

Democratization of Afghanistan and Karzai Regime

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Abstract

Afghanistan's dependency upon international economic and military assistance has brought international involvement and instruction in its internal affairs. The terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 and subsequent war on terror not only damaged the very foundation of democracy, but also exposed the intentions of the US and its allies, whose interests were focused to the elimination of terrorism rather than the promotion of a political system to root out such evil permanently. The initial peace building efforts revealed the American intentions and installing a stable and cooperative regime in Afghanistan was not in lines with democracy. However, the Bush administration changed his role, realizing the American global commitment to democracy. After the fall of the Taliban regime, the UN made efforts to win the support for the ongoing peace process in Afghanistan and the political development through Bonn Agreement. The agreement was planned to make arrangement among the victors rather than a peace settlement between the belligerents. Humid Karzai was chosen as the head of the Interim Administration and later won the presidential election consecutively in 2004 and 2009. The Karzai administration violated the election procedure to secure its votes, accommodating the powerful armed groups. The Loya Jirga confirmed its support for American priorities, creating doubts about its legitimacy, bulldozing the expectations of the people for a healthy democratic setting in Afghanistan. The most serious question was the type of government as the ethnic minorities, consisting more than 50 percent of the population, wanted parliamentary system, whereas the US showed its inclination towards the presidential system. Elections were labeled independent, but some basic elements of democratic traditions were ignored as the political parties were sidelined, which produced a fragmented and weak legislature. Here the question is about the process of democratization of Afghanistan, whether the President Karzai regime adopted a right direction for true democratic setup, making incremental measures or molded the system as per interests and requirements in the name of security? After reviewing the available literature, the paper has hypothesized that the Karzai regime has not projected itself as a true elected representative of the people, but with the impression of the devotee of American interests in Afghanistan. The objective of the study is to look into the tenure of President Hamid Karzai and his regime's effort to democratize the state. Being a tribal society, the process of democratization was a new experience in Afghanistan, but the US and its allies ignored the culture, traditions and ethnic composition while launching Western liberal democracy. They forgot that the countries, which opt to be democratized can show performance if the system is assimilated to its traditions. The study is to explore the process of democratization in Afghanistan, reviewing the role of the regime. Both qualitative and descriptive methods have been used for analyzing the data.

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Introduction

Afghanistan, a landlocked country is located at the crossroads of South Asia, Central Asia and the Middle East. It suffered three decades of civil war, which partially ended after the fall of the Taliban regime. The massive terrorist violence of September, 11, 2001 in the United States, led Washington to make a coalition in 2001. The US, NATO allies and other states launched a war in Afghanistan against the alleged elements. Al Qaeda and its Taliban supporters was the prime target of the war on terror. Not a single state supported or defended them. Almost all countries recognized the American inherited right of self-defense in striking back those who had attacked its land and prestige as well. In the aftermath of the Taliban regime, the US brought the idea of formal democratization of the country as decades of civil war, anarchy and despotic regimes left no space for growth of democratic institutions and political culture.

Democracy and Process of Democratization

Democracy and democratic politics have been the focus of academic inquiry since the term was first used. Literally, it is the rule of the people and famously government of the people, by the people. In a democratic political system, citizens participate in selecting their government and hold it to account by virtue of their vote. It is political equality, treating all individuals equally. The people or their representatives lawfully govern themselves, rather than being governed by a military dictatorship, totalitarian party or monarch. The states having democratic systems are better as their performance is healthier than the states ruled by authoritarians, particularly in the crucial areas concerning fundamental rights.

The process of democratization often involves the foundation of democratic institutions, which comprise, but are not limited to free and fair electoral system for assemblies, local government structure and other mechanism and devices to link citizens to the institutions, including political parties and interest groups. The existence of these bodies alone is not a guarantee for the success of a democratic system, but better performance is a condition and a central component. Afghanistan had a little sustained experience with democracy.

Bonn Agreement after fall of Taliban

In Afghanistan, since 1979, due to civil war, no formally recognized regime had been existed as the country was facing first the Afghan war and then civil war. This imbroglio also threw the country into the war on terror, which ended the Taliban regime in December 2001, but not ended the terrorist elements due to deteriorating internal security situation. After the fall of the Taliban rule, Lakhdar Brahimi, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan, launched a campaign to contact and consult the regional and major powers for the peace process in the war-

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torn country. The Bonn process was the major initiative to discuss the post-Taliban administration for the development of a political structure under the UN auspices. The representatives of various Afghan factions assembled in Bonn, Germany to discuss the plan.¹ However, some prominent leaders were absent, including former King Muhammad Zahir, the former President Rabbani, future president Hamid Karzai and General Abdul Rashid Dostum (Khan, 2011: 102). The delegates of the Northern Alliance remained dominant in the process, despite the fact that they occupied only 10 percent of the Afghan territory during the Taliban regime. The group consisted of anti-Taliban fighters from northern part of Afghanistan (Ra'ees, 2005; Suhrke et al., 2004).

Bonn agreement, which was officially named as the “Agreement on Provisional Arrangements in Afghanistan Pending the Re-Establishment of Permanent Government Institutions,” was signed on December 5, 2001 by the 22 notable personalities (UNSC, 2005: 7). It laid the framework for building a functioning democratic regime. Brahimi prepared the draft of the agreement, the details of which had already been leaked to the press. President Bush was ambitious to make a quick agreement to avoid the military campaign. The Bonn agreement was planned to produce an accord among the victors rather than a peace settlement between the belligerents. It brought a roadmap for reconstruction of the country and graduated steps to culminate in the attainment of full sovereignty (Johnson, 2006: 2; Suhrke et al. 2004).

Afghan Interim Administration

The Bonn Agreement received its first achievement in the form of the Afghan Interim Administration, a body consisting of 30 members. On December 22, 2001, the administration was installed in Kabul and Hamid Karzai sworn as its chairman, which was the desire of the executives of the whole process.² His election was not a democratic one as the US lobbied for securing his position during the Bonn Conference to make him the chairman, using every fair or foul means. The American favour for Karzai was to accomplish its goals in Afghanistan. His election was a violation of rule of democracy (Suhrke et al. 2004: 04). Such type of direct or indirect interference of external powers always shadowed the internal affairs of Afghanistan, but this time, the foreign influence was unprecedented.

The agreement included a Special Independent Commission, which was responsible for convening an Emergency Loya Jirga (grand council) and a Supreme Court of Afghanistan. The 1964 constitution was to be adopted until a new constitution was promulgated (UNSC, 2005: 4). The tenure of the Administration was for six-month, followed by a Transitional Authority for the next two years. After that the national elections would be held to establish a permanent government in Afghanistan (Mullen, 2008: 56; UNSC, 2005: 4).

Emergency Loya Jirga for Transitional Authority

Under the Bonn Agreement, the interim administration convened an emergency Loya Jirga, a council of tribal elders, in Kabul on June 09, 2002 to select a broad-based, representative government. It was attended by 1,550 delegates, including 200 women from 32 provinces of Afghanistan (Mullen, 2008: 65; Council on Foreign Relations, 2019). King Zahir Shah,⁵ who returned to Afghanistan on April 18, 2002, presided over the gathering to give it the legitimacy, keeping with Afghan tradition. Bonn agreement also instructed that Jirga would be opened by King Zahir Shah (Khan, 2011: 103; UNSC, 2005: 3). However, his role was ceremonial only as the meeting was unofficially presided over by the American representatives and Lakhdar Brahimi. The Jirga was part of the democratic process, but its proceeding was marred by undemocratic norms. A large number of delegates were going in favor of King Zahir Shah, while Zalmay Khalilzad, a special American adviser to Afghanistan, appeared on the scene, and cut the debate short. He announced to the press that the king had decided not to seek any position in the Interim Administration (Fänge, 2012: 02; Suhrke et al., 2004: 29). The critical decision on behalf of Jirga made by a non-Jirga member and foreign official clearly violated both democratic and traditional procedures. He not only interrupted the process, but also overtly supported Karzai's selection as the president of the country (Sarwari, 2019). After securing his position through the *Loya Jirga*, Hamid Karzai became the head of the transitional authority, taking oath on June 19, 2002. The transitional authority was to govern until the elections for a representative government to be held in 2004. The plan for a legislature to work during the transitional period was discussed for two days by the delegates, but Karzai and his allies bulldozed it (Fänge, 2012). The idea of a legislature was in favour of the Mujahidin factions as the non-Pashtuns Mujahidin looked at it as a power-sharing device. The Afghan intellectuals also viewed the idea as a hallmark of liberal democracy. This time, Brahimi exploited his position to block the proposal for a transitional Assembly without directly involving the UN and the US (NDI, 2009: 7). The democratic circles showed concern on the credibility and legitimacy of the *Jirga*. The common Afghans, who have been suffering for more than two decades of war, got no opportunity to decide their future and remained deprived as the process ignored them. They were also expecting a healthy growth of democracy from this forum, but their hopes were turned down.

There was also a serious violation of the principle of freedom of expression. Many intelligence agents of the Northern Alliance had access to the proceeding rooms with the consent of Brahimi. Both the UN and the US oversaw this wrongdoing in the name of stability. Its hidden purpose was to alienate some Afghan groups, particularly the intellectuals and human rights activists, who were the strongest advocates of the democratic process. At the eleventh hour, Karzai, Khalilzad and Brahimi decided to include one hundred government officials, violating the previously established rules for elections of the delegates. The reactions among the domestic sorters of democracy and abroad was negative (Suhrke, 2008).

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Drafting the Constitution of Afghanistan

The task of drafting a new constitution in the post- 9/11 period stood in line with the Afghan traditional experience of constitution-making. The Bonn Agreement provided a time frame for drafting a constitution and stipulated the creation of an Afghan Constitution Commission, which was to prepare a draft after consultation with the public. After the formation of the Transitional Authority, a constitutional Loya Jirga was to be called within 18 months to legitimize the new constitution (UNSC, 2005: 7).

All the previous six constitutions were promulgated in diverse situations, but all had the purpose to legitimize the process. The first constitution was introduced during the regime of King Aman Ullah Khan in 1924 to provide the legal framework for the modernization agenda of the king. The second one was designed in 1931 to provide legitimacy to the accession of Nadir Shah to the throne. King Zahir Shah promulgated the third constitution in 1964 to mobilize support for the struggle commenced by the King himself against the opposing branch of the royal family. The purpose of fourth constitution was to eliminate the monarchy by the President Sardar Muhammad Daoud. Fifth and sixth constitutions of 1987 and 1990 respectively, were drafted to support the Communists regimes. The seventh and current-one was not an exception. In the post-Taliban period, its centrally legitimizing objective was to announce the dawn of the new era. However, severe political competition influenced its process for shaping it as per the desires and interests of different factions. Another negative gesture was the delay in convening the Constitutional Loya Jirga. It was deliberately called at the end to get formal approval of the document. It was convened on December 13, 2003, after three weeks of deliberation, ratified Afghanistan's new constitution on January 4, 2004. However, different controversial issues were still there, like the role of Islam and the status of different languages in Afghanistan (Suhrke et al., 2004; Ra'ees, 2005; Ahmed, 2004).

Controversy on Type of Government and Position of Prime Minister

The process of drafting the constitution led to several controversies over various issues. The most severe question was to adopt the presidential or parliamentary system. The ethnic minority groups, including Tajiks, Uzbeks, Turkmen, Hazard and Kizilbash, which constitute more than half of the population, were demanding a sort of power sharing mechanism. They were raising their voice in support of the traditional position of prime minister despite their divided opinion on several other issues. They showed reservations about the presidential systems. They viewed that the Pashtun president would be strong enough to muster the required support from other ethnic minorities to obtain the majority in the parliament for resolving the controversial issues in his favour. This fear led the minorities to demand the system with a president and a prime minister, the latter preferably to be elected by the parliament instead the choice of the president. Whereas other groups, particularly, the Pashtuns were mobilizing support for a strong presidential system. From the beginning, architectures of the document were inclined toward a presidential form as

it was also a comfort zone in the US with definitely a purely presidential system. In the first draft, the process of the prime minister's selection was explained through the majority vote of Wolesi Jirga. This decision led the non-Pashtuns to walk out, providing ample time to Karzai to strengthen his position for presidential system. He exploited the ethnic card, arousing the sentiments of the Pashtuns nationalism. The second draft described the appointment of the prime minister through the president. In November 2003, when the constitution was opened to the public, the position of prime minister was altogether abolished, adding the position of two vice presidents (Suhrke et al., 2004: 31-32). Failing in their efforts, the dominant Tajiks group in the former Northern Alliance, succeeded in its efforts of blocking the presidential powers, granting the main authority to the elected parliament, including the impeachment of the president and veto power to nomination of senior posts (Council of Foreign Relations, 2019). The aspirations of the minorities were bulldozed by the *Loya Jirga*, which opted for the presidential system. The new constitution declared Afghanistan a republic modeled on the presidential system of American style (Ahmed, 2004). Exploitation of ethnic card has always been the structural feature of Afghan politics, but the issue of parliamentary system further widened the gap, imprinting a deep scar among the minorities.

The exclusion of the position of prime minister was an important departure from the tradition in the constitutional history of Afghanistan. There were only a few exceptions, one during the Daoud regime, which itself was short-lived and another was a subsequent Communist period, otherwise the country had been a prime minister since the formation of the constitutional monarchy (Barakat, 2002: 80). Abdul Hafiz Mansoor, a member of the Constitutional Loya Jirga, shared in an interview, "After the initial version drafted in the first stage, based on what I know, the draft had been changed 23 times before it was approved. And the only reason was the direct intervention of President Hamid Karzai. His main argument was the section about the change of system from premiership to a presidential system. Gradually this replacement took place in the draft while most people were in favor of system of a prime minister" (Ahmadi et al., 2016: 20).

The AIA started its task with great enthusiasm and optimism, believing that, after two decades of civil war, the US and international donors would support the reconstruction of the country. Unfortunately, the hopes dashed to ashes as rehabilitation process lacked a holistic view and efforts were fragmented instead of focusing on centralization. Above it, militia gangs of the former leaders of the Northern Alliance remained on the outskirts of Kabul and leadership was not ready to disarm them despite their commitment in Bonn agreement. This violation of the agreement was not pointed out by the US or International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) or the interim administration. During the transitional period, the authority of the AIA was limited to Kabul due to the ISAF's role and mandate, taking Kabul a secure "island" and a garrison city where war was officially stopped, but peace and security were nowhere (Mullan, 2008: 64). The American focus was terrorism and its initial efforts for peace

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building were to achieve its agenda through a stable regime rather than promotion of the democratic system. It is observed that either directly or indirectly, external powers' interference always shadowed the domestic affairs. Despite unprecedented support of foreign powers in Afghanistan, the very foundation of democracy was not strengthened and dependency of the state upon external economic and military aid left little space for self-governing and democratic choices.

First Presidential Elections in Afghanistan and Evolution of Democracy

Gélineau (2013) argued that democracy cannot be imagined without elections as they are the major component of the democratic processes. Increasing global attention and funding for the democracy help the transnational societies to shape their democratization process. Afghanistan is enlisted in those states, which have nominal experience of the democracy. Elections are the core and the spirit of democracy, providing an opportunity to masses to choose their representatives. Under Afghanistan's 2004 constitution, the president would be elected directly by the votes of the people. The first presidential elections were scheduled in July 2004, but due to certain technical issues, they were postponed. One reason was doubts surrounding the ability of the ATA to conduct free and fair elections. International community and political analysts were worried about the ethnic division between the Pashtuns of the southern area and the non-Pashtuns of the former Northern Alliance as their conflicts surfaced during the transitional period on different policy matters (NDI, 2009). Apart from this tension, there were insurgency, persistent rivalries, insecurity, the resurgent Taliban and continuous attacks on election workers, which led many to think that the presidential elections would be marred by a severe violence and low voter turnout. However, these fears evaporated on October 9, 2004 when the Afghans of all walks of life were going to polling station to elect their president. The United Nations-Afghan Joint Electoral Management Body (JEMB)⁴ supervised and made arrangements for the smooth process of elections in 2004-2005 (Ra'ees, 2005: 33).

About 10.5 million Afghans were registered as voters, with women comprising of 40 percent of those registered voters (Fair, 2009; Ra'ees. 2005: 39). Apart from Afghanistan, the presidential elections held in Iran and Pakistan as well due to the presence of the sizable number of Afghan refugees. The International Organization for Migration helped out to administer the Out of Country Voting (OCV) elections. JEMB well managed the presidential elections, however, there were a few sad incidents, one Afghan member and two international security advisors of JEMB were killed. Despite widely publicized threats of disruption of the elections by remnants of the Taliban regime, the elections were smooth. About 70 percent of the registered votes were cast as 18 candidates were contesting for the presidency including Karzai. Interim President Hamid Karzai secured 55.4 percent of the vote (4.4 million) against other seventeen candidates (Johnson, 2006: 12; NDI, 2009: 8-9).⁵

A survey showed that Pashtun origin helped President Karzai in gaining 86 percent of Pashtun votes, who were in majority in Afghanistan. However, surprisingly, he

secured 40 per cent of Tajiks' votes. Additionally, he received 16 percent of Uzbek and 21 per cent of Hazara's votes (Wilder, 2005). A breakdown of election results on ethnic lines showed that dominant non-Pashtun minorities equally supported him. In reality, Karzai demonstrated a moderate and sensible behavior during the transitional period and avoided to manipulate his powers. This fact was acknowledged by the people (Khan, 2011:105). The Afghans residing in refugee camps of Iran and Pakistan cast 80 per cent and 44.4 per cent of the votes respectively. It is to mention that the majority of the Afghan refugees in Iran were predominantly non-Pashtun, however, Karzai regime provided them registration in refugee camps. Another reason was the support of all groups to avoid a fragmented authority. The elections were a "real departure" from Afghanistan's past and a "great leap forward." This election rejected the despotism in all its forms and preferred democracy either in fragile form. This was a "Pashtun comeback" not return of "Pashtun dominance" (Ra'ees, 2005: 42).

These elections were the first democratic experience and the voters chose a political executive through universal franchise. In the decade of the sixties, King Zahir made an attempt to transform the country into a constitutional monarchy. About it, Amin Saikal wrote, "Afghanistan's limited experiment with democracy." Next attempt was made by the former president, Muhammad Daoud, who declared Afghanistan a republic in 1973, but banned political parties (Saikal & Maley, 1991: 22).

The 2005 Parliamentary and Provincial Council Elections

After passing a year of the presidential elections, the polls for the Wolesi Jirga (lower house of parliament) and provincial assemblies held on September 18, 2005. Total 6000 candidates contested for 370 seats and 217 seats of Wolesi Jirga and provincial council positions respectively. Afghanistan's 34 provinces served as multi-member constituencies to elect the members (Johnson, 2006: 15). The voters had to stamp a single candidate on the ballot paper. Taking each province as a single electoral district, the number of seats was divided proportionally to its population. The candidates were "at large" within their constituency, not confining to any boundary, but the whole province. Single Non-Transferable Vote (SNTV) system was adopted for individual candidates and the majority of the candidates contested in an independent capacity (Donini, 2004: 21).

Following the results of the provincial councils, Meshrano Jirga (the council of elders), was convened. The Meshrano Jirga was comprised of 102 members, elected by three different bodies.⁶ In November 2005, the Meshrano Jirga was chosen. In the absence of district councils, provincial council elected 68 members (two-third) and Karzai declared names of his 34 appointees on December 11, 2005 (Katzman, 2011: 10).

In the 2005 elections, the Afghan government, international organizations, Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs) and civil society equally took interest and actively participated in the elections, making them a success. The voter turnout was

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more than 50 percent. Women occupied 68 seats in the Wolesi Jirga, which were more than their share of the reserved seats of 25 percent (Johnson, 2006: 20). The media coverage of elections also projected change and advancement, highlighting different aspects of the elections, which was also a signal of free media (Mullan, 2008: 72). In an overall review, the 2005 elections were taken successful despite the short timetable for the election campaign due to insecurity. These elections were in confirmation of the Bonn agreement as different measures, outlined for strengthening the democratic structure and political institutions were taken.

Despite the formation of the political institutions, basic conditions for smooth flow of democratic system were still missing. There were questions on eligibility of the elected candidates as 80 percent had either a past background of affiliation with armed groups or links with them, which was confirmed by different sources. The majority of these members were elected from outside Kabul (IRIN, 2005). A huge number of the elected members of the Wolesi Jirga had the abhorrent credentials, which raised questions not only among the public, but also tarnished the image of the parliament, decreasing its legitimacy on the whole (Mullan, 2008: 73).

A few circles in Afghanistan were viewing proceeding of the presidential and provincial polls as the least bad option. A provincial councilor, who was a resident of insurgency-racked Ghazni province, observed: "If I say a [fully free and fair] election is possible at this time it is merely a lie. If I say it is impossible, then I block the only possibility for moving forward." In the 2005 elections, no out-of-country voting was managed and approximately 800,000 refugees, who cast votes for president in 2004, were not included in the electoral process (ICG, 2009: 1). With the election of assemblies, the first elections of the country were completed, marking a new era of democracy, closing the transitional period. Adhering to Loya Jirga's timetable for the elections was a positive step as the agenda designed for transitional period was achieved, restoring Afghan sovereignty by strengthening the democratic institutions in the post-conflict society. However, there were still questions about the credibility of Afghan democracy and democratically elected representative government as it was strong in theory, but not in practice. In reality, insufficient financial resources and incapable manpower was not in the position to run the political institutions properly and govern effectively (Mullan, 2008, 74).⁷

Presidential Elections 2009 and Transfer of Security Responsibility

After formation of a democratic government in 2005, full-scale civil war was nowhere, but the security situation was still deteriorating and worrisome. Non-state actors, particularly the Taliban were exploiting the weaker control of government and international community's limited commitment. The American resources were diverted to Iraq war and the Bush administration was preoccupied with the situation of the Middle East, which not only detracted the attention from emerging insurgencies but also reduced a significant focus on Afghanistan's reconstruction. On the other hand, state-building efforts of the Afghan government were insufficient and

dependency of its institutions upon the donors reduced their role, making no improvement as consolidated efforts were nowhere.

In June 2008, a former American General Dan McNeill, who was commanding NATO troops in Afghanistan, warned that the war was being fought is “under-resourced” and more troops were required to counter the Taliban (BBC News-South Asia, 2008). There were rifts among the allies for troop commitments to Afghanistan, which surfaced the NATO summit in Riga 2006. There was consensus among the leaders of 26 countries on the security situation of Afghanistan and Taliban attacks, but not on the need for more troops and a few countries showed their consent, which did not end the friction (Larsen, 2013). In late 2007, Robert Gates, American Defense Secretary, criticized the NATO allies for not sending more troops, showing concern about the violence against the aid workers of NGOs. He said, “At this time, many allies are unwilling to share the risks, commit the resources, and follow through collective commitments to this mission and to each other. As a result, we risk allowing what has been achieved in Afghanistan to slip away” (US Department of State, 2007).

Elections 2009 and Performance of Independent Election Commission

The 2009 elections were the first polls, which were organized and implemented under the Afghan authority. Previous elections of 2004 and 2005 were managed by the JEMB. The Independent Election Commission (IEC), a body exclusively appointed by President Karzai, took responsibility for administrating and making arrangements of the elections. A separate body named Enhancing Legal and Electoral Capacity for Tomorrow (ELECT) was constituted to provide technical support and funneling funding from the UN and other international donor agencies (Fair, 2009). The 2009 elections were originally scheduled to be held in May 2009, but the deteriorating security environment raised concerns about the capacity of the Afghan government and its international partners to conduct the elections, especially in the most insecure parts of the country. In January 2009, the IEC announced that the elections would not be held before August, referring the Election Laws (Section 55) that a “lack of security makes an election impossible” (NDI, 2009: 17) On August 20, 2009, the second presidential election held in the country along with provincial council. President Karzai won 49.67 percent of the votes, while his main contender, former foreign minister Abdullah secured 30.59 percent of the votes. According to the Electoral Complaints Commission, Karzai got 48.2 percent after ruling out one million of his fraudulent votes. His share would have been far lower if the commission’s fraud investigation had been more focused. Karzai was the top beneficiary of the fraudulent votes and 76 percent of excluded votes were cast in his favour, whereas total excluded votes from the final tally were 18 percent. All top candidates obtained fraudulent votes as this practice was common and widespread on the election-day (Council on Foreign Relations, 2019).

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According to Article 61 of the constitution, candidate to be elected as the president, require a majority with more than 50 percent of votes through secret and direct voting. If no candidate receives the required number of votes in the first round, a run-off election would be held within two weeks after elections' result declaration. In this round, only two candidates, carrying the highest number of votes would participate and the winner would be the president of the country. In lines with the American and other presidential system's tradition of two-term president, the article 62 of the Afghan constitution provides that a person can become president for two terms only (Afghanistan's Constitution of 2004).

In the beginning, Karzai was not agreed to a runoff vote, but international pressure forced him to go to the second round of election, which was decided to conduct on November 7, 2009. However, the run-off was postponed a week before the election, on October 31, 2009, when Abdullah pulled out from run-off. Sharing the reason of withdrawal with his supporters, Abdullah alleged the wrongdoing of the IEC and misuse of power by the government. Abdullah's withdrawal prevented another crisis in the presidential elections. Kai Eide, the senior UN representative in Afghanistan, held several rounds of talks with Karzai for a power-sharing deal with suggestion to pursue Abdullah for accepting defeat, making run-off unnecessary. He also arranged a meeting between the two for a solution, but Karzai was unwilling to compromise. Abdullah demanded a number of changes in electoral arrangement including removal of the chairman of IEC named Azizullah Ludin, who wrongly used his authority in favour of Karzai. However, all his demands were ruled out, leaving no choice but to withdraw as chances of victory were nowhere. Many Western observers supported a few demands, including removal of IEC's chairman (Katzman, 2011:17).

Abdullah's decision satisfied the external community, particularly, the American diplomats who were worried about civil unrest as the prolonged uncertainty in political matter was further complicating the decision of President Barack Obama to dispatch 34,000 more troops into Afghanistan. The US was waiting for installment of a new government in Kabul and this was the reason of delay in sending troops (Tran, 2009). Hillary Clinton, the US secretary of state, said the legitimacy of the election would not be affected by Abdullah's withdrawal. However, within Afghanistan, the people opined that any effort to appoint president without a second round would challenge the credibility of this position. Suggestion of calling a traditional meeting of tribal elders was also there to make a way forward. On the other side, supporters of Karzai argued that he received more votes than any other candidate and deserved to be accepted as the winner, even though he did not receive the required 50 percent of the vote as per constitutional provision (Baker, 2009).

The US and other international partners stressed Karzai for improved governance as concerns were still there about his legitimacy. Hillary Clinton, Secretary of State, conditioned future civilian assistance with the Karzai administration's efforts to combat corruption (Council on Foreign Relations, 2019). On November 19, 2009,

Karzai took oath as a second term president for next five years. The election results led the US to decide about its troops. General Stanley McChrystal sent a request for more troops to support a “surge.” He also alleged the 2009 elections for creating a “crisis of confidence” in the regime, which would ultimately undermine the war effort without more troops (Berman et. al., 2014: 10).

Elections of Wolesi Jirga 2010 and Provincial Councils

The second elections of the Wolsi Jirga and provincial council held on 18, September 2010 under the supervision of IEC. These elections held amid increasing wave of militancy and president Obama’s commitment with his allies to begin a drawdown of troops from July 2011. Initially, May 22, 2010 was fixed for the elections, as the constitutional provision required a new election prior to the expiry of the tenure of working assembly. However, this timetable was not pursued as the Election Complain Commission, UNAMA, donor countries and the US as all these stakeholders were not satisfied with the performance of the Afghan flawed institutions, taking them incapable of the administration of a free and fair election. About 2577 candidates were contesting across 34 provinces and a country wide electorate for the nomadic Kuchi tribes. Despite having 68 reserved seats, 406 women were contesting. The initial results of the elections were declared on September 20, 2010, and final were announced in November, 2010, which were to be announced by IEC on October 30, 2010. The delay in results was due to the investigation of the fraud complaints. Only 33 percent votes (5.6 million out of 17 million eligible voters) were cast and voter turnout was 37 percent of the registered voters, which was lower than presidential elections of 2009 (Katzman, 2011:21). The international community viewed these elections as a critical benchmark for consolidating the democratic institutions (Ahmadi et. al., 2016).

In post-Taliban era, three presidential elections were held in 2004, 2009 and 2014. First elections were administered by JEMB, which were jointly controlled by the Afghans and the UN. The second elections were arranged by the IEC with the technical assistances of the foreign advisors whereas the 2014 presidential elections were solely managed by the Afghan authority. The first one was more successful despite the security situation and a new experience in tribal setting of the country. A few problems were faced in the second elections of 2009, but the 2014 elections became a ‘chaotic one,’ throwing the country into the brink of fractions. Being the longest elections, it took six months to settle the dispute of power-sharing. It was only with the mediation and pressure from the UN, the US and the NATO, having troops in Afghanistan. According to decision and agreement, Dr. Ghani became the president and Abdullah Abdullah as the chief executive of the state (Sarwari, 2019).

Role of Political Parties in Afghanistan

Barnett R. Rubin and Andrea Armstrong (2003: 31) explain that political parties play a vital role in bridging the gap between various stakeholders in any political setup.

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The right to form political parties is guaranteed under Article 35 of the Afghan constitution and operation of a party is governed by the Political Parties Law. There have been several political parties working in Afghanistan and sixty got themselves registered with the Ministry of Justice at the time of 2005 parliamentary elections, while this number elevated to 108 in August 2009 (Afghanistan's Constitution of 2004). Under the amended Political Party Law, to get a registration, the party must provide a petition, having 700 to 10,000 signatures. The law also instructed that parties may not: oppose the rules of Islam; use force or threat of force; incite religious, ethnic, racial or regional discrimination; endangering individual rights or disrupt public order; be affiliated with militant groups; or receive foreign funding (Political Parties Law).

These legal provisions work as a latent weapon against ethnic minorities, blocking their entry in electoral politics through a party platform or those deemed “non-Islamic” attempting to make a party. No specific attention was given to ban the political parties to become “military organizations or affiliations with armed forces.” However, it was observed in elections that many Afghan voters were doubtful about the working of political parties due to their background history of having links with militant groups during the civil war following the fall of the Najibullah regime in 1992 (Larson, 2009). Mostly the candidates preferred to contest independently despite receiving assistance from a political party. Karzai and his sponsors, particularly US, chose an electoral system that prevented the political parties. The president was also in a position to reject the law over a provision, which allows the political parties to establish offices abroad and the government must manage their security. This provision must be revisited as political parties are integral part of any functioning democracy (ICG, 2009).

There is no historical example of any functioning democracy that has not produced political parties in the end. The existing Afghan political parties represent the political figures rather than political programs, having no influence in the ballot box and parliament. In Afghanistan, democratic process is in the initial stage and its essentials would emerge naturally. The continuation of this process is a positive sign and the political parties are emerging organically from this process, rather than being forced production (Smith, 2014).

The Electoral System

In Afghanistan, the electoral system of the single non-transferable vote (SNTV) was introduced in the elections of Wolesi Jirga and provincial council. It provides the voter an opportunity to choose among individual candidates in multi-member constituencies. The voter casts ballot for one candidate or party when multiple candidates run for multiple seats. If a voter's ballot goes towards a losing candidate, the vote is not re-apportioned (Berman et. al., 2014: 11). Andrew Reynolds (2006) says that “The single non-transferable vote (SNTV) electoral system came about by a

path of muddled missteps, and it was a disservice to the millions of Afghans who deserved a clear and transparent tool to craft their first democratic parliament.”

SNTV has been described as “first-past-the-post for multi-member electorates; the candidates with the highest number of valid votes win the allotted seats” (Larson, 2009). But there is neither party list nor party identification of the candidates on the ballot. Those who favour this system, they think that post-conflict societies can control the elections of powerful entities like warlords, working as a precursor for peace. However, critics of the system argue that it is useful in those societies where voters are properly well-disciplined and well-aware to take benefit of the system and they are right as this system failed in blocking criminals and warlords in Afghanistan. This system is not much common and once Japan, Jordan and South Korea applied it for parliamentary elections (Larson, 2009; Reynolds, 2006: 89).

The SNTV system is easy to administer and attractive for independent candidates as it discourages the role of political parties. It also inclines to bring forth numerous candidates and the results in a very low threshold for election. Several groups and the UN mission in Kabul as well as local and international experts warned against the adoption of SNTV in Afghanistan. However, President Karzai succeeded in pushing the SNTV through a cabinet decision after a yearlong debate in February 2005. Karzai took a critical step and chose the SNTV without understanding of its consequences. He opted for SNTV to produce a fragmented and weak parliament and succeeded in it. The parliament was without any capacity to promote the public interests, but weakened the opposition only. The SNTV proved useless and did not encourage unity in the plural society of Afghanistan (Berman et. al. 2014).

In 2005, 2700 candidates contested for 249 seats of Wolesi Jirga, and were identified through name, photo and a logo. The mostly voters were illiterate and they faced difficulty in managing a several pages ballot paper. Even in some provinces, the ballot paper was up to 40 pages (Johnson, 2006: 19). In the 2009 elections, in Kabul province, 524 candidates contested for the 29 seats in the provincial council. The voters faced difficulty in distinguishing them from one to another, and it became a challenge for both voters and candidates (Katzman, 2011: 13).

Following the SNTV, a very small number of voters are in the position to produce a winner. For example, in Kabul, in 2005, 33 candidates who won the election, each of them received only 1-2 percent of total votes, while one winner had less than 2000 votes. In this way, Kabul province won more seats in the parliament while Panjsher province brought only two members, the lowest one. On the opposite side, candidates having 68 percent of the votes could not win a seat (Katzman, 2011: 06; Berman et. al., 2014: 11).

This system facilitated the warlords, providing them the opportunity and they succeeded in gaining a strong foothold in the parliament. The credit for the entry of warlords into Afghan politics goes to SNTV. They also occupied the key posts like

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governors and ministers without facing any trial (Larson, 2009). In 2008, a proposal to add a party list for SNTV was brought in the parliament for the coming elections of 2009 and 2010. The demand was also earlier made by several political parties, but was rejected, supporting and keeping the system of SNTV in its original form (Kippen, 2008). The SNTV was the best option to serve American interests in a presidential system. A weak parliament could enable the US to streamline its relationship with local partner, the president. These institutional arrangements supported the US to gain policy goals in Afghanistan, which were not to promote democracy, but to eliminate terrorists and protect some regional economic and political interests.

Challenges to Democracy in Karzai Era

Since the formation of a regime under Bonn agreement, the Afghans have not been fully enjoying the fruit of democracy as the success of this project is complex. It is not as easy as was assumed by the US and its supporters. An analysis of democracy explained, “We should clearly distinguish between the ideology of state building as we experience in Europe, which at its most attractive incarnation took a liberal idealistic shape and the historical realities” (Barry & Green, 2009). The ambition to achieve its goals in Afghanistan rests on various components like the security condition, democratic culture, leadership, etc. There are certain causes, including tribal culture, long history of monarchy, undemocratic norms, communist occupation, traditional leadership, terrorist activities, drug trade and financial scarcity. Policies opted by the Karzai regime and low commitment of the international community were not in alignment of the true spirit of democracy. This part has identified a few aspects of the challenges, being faced by democratic system in Karzai era. The part is divided in further subheading

1-Irregularities and Discrepancies in Polling during Karzai Era

Several irregularities and discrepancies were found in the management of the elections by the different electoral institutions. The polling staff allowed underage voting and no proper mechanism was defined for checking of personal IDs or ID cards. Despite updating the registration, it was believed that at least three million duplicate registered cards were in circulation. It was reported by Free and Fair Elections Foundation of Afghanistan (FEFA), which was the major local observing body that one in five of the new cards were in control of underage boys, whereas the same number was in duplication (one in five). Numerous incidents were reported where multiple cards were issued to village elders and they obtained voter’s registration cards fraudulently. No effective mechanism was developed for confiscating the cards of those who were already registered, but obtained a second card. On the day of elections in 2009, the polling staff was accepting both new and old despite the fact that different shape of the new cards created confusion among the voters. Furthermore, voter lists were not provided to polling staff. In the south and southeast regions, males were getting registration for their female family members. This practice led to a huge number of phantom female voters as women’s cards did not require a photograph, paving the

path for false registration or proxy voting (ICG, 2009: 15-16). With an open sale or theft of the voting cards, it became difficult to know the actual number of cards in circulation. The electoral staff was widely involved in such practices, which opened the multiple and proxy voting, challenging the credibility of the 2009 electoral process. Another reason for multiple voting was the poor quality of indelible ink and puncher pliers in the larger part of Afghanistan. The low quality of ink and pliers affected the reliable working, challenging the two major safeguards against multiple voting (AREU, 2005).

Ballot box stuffing was equally problematic and was used as the most common device of fraud. There were reliable evidences of ballot box stuffing across Afghanistan. However, the larger number of doubtful boxes was found in south, southeast, east and central regions. The existence of suspicious boxes was linked to the security conditions and poor recruitment of the election officials. The IEC was equally responsible for these boxes as its plan for the allocation of polling stations was not transparent and generated complaints of the fraud (ICG, 2009).

2-Institutional Interaction for Check and Balance

In a democratic system, the constitution regulates the relations of all the three branches of the government, maintaining a check and balance. The jurisdiction of all the three institutions is legally determined, defining their interaction, limitations, obligations and powers vis-à-vis each other. Several analysts criticized the Karzai era as the relationship between the president, government and the legislature was not smooth and was criticized by the political analysts. Unfortunately, the parliament was weak due to non-compliance of the other two branches of the government as per democratic traditions. The president was the head of the executive branch, but was controlling the legislature as well judiciary through his decisions. The dominance of the president was the cause of the poor relationship among the three branches of the government. The parliament's decisions were not honoured by the president and 'weak institution' was unable to play an assertive role in ensuring its authority (Thier & Worden, 2017). The absence of a formal role of political parties was also one reason for such discrepancies as the parties strengthened the role of accepted constitutional norms in case of dispute. There were also fears of including parliament in the list of Afghanistan's dysfunctional institutions. Karzai was interested in consolidating his authority rather than strengthening the parliament and the judiciary (Ahmadi et. al., 2016).

3- Electoral Complaint Commission

The Electoral Complaint Commission (ECC) received hundreds of complaints of fraud and a large number of them had enough potential to affect the polling results directly. These complaints indicated that the president and the parliamentarians did not enjoy the level of support of the voters as was highlighted in election results. After the presidential election in August 20, 2009, the commission received thousands of

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complaints and reviewed approximately 2,000, examining the samples of doubtful ballot boxes. Despite fraudulent votes, no presidential candidate succeeded in achieving the 50 percent threshold. Manoel de Almeida Silva, head of the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, addressed a press briefing in Kabul on October 20, 2004, explaining the type and nature of complaints. Among 285 complaints, 45.3 percent were related to the indelible ink while 13 percent carried flaws in the polling process. About 8.4 percent complaints were regarding the polling staff, and were not clearly explained. The compliments about the JEMB and its electoral plans were 8.4 percent (Ra'ees, 2005). In elections of 2010, the ECC invalidated about 1.3 million ballots, after receiving and investigations the complaints of fraud and these were 25 percent of total cast votes (Katzman, 2011: 22). The elections are aimed to support the cause of democracy and a mechanism to choose a representative government, but discrepancies in electoral process damage its real objectives. However, by the passage of time, continuous democratic process would bring improvement and develop the system in Afghanistan. After examining the complaints, the election officials discussed different measures to reduce the level of fraud and proposed reforms prior to the next elections as complete change was difficult in the existing environment of the country.

4-Inclusion of Warlords and Convicted Persons

The election laws provided that the candidates must not have been convicted of a serious crime while the law on political parties, provided that the parties must not have the links to armed factions. Owing to the internal instable situation and non-availability of any mechanism to punish a person for the past crimes, no one could be convicted of war offenses or other inhuman doings. Hence the inclusion of such warlords, drug traffickers, offenders and culprits in the parliament undermined the democratic norms and process in Afghanistan. About 207 militia commanders and warlords were identified prior to elections, but only thirty two disqualified. More than 50 percent of the elected deputies were former militia commanders or companions of the old Mujahedeen groups. They also occupied the positions in presidium and the parliamentary committees. According to a calculation of the UN source, out of 249 newly elected deputies, forty had been former commanders yet part of the armed groups, 24 members belongs to the criminal gangs, 17 were drug lords and 19 were involved in war crimes (Wilder, 2005:14).

5-The Security Environment

The deteriorating security environment is a big issue in Afghanistan, jeopardizing efforts for peace-building and smooth flow of the system. It is equally harmful to the electoral process, damaging activities of candidates, campaigners, electoral staff and voters, confining their mobility. All of them had to conceal their actions as there were threats to them in case of working. Female election workers and polling staff were main target and vulnerable to intimidation. This made difficult to hire new female staff and also led working employees to discontinue the jobs. The insurgents made

several attacks on the vehicles carrying the election materials. The Taliban checkpoints also made assaults on persons having the voter cards. In 2009, two candidates of provincial council were killed, one in Khost and other in Ghazni. About 13 polling centers were attacked by the Taliban, damaging election materials. In early August 2009, nine IEC officials were assassinated along with three candidates of the provincial council (Fair, 2009: 7). Since 2005, the Taliban, militant groups and anti-government elements had been continuously strengthening their positions in their stronghold areas like south, southeast and east. All these groups steadily made inroads into areas of their influence like Kunduz, Faryab, Baghlan and Badghis. Additionally, police was facing difficulty to provide protection to registration centers, where voters were being registered and attacks on these places were discouraging them. The security threats also imposed limitations on donor agencies and observers of NGOs (Fair, 2009: 7; UNGASC, 2009). Consequently, the areas with the worst security environment had no virtually proper check on fraud cases or fraud mitigation measures. Such conditions were only facilitating those practices, which were executing electoral fraud.

Allegations of electoral fraud and other concerns surrounding the presidential elections and vote tally also wrapped vote count of the provincial council. Responding to complaints filed by the candidates and polling agents, the ECC investigated cases and found proofs of fraud, including fictitious entries in the voters' lists and issuance of wrong voter cards' numbers and ballot box seal numbers, which did not match with the data of the official record (Fair, 2009).

The elections of 2009 and 2010 were conducted during a period of severe violence in Afghanistan. The UN reports indicated that the insurgency had been increasing every year since 2001. In comparison to the previous situation, there was a 43 percent increase in 2008 and several tragic incidents occurred in 2009. A UN agency also assessed that out of the some 350 districts in Afghanistan, 10 were out of the government's control while access to 165 was restricted (UNGASC, 2009).

6-Corruption

The Afghan society is included in those societies where corruption is widespread with such a large volume that it becomes difficult to root out it. Even in the most advanced countries, some level of corruption tends to remain. The judiciary is considered to be the most unreliable and corrupt institution in Afghanistan. Judges had low wages ranging from US\$35-50 per month, which is insufficient to cover the expenditures of a family. The police had the same position and they spent more time to extract resources from people rather than focusing on duty (Barry & Greene, 2009: 51).

The Karazi regime faced some fundamental problems in addressing the corruption as his close aides were involved, even his brother Ahmed Wali Karzai was tangled in drug trafficking (Risen, 2008). Instead of removing the corrupt official, the regime just transferred them from one post to another. Corruption at the provincial and lower

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levels was high among tribal elders, strongmen and other powerful personalities. Joel Migdel observed that one of the most dangerous trend, which led the states to failure in controlling the corruption, was the cooperation of the government officials with the local strongmen at different levels. The traditional democratic institutions of Afghanistan like *Jirgas* and *Shuras*, must be given responsibilities while allocating the official grants for local projects, as leadership at this level is less prone to corruption. In many opinion polls, the respondents admired the justice administered by the Taliban in comparison to cumbersome and corrupt process in the Karzai era (Barry & Greene, 2009: 52).

7-Role of External Powers

The role of the external community in the creation of democratic institutions remained dubious. Its main focus was the security and counterterrorism. It was keen to adhere to its plan to leave the country. President Karzai was pushed by donor agencies to improve the security situation to the level where timetable for the withdrawal of NATO troops could be implemented. The international community provided the financial, human, and physical resources to ensure the proper functioning of institutions, but keeping the security issues on priority. It declared its role towards strengthening of the democratic institutions, but not at the cost of security. In the transitional period, the UN and donor agencies failed to build the capacity of the institution like Jirga and election commission as the UN and the US representatives exploited their positions and ensured entry of special persons for securing their interest in the regime. Unless coordinated and concerted efforts by the donor community and the Afghan state would not be undertaken to ensure the quality of the institutions, the democratic state-building effort would be derailed.

Conclusions and Policy Recommendations

Democracy is not a short-term project and it takes a long time to strengthen its roots. There was no previous history of democratic institutions in Afghanistan except one to two attempts to make it a republic. After the events of 9/11, international community showed its commitment for democratization of the system. However, the initial peace building efforts exposed the reality of their claims and US-led intervention in Afghanistan was focused on the elimination of the terrorism and installation of a favourable regime to bring stability in the country as well as support for the war on terror. The study has concluded that promotion of democratic institutions was not a priority agenda. It was later when President Bush and his allies pursued the course of action, advocating the values of a democratic system and representative government. The two-year transitional period led to the elections of the president and Wolesi Jirga, accomplishing the first task towards the road of democracy. Since 2004, consecutive elections have been conducted, after completion of their tenure, which is an achievement of democratic institutions. Though democratic practices are weak, yet signs of change are observed. It is also noted that initial question was raised whether polls would be possible in an autocratic society with creditable results because the

country was passing through a post-conflict crisis. In such a situation, long time is required to address the hostilities. Preventing the conflict and reemergence of the terrorist elements and the Taliban were equally important. In the beginning, the emphasis was on safeguards to ensure the political process for permanent set up. Next was the need to strengthen the system and it was observed that incremental changes were occurring in the traditional society, moving to betterment. President Karzai strengthened his powers and his tenure was marked by constant efforts to imbalance the institutions regarding distribution of power. He foiled democratic traditions, grasping authority of all the three branches of the government, making informal deals with warlords and powerful elites in the name of stability. Political parties were not promoted as he introduced the SNTV system, which sidelined the political parties and encouraged the independent candidacies. He was the person who received the one million, the highest number of fraudulent votes, which were an open challenge to his credibility in his second-term presidential elections. Electoral staff was equally corrupt, without any training, particularly about the count and data management. Karzai foiled attempts of those who were getting powerful and avoided grooming of a successor. This strategy was replicated in his approach to the US and neighbouring countries. He occasionally played one against the other and even used the Taliban card to balance his acts. It is also explored that the Karzai's strategy was supported by a massive American and NATO security blanket, which reaped some short-term gains, but failed to promote the institutional framework in the long term for the growth of democracy and a political order. In reality, domestic institutions were incapable without external support, which was evident from the presidential elections, first held under foreign umbrella, which were comparatively better than those solely managed by the regime as it took six months for power-sharing in 2014, exposing the quality and capacity of the Afghan institutions. Afghan police is equally incapable of managing security without external support. The rival groups were not constructively involved in the political process. The findings of this study confirmed that the Karzai regime and its domestic supporters were inefficient and incapable to pursue the democratic practices and they were dependent upon international support to overcome the challenges. Democracy with the instructions of the US and its NATO allies is not the appropriate model for Afghanistan as their focus is elimination of terrorism.

Recommendations

The role of the international community is crucial for reconstruction and rehabilitation of the country to avoid revisiting of conflict, but improvement in imperfect democracy needs a different type of engagement. An ideal democracy requires a peaceful environment without security threats while situation in Afghanistan is still embroiling, and may require more time to settle down. However, need of international assistance cannot be denied. Improving an imperfect democracy needs a different type of aid than the one for security measures. Following are a few recommendations for democratic norms and traditions. Directed democracy under the umbrella of the US and its allies is not the appropriate model for Afghanistan.

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- Reforms in electoral laws are required for independent electoral institutions.
- In order to achieve security, apart from military, political solution is equally required. There may be a compromise, but only for short-term.
- Opposition groups and rival parties must be included in the mainstream for a workable solution.
- Key institutions must be aligned with principle of check and balance, maintaining their autonomy.
- Corruption must be rooted out as its existing level is intolerable and the Taliban regime may trigger support.
- Non-Western democratic models are appropriate for those states, which have no previous experience with a majority Muslim population. The best roadmap and lessons can be gained from those states, which passed through the similar circumstances.
- Centralization is not the only option for democratization. Some studies about democracy have proposed that the societies with diverse ethnic groups and culture require a system with greater autonomy to generate satisfaction among the people.

Notes

1. In the Bonn talks, four groups were prominent: the Rome group (representing the former Afghan King Zahir Shah, the Peshawar group (representing the millions of Afghan refugees in Pakistan), the Cyprus Group (representing an Iranian-backed group of Afghan exiles and the Northern Alliance (representing the government of Burhanuddin Rabbani and anti-Taliban war lords). All these groups were invited by Brahimi for peaceful settlement of the conflict (Khan, 2011: 102).
2. Hamid Karzai belongs to Popalzai tribe of Durrani-Pashtuns, his father was the head of his clan and senator in King Zahir era. He was killed by the Taliban in 1999 in Quetta, Pakistan. At the time of 9/11, Karzai was living in Pakistan and was in contact with the US. He returned to Afghanistan to join post-Taliban interim arrangement, under the US patronage.
3. Zahir Shah returned to Afghanistan in April 2002, and agreed to inaugurate the Emergency Loya Jirga. The King enjoyed relatively broad support among the deeply divided Pashtun groups, and was acceptable to many people in other ethnic groups. The Islamist-oriented mujahedin groups opposed the King, alleging him to distance himself from the jihad against the communists, while among the other mujahedin parties, who remembered the devastation of war and subsequent civil war, supported the King for this very reason.

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4. JEMB consisted of nine Afghan members, appointed by the president while the Secretary General's Special Representative for Afghanistan appointed four members. Another electoral official was engaged to look after the daily matters and operations of the secretariat of JEMB, which was constituted to administer the presidential elections of 2004, Wolesi Jirga and provincial council's elections of 2005.
5. Among other presidential candidates, former officials, politicians of strong ethnic groups, professionals and tribal leaders were enlisted. Yunus Qanooni, a Tajik and former education minister, Mohammad Mohaqeq, a member of the Hazara ethnic group and General Abdul Rashid Dostum, an Uzbek commander, secured 16.3 percent, 11.7 per cent and 10 percent votes respectively while other candidates secured remaining seven per cent of votes, each having less than one percent.
6. The Meshrano Jirga is comprised of 102 members. One third is elected from the provincial council, 34 members (one third) from district councils and one third are appointed by the president. In the absence of district councils, two-third members were elected from the provincial council in November 2005. District councils were yet to be established.
7. According to statistics of JEMB, over 10.5 million (10,567,834) eligible voters had been registered, including 4.3 million (4,359,651) women. Approximate 740,000 voters registered In Pakistan, having 27 percent women. It was estimated that 8.2 million votes were cast on October 9, 2004 thus showing a voter turnout of above 80 per cent. However, another source reported that estimated turnout was 66 percent.

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