

## The Role of Political Culture in Afghanistan's Political Development from (2001-2021)



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### Article's History

**Submitted:** 1<sup>st</sup> October 2024

**Revised:** 12<sup>th</sup> October 2024

**Published:** 16<sup>th</sup> October 2024

### **Abstract**

**Aim:** This study aimed to understand whether the awareness of the people from their political culture have impact on the political development in Afghanistan. The main question in this regard was; does the political culture help toward political development, democracy and political stability in Afghanistan.

**Methods:** This work employed the doctrinal research methodology along with descriptive, explanatory, and analytical research approaches. This study was entirely based on library sources. The sources were textbooks, scholarly published and unpublished journal articles, law reports related to the research area.

**Results:** One of the major internal obstacles to the realization and institutionalization of democracy in Afghanistan is the existence of tribal and ethnic political culture of some of its inhabitants. In Afghanistan, beliefs, emotions, looking to the past with orientations, social traditions, and some social structures of some people are ethnic and tribal. As at 2024, many people of the new and young generation of Afghanistan have a participatory political culture and trampled many beliefs, red lines and ethnic taboo. In the third presidential election in Afghanistan, it was evident that the political culture of some of the youth of this borderland is participatory. One of the ways that pave the ground for understanding people about their political leaders, the structure and behavior of the government is that the young generation of Afghanistan should be literate. This is the responsibility of the political leaders and the government of Afghanistan.

**Conclusion:** Political culture in Afghanistan is limited. The people do not have the necessary knowledge about the political system and its mechanisms.

**Keywords:** *Afghanistan, elections, political culture, political development*

## INTRODUCTION

The term political culture in political science was first used by the American called Gabriel Almond. According to Almond (1950), political culture is a pattern of individual attitudes and orientations towards politics and its issues within a system with a society. Participatory political culture exists in advanced societies. In these societies, people are relatively involved in political life. In participatory political culture, people are aware of their citizenship and they are also aware of politics. In these communities, citizens are sensitive to the behavior of political elites. According to Almond (1950), citizens who are aware of the various roles of government, such as taxation and legislation, are called political citizens. In this model of political culture, individuals may be aware of the existence of the political system and its data and are interested in it. Due to the lack of input and expression of demands and demands or the weakness of institutional structures, people cannot have a lot of political efficiency. Political elites are the mouthpiece of the people. Thus, in this model of culture, people have no control in the political process.

Limited political culture is related to those who are not very aware of their political system. In this kind of political culture, the ability to compare the changes that the political system has brought is nonexistent. People with limited political culture do not expect anything from their political system. The political culture is a set of attitudes, beliefs and the emotions that give order to the political process and determine the hypotheses and rules that determine the behavior of the political system. According to Khatibi (2014), political culture can be considered a set of values; attitude considered beliefs that show the people's stance on political issues. In fact, the political culture of any human society has been made up of components and elements over time and historical processes. These include values; attitude, beliefs, and emotions, traditions, social structure, and historical experiences of geographical location (Khatibi, 2014)

The political cultures are considered in context to which both the forces and orientations of individuals are determined. The political system is placed within it and exercises power. Therefore, it is important to study the role of political culture in the development of the country. Culture is a set of customs, ethics, beliefs and values that are passed down from generation to generation through socialization. Values are generalized concepts of legitimate and desirable goals that guide human behavior in a particular direction. Values come through norms in the form of rules and regulations (Qaderi, 2012). Almond's definition of political culture was gradually accepted by others and from then on, the concept of political culture was linked to a behaviorist approach based on quantity and a kind of abstract modeling. As a new approach, it created a new level of analysis of political issues and developments. Contrary to the common approach in political science, this new approach - which studied and analyzed formal institutions and their mechanisms of action - emphasized the study of informal behaviors and the attitudes of actors as the basis of their political behaviors (Zarei, 2009).

Political culture is a set of attitudes, beliefs and feelings that give order and meaning to the political process and determine the principles and rules that determine the governing behavior and the political system (Rafi, 2016). It is mentionable that, most people from the new and young generation of Afghanistan have a participatory political culture and trampled many beliefs, crossed red lines and ethnic. In the third presidential election in Afghanistan, it was evident that the political culture of some of the youth of this borderland is participatory. After the Second World War, there was a huge wave of decolonization and the emergence of different countries, whose

main concern was the emergence of political and legal independence. After gaining independence, perhaps the most important issue for all newly independent countries and the so-called third world countries was the issue of development. Due to the development of third world countries, different theories and models of development were formed. For example, Diamond, Linz, and Lipset (1988) argue that economic performance affects the development of democracy in at least three ways. First, they argue that economic growth is more important for democracy than given levels of socioeconomic development. Second, socioeconomic development generates social changes that can potentially facilitate democratization. Third, socioeconomic development promotes other changes, like organization of the middle class, which is conducive to democracy.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Political culture is an important issue in political development in most societies. Political development provides more opportunities for people to participate in various areas of society such as development of councils and activating political parties and communities. According to Almond (1950), most political issues are raised in the press and media. Similarly, political development is related to some other concepts including political participation, political culture, and political communication. One of the indicators of political development is political participation and the level of political participation affects the legitimacy of the system. The more conscious and healthier the level of participation, the higher the legitimacy of the system. The question that arises is to what extent has political culture played a role in political development in Afghanistan? What was the level of women's political participation in Afghanistan in the post-Taliban era? This study tries to evaluate how effective the political culture has been in the political development of Afghanistan after the fall of the Taliban regime. Secondary objectives was to evaluate women's political participation in the election process after the fall of the Taliban regime based on the last Afghanistan's constitution, and the role of election in democratizing of political culture.

### **Research Question**

#### **Main research question**

To what extent has political culture in political development played a role in Afghanistan since the fall of the Taliban regime?

#### **Secondary Research Question**

1. What was the political participation of women during the Taliban regime?
2. How was women's political participation after 11<sup>th</sup> September 2001?
3. What are the challenges to political development in Afghanistan?

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Skaine (2010) focused on the structure and formation of the post-Taliban government than the political culture of post-Taliban Afghanistan. The present study is different from the subject of this book because it examines the role of political culture in the political development of Afghanistan. Maley (2011) noted that the transition in Afghanistan is manifestly beset by multiple challenges, yet behind obvious issues such as insecurity and corruption lie a range of deeper problems related to the way in which the Afghan political system has developed. Trust deficits, real conflicts of interest, and parallel and potentially conflicting systems of authority, have affected both the mass

population—many of whom feel disconnected and disenfranchised—and political elites, which remain severely divided. The combination of a presidential system with a highly centralized formal state structure had fostered patrimonialism at the expense of institutional development. Unless and until these problems are addressed, the likelihood that any Afghan government will be able to take the lead in confronting the country's problems remains low. This research only focused on challenges of political development in Afghanistan till 2011 but the current study covered the role of political culture and its impacts on political development, democracy and political stability in Afghanistan till 2021.

A report by Their and Worden (2017) noted that sixteen years after the start of the international intervention in Afghanistan, the country remains beset by a debilitating array of conflicts, undermined political stability, an economic and security decline since the withdrawal of a majority of international forces, and a divided government since the 2014 elections. The report indicated that Afghanistan needs to reform and restructure its political institutions if it is to have stability, peaceful and sustainable governance, and economic growth. Four approaches, in combination, may have the potential to put Afghanistan on a more stable and sustainable path while improving prospects for reconciliation. This report does not have any point out about political culture and its consequence on political development and political stability in Afghanistan.

Ibrahimi (2019) examined how a troubled relationship between a centralist state and centrifugal society has posed a serious challenge to state-building in Afghanistan. Drawing on 'state-society relations' theory, the article examines how this persistent obstacle has repeatedly interfered with efforts to consolidate a sovereign state in post-Taliban Afghanistan. The article investigates the historical roots of the uneven relationship between the state and society by comparing *Musahiban's* state conservatism with the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan's attempted social transformation strategy. The article develops a new framework for the analysis of state-building where state policies and social behaviours are considered mutually significant in the state-building process. This research only focuses on state building in Afghanistan and does not examine political participation of the people, the role of political culture and observation of human rights in political development and political stability.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

This was qualitative research in terms of data collection and information on the role of political culture in the political development of Afghanistan. It was desktop literature review where resources were obtained from Google Scholar.

## **RESULTS**

### **The Role of Elections in Democratizing the Political Culture in Afghanistan**

Because Afghan society is a traditional and tribal, its political culture is also tribal. According to the division of political culture from Almond (1950), political culture in Afghanistan is mostly limited and national political culture. However, it has manifestations of participatory political culture. Democracy has not yet been institutionalized in Afghanistan, and there is a long way to go before democracy is institutionalized. One of the major internal obstacles to the realization and institutionalization of democracy in this country is the existence of tribal and ethnic political culture of some of its inhabitants. Values, beliefs, emotions, social traditions and some social structures are ethnic and tribal. Nevertheless, majority of the new generation of Afghanistan have

a participatory political culture and many have broken the red line and ethnic taboos. In the third presidential election in Afghanistan, it was evident that the political culture of some of the youth of this borderland is participatory. It was observed that many young people and middle-aged people consciously participated in this public process and wanted to make accurate decisions in this field and they used their vote with participatory expectations and attitudes. According to Khatibi (2014), the political culture in Afghanistan is becoming more democratic. Elections in Afghanistan are part of the political culture of this country and there is a direct relationship between elections and the political culture of each country. If political culture is moving towards democratization, it means that the elections in Afghanistan are also moving towards democratization. Conversely, if some symbols and manifestations in the political culture are insignificant, the same issues arise in the elections irrespective of the year.

The last presidential election conducted in 2019 clearly showed the political culture in the country, which is rapidly changing from ethnic to democratic. In addition to the great things that elections had for Afghanistan in various fields, one refined its positive impact on political culture in the country and strengthened democratic values in political culture. This national process, had positive and wide-ranging changes in behaviors, norms and created the thoughts of people and political actors on political issues. The change is considered very necessary for the institutionalization of democracy in the country (Khatibi, 2014).

### **The Role of Political Culture in the Political Participation of Afghanistan**

Political culture is a system of experiential beliefs, symbols, values and norms that form the basis of political action and the context of political behavior of individuals in society, parties and Statesmen are considered. It is one of the fundamental issues that has been considered and researched in the field of politics in the contemporary era. Because political culture is also a factor in determining the socio-political nature of individuals in society and attitudes, it determine the values and norms of society about politics and power. Political participation in Afghan society is more social. Sociologically, a sustainable political system is achieved through the public and conscious participation of citizens as a comprehensive project. Political participation in the current Afghanistan society and the process of citizen participation is hampered by the lack of equal opportunities for all citizens in political participation.

Theoretical and cultural barriers to political participation in Afghanistan are largely rooted in the traditional culture of society. Traditional and cumbersome values, white-collar dictatorship determining social status based on ethnicity, authoritarian and ethnocentric perceptions have contributed to the formation of a culture of anti-participation and a serious obstacle to the collective participation of the people in the country's political arena. Also, there exist lack of efficient institutions to express demands, elitism, mythology, and leadership. Lack of public awareness, communication deficiencies in radio and television and the pervasive national press also exist. Unwillingness of the country's political system to delegate roles and obligations to relevant institutions is also a hindrance. Creating a culture of participation in society means that point of reliance should be more on commonalities to promote the culture of participation in which there is political tolerance in society. Political participation can only take shape in a society that has a participatory culture. Until the structure of the political system, and share-seeking based on specific ethnicity is not transformative. Political participation in the modern world is a necessity and inevitable. even the most closed political systems in the world and the few totalitarian systems



that exist. They do not see the need for the participation of their people, although in person, in various fields especially political participation. As Ibrahim and Mussarat (2014) points out, democracy as a form of governance has taken a global dimension and it is clear that political participation in democracies is vital and necessary. Political participation is the voluntary activity of members of society in electing governors and participating directly and indirectly in policy-making.

Women's political participation in the new power structure after 11<sup>th</sup> September was a turning point in the formation of a new government in Afghanistan. With the US-led invasion of NATO and the fall of the Taliban, the plan was laid out at the Bonn Conference to form a government in Afghanistan. The result of the international community coalition and the cooperation of the internal forces in the war in Afghanistan was the Bonn Agreement, which marked new eras of political and social developments for this country. The basis of the Bonn Agreement was the advancement of democracy in the form of mechanisms such as the adoption of the constitution. The holding of presidential and parliamentary elections was considered at the Bonn Conference in several factors such as human rights, freedom of expression, the free press and women's rights, on which the new system in Afghanistan was based. Out of 61 official and unofficial members, a total of five women participated in the Bonn Summit (Kandiyoti, 2007). The Bonn Agreement, which marks the beginning of the current developments in Afghanistan, addresses the role of women in the future of the country. The eighth paragraph of the preamble, which contains the aims of the agreement, states that by recognizing and accepting that these interim arrangements are the first step towards the establishment of a broad government, female cheese, multi-ethnicity and the rule of all people are considered.

These arrangements and the government were not to stay in place for more than a certain period of time. Article 3 of the Interim Administration provides that the Vice President and other members of the Interim Government had been appointed by members of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). The selection of these individuals was based on their individual merits and competencies, and of course the regional ethnic considerations and religious composition of Afghanistan as well as the importance of the participation of the female class in the government have been considered. Accordingly, the dozen included Dr. Simasmar as one of the five deputy prime ministers of a newly established ministry called the Ministry of Women. Dr. Soheila Siddiq, the first woman to be promoted to the rank of general during the communist era; As Minister of Public Health of the Government Provisional Determined 3. In Section 4 of the Independent Commission for the Establishment of the Emergency Loya Jirga. Article 2 (c) emphasizes the appointment of representatives so that a significant number of Afghan women can participate in the Emergency Loya Jirga (Founder power).

The position and political participation of women in the new constitution is basically not a discussion of women's political participation in Afghanistan and with any other country before the formation of a democratic political system or at least a quasi-democratic local Arabs. The authoritarianism of the previous governments in Afghanistan Political participation for both women and men has not been very popular. However, the pre-Taliban era cannot be compared to the Taliban era in this regard. The Taliban government should be considered a nightmare for not only women but all Afghans. These conditions changed after the fall of the Taliban regime and the formation of a new political system, and Afghanistan took a step towards democratization (Kazem; 2005). The new Afghan government in line with the Bonn Agreement, which emphasized the

development of women's rights in its most important reform movement, drafted and approved the constitution on January 4, 2004. The government also devoted several articles to the new constitution with a positive approach to women's rights. What is clear is that the new constitution of Afghanistan is based on respect for democratic values, including human values and equality of civil rights. Tyranny, discrimination and violence based on the rule of social justice, protection of dignity and human rights, ensuring freedoms and fundamental rights of the people. This Constitution has been ratified. (Introduction to the new Constitution of Afghanistan, 2003). Article 22 of the new constitution states that "all forms of discrimination and privilege among Afghan citizens are prohibited. Afghan citizens, both men and women have equal rights and privileges before the law. Article 33 of the Constitution of Afghanistan states that all citizens of Afghanistan have the right to vote and to be elected" (text of the new constitution of Afghanistan; approved in 1382: 12-15). Also, Article 72 does not impose any restrictions on women's membership in the Cabinet, and only the condition of Afghan citizenship is mentioned (Afghanistan Constitution, 2003).

### **Globalization and Political Development in Afghanistan**

The belief of the international community in Afghanistan has naturally led to a process of globalization and development of Afghanistan's political structures. In fact, this process has its supporters. After the collapse of the black Taliban regime in Afghanistan, the focus of citizenship issues such as freedom of expression were created by civil society organizations and political parties. Civil society refers to voluntary civil and social organizations and institutions that lay the foundation of a dynamic society and are in conflict with the imposed structure of government and commercial and market institutions. Civil society is one of the bodies that mostly defends the civil liberties of the citizens of Afghanistan and leader in defending the rights of the citizens of the country. Civil society has a necessary relationship with democracy because in a democracy they are the source of people's power. Power is exercised by the people, and the goals of power are the welfare and interests of the people. Thus, civil society is one of the most advanced institutions that has had a strong and inseparable relationship with globalization and political development, and this causes most of the development list globalism to be isolated and in favor of determinism.

Afghanistan is a country where, in the truest sense, no political parties have been established to function as the driving force of a democratic system of government. The parties that have been established in Afghanistan are mostly based on ethnicity, language, religion and other means have been created or established. But in addition to all these issues, there are parties in Afghanistan that have supported globalization and political development in the country after the fall of the Taliban, which can be considered as the Islamic Jamiat of Afghanistan. The United National Council of Afghanistan, which considered political development based on the change in the type of political system, can be named as liberal party that operate under the policy of liberalism and are more in favor of foreign presence and political development after a decade of black regime.

Western technocrats, after laying the foundations of the Taliban regime in Afghanistan, actually became the entry point for people who lived mostly in the West. During the years that bloodshed was experienced in the country, they were studying and learning science in foreign countries. The creation of an interim government and finally an elected government caused these people to return to the country and gain a share of political power. And they(technocrats) are mostly in favor of the presence of Westerners and the international community in the country, and these people can be

counted among the people who are in favor of the globalization and political development of the country.

Jihadi commanders were another group that witnessed more globalization and political development in the defeat of the Taliban, and globalization with the presence of Westerners in the reconstruction of the country. In fact, it was the jihadi commanders who laid down their arms and decided to rebuild the country and create a country that meets international standards.

### **Challenges of Political Development in Afghanistan**

Political development is the political methods and policies that facilitate economic growth in developing countries. Semple (2014) noted the expanding role of governments such as increasing political participation and the ability of regimes to maintain order in the face of rapid change, competition for power between political factions, and competition for social status and wealth. For others, political development is how to give revolutions, the conditions for the replacement of capitalist systems with socialist ones. The experiences of societies in the process of political development are different and special and in accordance to social values. The economic, cultural and political system of any society is affected by different challenges. The first challenge facing political development in Afghanistan is the lack of accurate and clear studies of political development. It can be said with certainty that the agents of the political system do not have an understanding of political development, indicators and theories of political development. Without understanding political development theoretically, it is not possible to realize it practically. Therefore, there is no understanding of political development and we need to discuss this issue in an organized and systematic way.

The second challenge is the tribe, ethnic and tribal traditions. Political development theories were formed in the framework of the conflict between tradition and modernity which is an important part of tradition, ethnic and tribal adaptations. The tribe and ethnicism in Afghanistan are a serious obstacle to political development because tribal and ethnic organizations are against modern mechanisms and adaptations and indicators of political development. But some part of traditions can create more capacity for political development. For example, some religious teachings can help us achieve political development.

The third challenge facing political development is the hostile view of political development. As in the early studies of political development, development was basically considered a process of westernization. In Afghanistan, the development and political development of the process of westernization is understood. This hostile view causes the tribal and religious mechanisms to oppose political development and prevent its growth. At the same time, this issue causes a part of the force to be spent on dealing with traditional mechanisms. This challenge is serious because political development must be accepted by the people and the elites. As long as people fail to understand the development and fail to consider it contradictory to religious and tribal teachings, it is not possible to achieve political development. That is why the hostile view is a challenge to political development in Afghanistan. Getting rid of this view can help achieve political development in the country. Political development after World War II entered the political and sociological studies, but it's unknown in Afghanistan. In addition to this issue; tribal and ethnic traditions and the hostile attitude of Afghans and elites towards political development have made it difficult to achieve it (Semple; 2014).



Afghanistan faces various obstacles in the path of political development, one of the most important of which is ethnicity in Afghanistan. The existence of different ethnicities has been a determining factor in the divergence of Afghan society and the nation-state-building process in Afghanistan. Lack of coordination and renewal of transnational identities within the country's borders and lack of sense of unity has led to the failure to form a unified government. The path of development has been paved in Afghanistan but ethnic differences continue due to ethnic policies. The parties formed after 2001 did not pursue national and public interests but the interests of their people and tribe. In this way, the party in Afghanistan instead of contributing to the country's political development was mostly negative and highlighted ethnic divisions (Qadiri, 2013).

## CONCLUSION

Political culture can mean people's view of power. Government policy is the structure of political institutions and its mechanisms. In developed countries, people play a prominent role in controlling the behavior of the political leaders, but Political culture in Afghanistan is limited. The people do not have the necessary knowledge about the political system and its mechanisms. In a limited political culture, the people do not have any expectation from the government, and the decisions of the political elites do not conform to the reaction of the people. Although the political culture in Afghanistan is limited, in some cases a participatory culture is witnessed. As at 2024, many of Afghanistan's younger generation enjoy a participatory political culture and many beliefs; they break the red line and ethnic taboos. In the third presidential election in Afghanistan, it was seen that the political culture of some of the youth of this borderland is participatory. It was observed that many young people and middle-aged people consciously participated in this public process and wanted to make accurate decisions in this field and with participatory expectations and attitudes by using their vote. What is considered as political participation in the current society of Afghanistan and complicates the process of citizen participation is the lack of equal opportunities for all citizens in political participation. Theoretical barriers and culture of political participation in Afghanistan are mainly derived from the traditional culture of the society.

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