

DEMOCRATIC ELECTIONS IN AFGHANISTAN: AN ASSESSMENT OF ELECTORAL PROCESS BEFORE TALIBAN 2.0

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Abstract. In August 2021, the Taliban came to power in Afghanistan. In expert circles, the second coming of the Taliban to power began to be designated as “Taliban 2.0.” when analyzing the goals and policies of a new generation of Taliban seeking recognition and support from the world community. It is known that, in February 2020 in Doha, an agreement was reached between the United States and the Taliban to include the Taliban in power. It was about how many percent they would represent in the transitional (inclusive) government. Elections were supposed to be held, but the Taliban did not fulfill their promises, the Taliban seized power by force and established their regime. The Taliban government announced the rejection of democracy in the country, thereby putting a barrier to the prospects for the development of Afghanistan as a democratic state.

To determine the reasons for the Taliban’s “second coming” to power after 2001, it is necessary to understand why attempts to introduce democratic institutions in Afghanistan in the previous two decades were not fully implemented. The democratic electoral process during this period was associated with the confrontation of various political forces, large-scale corruption, violations, and falsification of elections. The situation was complicated by problems in the field of public safety. The socio-political governance of the country was not focused on the effective solution of security problems.

The aim of the study is to understand democratic electoral procedures in Afghanistan and their impact on society by comparing presidential and parliamentary elections. Based on the analysis of electoral activity using quantitative methods, as well as qualitative methods (interviewing, interviewing experts), the features of parliamentary and presidential elections are considered.

Keywords: Afghanistan, electoral process, parliamentary elections, presidential elections

Introduction

The complex and contradictory political processes took place in the history of Afghanistan in the second half of the 20th and the beginning of the 21st centuries: the attempt to establish a communist regime, the struggle of Mujahideen of various groups, Americans with the values of Western democracy, and currently - the Taliban governance. Undoubtedly, the political system of the country largely determines the level of development of the spheres of society. The dichotomy of “democracy” versus “autocracy” and the underlying cause-and-effect relationships between these characteristics are complex. It is widely believed that stronger democracies have less corruption, which therefore ensures the free and open growth of technological innovation and economic prosperity [1]. Fair governments around the world should be able to lift their people out of poverty and reach their full potential if their countries have a sufficiently high per capita income. It was argued that it is not democracy as such, but rather the effectiveness of state institutions that contributes to the overall social and economic development of the country [2]. The economic rules that individuals must follow, including all necessary restrictions and all possible incentives, are set by Governments.

Economic growth and the level of material well-being of the population depend on the laws governing investment, property rights and other similar topics. However, it is also possible that a thriving democracy can take root and flourish because of the accompanying social and economic progress. Indicators of a country’s social and economic health that can contribute to the spread of democracy include the quality of its schools, the safety of its streets, and the size of its middle class. They say that democracy can function well only in countries where an average citizen has a comfortable standard of living, and that a society consisting of a few rich and a poor majority is doomed to failure either under oligarchy or tyranny [3].

People should be educated enough to vote and understand the issues at stake in the political process. Moreover, historical data suggest that political regimes are more likely to change during times of sluggish economic growth. When citizens are dissatisfied with the state of economy and society, they can go to the ballot boxes or to the streets to urge their government to make changes. Luo (2020) expressed the opinion that if we can back up these ideas with figures, we can get an idea of the history and future of the country by studying the level of its democracy and socio-economic progress [4]. Since these studies are able to shed light on the global situation, they are of paramount importance. Democracy and human progress seem to go hand in hand, but it is unclear in which direction the causal relationship lies.

This research critically analyzed the gap between theory and practice has been investigated from the Afghanistan election policy analysis. There are two research questions:

1. Why an effective democratic election system has not developed in Afghanistan during last two decades?
2. Does Taliban insurgency is the most significant factor that has caused issues

in the arrangement of democratic elections in Afghanistan?

Data collection & Data Analysis

This research involves with qualitative methods of research in which data collection procedures like expert interviews of focused group will be conducted. Interview process will be carried out to evaluates the cultural and historical variations between presidential and parliaments judiciary system. Also, interviewed citizens' concerns linked with election process will be notified for the purpose to encourage them for voting. The research paper mainly relies on the documents available in either electronic or printed form. The secondary sources will consist of books, research reports and articles, and scientific commentaries. The researcher also has utilized websites of television channels and newspaper like "Tolo News, Express", "Afghanistan Times Daily", "The Kabul Times", etc. The collected secondary data has been analyzed qualitatively through critical analysis of democratic election process in Afghanistan and its socio-economic impact. In addition, various official historical records consisting of IEC (Independent Election Commission), Independent election observation mission of OSCE and IEEC (Independent Electoral Complaint Commission) will be used for some defining essential factors linked to determine the difference between Parliament and Presidential election process.

The researchers note that democracy ensures the stability of the country only if it is genuine and legally established. Democratic governance systems play a huge role in maintaining national security [5]. It has been seen that the nation's safety with the aid of eagerness and issues among several shareholders in the policy-making process. For the intent to deliver an appropriate operational mechanism coupled with democratic stability, well-known legitimacy and legal regulation play a significant contribution. The average assessment concerned voter participation across presidential elections in Afghanistan [6]. It leads to the examination of issues in the context of the pattern of turnout, and it also describes how the pattern has been developed. Fundamentally, it has showcased the reduction in the year of 2009 and 2019 Presidential elections.

Claimants assert that Afghanistan act as a post-war state. It has been observed that a considerable measure of organizational elaboration on the voting outcome is shown to rise or decline the level of turnout. It has become vital to investigate several other essential elements that could impact the turnout of the Afghanistan elections results. Therefore, it has been evaluated that in Afghanistan, every four presidential voting's offers unexceptional elements involving turnout and some aspects of the election.

Consequently, this current study has determined the correlation between a reduced number of voters and alteration in financial, the socio-political and safety scenario before the votes. Moreover, it is speculated that the obligatory president and the incompetency of authorities to make a positive impact on the life of millions of individuals, Likewise, the proposition has investigated public discontent-

ment with the obligatory authority and discovered that turnout is influenced by fundamental dissatisfaction to a greater extent. This discontentment could be linked to the democratic system and organization procedure, the obligatory authorities, and the president.

Condra et al., (2019) stated that evolving level of democracy leads voting to be promoted as a means for the process of the Democratic system [7]. It has been seen that crime is not only responsible for dramatically impacting the election, but its city inhabitants frequently observed it as fraudulent towards the safe forces for the purpose to fight against crime. There are several influences have been evaluated for these safety considerations. Ballot stations with a similar background of crime before the elections is unknowingly acquired from the various strategic position of the Afghan Police in the year 2010 Afghan parliament voting's leads to enable the recognition of police attempts. By utilizing the information from global polling websites and several investigations, it has been evaluated to a decline in Police presence by 30 per cent. The outcome of several procedures that are competing for affecting the turnout of safety forces. And it reflects upon the conduct that was not operated by voters' participation to deal with crime on voting day. It has emphasized a trap for government authorities' creation through the election process in states of institutionalized and conflict pruned.

The women were being granted a lower position in politics as politics were regarded as a specialized area for the male only.[8] The female contribution was confined to the reproduction process in earlier times. The major target of this paper was to elaborate on the political anticipation concepts and target females for political anticipation. In the paper, a prime was associated with the investigation of Afghanistan's female empowerment. This research emphasizes the 2014-year presidential elections which possess the role of the Afghan female. This must turn out to be worthwhile results in the election process of 2014 after raising the rights for Afghan females. Several investigations have been utilized for the prediction of the current scenario of Afghan females by raising its contribution to the complete entire political anticipation. The major concern was linked with little discussion has been done due to female participation in the presidential election so, present research would examine the reasons and traditions to confine the female choosing the opted offices and members along with prospective scenario for Afghan female.

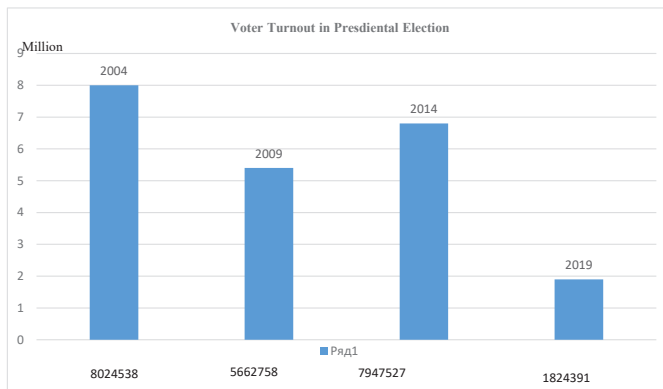


Figure 1: Turnout across Presidential Elections in Afghanistan

The above Figure-1 shows that the 2004 presidential election had the highest voter turnout, estimated at 8024538, but the turnout was too low in 2019, recorded as 1824391.[9] In the presidential elections in Afghanistan total number of registered voters was sometimes twice the number of voters who cast votes. 19% of the population has written in the elections of 2019. But Independent Election commission has reported registered vote was 9665745. The number of registered voters was twice the number of eligible voters. During 2019 presidential elections new trend was observed in the turnout rate. Systematic research and rigorous academic study needed help to address and find the possible solutions to the voter turnout problem in Afghanistan. The identified factors from the analysis force the decline in the voters caused the re-election of both presidents in 2009 and 2019. Various political, economic, and social factors play a significant role causes a huge difference in the voter turnout in Afghanistan Presidential elections. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the task of collecting relevant data for voter turnout was considered a difficult task. Efficacy, diversity of parties, mobilization, and electoral competition were other reasons for voter turnout. Voter buying, ballot stuffing and intimidation constitute voter turnout were considered a secondary reason for voter turnout. The campaign promises failed, and individual performance in the election decreased public satisfaction. Added with corruption lays the foundation of voter turnout.

The lack of reliable baseline data in Afghanistan causes complicated challenges in the parliamentary election in the year 2019. The specific polling stations for each area in Afghanistan were established by the Independent Election commission (IEC) of Afghanistan in 2018. The mass ball out staffing was controlled over the voter can be expected to turn up for voting. In the parliamentary elections 2018, the IEC plans to collect data such as the number of polling centers and polling stations open and help prevent fraud in the polls. The method followed by IEC for collecting the information lacks clarity and is suspicious of manipulation. In the 2018 election in Wolesi Jirga, the primary source of fraud in the election was

caused by an inaccurate voter list published by IEC. In the presidential election, IEC tried to correct the incorrect data. The following chart shows the number of voters in the 2019 presidential election.

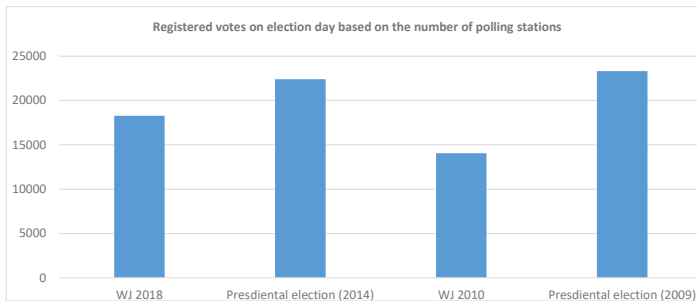


Figure 2: Registered votes on election day based on the number of polling stations.

In the above Figure 2, Separate polling station for men and women was allocated by IEC. On Election Day 5300 and 73 poll station was opened with the cooperation of Ministry of Interior (MOI) and IEC. In different pages of the website IEC published number of registered voters district by district. In the year 2019, IEC published that total number of male and female voters are 6331515,334230 respectively. The voters list published by IEC allocated a separate polling station for men and women. On election day, five thousand three hundred and seventy-three poll station were opened with the cooperation of the Ministry of the Interior (MOI) and IEC. On different website pages, IEC published several registered voters district by district. In 2019, IEC published that the total number of male and female voters is 6331515,334230, respectively. The voter's list published by IEC lack in maintaining the accuracy of the voter list. Multiple or illegitimate voting was prevented using Biometric voter verification introduced by IEC. Ballot stuffing was introduced to avoid mass fraud in casting the illegal vote during elections. Over the years, the role of social media has increased in Afghanistan. Turnout and geographical distribution were crucial for legitimacy in the forthcoming election.

Parliamentary Election Chambers of Afghanistan in 2005, 2010 and 2018

Two hundred forty-nine members' House of representatives and the Lower House of the Afghan National Assembly were held in 2005. Various parliamentary election chambers in the year 2005,2010 and 2018 was shown in the below Figure 5 based on the number of registered electrons, valid votes and Ballot.

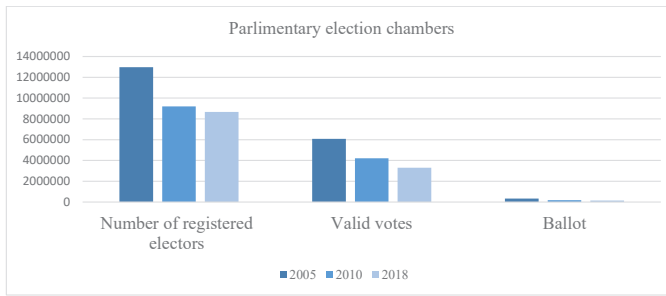


Figure 4: Parliamentary election chambers

Due to logic and security reason the parliamentary elections were postponed twice a time from their original planned schedule in June 2004. According to the House, for a five-year term, a total of two thousand seven hundred candidates were sought for women. During the election, campaign violence was considered widespread all-around Afghanistan. Before the election day, six election workers and seven parliamentary candidates were killed. Due to security concerns, nearly fifty-one women candidates from a total of two hundred eighty-six candidates voluntarily withdrew from the election. The significant problem identified during the election was the high literacy rate. Nearly eighty-five per cent of the candidate was illiterate. The photos and symbols were accompanied in the voting process to help the voters. The newly established parliament in 2005 was owned by President Karzai's Youth Solidarity Party of Afghanistan to secure a majority in the election. Mr Mohammad Yunos Qanuni leads the coalition in the presidential election. The prevention of the narcotics problem in Afghanistan and addressing the issues caused by narcotics was considered a primary pledge in the election by Mr Qanuni. Nearly five international observers and four thousand seven hundred people monitored the polls. To reinforce the security in the elections was managed with twelve thousand troops NATO-led peacekeepers from other countries. Due to the threat of Taliban fighters, voter turnout was recorded as fifty-three per cent, considered lower than expected. Under nations mediated to Bonn accords in December 2001, elections were conducted to establish a fully representative government.

After the fall of the Taliban regime in 2001, the 2010 election was held by the people's House. Most of the candidates were independents in the election held in 2005. On the ballot paper, the endorsement was not allowed by political parties to submit by the candidate. Due to the Independent election commission budget problem, elections were postponed from January 2010 to May 2010. The election campaign was initiated in June. Nearly three hundred eighty-six women participated out of two thousand four hundred forty-seven. In the 2010 election, most of the candidates were independent. Even party endorsement was permitted. During the first half of 2010, thirty-one per cent of civilians were killed, and thousand

two hundred seventy-one foreign troops were killed in Afghanistan in the same period. The election campaign started on June 23, 2010.[10] A total of three hundred eighty-six women candidates participated out of two thousand four hundred forty-seven candidates in the parliamentary election. Only nine per cent of the candidate in the political party was officially linked with the parties. Taliban influence was strong in the southern part of Afghanistan. In other places, election campaigns are held securely. In the election, campaign young voters used electrical equipment like mobile phone text messages, Twitter and Facebook and stayed updated about political information.

Women participated in the election to build better future generations and pledged to oppose gender and cultural obstacles in the country. The disruption was arisen by the Taliban in elections polls. To facilitate voting council of ministers voting polling day as a holiday. For illiterate voters was reduced with the help of ballot papers and pictograms. In Afghanistan, nearly seventy-two per cent of the people are illiterate. The election result announcement was postponed to December 2010 from October 2010. In the House of people, nearly eighty-eight people were returned. The women occupied the least seats in the elections, with sixty-nine women elected. Distribution of the chairs was not possible in the elections as most of the candidate was participating individually.

Due to fraud, irregularities, and invalidated activities, the election commission discarded nearly one point three million ballots. The supreme court approved the complaint raised by president Karzai to set up a five-member special election court to hear compliance of fraud in December 2010. To allow the inaugural session of the people's house special election court head issue rulings within two weeks. Several incumbents of parliaments contested the result. The supreme court approved hearing fraud complaints from the president of Karzai to set up a five-member special edition. President Karzai inaugurated the House of people. The special election court unseated eighty-three elected members in the election in February 2010. President Karzai insisted the House of People disband the election court order. Independent election commission forces to recount the votes due to illegal action caused during the election. Mr Abdul Raouf Ibramhimi was elected as the new speaker by the House of people [11].

The Independent election commission of Afghanistan declared the results of parliamentary elections in 2018. Due to technical problems and threats, nearly four hundred and one poll was not opened. Due to the problem, the polling centres were opened the next day for the public to vote. At the end of the previous parliamentary team, a new parliament was initiated in April 2019. The election result of Kabul and Paktia was not considered in the selection list. MP Halima Askari attended the inauguration [12].

Independent election commission granted credentials to ten provinces. The two sets of commissions helped manage the parliamentary elections held in 2018.

Some of the winners in the preliminary results of the parliamentary elections were replaced by other people by a new commissioner confirmation. The significant problems in the parliamentary elections were caused due to inefficiency of former commissioners. Before elections, the rule of the polls was not framed correctly. An independent election commission forces political parties and governments to compromise with verification through a biometric process on the election day. During ballot, the problem with biometric machines leads to more difficulty in the parliament election. Independent election commission rules were entirely disregarded by both government and election parties. A special committee approves postponing the election in Wolesi Jirga in Afghanistan [13].

How elections have been managed? Compared with the presidential elections, the process of parliamentary elections management was considered a difficult task [14]. Thousands of candidates and positions had to be managed in the parliamentary polls appropriately was considered a challenging task in managing the parliamentary elections of Afghanistan. The elections commission of Afghanistan was keen not to repeat the mistakes in the parliamentary election. The election commission managed the election-related complaints and queries by adapting mandatory rules and regulations. The scheduling and maintenance of parliamentary polls were considered the most challenging task in parliamentary actions.

Level of Socio-Economic Development During Presidential and Parliamentary Elections

The economy of Afghanistan was drastically decreased due to increasing political instability and insecurity. The massive external aid serves as a source of economy in Afghanistan. Most of the people in Afghanistan were under the poverty line, as reported by the media of Afghan was shown in the below Figure 3. The gross national income of Afghanistan decreased reported by World Bank. Women living in Afghanistan faced discrimination against human rights and abuses. As reported by UNICEF, most of the students in Afghanistan were out of school in the year 2020. In the world, the highest mortality rate of women during maternity was found in Afghanistan, reported by UNPFA (United Nation Population Fund Act) in the year 2020)

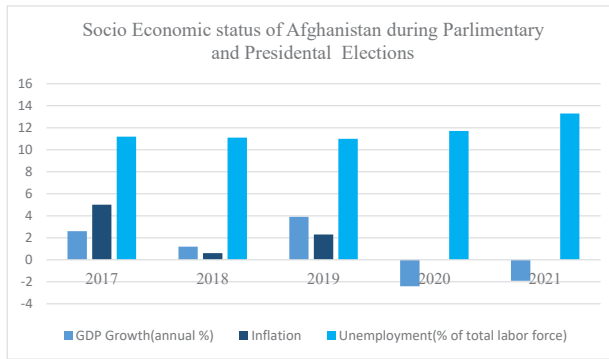


Figure 3: Socio Economic status of Afghanistan

Sources (as of December 2021): The World Bank, World Development Indicators | International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Economic Outlook | Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), Military Expenditure Database.

Conclusion

The democratic election system in Afghanistan consists of two types of elections that are presidential election and parliamentary election. It has been assumed that the Taliban insurgency is the most significant factor that has caused issues in the arrangement of democratic elections in Afghanistan. The issue mainly emerged in the presidential election of 2019. The existence of the Taliban has caused security issues for voters to participate in the election process [15]. After a long gap, democratic elections started to be arranged in Afghanistan after 2001. The elections that have been arranged in 2009, 2014 and lastly 2019, have not been effective to get valid results.

However, the government of the nation tried its best to arrange elections systematically. The government tried its best to avoid bias in the arrangement of democratic elections. As an example, the election of *Wolesi Jirga* was held for 250 seats. Among those seats, 10 seats were reserved for Kuchis or nomads. One was jointly reserved for Sikh and Hindu communities. The election could have not been conducted if there was no minimum of 68 female representatives for the seats. However, the government has failed to achieve legitimate outcomes by arranging elections. The statement can be justified based on historical data about elections arranged in Afghanistan after the end of the Taliban administration in 2001.

To vote for the leaders was the lesson the people of Afghanistan learned during the presidential election. Afghanistan's government and elections commission have found so many ways and made a continuous effort for the voters to cast their vote by ensuring safety and security. The challenges caused during the elections were efficiently handled with the help of urgent actions by the government. Ensuring

ing security in all possible ways was considered the most challenging task for the election commission. Sufficient robust precautions were taken by the international community and by the government to address the issue. Some of the problems in the elections forced to postpone the elections in some parts of Afghanistan. Afghanistan's political transition has been conducted to ensure safety and security for the people in all district boundaries of Afghanistan. Sufficient financial resources were provided to the international community and the Afghan government. The increasing insurgency and weak institutions were considered significant challenges faced by the people of Afghanistan during elections. The people did not properly implement many government reforms due to political situations. On the other hand, the other major threat to the Afghan people was caused by the Taliban. The capacity of state institutions was affected majorly by corruption, nepotism and clientelism caused by improper management of politicians of Afghanistan. The problem of sin is considered the root cause of all illegal activities in Afghanistan. The increased poverty and internal displacement affect most people in Afghanistan. The process held in the *Wolesi Jirga* was considered widespread fraud.

The future of Afghanistan was notwithstanding due to the criticality of a successful election. Democracy of the country was laid in the hands of the people by choosing of right representative. The deficiency of the system caused the utility of exercises. A perfect election was considered a myth in thriving and wracked countries. In all presidential elections in Afghanistan, emerging patterns of electoral fraud to client list practices and pattern client relations occupy a dominant place for voter turnout. Socio-economic, security and political, a higher level of public dissatisfaction was considered a significant reasons for the voter turnout in presidential elections in Afghanistan.

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Ауғанстандағы демократиялық сайлау:»Талибан 2.0» билікке келгенге дейінгі сайлау процесін бағалау

Аңдатпа. 2021 жылдың тамызында Талибан Ауғанстанда билікке келді. Сараптамалық ортада» Талибанның «билікке екінші келуі» Талибан 2.0.»әлемдік қоғамдастықтың танылуы мен қолдауына ұмтылатын Талибанның жаңа ұрпағының мақсаттары мен саясатын талдау кезінде. Өздеріңіз білетіндей, 2020 жылдың ақпанында Дохада АҚШ пен «Талибан» арасында Талибанды билікке қосу туралы келісімге қол жеткізілді. Бұл олардың өтпелі Үкіметте қанша пайыз болатындығы туралы болды.

Сайлау өткізілуі керек еді, бірақ «Талибан» уәделерін орындамады, талибандар билікті Қарулы жолмен басып алып, өз режимін орнатты. «Талибан» үкіметі елдегі демократиядан бас тарту туралы мәлімдеді, осылайша Ауғанстанның демократиялық мемлекет ретінде даму перспективаларына тосқауыл қойылды.

2001 жылдан кейін Талибанның билікке «екінші келуінің» себептерін анықтау үшін Ауғанстандағы демократиялық институттарды алдыңғы екі онжылдықта енгізу әрекеттері неге толық жүзеге асырылмағанын түсіну қажет. Осы кезеңдегі демократиялық сайлау процесі әртүрлі саяси күштердің қарсыласуымен, ауқымды сыбайлас жемқорлықпен, бұзушылықтармен және сайлаудағы бұрмаланумен байланысты болды. Жағдай халықтың қауіпсіздігін қамтамасыз ету саласындағы проблемалармен күрделене түсті. Елдің қоғамдық-саяси басқаруы қауіпсіздік мәселелерін тиімді шешуге бағытталмады.

Зерттеудің мақсаты—Президенттік және парламенттік сайлауды салыстыру арқылы Ауғанстандағы демократиялық сайлау процедураларын және олардың қоғамға әсерін түсіну. Сандық әдістерді, сондай-ақ сапалық әдістерді (сұхбаттасу, сарапшылардан сұрау) қолдана отырып, сайлау белсенділігін талдау негізінде пар-ламенттік және президенттік сайлауды өткізудің ерекшеліктері қарастырылады.

Түйін сөздер: Ауғанстан, сайлау процесі, парламенттік сайлау, президенттік сайлау, «Талибан».

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Демократические выборы в Афганистане: оценка избирательного процесса до прихода к власти «Талибана 2.0»

Аннотация. В августе 2021 года к власти в Афганистане пришли талибы. В экспертных кругах второе пришествие «Талибана» к власти стало обозначаться как «Талибан 2.0.» при анализе целей и политики новой генерации талибов, стремящихся к получению признания и поддержки со стороны мирового сообщества. Как известно, в феврале 2020 года в Дохе между США и «Талибаном» была достигнута договоренность о включении талибов во власть. Речь шла о том, сколько процентов будут представлять они в правительстве переходного периода. Предполагалось проведение выборов, однако «Талибан» не выполнил свои обещания, талибы вооруженным путем захватили власть и установили свой режим. Правительство «Талибана» заявило об отказе от демократии в стране, тем самым был поставлен барьер перспективам развития Афганистана как демократического государства.

Для определения причин «второго пришествия» Талибана к власти после 2001 года необходимо осмыслить, почему попытки внедрения демократических институтов в Афганистане в предшествующие два десятилетия не были реализованы в полной мере. Демократический электоральный процесс в этот период был сопряжен противоборством различных политических сил, масштабной коррупцией, нарушениями и фальсификацией на выборах. Ситуация осложнялась проблемами в сфере обеспечения безопасности населения. Общественно-политическое управление страной не было сосредоточено на эффективном решении проблем безопасности.

Целью исследования является понимание демократических избирательных процедур в Афганистане и их влияния на общество путем сравнения президентских и парламентских выборов. На основе анализа избирательной активности с применением количественных методов, а также качественных методов (интервьюирование, опрос экспертов) рассматриваются особенности проведения парламентских и президентских выборов.

Ключевые слова: Афганистан, электоральный процесс, парламентские выборы, президентские выборы, «Талибан».