups and individuals in society	1	2	3	4	5
18		Having respect for the ethnic and social capacities of society	1	2	3	4	5

Indicator	Research Questions	Spectrum of Importance					
		Very Low (1)	Low (2)	Medium (3)	High (4)	Very High (5)	
19	Economically balanced society and social facilities	1	2	3	4	5	
20	Increasing the level of education	1	2	3	4	5	
21	Self-confidence and self-reliance	1	2	3	4	5	
22	<b>Cultural factors</b>	Strengthening national identity through the wisdom of cultures	1	2	3	4	5
23		Holding bonding rituals	1	2	3	4	5
24		Using the media for public education	1	2	3	4	5
25		Global cultural communication	1	2	3	4	5

The FAHP method allowed the researchers to determine the weight and rank of each factor, providing valuable insights into the relative importance of components for Afghanistan's sustainable security. The main indicators' weights were calculated using FAHP, as depicted in Table 2 and Table 3. The degree of probability for each  $\mu_i$  surpassing other  $\mu_j$ s, represented as  $d'(A_i)$ , was also calculated (Table 5).

**Table (2): Matrix of Pairwise Comparisons of Afghanistan's Sustainable Security Indicators**

	Political factors	Economic factors	Social factors	Cultural factors
Political factors	1, 1, 1	3.1, 3.7, 4.1	1.5, 2.1, 2.6	2.2, 2.8, 3.3
Economic factors	.24, .27, .32	1, 1, 1	.45, .55, .6	.38, .28, .32
Social factors	.38, .47, .66	1.7, 1.8, 2.2	1, 1, 1	1.3, 1.8, 2.1
Cultural factors	.3, .36, .45	2.6, 3.1, 3.6	.48, .55, .77	1, 1, 1

**Table (3): Total Matrix of Pairwise Comparisons of Afghanistan's Sustainable Security Indicators**

	The Sum of the Matrix of Pairwise Comparisons of the Main Indicators
Political factors	(7/8.9/6.11/0.0)
Economic factors	(1/97.2/14.2/3.0)
Social factors	(4/38.5/0.7.5/96)
Cultural factors	(4/38.5/0.1.5/82)
Sum	(18/53.21/82.25/0.8)

**Table (4): Normalizing the sum of row**

	Normalize the sum of rows
Political factors	(0/311, 0/440, 0/593)
Economic factors	(0/078.0/0.98.0/124)
Social factors	(0/174.0/222.0/322)
Cultural factors	(0/175.0/229.0/314)

The subsequent step involved calculating the degree of probability that each  $\mu_i$  surpasses other  $\mu_j$ s, represented as  $d'(A_i)$ .

**Table (5): Calculate the Degree of Priority of Afghanistan's Sustainable Security Indicators**

	Political factors	Economic factors	Social factors	Cultural factors
Political factors	-	1	1	1
Economic factors		-	1	0.801
Social factors	0.048	1	-	1
Cultural factors	0.014	1	0.980	-

The weight vector was normalized to obtain the normalized weights, and the final ranking of Afghanistan's sustainable security indicators was determined based on the software output and expert analysis (Table 6).

**Table (6): Final Ranking of Afghanistan Sustainable Security Indicators**

Indicators	Weight	Rank
Political factors	۰.۳۱	۱
Economic factors	۰.۱۹	۴
Social factors	۰.۲۷	۲
Cultural factors	۰.۲۳	۳

Similarly, the sub-indices of political factors were analyzed using the FAHP method, following the steps described previously. Pairwise comparison matrices were created for the sub-indices of political factors (Tables 7 & 8). The degree of probability for each  $\mu_i$  outperforming other  $\mu_j$ s was also calculated (Table 10).

**Table (7): Paired Comparisons Corresponding to the Sub-Indices of Political Factors**

Main Indicators	Regional cooperation and international relations policies	Regional cooperation and international and cross-border relations policies	Increase military security capabilities	Involving people in political affairs	Develop a comprehensive public security policy	The will of the elite
Regional cooperation and international relations policies	۱, ۱, ۱	۰.۱۹, ۰.۲۱, ۰.۲	۰.۲۴, ۰.۲۹, ۰.	۰.۲۲, ۰.۲۶, ۰.۲	۰.۲۱, ۰.۲۳, ۰.۲۶	۰.۳۱, ۰.۳۴, ۰.۳۸
Regional cooperation and international and cross-border relations policies	۴, ۱, ۴, ۷, ۵, ۱	۱, ۱, ۱	۱.۵, ۱.۸, ۲.۱	۱.۳, ۱.۶, ۱.۹	۱.۱, ۱.۴, ۱.۷	۲.۳, ۲.۸, ۳.۲
Increasing military security capabilities	۳.۱, ۳.۴, ۴.۲	۰.۴۷, ۰.۵۵, ۰.۶	۱, ۱, ۱	۰.۷۶, ۰.۸۱, ۰.۸	۰.۸۲, ۰.۸۵, ۰.۸۹	۱.۴, ۱.۷, ۲.۱
Involving people in political affairs	۳.۵, ۳.۹, ۴.۵	۰.۵۲, ۰.۶۲, ۰.۷	۱.۲, ۱.۲۴, ۱.۳	۱, ۱, ۱	۰.۷۵, ۰.۸۱, ۰.۸۸	۱.۶, ۱.۹, ۲.۳
Developing a comprehensive	۳.۸, ۴.۳, ۴.۷	۰.۵۸, ۰.۷۱, ۰.۹	۱.۱۲, ۱.۱۷, ۱.۱	۱.۱۳, ۱.۲۳, ۱.۱	۱, ۱, ۱	۱.۷, ۲.۱, ۲.۵

Main Indicators	Regional cooperation and international relations policies	Regional cooperation and international and cross-border relations policies	Increase military security capabilities	Involving people in political affairs	Develop a comprehensive public security policy	The will of the elite
ve public security policy						
The will of the elite	٢٤,٢٩,٣٢	٠,٣١,٠,٣٤,٠,٤ ٣	٠,٤٧,٠,٥٨,٠, ٧١	٠,٤٣,٠,٥٢,٠,٤ ٢	٠,٤,٠,٤٧,٠,٥٨	١,١,١

**Table (8): Total Matrix Comparisons of the Main Indicators**

Main Indicators	Total Matrix Comparisons
Regional cooperation and international relations policies	(2/96.3/28.3/72)
Regional cooperation and international and cross-border relations policies	(17/6.2/7.23,3)
Increasing military security capabilities	(12/25.13/81, 28/16)
Involving people in political affairs	(13/47.15/17.17/35)
Developing a comprehensive public security policy	(14/43.16/61.18/64)
The will of the elite	(8/41.9/93.11/14)
Sum	(79/52.92/1.104/97)

**Table (9): Normalizes the Sum of Rows**

Main Indicators	Total Matrix Comparisons
Regional cooperation and international relations policies	..282, ..356, ..468
Regional cooperation and international and cross-border relations policies	..1677, ..2250, ..2930
Increasing military security capabilities	..1167, ..1501, ..2047
Involving people in political affairs	..1283, ..1649, ..2182
Developing a comprehensive public security policy	..1375, ..1805, ..2344
The will of the elite	..801, ..1079, ..1401

The degree of probability for each  $\mu_i$  surpassing other  $\mu_j$ s was calculated, represented as  $d'(A_i)$ .

**Table (10): Calculate the degree of preference for options over the target**

	B1	B2	B3	B4	B5	B6
B1	1	•	•	•	•	•
B2	1	1	1	1	1	1
B3	1	•.331	1	•.837	•.688	1
B4	1	•.456	1	1	•.837	1
B5	1	•.600	1	1	1	1
B6	1	•	•.356	•.171	•.234	1

The weight preference matrix for each factor was determined as the minimum of each row.

**Table (11): Normalization of Total Rows**

Main Indicators	weight
Regional cooperation and international relations policies	•.289
Regional cooperation and international and cross-border relations policies	1
Increasing military security capabilities	•.331
Involving people in political affairs	•.456
Developing a comprehensive public security policy	•.600
The will of the elite	•.356

By normalizing the weight vector, the normalized weights for the sub-indices of political factors were obtained, and the final ranking of the components concerning the purpose of the indicators was determined based on the software output and expert analysis (Table 12).

**Table (12): The final ranking of the components concerning the purpose of the indicators**

indicators	weight	rank
Regional cooperation and international relations policies	•.24	1
Regional cooperation and international and cross-border relations policies	•.19	3
Increasing military security capabilities	•.15	4
Involving people in political affairs	•.09	6
Developing a comprehensive public security policy	•.12	5

indicators	weight	rank
The will of the elite	.21	2

The findings highlighted the critical elements that contribute to Afghanistan's sustainable security and provided policymakers and stakeholders with valuable insights for formulating effective strategies and policies to ensure lasting peace and stability in the country.

## 5. Analysis and Discussion

Development and progress in nations hinge upon their citizens' sense of mental security. Indeed, security and stability act as steppingstones towards a flourishing society, an improved governance, enhanced economy, and ultimately, sustainable development. Thus, sustainable security serves as a pivotal factor and source of societal development and excellence. Evidence suggests that modern and developed societies are characterized by enduring security and lasting peace. Conversely, countries lacking sustainable peace and security often rank among the world's third-world countries, grappling with various challenges such as poverty, government dictatorship, illegitimate political systems, ethnic divides, and human rights violations.

Afghanistan, given its vital geostrategic position in proximity to critical and unstable regions like the Middle East, India, Pakistan, and Central Asia, holds significant global relevance. Over time, this relevance has grown due to Central Asia's massive oil and gas reserves, almost equivalent to those of the North Sea. Thus, Afghanistan has become a crucial intermediary for accessing these resources on international markets. Additionally, Afghanistan serves as a vital link between Central Asia and South Asia. However, the country has also emerged as a hindrance to the regional development process due to its status as a source of narcotics and a breeding ground for ideological fundamentalism, extremism, arms trade, and terrorism.

Afghanistan has always had a weak government due to its inability to control a strong social structure and dominant tribal systems. The tribal divisions in Afghan society have traditionally held elements of power, including the population, an independent economy and land, without foreign or central government sovereignty. These tribal divisions also form the ethnic roots of the government. The presence of warlords, who currently pose the most significant threat to Afghanistan's stability post-terrorism, contributes to the country's chronic insecurity. Therefore, security in Afghanistan is a scarce commodity that everyone seeks.

Studies by Seifi et al. (1396) stated that political and economic factors play a significant role in shaping sustainable citizenship security. To create and promote sustainable citizenship security, reforms in these areas are essential. Other contributing factors, such as social, health, food, and environmental elements, also play a vital role due to their interconnectedness. The individual factor in this system remains passive and is influenced by other factors relating to the concept of sustainable citizenship security.

**Table (13): Final Components of Afghanistan's Sustainable Security Delphi Method Output**

Indicator	Sub-index	Abundance	Percentage of frequency	The first round of Delphi
<b>Political factors</b>	Regional cooperation and international relations policies	۳	۲۰	۴.۴۷
	Regional cooperation and international and cross-border relations policies	۴	۲۶.۷	۴.۴۶
	Increasing military security capabilities	۵	۳۳.۳	۴.۳۳
	Involving people in political affairs	۲	۱۳.۳	۳.۴۶
	Developing a comprehensive public security policy	۱	۶.۷	۴.۰۰
<b>Economic factors</b>	Poverty alleviation	۳	۲۰	۳.۸۰
	Implementation of the regional development plan with existing capacity	۶	۴۰	۳.۵۳
	No hesitation in the face of external shocks	۸	۵۳.۳	۳.۲۰
	Economic Jihad (redoubled effort)	۷	۴۶.۷	۳.۷۳
	Attention and support for private sector investment	۱۰	۶۶.۷	۳.۹۳
	Stability of government markets	۹	۶۰	۳.۱۳
	Free trade	۱۵	۱۰۰	۳.۷۳
<b>Social factors</b>	Avoiding and dealing with speculative attacks on the market	۵	۳۳.۳	۳.۲۰
	People's participation in providing security	۵	۳۳.۳	۴.۶۶
	Strengthening correlations or internal links (ethnic, religious)	۶	۴۰	۴.۸۰
	Increasing popular institutions	۷	۴۶.۷	۳.۲۶
	Creating a sense of national belonging between groups and individuals in society	۹	۶۰	۴.۱۳
Having respect for the ethnic and social capacities of society	۱۱	۷۳.۳	۴.۵۳	

Indicator	Sub-index	Abundance	Percentage of frequency	The first round of Delphi
<b>Cultural factors</b>	Economically balanced society and social facilities	۱۲	۸۰	۳۰۰
	Increasing the level of education	۱۲	۸۰	۴۴۰
	Self-confidence and self-reliance	۱۱	۷۳.۳	۳۴۶
	Strengthening national identity through the wisdom of cultures	۸	۵۳.۳	۳۹۳
	Holding bonding rituals	۹	۶۰	۳۱۳
	Using the media for public education	۱۰	۶۶.۷	۴۱۳
	Global cultural communication	۷	۴۶.۷	۴۱۳

Further studies by Ghadermazi et al. (1396) indicated that there is a direct and significant relationship between research variables in the study area. These components and indicators have a substantial impact on the regional balance and stability of border areas. It was found that government involvement, the evolution of border function, and accessibility significantly increase the security stability of border areas. More government investment in border cities and the creation of large industrial projects have led to a greater population and retention in these cities, resulting in increased border and internal protection and enhancing citizens' sense of security.

This research also draws upon the works of authors such as Cooper (2013), Cole (2008), and Nickelsberg (2013), which delve into various aspects of Afghanistan's historical and current predicaments, including the opium trade, terrorist activities, and the impact of various regional and international players.

In this study, the most influential factors are found to be political factors with a weight of 0.31, followed by social factors with a weight of 0.27. Among political factors, regional cooperation and international relations policies rank first with a weight of 0.24, followed by the will of elites with a weight of 0.21. Among economic factors, poverty alleviation ranks first with a weight of 0.28, followed by economic jihad (double effort) with a weight of 0.24. Within social indicators, strengthening solidarity or internal ties (ethnic, religious) ranks first with a weight of 0.26, followed by people's participation in security provision with a weight of 0.21. Finally, in cultural factors, increasing the level of education ranks first with a weight of 0.21, followed by the nation's trust in government with a weight of 0.17.

## Conclusions and Recommendations

This study undertook the complex task of investigating the key components of sustainable security in Afghanistan and how these elements might be ranked to contribute to the nation's sustainable development. Our research question was centered around discerning these components and their significance in the larger security landscape. Our hypothesis assumes that sustainable security in Afghanistan is influenced by various factors, including economic development, political stability as well as social cohesion; and that its successful classification and implementation could significantly contribute to achieving sustainable security.

Our findings corroborate the hypothesis and provide valuable insights into the intricate web of components that shape Afghanistan's sustainable security landscape. Political factors emerged as the most influential component, demonstrating the centrality of regional cooperation, international relations policies, and the political will of ruling elites to security dynamics. The social factor, underscored by strengthening solidarity across ethnic and religious lines and promoting citizen participation in security provision, was the second most influential factor, underlying the crucial role of societal cohesion and harmony in security matters.

Economic factors, especially poverty alleviation initiatives and the commitment to economic growth, or 'economic jihad', also stood out as significant, reaffirming the correlation between economic stability and security. The cultural parameters, specifically enhancing educational standards and nurturing citizens' trust in government, were critical as well, indicating the role of cultural values and practices in shaping security.

Through our rigorous analysis, it becomes clear that sustainable security in Afghanistan is a multifaceted concept, necessitating a balanced and comprehensive approach to address the different components holistically. The importance of social, economic, and cultural factors cannot be undermined despite the fact the political factors hold the highest weight. Therefore, in shaping policies and strategies for Afghanistan's security, these diverse components must be considered and ranked appropriately.

Furthermore, the complexity of Afghanistan's socio-political landscape, characterized by tribal divisions, weak governance structures and the presence of warlords, highlights the challenges of achieving sustainable security in the region. It underscores the urgent need for reformative actions that bolster political stability, encourage economic development, enhance societal cohesion, and

build cultural trust in government.

In conclusion, this study affirms the interplay and mutual influence among political, social, economic, and cultural factors in shaping Afghanistan's sustainable security. It underscores the need for a balanced and integrated approach that acknowledges and addresses these elements to achieve sustainable security. By investigating these multifaceted components and their interrelations, the study provides a robust framework that can guide policymakers and stakeholders invested in Afghanistan's peacebuilding journey. Thus, this research makes a valuable contribution to understanding sustainable security in Afghanistan and offers a way forward for informed policy decisions and strategic planning for a secure and prosperous future for the nation.

### **Limitations and Future Research**

This research was carried out under certain constraints, limiting the scope of the study. Firstly, the research focused primarily on Afghanistan, and hence the findings may not be directly applicable to other countries with differing socio-political contexts. Secondly, the selection of the expert panel might have introduced biases in the study. Future research should aim to involve a more diverse group of participants, including women, minorities, and representatives from various socio-economic backgrounds.

Furthermore, this study only took into account political, social, economic, and cultural factors. Future research should examine other potential influences on sustainable security, such as technological advancements, infrastructure, healthcare availability, or gender equality.

It would also be beneficial to conduct comparative studies, examining how these factors play out in different countries or regions. This could provide further insight into the dynamics of sustainable security and identify best practices for achieving this goal.

Finally, it's important to note that while this research has identified key factors affecting sustainable security in Afghanistan, it does not provide a definitive blueprint for action. Instead, it should be viewed as a starting point for further discussion and research, with the aim of informing policy-making and practice in this vital area.

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