American University of Central Asian
International and Comparative Politics Department

Understanding the Unity Government of Afghanistan: Case of 2014 Presidential Election

By

Aalam Gul Farhad

Thesis Advisor

Kunduz Niiazova

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Abstract

The 2014 presidential election in Afghanistan after two rounds did not have any result and the country went in to serious crisis. Only after mediation of the U.S. the dispute was solved and a unity/coalition government was formed, but the influence of the U.S. was not the only reason for which the candidates (Ashraf Ghani and Abdullah) agreed on power sharing. Therefore, this thesis seeks to find out why the National Unity Government of Afghanistan was formed. The qualitative research method was used to study the topic. The study has found that ethnic and informal politics have played a crucial role in the formation of the National Unity Government of Afghanistan. As a result of ethnic competition for power the unity government was formed so that all the major ethnic groups (Pashtun, Tajik, Hazara and Uzbek) could share power. Pressure of informal institution such as tribal leadership on the candidates and fear of the warlords for destabilizing the country and accelerating the crises further facilitated the formation of the unity government. The study concludes that influence of ethnic politics and informal institutions has been significant on the formal politics of Afghanistan.

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Introduction

Governance and power sharing has always been a conflicting case in the history of Afghanistan. State building has been the most difficult process for centuries and transition has never taken place in a peaceful way.[1] Clashing interests of internal actors and influence of external powers on them did not allow the establishment of a peaceful country and a strong government. It was only after long years of war and international community intervention that a democratic government was established in Kabul after the collapse of brutal regime of Taliban. After the establishment of the interim government, Afghanistan witnessed its first direct election in 2004 in which people from all ethnicity and backgrounds could both participate and compete.[2] In spite of security threats imposed by loyal rebels of former Taliban regime, people were courageous enough to actively participate in the process and the voter turnout reached millions. After experiencing brutal years of bloodshed and destruction Afghans were exhausted and ready for a change in all spheres of their lives. At that point of time participating in a fair and transparent election was the only hope for stabilization of the country and establishment of a legitimate government. The new democratic government was established by the people's vote but still its legitimacy was questioned; the same happened with the elections result in 2009 when Abdullah Abdullah, Karzai's top challenger, called the established government illegitimate.[3]

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[1] Suba Chandran, "Afghanistan Elections 2014: Positive Vote, Future of Taliban & the Challenges Ahead," *IPCS*, IPCS Special Report # 161, April 2014, accessed on 15 April,2015, http://www.ipcs.org/pdf_file/issue/SR161-AfghanElections2014-Suba.pdf.

[2] Benjamin Dubow, "Ethnicity, Space, and Politics in Afghanistan," p.3, *University of Pennsylvania*, Urban Studies Program, 11 January, 2009, accessed on 10 April,2015, http://repository.upenn.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1012&context=senior_seminar.

[3] "Karzai Opponent: Re-election as illegitimate," *NBC News*, 11 April, 2009, accessed on 1 April, 2015, http://www.nbcnews.com/id/33626456/ns/world_news-south_and_central_asia/t/karzai-opponent-re-election-was-illegitimate/#.VTfIDVCS_cw.

Establishment of a government in Afghanistan, therefore, has had its challenges which are still present. The people of Afghanistan witnessed three presidential elections since 2001[4] but none of them reflected the will and the voice of the people.[5] Neither the method of conducting the process nor the form of the government was satisfactory. The last presidential election of 2014 resulted in establishment of a unity/coalition government[6] which was beyond the expectation of the people. There are many reasons for the formation of coalition governments. According to some authors (Ravi P. Bhatia, Tamim Asey, Johannes Langer, and Treda Mukahlani have written about unity governments in different countries) the type of the electoral system, ethnic and political diversity of a state, economic crisis, and absence of strong political parties could lead to formation of unity governments. In addition to these factors there are other factors which have played a crucial role in establishment of the unity government in Afghanistan and the aim of this research is to determine those reasons and factors. Therefore, I hypothesize that in a segmental society like Afghanistan where the formal institutions are weak and fragile, elections are influenced by informal institutions. Formal institutions are defined as "rules that are codified, in the same sense that they are

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[4] The 2004 election was held to replace the interim government which was established in December 2001. The next election was held in 2009, and the last one was the 2014 presidential election which led to formation of the Unity Government.

[5] In the 2004 presidential election eleven candidates were alleged of fraud. Fifteen candidates opposing President Hamid Karzai declared the results invalid, complaining of fraud and improper procedures.

Pamela Constable, "Afghan Election Disputed," Washington Post Foreign Service, October 10, 2004, Page A01, accessed on 2 April, 2015, http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A20091-2004Oct9.html. In the 2009 election over 1 million votes were invalidated and lots of people were unhappy with the result of the elections. "Karzai Opponent: Re-election as illegitimate," NBC News, 11 April, 2009, accessed on April 1, 2015. Finally, the 2014 presidential election had no winner but the result was formation of a "unity government."

[6] Maria Golovnina, "Frontrunner in Afghan vote rules out coalition government," *REUTERS*, April 9, 2014, accessed on April 2, 2015, http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/04/09/us-afghanistan-election-idUSBREA381SC20140409.

established and communicated through channels that are widely accepted as official."[7] Although the formal institutions are directly involved in the electoral process, the final outcome is most strongly determined by the informal institutions. In contrast to the formal institutions "informal institutions are socially shared rules, usually unwritten, that are created, communicated, and enforced outside of officially sanctioned channels."[8] In the Afghan divided society they have been very strong and they still have significant influence on the people as well as the formal institutions.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

This research explores the 2014 presidential election in Afghanistan and specifically focuses on why the election led to the formation of the unity government.

I was interested to research about the 2014 presidential elections before it actually took place but my specific aspect of focus was unclear. In the summer of 2013, when I returned to Afghanistan the upcoming presidential election was the main topic of discussion almost everywhere I went to. It was mainly discussed because it had the potential to be the very first peaceful transition of power in Afghanistan's history. Listening to everybody's ideas about the future election interested me to explore the topic academically. The second round of elections was not completed until I had returned to Afghanistan for my 2014 summer vacation. When the outcome of the elections was announced in September 2014 and the unity government was formed, my specific research topic became clear.

Therefore, this research seeks to understand why the unity government was established and

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[7] Gretchen Helmke and Steven Levitsky, "Informal Institutions and Comparative Politics: A Research Agenda", *Kellogg Institute*, 2003, accessed April 5, 2015 p.11, https://www3.nd.edu/~kellogg/publications/workingpapers/WPS/307.pdf

[8] Gretchen Helmke and Steven Levitsky, "Informal Institutions and Comparative Politics: A Research Agenda", *Kellogg Institute*, 2003, accessed April 5, 2015 p. 11.

why Afghanistan could not have just one winner in the election.[9] The results of the two previous elections were not easily accepted by the public, especially by the opposition because of allegations of fraud, corruption, manipulation and many other reasons. However, both elections had a single winner who would be recognized as the president.[10] The 2009 election was more controversial and the result of the election is still a contentious issue which has been influenced by many factors which will be explored through this research.

1.2 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative study is to understand the complexity of the 2014 presidential election process in Afghanistan and to understand the potential reasons/factors which influenced the result and eventually led to the unexpected outcome of the formation of "the National Unity Government"[11]. The 2005 and 2009 presidential elections were marred by controversy with interventions from formal/informal institutions which manipulated the result but, at the end, a president was elected. The 2014 presidential election did not end with one winner. The two finalists agreed to share power, albeit reluctantly, and establish a coalition government which is a new experience in the Afghan history. According to an expert, "Afghanistan has always had ethnic politics with the feature of monopoly of power in the hand of one ethnic group and sharing power with other ethnicities has almost never happened."[12] Afghanistan is in the process of democratization and "genuine elections by universal suffrage are essential elements of

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[9] Despite much controversy during the 2004 and even more in the 2009 election there was a final winner, Hamid Karzai. In 2009, Abdullah Abdullah withdrew after the first election; Karzai became the president though he did not have 50+ percent of the votes.

[10] Sabrina Tavernise and Abdul Waheed Wafa, "U.N. Official Acknowledges 'Widespread Fraud' in Afghan Election," *New York Times*, Oct 11,2009, accessed on April 3,2015, http://www.nytimes.com/2009/10/12/world/asia/12afghan.html?_r=0

[11] "The National Unity Government Agreement," *Tolo News*, accessed on 10 April, 2015, http://www.tolonews.com/TOLOnews_photo/National_Unity_Government_agreement.pdf.

[12] Interview 1, Conducted on 2 April 2015, Kabul, Afghanistan.

democracy"[13]. Now the result of the election does not seem to be very democratic because after the elections some people believed that "the voice of people died"[14]. The president and the Chief Executive officer (CEO) were more selected than elected, competition was not fair and representation of the people was undermined when the voter's ballots were not taken as standard for the elections.[15]

This study could be useful for social scientists who are interested in studying more about power sharing and state building in Afghanistan.

1.3 Research Question

This research will try to mainly answer the question:

Why the unity government was formed?

In Afghanistan the informal institutions play a stronger role then formal institutions,[16] therefore, considering the role of informal institutions in manipulation of the elections' result is unavoidable. To understand how informal politics influence the formal institutions and their functions it is important to study the role of informal institutions and actors in Afghan politics.

1.4 Limitations of the Study

There are some limitations and challenges to this research. First of all, the formation of the unity government is an ongoing process and it is not yet completely formed, or at least it is not functioning yet.[17] Therefore, it is challenging to write about an ongoing process with a limited amount of written resources. Secondly, interviews were limited to only five experts and

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[13] "Democracy and Human Rights: The human rights normative framework," *UN Globa Issues*, accessed on April 3, 2015, http://www.un.org/en/globalissues/democracy/human_rights.shtml.
[14] Interview 1, Ibid.
[15] Interview 2, Conducted on 4 April 2015, Kabul, Afghanistan.
[16] Ibid.
[17] Thomas Ruttig, Kate Clark and Obaid Ali, "104 Days Without a Government – and Counting: The national mood sours," *AAN*, January 9,2015, accessed on April 5,2015. https://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/104-days-without-a-government-and-counting-the-national-mood-sours/.

may not accurately reflect the general results of the research. More reliable and accurate results would be possible if more people could be interviewed. Thirdly, time and travel limitations created additional constraints in my data collection process. I was not able to travel to Afghanistan which limited the number of people I could interview. Therefore, I invite my fellow researchers with more time and resources to contribute to this topic in future.

Chapter 2: Methodology

The qualitative research method was used to conduct this study. The main data collection methods were content analysis and interviews. Updated news and published articles were analyzed to complete this work. Semi-structured questions were designed to conduct interviews from five experts in Kabul, Afghanistan. To supplement the limited amount of available published, in-depth interviews were needed to provide information to answer the research question, "Why was the unity government formed?" The interviews were digitally recorded, transcribed, translated from Farsi to English, and saved in Microsoft Word documents.

2.1 Setting

Snowball method was used to access the participants for the interviews. The participants were choses on the basis of their political activities and the awareness about the political situation in the country. All of them were requested beforehand to set an appropriate time which would suit their schedule to be interviewed. The location of the interviews was determined by the participants so that they would choose whatever place was comfortable with no destruction for them. The timing of the interviews was set on mutual agreement by the interviewee and the interviewers, but almost all the interviews were conducted in the late evening when the interviewee would be free and comfortable.

2.2 Research participants

Five experts were chosen to be interviewed. These five male interviewees included the two key spokesmen from Abdullah Abdullah's camp and two spokesmen from Ashraf Ghani's camp. These men had countless TV appearances, press conferences and were responsible for defending their political party's interests whenever it was necessary. The fifth interviewee was a well-

known critic on Afghan politics, in general, and an analyst of the election in particular. My interviewees were ethnically Hazara and Tajik but despite their ethnicity worked for the interest of the two political parties. All of these interviewees had been educated in Iran and they were between 35 to 50 years old. All of my interviews had active roles in the past ten years in the recent political parties in the country. None of them had any prior experience being a government official. The interviewees were all religious scholars and also university graduates with advanced degrees. One of them was also a past Mujahidin commander in the fight against the Taliban. None of the interviewees could speak Pashto but were fluent in Dari and Arabic. Two of them could write and speak English. All of the interviewees also had the experience of living in Afghanistan villages. One of the interviewees is also an influential tribal elder who continually solves the tribal issues in his village although he is settled in Kabul. Two of the interviewees, as the main spokesmen of the two opposing camps of both Dr. Abdullah and Ashraf Ghani, have appeared many times in BBC Hot Talks on the Afghanistan election in Persian language.

2.3 Procedure

Interviews and follow-up questions were conducted between 1 to 15 April, 2015. Since all of the participants were aware of the election case, there was no need to give them detailed background about the topic. After the interviews were conducted, follow-up questions were sent and replied to by Viber and email. The interviews also included questions regarding the role and existence of political parties with respect to different tribes and their connection with the election. The questiones will be added at the end of the thesis. Interviews were primarily unstructured using open-ended questions which allowed the interviewees to share their personal experiences related to their involvement in the political life in Afghanistan. A semi-structured style of interviewing was conducted if the need for further clarification arose. The interviews lasted

between 25-60 minutes each through Skype and were digitally recorded. The interviews were transcribed, translated, coded and categorized based on a thematic analysis. The transcription of each of the interviews was saved in a separate Microsoft Word file which was later translated to English. This research was inductive and included discourse and data analysis.

From the beginning of the academic year, I have been reading literature and following the news about the topic. Few articles have focused on the reasons for the formation of the unity government in Afghanistan. News articles were helpful for my data analysis but insufficient. Conducting interviews became necessary as a result of the lack of relevant resources to answer my research questions.

2.4 Data Analysis

The data from the interviews were used after transcribing and translating to English which made the analysis process easier. The data was reduced and used selectively according to the questions which were needed to be answered in the study. The data from all the interviews and other sources were grouped according to the research questions and analyzed. Real voices of the participants and direct quotations from news publications and other published articles are used to support my analysis.

Chapter 3: Literature Review

Historically, a weak governmental structure has been common in Afghanistan and state-building has been a problematic process.[18] Political competition and conflict over power has been the main obstacle to the formation of a successful state and as a result Afghanistan has remained socially, politically and economically unstable. Throughout the history, Afghanistan never experienced a peaceful political transition because of having many conflicting groups with different interests. Formation of the unity government after the 2014 presidential elections was also the result of conflict between two opposite candidates who ran for the second round of the 2014 presidential election.

3.1 Theoretical Perspective

The case of the unity government of Afghanistan could be explained using many theories but Asymmetric Warfare theory better explains it. Asymmetric warfare has been defined differently from time to time. According to this theory the "perception of strategy, tactics, security and threat"[19] has changed significantly. The warring parties are not equally powerful, so they exploit each other's strength while attacking the weaknesses. In the case of Afghanistan, this theory cannot be limited only to the warlords who own arm power but it also includes the informal institutions like tribal leaderships who have the potential to create/resolve conflicts. The past warlords and dissatisfied community leaders are today the bureaucrats of the government and they have changed their strategy of conflict to cooperation. But it is worth mentioning that the war-lords still have arm power and they can use it in case of serious disputes.

3.2 Topic in the Existing Literature

[18] Kaveh Karimi, "Challenges to State-building Efforts in Fragile States: Lessons from Afghanistan post 2001," *NATO Watch*, September 2012, accessed on 10 April 2015, http://www.natowatch.org/sites/default/files/challenges_to_state-building_efforts_in_fragile_states_-_kaveh_karimi.pdf

[19] David L. Buffaloe, "Defining Asymmetric Warfare," *The Institute of Land Warfare*, Sep 2006, accessed on April 20, 2015, https://www.ausa.org/SiteCollectionDocuments/ILW%20Web-ExclusivePubs/Land%20Warfare%20Papers/LWP_58.pdf.

There are many articles already published about the unity government in Afghanistan but very few of them have discussed the reasons for its formation. Formation of coalition or unity governments is not a new phenomenon and there are already examples of coalition governments which have been discussed by some scholars. Bhatias's article, "Structural Basis of Coalition Governments" discusses the coalition government in India. He believes that the social and political diversity and electoral systems could influence the party system of a country and, as a consequence, it could impact the electoral results and lead to formation of a coalition government.[20] With respect to social and political diversity, the case of India is relevant. However, because of Afghanistan's weak party system, the relevance is limited.

Tamim Asey states that unity governments in post-conflict, multiethnic and transitional societies are formed because of the weakness of political parties and "individual ethnic leaders, warlords, and regional proxies"[21] are the strong players in the state. Election crisis was not an accident but there were already signs of conflict seen when former President Hamid Karzai "refused to sign the parliament-approved version of the Afghan election law in early 2013 because he opposed having two international commissioners on the Afghan Independent Electoral Complaints Commission (here after IECC)"[22] and the appointed commissioners were closely tied to the presidential palace. During the 2014 presidential election process most of the electoral crises were associated with the election commissions. Asey has mentioned about the role of formal and informal actors in formation of the unity government but he has not gone

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[20] Ravi P. Bhatia, "Structural Basis of Coalition Governments," *The Indian Journal of Political Science,* Vol. 64, No. 1/2 (Jan.-June, 2003), pp. 135-155, Accessed on March 3, 2015. http://www.jstor.org/discover/10.2307/41855774?uid=2&uid=4&sid=21106028108971.

[21] Tamim Asey, "Afghanistan's Government of National Unity: Risk and Opportunity," *The Diplomat*, Oct 14, 2014, http://thediplomat.com/2014/10/afghanistans-government-of-national-unity-risk-and-opportunity/.

[22] Ibid

deeper to details. Though concerned about the legitimacy of the unity government in Afghanistan, Asey believed that Ghani and Abdullah should have the capability to demonstrate leadership and build a sustainable government.[23]

The 2008 grand coalition of Kenya has similarities to that of Afghanistan's unity government. Economic crises, corruption and political instability triggered violence between the people. High scale of fraud in the election angered the supporters of the two parties and violence escalated after President Mwai Kibaki, an ethnic Kikuyu, defeated Raila Odinga, a Luo in 2008 election. More than 1,000 people were killed by security forces and thousands were displaced because of ethnic clashes.[24] Kenyan President Mwai Kibaki and opposition leader Raila Odinga reached a power-sharing agreement after weeks of dramatic violence and serious political crisis when Kofi Annan intervened. Although the post-election conflict in Afghanistan was not as severe as that of Kenya, the potential of violent clashes between the supporters of the two teams was present if U.S. Secretary of State, John Kerry, did not mediate[25] and convince Ghani and Abdullah to agree on power sharing and forming a unity government.

Similarly, the Zimbabwean Government of National Unity was formed as a result of economic crises and political deadlock. The Global Political Agreement (GPA) was an agreement between the Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) and the

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[23] Ibid.

[24] Johannes Langer, "The Responsibilities to Protect: Kenya's Post-Electoral Crises," *Journal of International Service, American University of Washington,* accessed on 1 April, 2015, https://www.american.edu/sis/jis/upload/1LangerF11.pdf

[25] Ankit Panda, "Afghan Electoral Crisis Defused," The Diplomat, July 15,2014, accessed on April 1,2015, http://thediplomat.com/2014/07/afghan-electoral-crisis-defused/.

two Movements for Democratic Change (MDC) out of mediations by Thabo Mbeki, the South African president of that time.[26]

In all of the cases the diversity of a state in terms of ethnicity, economic crisis, political and social tensions have been the cause of the conflicts and formation of coalition governments. The conflicts have been resolved only by a neutral mediator. Afghanistan faced all of the same challenges; however, there are additional factors that are unique to Afghanistan that play a major role in the election results and the circumstances that led to the formation of the unity government. In Afghanistan informal institutions, subculture patterns, tribal values and former warlords are still powerful elements of society and they have the capacity to manipulate any formal process which is regulated by formal institution, and they could have been influential in formation of the unity government.

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[26] Treda Mukahlani, "Zimbabwe's Government of National Unity: Successes and Challenges in Restoring Peace and Order,"*Journal of Power, Politics & Governance,* June 2014, Vol. 2, No. 2, pp. 169-180, Accessed on March 29, 2015, http://aripd.org/journals/jppg/Vol_2_No_2_June_2014/9.pdf

Chapter 4 Background of the Unity Government

The 2014 presidential election began a new phase in the Afghan history. Electing a leader in Afghanistan started in the 1920s, when King Amanullah Khan (Dari: امان الله خان) established the country's first parliament[27] but mostly transfer of power has not been peaceful. Only in 1901, after natural death of Amir Abdur Rahman Khan (Dari: عبدالرحمن خان) power was transferred peacefully to his son, Habibullah Khan (Dari: حبیب الله خان), who was assassinated in 1919.[28] After him there was conflict over power among his brothers. Amanullah Khan (Dari: امان الله خان) ousted his brother Nasrullah (Dari: نصرالله) who ruled for few days. Amanullah ruled for the next ten years (1919-1929) but he was ousted. After him Habibullah Kalakani (Dari: حبیب الله کلکانی) ruled for a short period in 1929, before being executed by Nadir Khan (Dari: نادر خان) who was also assassinated in 1933.[29] The last King of Afghanistan, Zahir Shah (Dari: ظاهرشاه), took over in 1933 but he was overthrown in 1973 by Daud Khan (Dari: داوود خان) who was killed in Saur revolution in 1978.[30] In 1986, Babrak Karmal's (Dari: ببرک کارمل) resignation was involuntary, since he was replaced with Najibullah (Dari: نجیب الله) by the Soviet leadership.[31] The 1992 transfer of power by former president Sebghatullah Mojaddedi (Dari: صبغت الله مجددی) to Burhanuddin Rabbani (Dari: برهان الدین ربانی) was the result of pressure from armed rivals.[32] The brutal Taliban regime was overthrown by the U.S military intervention and Karzai's government

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[27] Thomas Barfield, Afghanistan: A Cultural and Political History, (Princeton, 2010), p.189.

[28] "Abdur Rahman Khan "The Iron Amir" - 1880-1901," Global Security Organization , accessed on April 23,2015, http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/afghanistan/amir-abdur-rahman.htm

[29] D. Suba Chandran, "Afghanistan Elections 2014: Positive Vote, Future of Taliban & the Challenges Ahead."

[30] Ibid.

[31] Peter Tomsen, The Wars of Afghanistan: Messianic Terrorism, Tribal Conflicts, and the Failures of Great Powers, Public Affairs, 2011, p.224.

[32] "For once, Afghanistan sees a peaceful transition", *The New York Times,* 29 June 1992. Accessed on Feb 11, 2015, http://www.nytimes.com/1992/06/29/world/for-once-afghanistan-sees-a-peaceful-transition.html.

was established in 2001 and he ruled for thirteen years as the president.[33] Finally, after decades of conflict over power and brutal civil war, Afghanistan experienced a peaceful transition in 2014 when Karzai handed power to his successor.[34]

4.1 Political Alliances

The alliances made by candidates for participating in the 2014 presidential election were very diverse and unexpected at the same time. Almost none of the candidates enjoyed Karzai's support,[35] at least explicitly. Eleven candidates [Abdullah Abdullah (Dari: عبدالله عبدالله), Ashraf Ghani (Dari: اشرف غنی), Zalmai Rassoul (Dari: زلمی رسول), Abdul Rasul Sayyaf (Dari: عبدالرسول سیاف), Gul Agha Sherzai (Dari: گل آغاشیرزی), Qutbuddin Hilal (Dari: قطب الدین حلال), Mohammad Daud Sultanzoy (Dari: محمد داوود ستانکزی), Hidayat Amin Arsalan (Dari: هدایت امین ارسلان), Qayoom Karzai (Dari: قیوم کرزی), Abdul Rahim Wardak (Dari: عبدالرحیم وردک), and Sardar Mohammad Nadir Naeem(Dari: سرداد محمد نادر نعیم)][36] were able to meet the requirements for running in the first round of 2014 presidential election but the last three (Karzai, Wardak and Naeem) withdrew and backed Zalmai Rassoul.[37] So there were eight candidates with their alliances in the first round. The three front-runner candidates made alliance as follows:

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[33] Zachary Laub , "The Taliban in Afghanistan," *Council on Foreign Relations*, July 4, 2014, accessed on April 20,2015, http://www.cfr.org/afghanistan/taliban-afghanistan/p10551.

[34] "Karzai proud of peaceful power transfer," *Pajhwok Afghan News*, September 29,2014, accessed on March 10, 2015, ttp://elections.pajhwok.com/en/2014/09/29/karzai-proud-peaceful-power-transfer.

[35] "Stay neutral in runoff, Karzai tells govt officials*," Pajhwok Afghan News*, 17 May,2014, accessed on Feb 25, 2015, http://www.elections.pajhwok.com/en/2014/05/17/stay-neutral-runoff-karzai-tells-govt-officials.

[36] Latifa Ali M. "Sixteen Afghan election hopefuls disqualified," *Aljazeera*, Oct 22, 2013, accessed on May 11, 2015, http://www.aljazeera.com/news/asia/2013/10/sixteen-afghan-election-hopefuls-disqualified-2013102213563537306.html.

[37] Rob Crilly, "Hamid Karzai brother drops out of Afghan elections," *The Teleghrap,* 6 March 2014, accessed on April 3, 2015, http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/asia/afghanistan/10679800/Hamid-Karzai-brother-drops-out-of-Afghan-elections.html**,**

a) The main Pashtun candidate, Ashraf Ghani Ahmadzai,[38] aligned with Abdul Rashid Dostum (عبدالرشید دوستم) leader of Jumbeshe Mili e Afghanistan Party (Dari: حزب جنبش ملی افغانستان) and a predominant Uzbek commander in northern Afghanistan[39] was an unexpected alliance. Ghani's experience as an academic was not comparable to Dostum's experience from the battlefield. A third member, former Justice Minister Sarwar Danish (Dari: سرور دانش), an ethnic Hazara, further diversified the team.[40] Furthermore, Ghani was supported by other influential individuals including Sebghatullah Mojaddedi, a former interim president; and Sayyid Ahmad Gailani (Dari: سید محمد گیلانی), the Pashtun head of Sufi order and leader of Mahaz-i-Meli Islami Afghanistan (Dari: محاذ ملی اسلامی افغانستان).[41]

b) The second popular candidate, Abdullah Abdullah, comes from a Pashtun father and Tajik mother but he is more associated with his Tajik heritage.[42] He joined forces with two Hazara figures, Mohammad Mohaqeq (Dari: محمدمحقق), leader of Islamic Unity Party of the People of Afghanistan,[43] and Mohammad Khan (Dari: محمد خان), former parliamentarian and former head of

Abdul Rahim Wardak Announces Coalition wht Zulmai Rassoul," *atn News*, March 6,2014, Accessed on March 3, 2015, http://ariananews.af/election2014/abdul-rahim-wardak-announces-coalition-with-zulmai-rassoul/,

Rafiq Sediqi, "Nadir Naeem withdraws in Favor of Zalmai Rassoul," *Tolo News*, 25 March 2014, Accessed on Feb 17, 2015,
http://elections.tolonews.com/nadir-naeem-withdraws-favor-zalmai-rassoul#.

[38] "Afghanistan election guide: everything you need to know," The *Guardian*, accessed on April 20, 2015, http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/feb/03/afghanistan-election-guide-candidates-list.

[39] Obaid Ali, Thomas Ruttig, "Elections 2014 (22): How disenchantment with General Dostum split the Uzbek vote bank," *Afghan Analysts Network*, 22 May 2014, https://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/the-split-uzbek-vote-bank-disenchantment-with-general-dostum-spreads-from-his-party-to-the-electorate/.

[40] "Danish, Mohammad Sarwar Danesh," *Afghan Biographies,* Accessed on March 2, 2015, www.afghan-bios.info.

[41] Sayyid Ahmad Gailani, Ibid.

[42] Tim Craig, "Abdullah Abullah, front-runner in Afghan presidential race, seeks to quell ethnic fears," *The Washington Post*, May 18, 2014, accessed on April 20, 2015, http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/asia_pacific/abdullah-once-called-messenger-of-death-seeks-afghan-presidency-as-a-healer/2014/05/18/14dd9258-da09-11e3-bda1-9b46b2066796_story.html.

[43] "Mohaqeq, Haji Mohammad Mohaqiq," *Afghan Biographies*, accessed on April 20, 2015, www.afghan-bios.info.

intelligence for Hizb-e Islami Gulbuddin[44]. Additionally, he enjoyed strong support from the Tajiks in the North by Jamiat-i-Islami Afghanistan party (Dari: حزب جمعیت اسلامی افغانستان)[45] and through this alliance he received support from the central parts of the country where mainly Hazaras live.

c) Zalmai Rassoul,[46] ethnically Pashtun but not very popular among Pashtuns, selected Ahmad Zia Massoud (Dari:احمد ضیامسعود), the brother of famed late Tajik commander Ahmad Shah Massoud (Dari: احمدشاه مسعود)[47], as his first running mate. This helped Rassoul gain support in the north where Massoud's family is still influential. Former Bamiyan Governor Habiba Sarabi(Dari: حبیبه سرابی), an ethnic Hazara, was the only female politician who joined Rassoul's team and diversified it. Shortly before the election, Qayum Karzai, former president's brother, dropped out of the race and threw his support behind Rassoul in early March 2014 providing more strength to Rassoul's team from the Pashtuns.[48]

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[44] "Hizb-i-Islami Gulbuddin (HIG), led by Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, is an insurgent group active in Afghanistan. It is a splinter group of one of the prominent, and the most radical of the seven mujahedeen factions fighting the Soviets in the 1980s. Hekmatyar , a favorite of the CIA and Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) Directorate, received the greatest portion of foreign assistance to the mujahedeen. Hekmatyar trained Afghan and foreign guerilla fighters in the refugee camps of Shamshatoo and Jalozai in Pakistan are Northwest Frontier Province (NWFP) and also ran numerous schools and hospitals in NWFP. His organization also received funds from Saudi charity organizations, Muslim Brotherhood, al-Qaeda leader, Osama Bin Laden, and other wealthy Arabs." See more: http://www.understandingwar.org/hizb-i-islami-gulbuddin-hig.

[45] "Afghanistan's Political Transition," *Crisis Group Asia*, Report N°260, 16 October 2014, p.7, accessed on March 9, 2015, http://www.crisisgroup.org/en/publication-type/media-releases/2014/asia/afghanistan-s-political-transition.aspx

[46] "Rasool, Zalmay Rasul Rassoul Dr." *Afghan Biographies*, Accessed on April 20, 2015, www.afghan-bios.info.

[47] "General Ahmad Shan Massoud who was killed at the age of 49, was the military commander of the guerilla forces that resisted the hardline Islamic Taliban regime in Afghanistan. Massoud became known as the to his followers during the 1980s for his success in resisting Soviet efforts to seize his strategic stronghold in the Panjshir valley in central Afghanistan." See more: http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/obituaries/1340726/Ahmad-Shah-Massoud.html.

[48] Rob Crilly, "Hamid Karzai brother drops out of Afghan elections."

4.2 The First Round

The three leading candidates (Abdullah, Ghani, and Rassoul) had busy schedules during campaign period from 2 February to 2 April 2014.[49] They travelled to different parts of the country and the security during the campaign was surprisingly very good. Media was very active during the campaigns and much time was associated with talks about elections. For instance, there were election related topics to raise public awareness. The advertisements of the leading candidates were broadcast almost twice compared to advertisements of other candidates.[50] "Speeches and televised debates generally focused on broad themes about improving Afghanistan without emphasis on ethnic rivalries."[51]

Vigorous and prominent campaigns of the frontrunners were discouraging for the minor candidates and eventually three of them, Rahim Wardak[52], Qayum Karzai and Mohammad Nadir Naeem[53] dropped out in favor of Rassoul.[54] Qayum's support for Rassoul was somehow understood as Hamid Karzai's support; elections officials were suspicious about the government's support of Rassoul but Karzai remained neutral during the whole process. Nevertheless, there were speculations that Rassoul received Karzai's support.[55]

Before the 2014 presidential election some fraud, like stealing of votes, was predicted and inevitable because of insecurity in some parts of the country[56] but the scale of fraud was very

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[49] "Timeline of 2014 presidential and provincial councils elections", accessed on April 10, 2015, *Independent Election Commission*, www.iec.org.af.
[50] "Preliminary statement of the EU Election Assessment Team (EU EAT)", Kabul, 7 April 2014, p. 6.
[51] "Preliminary statement of the National Democratic Institute's (NDI) Election Mission for Afghanistan's 2014 presidential and Provincial council elections," Kabul, 7 April 2014, p. 4.
[52] "Abdul Rahim Wardak Announces Coalition wht Zulmai Rassoul."
[53] Rafiq Sediqi, "Nadir Naeem withdraws in Favor of Zalmai Rassoul," *Tolo News*.
[54] "Afghan president's brother withdraws from election race", *The Guardia*n, 6 March 2014, http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/mar/06/afghan-president-brother-karzai-withdraws-election.
[55] "Stay neutral in runoff, Karzai tells govt officials*," Pajhwok Afghan News*, 17 May,2014.
[56] Crisis Group interview, campaign manager, Kabul, 16 March 2014.

high and difficult to estimate, according to reports.[57] On 5 April the first round of the election was held and Independent Election Commission (IEC) started receiving calls at 9:30am, only two and a half hours after the polls opened. Some of the voting sites were running out of ballots just after few hours of voting and many people returned home without voting[58]. Prominent figures like Ata Mohammad Noor (Dari: عطامحمد نور), the governor of Balkh (a northern province with large Tajik population), started lobbying for extra ballots.[59]

High degree of fraud happened in Panjshir[60] and Paktika[61], two of the biggest strongholds for Abdullah and Ghani, respectively, where the number of votes were twice the number of eligible voters.[62] Small and large scale fraud was reported from almost all provinces. There were cases where the official confirmed that the results were manipulated by them in favor of several candidates[63] and at some voting centers the votes were distributed for several candidates deliberately and the fraud went undetected or ignored at some sites according to domestic and Western observers.[64] Some voting centers remained closed because of insurgents' threat.[65] Generally, this misconduct was overlooked and the IEC announced final results of the first round on 15 May, showing Abdullah in the lead with 45 percent of the vote and Ghani with almost 32

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[57] Joseph Goldstein, "E.U. Confirms Wide Fraud in Afghan Presidential Runoff Election," *The New York Times*, Dec 16, 2014, Accessed on March 21, 2015, http://www.nytimes.com/2014/12/17/world/asia/afghan-voting-fraud-detailed-in-new-report.html.

[58] Crisis Group interview, campaign manager, Kabul, 16 March 2014.

[59] Zabiullah Ehsas, "Noor Comes Hard on Electoral Bodies," *Pajhwok Afghan News,* May 7, 2014, accessed on April 11, 2015,http://www.elections.pajhwok.com/en/2014/05/07/noor-comes-hard-electoral-bodies.

[60]Panjshir province is located in the northeastern with predominant Tajik population. Abdullah's mother is also from Panjsher and Abdullah is very popular among the people of this province. Accessed on 24 April, 2015, See more: http://www.rferl.org/content/panjshir-backs-adopted-son-for-presidency-abdullah/25362404.html.

[61] Paktika is an eastern province with majority of Pashtun ethnic group.

[62] "Afghanistan's Political Transition," *Crisis Group,* p.12,

[63] Ibid.

[64] Crisis Group interview, Kabul, 17 May 2014.

[65] "813 polling sites to stay shut on election day," *Afghanistan Times*, accessed on April 6, 2015, http://old.afghanistantimes.af/news_details.php?id=7643.

percent[66]. Second round was also announced because none of the candidates surpassed the required threshold[67] of 50 percent.

4.3 The Second Round

The second round campaign was not as rigorous as the first round. There were only two candidates so there were less public events and speeches.[68] Abdullah was not as active as in the first round because his campaign budget was running low, according to some reports.[69]

In order to improve election in the second round, the IEC removed 440 of 3,150 District Field Coordinators (DFCs) in response to allegations that they were involved in the fraud during the day of the election.[70] There were many complaints against election commission members especially from Abdullah's camp who claimed that many of the members worked to the advantage of Ghani.[71] Since Abdullah had more votes in the first round his team was sure that he would win in the second round.

The second round of election took place on 14 June 2015.[72] Both candidates accused each other of fraud within hours of polls closing. There were thousands of complaints registered not only by the two teams but also by individuals from across the country.[73] According to

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[66] Mirwais Haroon, Maria Golovnina, "Afghanistan's Abdullah rejects election result as 'coup' against people," *REUTERS,* 7 June, Accessed on Feb 12, 2015, 2014, http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/07/07/us-afghanistan-election-idUSKBN0FC0EN20140707.

[67] According to the article 61 of the Afghan Constitution "the President shall be elected by receiving more than fifty percent of votes cast by voters." There is no obligation for them to get votes from all over the country just the percentage is important. "The Constitution of Afghanistan," Ratified January 26, 2004, Accessed on 12 April 2015.

[68] "Afghanistan's Political Transition," *Crisis Group Asia*, p.17

[69] Crisis Group interview, senior Western observer, Kabul, 16 September 2014.

[70] Sayed Sharif Amiry, "IEC Dismisses More Than 3,300 Employees," *Tolo News,* May 18, 2014, http://www.tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/14911-iec-dismisses-more-than-3300-employees.

[71] Naqib Ahmad Atai, " Elections 2014: Many votes, many doubts in eastern provinces," *Afghanistan Today*, June 22, 2014, http://www.afghanistan-today.org/article/?id=724.

[72] "Afghanistan goes to the polls in second round of presidential election," *The Guardian*, accessed on April 20, 2015, http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/jun/14/afghanistan-goes-to-the-polls-in-second-round-of-presidential-election.

[73] Qayoom Suroush, "Elections (40): The IECC open sessions on election day complaints,*"*

international and local observers the number of voters was less than the first round but the turnout went higher. [74]

Abdullah's reactions were more serious about the fraud after the turnout and his team accused the IEC and IECC of being biased.[75] They believed that high scale of fraud was done in favor of Ghani. Abdullah declared on 19 June to his followers, "Our stance is that any kind of performance by the election commissions after this shall be regarded as illegal".[76] Abdullah became more vocal after his team released wiretaps of phone conversations suggesting fraud by government and IEC officials.[77] The recording was associated to Chief Electoral Officer Zia-ul-Haq Amarkhil (Dari:ضياالحق امرخيل) speaking about "sheep" and "goats" that needed to be fed and fattened.[78] This conversation was described as codes which referred to ballot boxes which need to be filled in favor of Ghani. The recording became very visible in TV channels and it was one of the main topics on social media after the election, though Amarkhil denied any wrongdoings but then stepped down on 23 June.[79]

Ghani, rejecting all the accusations of Abdullah's team, claimed to have gained an additional 2.4 million of votes because of their active campaign techniques such as sending 3.8 million SMS text messages to mobile phones.[80] Also his team was confident about the support of tribal leaders and religious scholars who were influential in their communities and were campaigning among

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Afghan Analysts Network, July 17, 2014, accessed on Feb 19, 2015, https://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/elections-40-the-iecc-open-sessions-on-the-election-day-complaints/.

[74] Crisis Group interviews, Western officials, Kabul, 15 June 2014.

[75] "Afghanistan's Political Transition," *Crisis Group,* p.15.

[76] Statement by Abdullah, broadcast on *Noor TV*, 19 June 2014.

[77] Mokhtar Amiri, "Afghan election crisis: 'stuffed sheep' recordings suggest large-scale fraud," *The Guardian*, June 22, 2014, http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/jun/22/afghan-election-crisis-stuffed-sheep-fraud

[78] Ibid.

[79] Ahmad Mukhtar, "Election scandal brings down Afghan official*," CBS News*, June 23, 2014, Accessed on March 15, 2015,
http://www.cbsnews.com/news/afghanistan-election-ziaul-haq-amarkhel-resigns-amid-fraud-scandal/.

[80] Hamdullah Mohib, "Victory Lab Kabul," *Foreign Policy*, 16 Sep, 2014, accessed on April 12, 2015, http://foreignpolicy.com/2014/09/16/victory-lab-kabul/.

their followers to support Ghani's team.[81] Ghani's team claimed that they were able to get votes

in insecure areas in the second round. In addition, Ghani's observers were more prepared than

the previous round to reduce the scale of fraud dramatically.[82]

Although the scale of fraud in the second round was not measurable, it was higher than the

first round because "the official turnout in some volatile eastern provinces was higher even than

the eligible population of voters"[83]. The IEC announced preliminary results on 7 July, showing

56.4 per cent of the vote in favour of Ghani, with 43.6 per cent favoring Abdullah.[84] The result

angered Abdullah's supporters, who gathered the next day at the Loya Jirga (Dari: لویه جرگه) hall

on the campus of the Polytechnic University of Kabul.[85] Some of them were heavily armed. They

wanted Abdullah to announce a "parallel government"[86] but he asked them for patience and wait

for the result of the meeting with John Kerry.[87] Some of Abdullah's supporters allegedly were

preparing to occupy the presidential palace in Kabul.[88] During this period the country was in

tension because of political and economic crises. The U.S was calling both of the candidates to

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[81] Jennifer Brick Murtazashvili, "How Ghani Learned to Play the Tribal Game," *Foreign Policy*, July 3, 2014, Accessed on March 16, 2015, http://foreignpolicy.com/2014/07/03/how-ghani-learned-to-play-the-tribal-game/.

[82] "Afghanistan's Political Transition," *Crisis Group Asia*, p.17.

[83] Ahmad Mukhtar, "Afghan presidential hopeful accuses election body of fraud," *CBS News*, June 18, 2014, accessed on April 5, 2015, http://www.cbsnews.com/news/abdullah-abdullah-afghanistan-presidential-hopeful-makes-fraud-claim/.

[84] "IEC announces preliminary results of the 2014 Presidential Election run-of," Accessed on April 13, 2015, *IEC*, www.iec.org.af.

[85] "We Do Not Want to Create Crisis in Afghanistan: Abdullah," *Tolo News*, July 8, 2014, accessed on 1 March 2015. http://www.tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/15527-we-do-not-want-to-create-crisis-in-afghanistan-abdullah.

[86] Mohammad Aziz and Mirwais Harooni, "U.S warms Afghans not to form 'paralled government," *REUTERS*, July 8,2015, accessed on March 3,2015, ttp://www.reuters.com/article/2014/07/08/us-afghanistan-election-idUSKBN0FD0PC20140708.

[87] "We Do Not Want to Create Crisis in Afghanistan: Abdullah." *Tolo News.*

[88] "Anxious moments for an Afghanistan on the brink", *The New York Times*, 14 July 2014, http://www.nytimes.com/2014/07/15/world/asia/anxious-moments-for-an-afghanistan-on-the-brink.html?_r=0 .

stay calm and not step out of the "constitutional mechanisms to resolve their election dispute".[89]

After the country reached the peak of crises and there was more pressure from U.S and Western

observers, Abdullah and Ghani reached an agreement on 12 July to conduct a 100% audit under

international community and UN observers.[90] Under international observation over 1 million

votes were invalidated and the final results were not announced officially.[91] Finally, after many

closed and open door talks, Ghani and Abdullah signed an agreement on 21 September to form

"the ational unity government"[92] in which Ghani would be the president and Abdullah would be

appointed as the Chief Executive Officer (CEO)[93] which was a newly constructed position.

According to the section A of unity the agreement, Loya Jirga (grand council) should be held in

two years to consider the position of the CEO[94] because it is not defined in the constitution.[95] The

CEO would serve in a capacity similar to a prime minister and he is answerable to the president.[96]

The ending of the long process was relieving for some people but others were concerned

about the sustainability of power sharing in Afghanistan which was a new experience. The unity

government was formed when no other option was left and it was considered to be the last

solution for the election crisis.[97] Though the legitimacy of the unity government is questioned,

there was no other alternative to resolve the elections dispute. "Formation of a coalition

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[89] "Afghanistan's Political Transition," *Crisis Group,* p.19.

[90] "Elections 2014 (39): Has Kerry saved the day?". *AAN*. 14 July 2014. Accessed on March 2, 2015, https://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/elections-2014-39-has-kerry-saved-the-day/.

[91] "Ashraf Ghani Ahmadzai declared winner of Afghan presidential election," *CBS News*, Sep 21, 2014, accessed on March 10, 2015.
http://www.cbsnews.com/news/ashraf-ghani-ahmadzai-declared-winner-of-afghan-presidential-election/.

[92] "The National Unity Government Agreement," *Tolo News*, accessed on 10 April, 2015.

[93] "Afghan presidential contenders sign unity deal," *BBC,* Sep 21, 2014, accessed on 13 February,2015, http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-29299088.

[94] "The National Unity Government Agreement," *Tolo News*, accessed on 10 April, 2015.

[95] "The National Unity Government Agreement," Section B, Point 1.

[96] Ibid Section B, Point 2.

[97] Saleha Soadat, "Coalition Government Only Solution to Electoral Tensions," *Tolo New*, July 10, 2014, accessed on April 2, 2015, http://www.tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/15552-coalition-government-only-solution-to-electoral-tensions

government is a last option; it could be a political option but not a legal one," states Nasrullah Estanikzai, a university lecturer.[98] Abdullah's supporters were ready to gain power, even by force, if Ghani did not agree on power sharing. Economic, social and political crises were threatening the stability of the country. There were tensions and fear of another civil war if the candidates (Abdullah and Ghani) did not come to an agreement. The international community and the U.S were putting more pressure and threatening the candidates about cutting their support if the disputes were not resolved. Under these circumstances there was no option but to have a government where both candidates would rule together.

Chapter 5: Analysis

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[98] Saleha Soadat, ibid.

The long process of the 2014 presidential election and the unknown future were of concern to the Afghan population and the international partners. The National Unity Government of Afghanistan was formed after a very controversial election result when the country was vulnerable to serious political and economic crisis. There are many reasons for which the National Unity Government of Afghanistan was formed. This research has found that ethnic competition, influence of informal institutions such as tribal leaders and warlords, absence of strong and effective political parties, grandiosity of fraud and absence of foreign supervision were the most important factor which led to the formation of the Nation Unity Government of Afghanistan.

5.1 Ethnic Competition

Ethnic competition is considered to be one of the major reasons for the formation of the National Unity Government of Afghanistan. Surprisingly, in the 19th century the notion of ethnicity was totally unknown and only in the course of the 20th century ethnic groups were created in Afghanistan.[99] Since then

> Pashtuns were privileged in all areas and dominated the military. Tajiks were left with the economic sector and the educational institutions, whereas the Hazaras were marginalized in general. The different treatment of the people went along with the forming of ethnic stereotypes: Pashtuns were considered 'bellicose', Tajiks were said to be 'thrifty', Uzbeks were known as 'brutal'and the Hazaras as 'illiterate' and 'poor'.[100]

At present, in terms of ethnic division, Afghanistan is considered to be one of the most diverse countries in the world and the diversity has been a major obstacle for nation and state building.[101] Ethnic diversity became an issue of conflict only by the end of the 19th[th] century when the

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[99] Schetter Conrad, *"Ethnicity and the political reconstruction in Afghanistan,"* In: State reconstruction and international engagement in Afghanistan. Joint CSP/ZEF (Bonn) symposium, 30 May - 1 June 2003, Accessed on 20 April 2015, http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/28376/

[100] Ibid. p.3.

[101] Benjamin Dubow, "Ethnicity, Space, and Politics in Afghanistan," p.5.

Pashtun leaders strictly started to "Pashtunize" [102] the country and eliminated all the other ethnic groups from political ground. Power sharing was one of the reasons for ethnic conflict in Afghanistan for centuries, but in post-conflict Afghanistan the ethnic conflict has changed to ethnic competition.[103] The competition was more visible leading up to the 2014 presidential election when the candidates with different ethnic affiliations were making unexpected alliances recognizing that it would not have been possible for one ethnicity to win the election since there is no majority in Afghanistan.[104] The main ethnicities (Pashtun, Tajik, Hazara and Uzbek) wanted to occupy key political positions through active participation and competition in the election to secure their interest.[105]

Generally the role of the Pashtuns in politics of Afghanistan and particularly in the 2014 elections should be analyzed and understood historically because they have been in exclusive power in Afghanistan for centuries. "Part of the political crisis of the elections was due to the vision of inheritance of political power in Afghanistan by Pashtuns." [106] Ashraf Ghani wanted to preserve the political power as his ethnic legacy but he needed to adapt to the changing circumstances in the country. According to the Constitution[107], a candidate must have 50 + 1 percent of the votes in order to win the election and the Pashtuns alone would not have been able to get that threshold since they comprise between 36%-42% of the population.[108] Therefore, aligning with Sarwar Danish (Hazara) and Abdul Rashid Dostum (Uzbek) was a good option for Ashraf Ghani (Pashtun) to get majority of votes and preserve the historical legacy of having a

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[102] Benjamin Dubow, "Ethnicity, Space, and Politics in Afghanistan," p.11
[103] Interview 1, Conducted on 2 April 2015, Kabul, Afghanistan.
[104] Benjamin Dubow, "Ethnicity, Space, and Politics in Afghanistan," p.1.
[105] Interview 2, Conducted on 4 April 2015, Kabul, Afghanistan.
[106] Interview 1, Conducted on 2 April 2015, Kabul, Afghanistan.
[107] "The Constitution of Afghanistan," Chap 2, article 61, Ratified January 26, 2004. Accessed on 12 April 2015. http://www.afghanembassy.com.pl/afg/images/pliki/TheConstitution.pdf.
[108] Benjamin Dubow, "Ethnicity, Space, and Politics in Afghanistan."

Pashtun as the president. "Exclusion of Tajik and aligning with Hazaras and Uzbeks showed that the Pashtuns wanted to have weaker partners."[109]If this was achieved the Pashtuns would have been able to weaken the Tajiks, by marginalizing their historic rival.

Tajiks have been the second major ethnic group and historic rival to the Pashtuns.[110] Though they have not ruled the country for very long time their influence on the political sphere has been crucial. They are more civilized with most of population living in urban areas and occupying key positions in the state.[111] "Excluding them from power automatically brings political crisis"[112] Ghani's decision of eliminating Tajiks was not acceptable for Tajik leaders. Though Abdullah is ethnically mixed of Pashtun father and Tajik mother but he is well-known as a Tajik and his supporters in the election were mostly the Tajiks of the northern Afghanistan. Ashraf Ghani along with his Hazara and Uzbek running mates could not solve the crisis of Tajik's exclusion from power even if he was backed by some key Tajik individuals like Ahmad Zia Masood[113]. "Without [Tajiks] politics in Afghanistan is not complete because they have always been there"[114] and not considering them important in the political sphere is leading the country towards serious tensions deliberately. "The main force for the formation of the unity government was the Tajik strength. If they were not given share in the government, it would not be impossible for them to create a government of their own in the north where they are predominant."[115]

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109 Interview 5, Conducted on 15 April 2015, Kabul, Afghanistan.
110 Selig S. Harrison, "Afghanistan's Tyranny of the Minority," *The New York Times*, August 16, 2009, accessed on April 15, 2015, http://www.nytimes.com/2009/08/17/opinion/17harrison.html?_r=0
111 Benjamin Dubow, "Ethnicity, Space, and Politics in Afghanistan," p.15.
112 Interview 5, Conducted on 15 April 2015, Kabul, Afghanistan.
113 The Masood family is a prominent family in the north among Tajik. The family is mainly influential because of late Ahmad Shah Massoud who fought against the Taliban.
114 Interview 1, Conducted on 2 April 2015, Kabul, Afghanistan.
115 Ibid.

Hazaras have been excluded from decision making and political right for centuries and they have been in continuous conflict with other ethnic groups especially with the Pashtuns.[116] They have not been considered as citizens of Afghanistan by Pashtun in the past; therefore, a significant number of them have been massacred, and the remaining have been discriminated and tortured brutally[117]. But in post-conflict Afghanistan, the Hazaras have become very active not only economically but also politically since they are recognized as citizens of Afghanistan constitutionally[118]. In the 2014 election they were "the main force in the turnout and intellectual force behind Ghani."[119] Nothing could be more surprising than the backing of a Pashtun by Hazaras, who have been always hated, discriminated and eliminated by the Pashtuns. But the circumstances have changed so "now it is time for [Hazaras] to use every opportunity to achieve their political rights"[120]. The support of the Hazaras was divided between both of the strong ethnicities (Ghani Pashtun, and Abdullah Tajik) so they would be the winning party if any of the candidates became the president. "The Hazaras benefitted more because now they have two representatives (Sarwar Danesh is the second vice president and Mohammad Muhaqiq is deputy of the CEO) in the main structure of the National Unity Government."[121] It is already an achievement although "Hazaras were the most active voters, they could not get a better position than the Uzbeks."[122] Hazaras have a bigger population than the Uzbeks but the Uzbeks are represented through the position of the first vice presidency.

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[116] Benjamin Dubow, "Ethnicity, Space, and Politics in Afghanistan, " p. 11-16.
[117] Ibid.
[118] "The Constitution of Afghanistan," chap 1, article 4, Ratified January 26, 2004.
[119] Interview 1, Conducted on 2 April 2015, Kabul, Afghanistan
[120] Interview 5, Conducted on 15 April 2015, Kabul, Afghanistan.
[121] Interview 4, Conducted on 11 April 2015, Kabul, Afghanistan.
[122] Interview 1, ibid.

Like the Hazaras, Uzbeks of Afghanistan have been "left out of the bureaucracy, military, and national politics in general"[123] by Pashtuns. Uzbeks were a marginalized power in the past and they have lived far away from the capital in the northern part of Afghanistan.[124] Abdul Rashid Dostum, the now first vice president, is the key leader of the Uzbek ethnicity. After the collapse of the Taliban regime, Dostum served as Deputy Defense Ministry and Chief of Staff to the Commander In Chief.[125] In the National Unity Government the Uzbeks gained the first vice president position which is a significant achievement for a minority group. "It depends on how much authority the vice president will have but being a vice president means something important."[126] Dostum was and is popular in the north but now he has gained more popularity nation-wide by becoming the first vice president. "The Uzbeks have been successful in the political competition by occupying key positions in the government. They had an Uzbek (Abdul Rauf Ebrahimi) as the speaker of the parliament [127] before and now they have become stronger by holding the position of the vice presidency."[128]

The influence of ethnicity in Afghan politics cannot be ignored.[129] Though officially it is not given very much importance[130] because of historical sensitivities it is still "an important factor in the Afghan politics"[131]. The ethnic division is visible in the Afghan Constitution as well.

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[123] Benjamin Dubow, "Ethnicity, Space, and Politics in Afghanistan,"p.8.

[124] Ibid, p.30.

[125] "General Abdul Rashid Dostum biography," *General Abdul Rashid Dostum*, April 22, 2010, accessed on 20 April, 2015, http://generaldostum.com/2010/04/22/biography/.

[126]Interview 3, Conducted on 8 April 2015, Kabul, Afghanistan.

[127] Dion Nissenbaum, "Afghan Legislators Pick Leader," *The Wall Street Journal*, 22 Feb 2011, accessed on 16 April 2015, http://www.wsj.com/articles/SB10001424052748703933404576170450343503820.

[128] Interview 3, ibid.

[129] Interview 1, Conducted on 2 April 2015, Kabul, Afghanistan.

[130] Benjamin Dubow, p.4-5.

[131] Malaiz Daud, " The Political Landscape of Afghanistan and the Presidential Election of 2014," *CIDOB*, February 2014, accessed on 21 April, 2015, http://www.cidob.org/en/publications/stap_rp/policy_research_papers/the_political_landscape_of_afghanistan_and_the_presidential_election_of_2014.

According to Article 4 of the Constitution there are 15 ethnic groups and other tribes recognized. The article says,

> The nation of Afghanistan is composed of all individuals who possess the citizenship of Afghanistan. The nation of Afghanistan shall be comprised of Pashtun, Tajik, Hazara, Uzbek, Turkman, Baluch, Pachaie, Nuristani, Aymaq, Arab, Qirghiz, Qizilbash, Gujur, Brahwui and other tribes. The word Afghan shall apply to every citizen of Afghanistan.[132]

This basically explains the importance of ethnic identity in Afghanistan. One of the main reasons for which ethnicity has been and still remains important is social, political and economic deprivation of the minorities because of their ethnic belonging.[133] Now ethnicity can be used as an instrument for political demands.[134] A very good way of using ethnicity as political instrument has been voting along ethnic lines in presidential elections. For instance, according to the preliminary result of the 2014 first round of election "80 percent of Pashtuns have voted for Ashraf Ghani, 95 percent of Tajiks have voted for Abdullah, 70 percent of Uzbeks have voted for Ashraf Ghani, and 65 percent of Hazaras have voted for Abdullah."[135] It is not surprising that ethnic groups have supported the teams on the basis of their ethnicity because it has always been the norm. Though the political alliances were very diverse the turnout was not. In the ethnic competition every ethnicity was trying to win and defeat the others. "A vote for a candidate of another ethnicity represents the will to put that ethnicity in power"[136] which is not acceptable among the ethnicities in Afghanistan. "If most of the Uzbeks voted for Ghani it does not mean that Ghani won their votes. It was because of general Dostum. If Dostum joined Abdullah by any

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[132] "The Constitution of Afghanistan," chap 1, article 4, Ratified January 26, 2004.

[133] Schetter Conrad, "Ethnicity and the political reconstruction in Afghanistan*,"* p.5.

[134] Ibid, p.6.

[135] Srinjoy Bose, "Afghanistan's 2014 Run-Off Election: An Observer's Account, *The Diplomat*, June 18, 2014, accessed on April 10, 2015, http://thediplomat.com/2014/06/afghanistans-2014-run-off-election-an-observers-account/.

[136] Benjamin Dubow, "Ethnicity, Space, and Politics in Afghanistan," p.2.

chance, no Uzbek would vote for Ghani."[137] It is all about ethnic politics which determines who should be supported by whom.

Competing for political power, all of the major ethnic groups (the Pashtun, Tajik, Uzbek and Hazara) would not have been able to have political representation if one of the two front-runners (Ghani or Abdullah) would become the president. Therefore, forming the National Unity Government was the result of long term ethnic competition and endeavor for obtaining a space in the political sphere of the country.

5.2 Influence of Informal Institutions

Informal institutions had a crucial role in the formation of the National Unity Government and their influence is undeniable in Afghan politics. Since the state and formal institutions do not have monopoly of power, the informal institutions have grown stronger.[138] According to 2012 survey, Afghans had more faith in the informal institutions than formal institutions because the informal institutions were more active in representation of their interests.[139] They have succeeded to win the trust of the people by providing services such as communal conflict resolution in more efficient and less time consuming manner.[140] This trust gives them the power to decide on behalf of the societies in which they live. Robert D. Lamb has listed a number of formal and informal institutions and their functions in Afghan society (Table 1). Traditional leaders such as Malik (Dari: ملک), Qaryadar (Dari: قریه دار), tribal leaders, local commanders (warlords) Jirga (Dari:

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[137] Interview 3, Conducted on 8 April 2015, Kabul, Afghanistan.

[138] Robert D. Lamb, "Political Governan and Strategy in Afghanistan," *CSIS*, April 2012, accessed on 8 April, 2015, http://csis.org/files/publication/120426_Lamb_PolGovernanceAfgha_Web.pdf.

[139] "Afghanistan Survey on Political Institutions, Election and Democracy in Afghanistan," *Democracy International*, November 2012, accessed on April 20, 2015, http://democracyinternational.com/ sites/default/files/Afghanistan%20Survey%202012%20-%20Full%20Report_1.pdf.

[140] Ibid. p.6.

جرگه) and Shura (Dari: شورا) are some of the informal institutions within the communities.[141] Presence of these informal and sometimes illicit entities has created a hybrid form in the system of governance.[142] In a recent kidnapping of nineteen minors in the province of Paktia, the tribal elders known as "rish safid" (Dari: ریش سفید) *the white bearded men* proved effective to negotiate with Taliban and free the minors without paying any ransom.[143]

	Policies/Processes	Services	Institutions	Networks
Formal	elections, laws, regulations	health, sanitation, education, justice, defense, taxation	parliament, military, courts, police	communities of practice, parties
Informal	jirga, shura, Pashtunwali, shari'a	community defense, health, education	jirga, shura, militia, alternative dispute resolution, madrassa	patronage system, tribal kin, the faithful
Illicit	curfew, "rule of man"	employment, protection	manufacturer, enforcer, strongman	patronage, cartel, smugglers

Table 1: Source: Robert D. Lamb, "Political Governance and Strategy in Afghanistan."

In the formation of the National Unity Government of Afghanistan informal institutions have played an important role. As an example, the role of tribal leaders and the warlords in the formation of the National Unity Government will be discussed.

5.2.1 Tribal leaders

Tribal leaders are influential men who rule through patronage networks and illicit actors (insurgents or organized crimes bosses).[144] They function almost in the framework of a subnational government functioning bodies like informal justice system, decision making

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[141] "Afghanistan Survey on Political Institutions, Election and Democracy in Afghanistan," p. 5-10.

[142] Robert D. Lamb and Brooke Shawn, "Political Governan and Strategy in Afghanistan,"p.12.

[143] BBC, "نوزده مینروب ربوده شده در پکتیا آزاد شدند،" 1 اردیبهشت 1394، (English: "19 Kidnapped minor were released in Paktian," BBC New, 21 April, 2015, accessed on 22 April 2015).

[144] Robert D. Lamb and Brooke Shawn, p.6.

councils and customary law.[145] They are not only trusted by the people but also the previous governments have relied on them.[146] Tribal leaders cannot be ignored because of their power and influence in solving rural people's everyday problems and inner conflicts. In addition, the general public is heavily dependent on them for protection in tribal rivalry and conflicts. These tribal leaders have gained their recognition in the times of war and are mostly of high socially recognized status. The main role of the tribal leaders is to influence the government's decision by gathering in the Loya Jirga (Dari: لویه جرگه) the grand council. The Loya Jirga, an informal national assembly[147] where the elders of the society come together and decide on very important and urgent issues related to "independence, national sovereignty, territorial integrity as well as supreme national interests"[148]. According to the constitution "The Loya Jirga is the highest manifestation of the will of the people of Afghanistan."[149] The Loya Jirga is derived from the old Traditional Jirgas (council) where the elders of the communities discussed problems and made decisions.[150] Throughout the course of history, all of the central governments, including Karzai's, discussed and resolved issues of delicacy and public concern via a grand Jirga which is established upon president's proposal to the Parliament and occurs from time to time as needed.[151] For instance, Karzai was unable to make any decision about the presence of the U.S.

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[145] Robert D. Lamb and Brooke Shawn, p. 20-22.

[146] Jennifer Brick Murtazashvili, "How Ghani Learned to Play the Tribal Game," *Foreign Policy*, July 3, 2014, http://foreignpolicy.com/2014/07/03/how-ghani-learned-to-play-the-tribal-game/.

[147] Viola Gienger, "Afghan-U.S. Accord May Be At Risk in Informal Assembly This Week," *Peace and Conflict Development Network,* Nov 20, 2013, accessed on April 18, 2015, http://www.internationalpeaceandconflict.org/profiles/blogs/afghan-u-s-accord-may-be-at-risk-in-informal-assembly-this-week?xg_source=activity#.VUCBYkjFwgs.

[148] Chapter 6, article 111 of the 2004 ratified constitution of Afghanistan.

[149] Chapter 6, article 110 of the 2004 ratified constitution of Afghanistan.

[150] Dr. Gareth Price, "Why tribal elites feature in Afghanistan's future," *CNN*, November 16, 2011, accessed on April 9,2015, http://edition.cnn.com/2011/11/16/opinion/loya-jirga-qa/.

[151] Lila Muhammad, "Afghan Loya Jirga: What Is It and Why America Cares What It Decides," *abc News*, 21 Nov 2013, accessed on 20 April 2015, http://abcnews.go.com/International/afghan-loya-jirga-america-cares-decides/story?id=20961502.

troop after 2014 in Afghanistan; therefore, he called for the Loya Jirga so that the elders would make decision.[152]

Backing Ghani in the 2014 presidential election, the tribal leaders were mob mobilizers in the southern Afghanistan.[153] "Tribal leaders frequently decide which way their group will vote in the hope of gaining access to patronage in the future."[154] The election crisis was not favoring the interest of the tribal leaders due to the escalating graph of insecurity, unemployment and the delay of developmental projects in their provinces. People in Afghanistan relied on their tribal elders and provincial and parliamentarian members to address issues of public health, education, security and tribal and local conflicts. Accordingly, the prolonged process of finalizing the election result had the potential to weaken the tribal elders' influence within society and their territory of influence. Therefore, "they pressured on the government to find a solution."[155] The government recognized the importance of the tribal leader and it takes their decision in to consideration as well.

> The tribal leaders were not happy with what happened with their votes. Instead of bringing peace and security in the country the election result increased insecurity, unemployment and ethnic sensitivities in the country. So the tribal leaders had to act seriously to prevent more tensions.[156]

To prevent more dissatisfaction of the tribal leaders and other informal institutions which are important in the political sphere of the country, and to have their long term support, the candidates had to make a decision to normalize the situation. Therefore, forming a unity government was a rational option at that moment.

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[152]Lila Muhammad, "Afghan Loya Jirga: What Is It and Why America Cares What It Decides."
[153] Jennifer Brick Murtazashvili, "How Ghani Learned to Play the Tribal Game."
[154] Dr. Gareth Price, "Why tribal elites feature in Afghanistan's future."
[155] Interview 3, Conducted on 8 April 2015, Kabul, Afghanistan.
[156] Ibid.

5.2.2 The Warlords

The warlords have been a threat to the central government for a long time because of their unchallenged rule over their respective areas. They have been in competition with the government over decentralization of power. [157] In 2002, they were included in decision making process of the Loya Jirga.[158] Now, in addition to their power in their areas of influence, they are also well represented in the central government. In addition to military power "they have also managed to accumulate immense wealth, reportedly mainly through U.S. contracts and from the drug trade."[159] These resources are used strengthen themselves in their areas of influence to back political actors to ensure their long-term interest in the central government.

In post-Taliban Afghanistan the warlords became more active politically especially in the 2014 presidential election. They proved that they can be part of the democratization process. Although some critics have raised concerns about "democracy by undemocratic agents," the warlords have facilitated the process by backing the candidates and ensuring political and military stability for moving the process towards a smoother transition.[160] A villager in Ghazni said, "In our village there is the Hezb-e Islami that is active and [it] maintained good security. [Members of the Hezb-e Islami] were standing at the poll centers in order to observe the ballot boxes."[161] The warlords have the potential to stabilize or destabilize the country using their arm power and influence on the people. After the election crisis they were among the most important players to solve the disputes either by negotiation or by threatening the formal state. As Ata Mohammad Noor, a former militia leader and a strongman in the north said, "We do not want

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[157] Malaiz Daud, "The Political Landscape of Afghanistan and the Presidential Election of 2014."
[158] Schetter Conrad, *"Ethnicity and the political reconstruction in Afghanistan,"p.11*.
[159] Ibid.
[160] Sohrab Rahmaty, "Afghanistan: Warlords and Democracy," *The Diplomat*, October 26, 2014, accessed on April 19, 2015, http://thediplomat.com/2014/10/afghanistan-warlords-and-democracy/.
[161] "Afghanistan Survey on Political Institutions, Election and Democracy in Afghanistan," p.94.

crises, but we will defend the rights of our people. We will have a big civil uprising. . . We will occupy government buildings and institutions.   . . We will boycott the process, and we will not recognize the next government because it will have no legitimacy."[162] They have the power to mobilize the people for their interest and since they have won the trust of the people they can manipulate the public easily. "There is also trust and fear which makes the warlords strong," said an interviewee.[163] Their traditional rules and military power have silenced the people while at the same time they provide services to people to gain their support. "The warlords were backing both of the front-runner teams and if any of them would be excluded from power his warlord partners would destabilize part of the country, and you know that they can do it."[164] For example, Ata Mohammad Noor warned if the election results were against Abdullah he would form a parallel government. His Facebook status stated, "From this moment on, we announce our own legitimate government led by Abdullah Abdullah."[165] Though there were not any serious actions taken to form a parallel government there was rising fear of a return to civil war. "The warlords were getting ready to start a civil war especially in the north where they have strong armed forces."[166] A serious concern for many people was the rivalry of Ata Mohammad Noor with Dostum in the north.[167] "The major concern of both parties is to have domination in the area," a foreign diplomat said.[168] Balkh and Jawzjan are the two provinces where Noor and Dostum have power

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[162] Pamela Constable, "Afghan Election Disputed."

[163] Interview 3, Conducted on 8 April 2015, Kabul, Afghanistan.

[164] Interview 5, Conducted on 15 April 2015, Kabul, Afghanistan.

[165] Azam Ahmed, "Afghan Candidate Stops Short of Forming Government," *The New York Times*, July 8, 2014, accessed on April 23, 2015. http://www.nytimes.com/2014/07/09/world/asia/afghanistan-elections-abdullah-abdullah.html?_r=1.

[166] Interview 3, ibid.

[167] Carlotta Gall, "Threat and Responses: Warlords, Northern Afghan Region Still by Rivalries and Fighting," *The New York Times*,   24 September 2002, accessed on 20 April 2015, http://www.nytimes.com/2002/09/24/world/threats-responses-warlords-northern-afghan-region-still-roiled-rivalries.html.

[168] Carlotta Gall, "Threat and Responses: Warlords, Northern Afghan Region Still by Rivalries and Fighting."

respectively. Both of the former warlords were supporting two opposite teams which could escalate the tensions if one of them lost. Though Dostum was very calm and patient during the whole process he would use his power if the tensions were escalated by Noor in the north.[169]

Hence the unity government was created to balance power between the formal and the informal government (warlords) and prevent conflicts between the rival warlords. The warlords were the facilitators of the elections and they contributed much of their resources so that they would be represented in the future government. Without creating a coalition government it would not have been possible for the formal government to maintain peace and security of the country.

5.3 Absence of strong and effective political parties

According to the experts, absence of strong, active and effective political parties is one of the main reasons of political crisis in Afghanistan.[170] Political parties reflect the will of the people and their role in the political sphere is very important but in Afghanistan their existence does not matter much. According to experts, political parties in Afghanistan are not influential in political sphere because they lack of right to vote, they have military background and they are formed on ethnic basis.

Political Parties do not have the right to vote.[171] Around fifty parties[172] have been registered in the Ministry of Justice of Afghanistan and constitutionally, "The people of Afghanistan shall have the right, in accordance with provisions of the law, to form political parties"[173] but indeed they have not been provided with any kind of opportunities to practice their rights and function actively. Surprisingly, the constitution does not have any article which would

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[169] Interview 4, Conducted on 11 April 2015, Kabul, Afghanistan.
[170] Interview 2, Conducted on 4 April 2015, Kabul, Afghanistan.
[171] Interview 2, ibid.
[172] Licensed Political parties, *Ministry of Justice, Islamic Republic of Afghanistan,* accessed on 10, April, 2015, http://moj.gov.af/en/page/registered-political-parties-and-social-organizations/1700.
[173] The Constitution of Afghanistan," Chap 2, article 35, last ratified 26 January 2004.

clearly state about the rights and the role of political parties in the country. Indeed their role and activities were limited by the Karzai's government because he was afraid of "modern organization".[174] The Afghan governments have tried to keep the role of the parties limited from fear of strong opposition parties. Usually strong parties are the product of strong states where enough resources are allocated to development of institutions. In the past thirteen years of Karzai's government, parties were not facilitated with any chances of improvement. "Even one percent of the parliament seats are not allocated to parties."[175]

Additionally, the political parties of Afghanistan mainly have military background which makes them weak when it comes to political experience.[176] Many former warlords who have established political parties lack political knowledge and they do not have any strategy for their parties. The parties are evolved around particular individuals and they are used as tools for achieving personal interests and gaining political power.

Furthermore, political parties have grown along ethnic lines.[177] In Afghanistan, there is no party which would reflect the interest of the nation but they are formed on the basis of patriarchic structure or tribal structure which is influenced by traditions, ethnicity and regions. Constitutionally "formation and operation of a party on the basis of tribalism, parochialism, language, as well as religious sectarianism shall not be permitted"[178] but this law is violated by those who form parties. "The parties are formed on basis of kinship structure; the biggest could include people from the same ethnicity"[179] and none of the parties has been a national party. Unlike other states where political parties reflect the will of people, in Afghanistan political

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[174] Interview 2, Conducted on 4 April 2015, Kabul, Afghanistan.
[175] Interview 5, Conducted on 15 April 2015, Kabul, Afghanistan.
[176] Interview 2, ibid.
[177] The Constitution of Afghanistan," Chap 2, article 35, last ratified 26 January 2004.
[178] Ibid.
[179] Interview 1, Conducted on 2 April 2015, Kabul, Afghanistan.

parties are limited to family, ethnic or regional level; therefore, they cannot appear as strong players in the political sphere because they do not have strong public support.

5.4 Failure of Formal institutions

Formation of the unity government raised many questions about the legitimacy of formal institutions like IEC. During the thirteen years of Karzai's government enough resources were allocated to development of the country but unfortunately, not enough efforts were made to improve the formal institutions which are the building blocks of the state. The formal institutions are commonly corrupt and lack proper functioning. The IEC failed to resolve the election dispute because of its "unprofessional and dangerous working mechanism and corrupted bureaucracy."[180] The bureaucracy in the election commission is appointed on the basis of personal or political affiliation with no professionalism. "The government brings together a group of people who would be loyal to its orders."[181] They follow the orders of those who have appointed them and they are not concerned with the interest of the nation or loyalty to their jobs.

The members of the IEC and other institutions which are associated with the election process are doubtful about the power of legal processes and in order to get a satisfactory result from the process they engage in fraud and manipulation of the electoral turnout. An expert who had experience of monitoring the recent elections expressed,

> The problem is that the institutions which hold the elections are always involved in the fraud. It seems that they don't believe in the legitimacy of the process at all so they rely on fraud. From my own experience, part of the fraud is done by the people who are associated with the election commissions.[182]

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[180] Interview 4, Conducted on 11 April 2015, Kabul, Afghanistan.
[181] Interview 2, Conducted on 4 April 2015, Kabul, Afghanistan.
[182] Interview 4, Conducted on 11 April 2015, Kabul, Afghanistan.

The election commission is an independent institution, at least literally and it is the most responsible institution for elections in the country. This independence gives authority to the members of the commission which is misused by some of them at the times of elections.

As such, the former government was alleged to plan fraud in the 2014 presidential election. Some experts believe that the Karzai government had pre-planned fraud in the election and it started with "Karzai refusing to sign the parliament-approved version of the Afghan election law" [183] According to the revised law there would be two foreigners who would be appointed as commissioners in the IEC and they would not do what the government expected. The law was not signed by Karzai because he wanted to appoint his own people in the commission so that they would obey his orders. "Long before the election, the government had gathered a group of people and they were ordered to commit. They were controlled and supervised within themselves, but there was no neutral party to control or supervise the process."[184] The government did not want any strict control during the elections so the foreign commissioners were not appointed and during the election there were less foreign supervisors.[185] On the other hand, "there is no concrete evidence which would show that Karzai government was involved in the fraudbut there were no mechanisms which would prevent fraud."[186] It is hard to say that Karzai's government engineered the election fraud but it is obvious that the scale of fraud was very high and the authorities could not decrease the level.

Therefore, the failure of the IEC and other institutions which were involved in the election process resulted in formation of such a government which lacked "structural legitimacy".[187] The position of CEO which was created right after the agreement reached by the two parties did not

[183] Tamim Asey, "Afghanistan's Government of National Unity: Risk and Opportunity."
[184] Interview 4, ibid.
[185] Interview 1, Conducted on 2 April 2015, Kabul, Afghanistan.
[186] Interview 5, Conducted on 15 April 2015, Kabul, Afghanistan.
[187] Interview 5, Conducted on 15 April 2015, Kabul, Afghanistan.

have legitimacy according to the Constitution because there is no such a position defined by the law.

5.5 Grandiosity of fraud

Fraud in the presidential election cannot be denied but the scale of the fraud was not higher than the previous elections.[188] "There was fraud but it is hard to say which team was more involved."[189] The result of the election was undermined. The difference in 2014 election was that fraud was over-emphasized especially by Abdullah's team and "the cost of fraud went very high"[190]. Those involved in fraud, besides meeting financial costs, also invested their reputation and image. Fraud by the two teams distorted the image of the candidates (Ghani and Abdullah) in the mind of their followers. Such cases are extremely delicate in social and cultural context of Afghan society, and people's trust in their representatives plummeted creating the paradoxical result of a government on the basis of power sharing. Considering himself a winner, Abdullah became more vocal after the preliminary results were announced by the election commission and he made the issue of fraud public discourse. "Abdullah's expectations were not met so he manipulated the public."[191] After getting more votes in the first round he was confident of winning the election but it did not happen. Though he was very happy and respectful of the election commission at the first round of election, he accused the commission for fraud after the second round. The votes were recounted upon Abdullah's request but it did not solve the dispute because it did not change the result of the election. According to an observer, the votes were counted over three times; the number of fake votes did not increase but Abdullah's team was not

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[188] Ibid.
[189] Interview 4, Conducted on 11 April 2015, Kabul, Afghanistan.
[190] Interview 5, ibid.
[191] Ibid.

ready to accept the final result.[192] Abdullah, in a dramatic manner, not common among the Afghan presidential candidates, warned about the possibility of mutiny and even civil war. His confidante and team member, Ata Mohammad Noor, continually appeared vocal in media and would from time to time warn for secession of the north. The country was on the verge of political chaos. This had bewildered the international community and U.S. government.

Weakness of the institutions and corruption in the commissions were believed to be among the major reasons for high scale fraud in the election. An observer stated that the major problems grow from within the commissions when members cannot prevent fraud and, in some cases, are actively involved in supporting and/or committing fraud. He stated that "this creates a tension about the fairness and legitimacy of the elections. The general public does not believe fairness of elections; therefore, they do not give much importance to the process and use even the smallest chance to commit fraud."[193] After experiencing three rounds of presidential elections the IEC has not managed to facilitate the election with improved conditions. The last election decreased the credibility of the election commission even more. Such discrepancies and allegations led to the formation of a commission to reappoint new members and restructure the organization of election committee in order to avoid further corruption. Such plans were proposed as the corner stone of Abdullah's and Ghani's agreement.[194]

5.6 Absence of Foreign Supervision

The 2014 presidential election was mostly monitored by local staff and unlike the previous elections there were fewer foreigners involved in the process. Some experts believe that presence of foreigner monitors and supervisors in the process could have decreased the crisis to some extent and the process would not last as long as it did. The institutions inside the country

[192] Interview 3, Conducted on 8 April 2015, Kabul, Afghanistan.
[193] Interview 1, Conducted on 2 April 2015, Kabul, Afghanistan.
[194] Ibid.

are not trusted to act fairly and neutrally in political processes; especially after the last election their credibility has been challenged by many. "We have to understand that there are no neutral parties in Afghanistan which would be fair to all the candidates; therefore, we need foreigners (international experts) to mediate between the competing parties."[195] The institutions inside the country were not able to solve the dispute after the second round of the election because they were accused of being biased and corrupt. Finally Abdullah requested to involve the international community in the recounting and monitoring process. According to an expert "there were tensions during the previous elections but the foreign mediation helped to resolve the disputes faster and more peacefully".[196] For a post-conflict state like Afghanistan where transition has not so far been experienced in a peaceful way, it is not very easy to manage political processes like elections without foreign and independent monitors. "It would have been a rational decision of Karzai who would accept to have two foreigners as commissioners."[197] The country is dependent on foreigners economically and politically and at present it is difficult to eliminate them. The election commissions believed that they were ready to hold the process successfully but at the end, because of lack of public trust in their commission and continuous public and government pressure, they could not announce the result. As a result, foreign mediation as a neutral party was necessary to convince the candidates to form a government together.

[195] Interview 5, Conducted on 15 April 2015, Kabul, Afghanistan.
[196] Interview 4, Conducted on 11 April 2015, Kabul, Afghanistan
[197] Interview 2, Conducted on 4 April 2015, Kabul, Afghanistan.

Conclusion

The core purpose of this study was to answer the question why the Unity Government of Afghanistan was formed? And therefore, hypothesized that in a segmental society like Afghanistan where the formal institutions are weak and fragile, elections are influenced by informal institutions.

The qualitative research, relying on in-depth interviewees and data analyses, has found that the mixture of ethic and informal politics and inefficiency of the formal institutions have had significant influence on the formation of the National Unity Government of Afghanistan.

Afghanistan has a history of conflict over power, bloodshed, and instability. It has been a monarchy, theocracy, communist state and republic but none of these systems were stable because some part of the population, especially the minor ethnic groups, were excluded from the political ground on the basis of ethnicity, tribe, religion etc. This exclusion became the cause of conflict between the rival ethnicities and rise of warlordism in the country. But in the post-Taliban Afghanistan the changing circumstances have given the informal institutions and the warlords the ability to be representatives of the interest of people in the formal government and influence on the result of political processes such as elections. The warlords and the ethnic groups played a significantly positive role in the formation of the National Unity government. Using whatever positive or negative methods they were able to make a history of power sharing in Afghanistan which had never happened before. They not only gained political power but they also saved the country from going in to more severe crises. The Unity government was an opportunity which brought all the marginalized groups in to political ground after long years of political deprivation. It has become obvious now that ethnic competition has become more serious and ethnic politics can play stronger role in Afghanistan more than ever. None of the

ethnicities (even the Pashtuns) can rule the country alone anymore because there is no major ethic group in Afghanistan.

Furthermore, the study has found that in Afghanistan where the formal institutions fail the informal institutions and the role of neutral foreigner mediators become more important and functioning. The crises of the 2014 presidential elections showed that democratic processes such as election cannot be held properly if the government and its formal institutions remain relatively weak. Even after the establishment of a legal and democratic government the Afghan society is still more dependent on the informal governments and there is lack of public trust on the formal government. The traditional leaders remain significantly influential and their decisions impact on the overall political sphere of the country. In Afghanistan where the formal government is fragile and its institutions lack public trust the political decisions cannot be made in a peaceful way and there is always need for a neutral party mediation to resolve conflicts.

Hence, it could be concluded that as long as the formal government remains weak in Afghanistan the mixture of ethnic and informal politics will be the key role players in the political ground of the country.

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Appendixes

List of Interview Questions

1- Why have the elections been problematic processes in post-conflict Afghanistan?

2- Why did the 2014 presidential election go in to crisis

3- What were the potential factors which played a role in formation of the Unity Government of Afghanistan?

4- How did ethnic diversity contributed to formation of the unity government?

5- How do you explain the role of the political parties in formation of the Unity Government?

6- Why were formal institutions such as the Independent Election Commission unable to solve the election dispute over results?

7- What was the role of informal institution such as tribal leaders in formation of the unity government?

8- Under what circumstances the unity government was formed?

9- How would foreign supervision have impact on the election process?

10- What was the role of the international community especially the United States in resolving the post-elections dispute?