



EVALUATING FACTORS OF  
INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF POLITICAL PARTIES IN  
AFGHANISTAN: 2001-2014

BY

SHOAIB ABDUL ZAHIR

A dissertation submitted in fulfilment of the  
requirement for the degree of Master of Human Sciences  
(Political Science)

Kulliyyah of Islamic Revealed Knowledge  
and Human Science  
International Islamic University Malaysia

SEPTEMBER 2015

## **ABSTRACT**

This study evaluates the factors of political parties' institutionalization in post September 11 Afghanistan. It uses Svåsand-Randall political party institutionalization model as the framework for analysis. It assumes that there is a close link between political stability and political party institutionalization. Therefore, it argues that formal institutional context, conducive environment, capacity of political parties and political will are essential for institutionalization of political parties in Afghanistan. The study used a combination of descriptive and historical analytical methods of data collection and analysis. This study is composed of five chapters. Chapter One provides the essential background information. Chapter Two discusses the socio-political context of political party institutionalization since the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Chapter Three describes the Bonn Agreement and the post-Bonn political setup. Chapter Four examines the factors of political party institutionalization in post September 11 Afghan society. In the final chapter, based on the discussion and data presented in Chapter Four, the findings of the study and valuable recommendations are given. The study, among others, found that political parties in Afghanistan could have a more stabilizing role in the politics and democratizing of the political process in Afghanistan if the political leadership had provided the parties with a conducive environment to operate without restrictions. The leadership had side-lined political parties which prevented their development and institutionalization. The study also found that the complexity of the system of law in Afghanistan, the political constraints, the social perception and the weak organizational capability of political parties have also contributed to the marginalization of parties from the political scene. Finally, this study recommends that democratization efforts in Afghanistan should consider the institutionalization of political parties as a priority. Immediate actions should be taken to simplify the laws and establish the necessary institutional grounds for political parties to operate. Educating the populace on the role of political parties in consolidating democracy will change their perception for good results. Lastly, the political leadership of the country must build its trust on positive participation of political parties in the political process.

## خلاصة البحث

هذا البحث يقوم بتقييم عوامل وضع الأنظمة للأحزاب السياسية في أفغانستان في مرحلة ما بعد أحداث 11 سبتمبر. ويستخدم نموذج (سواساند-راندال) لوضع الأنظمة للأحزاب السياسية كإطار للتحليل. ويفترض أن تكون هناك علاقة قوية بين الاستقرار السياسي ووضع الأنظمة للأحزاب السياسية. وبالتالي، فإنه يزعم أن سياق النظام الرسمي، والبيئة المواتية، وصلاحيات الأحزاب السياسية، وإرادة سياسية ضرورية لوضع الأنظمة للأحزاب السياسية في أفغانستان. استخدم البحث مجموعة من الأساليب التحليلية الوصفية، والتاريخية لجمع البيانات وتحليلها. تتكون هذه الدراسة من خمسة فصول. يحتوي الفصل الأول على معلومات خلفية لازمة. يناقش الفصل الثاني السياق الاجتماعي- السياسي لوضع الأنظمة للأحزاب السياسية منذ أوائل القرن العشرين. يصف الفصل الثالث اتفاق بُن (Bonn) والإعداد السياسي في مرحلة ما بعد بُن. يفحص الفصل الرابع عوامل وضع الأنظمة للأحزاب السياسية في مرحلة ما بعد أحداث 11 سبتمبر في المجتمع الأفغاني. في الفصل الأخير، استناداً على النقاش والبيانات الواردة في الفصل الرابع، تمّ تقديم نتائج الدراسة واقتراحات قيمة. وقد وجدت هذه الدراسة من بين الأمور الأخرى، أنه من الممكن للأحزاب السياسية في أفغانستان أن تؤدي دوراً استقرارياً أكبر في السياسة، وديمقراطية في العملية السياسية بأفغانستان إذا قدّمت القيادة السياسية البيئة المواتية للأحزاب للعمل دون قيود. ولم تعر أهمية للأحزاب السياسية وهذا ما منعهم من التنمية، ووضع الأنظمة. الدراسة وجدت أيضاً أن تعقد النظام القانوني في أفغانستان، والقيود السياسية، والنظرة الاجتماعية، وضعف المؤهلات التنظيمية للأحزاب السياسية أسهم على تهميش الأحزاب من الساحة السياسية. أخيراً، تقترح هذه الدراسة وضع الأنظمة للأحزاب السياسية كأولوية في الجهود المبذولة في التحول الديمقراطي بأفغانستان. وينبغي اتخاذ الإجراءات الفورية لتبسيط القوانين، ووضع الأسس التنظيمية اللازمة لتعمل الأحزاب السياسية بها. وتوعية الجمهور عن دور الأحزاب السياسية في دعم الديمقراطية الذي يؤدي في تحول المفهوم لديهم للحصول على نتائج جيدة. وأخيراً، يجب على القيادة السياسية للبلد بناء الثقة في المشاركة الإيجابية للأحزاب السياسية في العملية السياسية.

## **APPROVAL PAGE**

I certify that I have supervised and read this study and that in my opinion, it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Master of Human Science (Political Science).

.....  
Wahabuddin Ra'ees  
Supervisor

I certify that I have read this study and that in my opinion it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Master of Human Sciences (Political Science).

.....  
Khairil Izamin Bin Ahmad  
Examiner

This dissertation was submitted to the Department of Political Science and is accepted as a fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Master of Human Sciences (Political Science).

.....  
Tunku Mohar Tunku Mohd  
Mokhtar  
Head, Department of Political  
Science

This dissertation was submitted to the Kulliyah of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Human Sciences and is accepted as a fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Master of Human Sciences (Political Science).

.....  
Ibrahim Mohammed Zein  
Dean, Kulliyah of Islamic  
Revealed Knowledge and Human  
Sciences

## DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this dissertation is the result of my own investigations, except where otherwise stated. I also declare that it has not been previously or concurrently submitted as a whole for any other degrees at IIUM or other institutions.

Shoaib Abdul Zahir

Signature .....

Date .....

INTERNATIONAL ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY MALAYSIA

**DECLARATION OF COPYRIGHT AND AFFIRMATION  
OF FAIR USE OF UNPUBLISHED RESEARCH**

**EVALUATING FACTORS OF INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF  
POLITICAL PARTIES IN AFGHANISTAN: 2001-2014**

I declare that the copyright holder of this dissertation is  
Shoaib Abdul Zahir

Copyright © 2015 Shoaib Abdul Zahir. All Rights Reserved.

No part of this unpublished research may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise without prior written permission of the copyright holder except as provided below

1. Any material contained in or derived from this unpublished research may only be used by others in their writing with due acknowledgement.
2. IIUM or its library will have the right to make and transmit copies (print or electronic) for institutional and academic purposes.
3. The IIUM library will have the right to make, store in a retrieval system and supply copies of this unpublished research if requested by other universities and research libraries.

By signing this form, I acknowledge that I have read and understand the IIUM Intellectual Property Right and Commercialization policy.

Affirmed by Shoaib Abdul Zahir.

.....  
Signature

.....  
Date

*This work is dedicated to my parents who in all aspects of life supported me. The father who thought me to be a free man, brave, selfless, supportive and to sacrifice for people you love; and the mother who has thought me, with kindness and love, how to cope with the challenges of life when I lose my hope and surrender to the dark reality of being.*

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Praise be to Allah (SWT) for giving me the ability to complete this research.

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my supervisor Prof. Dr. Wahabuddin Ra'ees for his excellent guidance, patience, care and for providing me with necessary facilities for the research. This research would not be possible without his support and guidance. I also would like to thank Dr. Khairil Izamin Ahmad for reading this manuscript and for his constructive opinions. I place on record, my deepest gratitude to the Head of Department, Dr. Tunku Mohar Tunku Mohd Mokhtar, for his help and support. I take this opportunity to express my gratitude to Prof. Dr. El Fatih Abdullahi Abdelsalam, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Ishtiaq Hossain, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Garout Suliman Eisa, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Md. Moniruzzaman, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Danial Mohd. Yusof, Assoc. Prof. Dr. S. M. Abdul Quddus and Dr. Muhamad Fuzi Omar.

Furthermore, I would like to thank the staff in the library and Centre for Postgraduate Studies for their help and support as well as my classmates and friends who made this experience memorable and wonderful.

I also would like to thank my family for their constant support and encouragement, especially my mother, Samea Mohammady, and my brother, Mosab Mohammady, who were patient and supportive all the time. Finally, I would like to thank two of my best friends, Qasim Zargar and Javid Riaz, who were always helping me and giving me their best suggestions. I would have been a lonely lab without them.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract .....	ii
Abstract in Arabic .....	iii
Approval Page.....	iv
Declaration .....	v
Copyright .....	vi
Dedication .....	vii
Acknowledgements.....	viii
List of Figures .....	xi
List of Tables .....	xii
List of Abbreviations .....	xiii
<b>CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION .....</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1 Background of the Study.....	1
1.2 Statement of the Problem .....	3
1.3 Justification .....	4
1.4 Objectives of the Study .....	4
1.5 Literature Review .....	5
1.6 Conceptual Framework .....	11
1.6.1 Political Party and its Types.....	12
1.6.2 Factors Related to Party Institutionalization in Afghanistan .....	15
1.6.2.1 The Conducive Environment .....	20
1.6.2.2 The Formal Institutional and Legal Context.....	21
1.6.2.3 The Political Will.....	21
1.6.2.4 The Capacity of Political Parties.....	22
1.6.3 Argument .....	22
1.7 Research Methodology.....	23
1.8 Chapter Outline .....	24
<b>CHAPTER TWO: POLITICAL PARTIES IN AFGHANISTAN .....</b>	<b>25</b>
2.1 Introduction .....	25
2.2 The First Phase: Monarchy, Reformists and the First Political Parties.....	26
2.2.1 The Wish Zalmian, the Watan, and the Khalq Groups .....	27
2.2.2 Shah Mahmood Khan And Suppression of Political Groups.....	30
2.2.3 King Zahir, the 1964 Constitution and Political Groups .....	31
2.2.3.1 Pro-Monarchist Parties.....	34
2.2.3.1.1 Hezb-e Wahdat-e Melli (National Unity Party).....	34
2.2.3.1.2 Democrat-e Motaraqi (Democratic Progressive Party).....	35
2.2.3.2 Leftist Parties .....	36
2.2.3.2.1 Hezb-e Demokratik-e Khalq-e Afghanistan (People’s Demcoratic Party of Afghanistan; PDPA).....	36
2.2.3.2.2 Sazman-e Jawanan-e Motaraqi (Progressive Youth Organization) .....	37
2.2.3.3 Islamist Parties .....	37

2.2.3.3.1 Sazman-e Jawanen-e Moslaman (Organization of Muslim Youth).....	37
2.3 The Second Phase: Mohammad Daud Khan’s Republic (1973-1978) .....	38
2.4 The Third Phase: Communist Take Over.....	40
2.4.1 The Single-Party System.....	41
2.4.2 Multi-Party System of Dr. Najibullah.....	43
2.5 The Fourth Phase: Mujahideen And Taliban Regimes .....	44
2.6 Conclusion.....	45
<b>CHAPTER THREE: THE BONN AGREEMENT: STATE BUILDING AND POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS .....</b>	<b>47</b>
3.1 Introduction .....	47
3.2 The 2001 Bonn Agreement: Ending the Conflict .....	47
3.3 The New Constitution .....	55
3.4 The Electoral Law .....	56
3.5 The Political Party Law.....	60
3.6 Conclusion.....	61
<b>CHAPTER FOUR: FACTORS OF PARTY INSTITUTIONALIZATION .....</b>	<b>62</b>
4.1 Introduction .....	62
4.2 Formal Institutional Context .....	62
4.2.1 Afghanistan’s Constitution .....	62
4.2.2 The Political Parties Law .....	65
4.2.3 The Electoral System .....	68
4.3 The Conducive Environment .....	70
4.3.1 Political Environment.....	71
4.3.1.1 The Religion Factor .....	74
4.3.1.2 The Ethnicity Factor .....	75
4.4 Informal Patronage Networks and Traditional Power Structure.....	76
4.5 Capacity of Political Parties .....	80
4.5.1 Systemness and Decisional Autonomy .....	80
4.5.2 Value Infusion and Reification .....	84
4.6 Political Will .....	85
4.7 Conclusion.....	87
<b>CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, ANALYSIS AND RECOMMENDATIONS ....</b>	<b>89</b>
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY .....</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>APPENDIX A: TRANSLATION OF POLITICAL PARTIES’ NAMES .....</b>	<b>108</b>
<b>APPENDIX B: 2009 POLITICAL PARTIES LAW.....</b>	<b>112</b>

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1.1 Theoretical Framework	20
----------------------------------	----

## LIST OF TABLES

Table 3.1	2004 Presidential Election Results	59
-----------	------------------------------------	----

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CEO	Chief Executive Officer
DDR	Disarmament Demobilization Reintegration
ECC	Election Complaints Commission
IEC	Independent Election Commission
JEMB	Joint Electoral Management Body
MP	Member of Parliament
NDI	National Democratic Institute
NDP	New Democratic Party
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
PDPA	People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan
SNTV	Single Non-Transferable Vote
UN	United Nations
UNAMA	United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Located in the heart of Asia, Afghanistan is a country surrounded by land and bears a long history of struggle across different civilizations. This country is a bridge that links Central Asia to South Asia and East Asia to the Middle East. It is bordered by Pakistan in the south and east, Iran in the west, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan in the north, and China in the far northeast. Urban civilization may have begun in the area as early as 3,000 to 2,000 BC.<sup>1</sup> Due to the historical structure of rule in the region by different empires, this country shares many socio-cultural elements with its neighbours. This land has witnessed military conquests by the Greeks, the Mayuryans, the Muslim Arabs, the Mongols, and others such as the British, the Soviets and the Americans.<sup>2</sup> Quoting Saikal's words, "rare is the country that has sustained as many blows, and such hard blows, as has Afghanistan since its foundation as a distinct political unit in 1747".<sup>3</sup> This is the birthdate of Afghanistan's modern political history and rise of the Durrani Empire led by Ahmad Shah Durrani.<sup>4</sup>

In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, Afghanistan was the victim of the "Great Game" between the British and Russian empires.<sup>5</sup> Although Anglo-Indian forces attacked Afghanistan twice, they could not colonize Afghanistan. This experience convinced

---

<sup>1</sup> Luke Griffin, "The Pre-Islamic Period, Afghanistan Country Study", Illinois Institute of Technology, <http://www.gl.iit.edu/govdocs/afghanistan/PreIslamic.htm>.

<sup>2</sup> D. Balland, "AFGHANISTAN x. Political History" *Encyclopedia Iranica Online*. Accessed on March 23, 2015. Available at <http://iranica.com/articles/afghanistan-x-political-history.htm>.

<sup>3</sup> Amin Saikal, *Modern Afghanistan: A History of Struggle and Survival*, new pbk. ed. (London: I.B. Tauris, 2006, 2004), 1.

<sup>4</sup> Saikal, *Modern Afghanistan...*, 17-22.

<sup>5</sup> "Western Powers and the Great Game", Centre for Applied Linguistics (CAL). Accessed on March 27, 2015. Available at <http://www.cal.org/co/afghan/ahist.htm>.

both British and Russians to transform the country to an effective “buffer” zone.<sup>6</sup> Since then, Afghanistan has experienced extremist ideological dispositions ranging from tribal value system to Marxism-Leninism and Islamic extremism.

The current government of Afghanistan exists as a result of more than a decade of endeavours aimed at peace and state building, democratization and development of the political system. The political development of democratic countries is principally dependent, in some definite ways, on the existence of political parties in that country. As stated by Weiner and LaPalombara, having powerful and organized parties will have precise impact on national integration, political participation, legitimacy of the government and the management of conflict.<sup>7</sup> By 2006, more than 80 political parties were registered with the Ministry of Justice of Afghanistan but they were mostly functioning as simple organizations, assemblies or semi-structured political parties rather than institutionalized parties championing for political causes. The 2003 Political Parties Law, based on the terms of Afghanistan’s Constitution, formally charted the platform for operation of political parties. However, the new law in 2009 tighten the situation for political parties’ functions and hence the number of political parties was reduced. Well organized, transparent and widely representative political parties were the aim of democracy advocates. Therefore, the issue of the institutionalization of political parties developed into a vitally important step in consolidation of democracy in Afghanistan.

---

<sup>6</sup> Saikal, *Modern Afghanistan...*, 26-27.

<sup>7</sup> Myron Weiner and Joseph LaPalombara, “The Impact of Parties on Political Development” in *Political Development and Social Change*, edited by Jason Leonard Finkle, (New York: Wiley, 2d ed. 1971), 1.

## 1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Academics<sup>8</sup> often argue that the process of building democracy and democratic institutions in Afghanistan appears to have started with the American invasion in 2001. Formation and development of political parties have become essential for institutionalization and consolidation of democracy in Afghanistan. One can argue that the historical obstacle to the development of political parties has been removed. Afghanistan in 2003 promulgated laws on political parties, paving the way for the formation and registration of a large number of parties with the Afghan Ministry of Justice. However, academics, for example Giustozzi and Larson, question the ability of political parties in Afghanistan to play the role that they normally play in a stable democracy.<sup>9</sup> They have raised questions about the institutionalization of political parties. If Afghanistan wants to be a step closer to building democracy and its consolidation, it needs to institutionalize political parties. Hence, this study examines party institutionalization and the factors that facilitate or prevent party institutionalization. This study therefore aims to answer the following questions:

1. Why are political parties in Afghanistan not able to play a stabilizing role in the political process of the country?
2. How can institutionalization of political parties in Afghanistan take place?

---

<sup>8</sup> For example see, O. Hassan, & A. Hammond, "The rise and fall of American's freedom agenda in Afghanistan: counter-terrorism, nation-building and democracy", *The International Journal of Human Rights*, vol. 15, no.4 (2011):532-551; H. Nixon, & R. Ponzio, "Building Democracy in Afghanistan: The Statebuilding Agenda and International Engagement", *International Peacekeeping*, vol.14, no.1 (2007): 26-40.

<sup>9</sup> See: Antonio Giustozzi, "Afghanistan: political parties or militia fronts?" in *Transforming rebel movements after civil wars*, edited by J. de Zeeuw (179-204), (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2007); Antonio Giustozzi, "March towards Democracy? The Development of Political Movements in Afghanistan", *Central Asian Survey*, vol.32, no.3 (2013): 318-335; Anna Larson, "Afghanistan's New Democratic Parties: A Means to Organise Democratisation?" (Kabul: Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit, 2009); Anna Larson, "Toward an Afghan democracy? Exploring perceptions of democratisation in Afghanistan", (Kabul; Afghan Research and Evaluation Unit, 2009)

3. What are the factors or obstacles to institutionalization of political parties and how can they be overcome?

### **1.3 JUSTIFICATION**

The study of factors of institutionalization of political parties in Afghanistan is significant for the following reasons: firstly, the existing yet scattered literature on political parties in Afghanistan lacks a systematic base to describe the trend by which political parties are established and there is a need to explain the know-how of parties' institutionalization there. Therefore, by relying on accepted models of party institutionalization, this study would be an atypical work that analyses the factors of political party institutionalization in Afghanistan.

Secondly, since the process of state building and democratization is one of the major concerns of many international bodies as well as most organizations in Afghanistan, one can appreciate the rise of party politics in the Afghan society if political parties are institutionalized. This requires a true analysis of the factors of political party institutionalization.

### **1.4 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

The objectives of this study are to:

1. Assess the inability of political parties to play stabilizing role in Afghanistan.
2. Examine the institutionalization of political parties in Afghanistan.
3. Analyse the obstacles to institutionalization of political parties in Afghanistan and how to overcome them.

## 1.5 LITERATURE REVIEW

In contemporary politics, the issue of democracy and democratization has become one of the main concerns.<sup>10</sup> The issue of political parties and party system is an important part of the process of building democracy. Saikal in *The UN and Afghanistan: Contentions in Democratization and State-building* looks at why it is often argued that after more than a decade of UN and international community's constant efforts and involvement in Afghanistan, they have not been able to facilitate the construction of a stable democratic political order. He believes that instead of aiming for a system of governance along 'Western' lines, the main focus should be on promoting an appropriate, institutionalized, workable political order, national reconciliation and regional consensus as preconditions for stability and bringing peace to Afghanistan. Acknowledging the importance of political parties for a functioning democracy, he believes that "the mixture of government interference, a dangerous security environment, and a questionable political party law led to them being side-lined".<sup>11</sup>

Shahrbanou Tadjbakhsh and Michael Schoiswohl look at the democratization process in Afghanistan as an experiment. By scrutinizing the first six years of the democratization process starting from 2001, they believe that externally led democratization was not rooted enough in traditionally formed institutions of Afghanistan. They argue that "Afghan citizens have been considered as recipients of democracy rather than the driving force behind it."<sup>12</sup> Therefore, this lack of participation and sense of ownership has a direct link with the failure of

---

<sup>10</sup> See: George Sorensen, *Democracy and Democratization: Processes and Prospects in a Changing World*, (Westview Press, 2007); Barbara Geddes, "What do we know about democratization after twenty years?." *Annual review of political science*, vol.2, no. 1 (1999): 115-144.

<sup>11</sup> Saikal, Amin. "The UN and Afghanistan: Contentions in Democratization and Statebuilding", *International Peacekeeping*, vol.19, no. 2 (2012): 217-234.

<sup>12</sup> Shahrbanou Tadjbakhsh, and Michael Schoiswohl, "Playing with fire? The international community's democratization experiment in Afghanistan", *International Peacekeeping*, vol. 15, no. 2 (2008): 253.

democratization. They believe that it eventually “generates dissatisfaction and disillusionment, which, when combined with perception of social injustice in the distribution of development gains, lead to mistrust of the intervention and a sustained cycle of conflict.”<sup>13</sup> Moreover, they assert that the ban of political parties in parliamentary election explains the personalized nature of Afghan politics. The main challenge of political parties in Afghanistan is generating funds. This problem becomes more serious when the law on political parties prohibited any external financial support for parties. The article closes by stating that “democratic mechanisms have to be adapted to the particular needs of a community, not the community to an ideal of a democratic system”.<sup>14</sup>

However, Warsaji believes that people in Afghanistan have had the experience of a “bitter” democracy.<sup>15</sup> He insists that the Royal Family in this country “were not sincere” in process of building democratic institutions.<sup>16</sup> He continues by stating that “the Royal Family wanted to have democracy, parliament, constitution and constitutional monarchy” but simultaneously they had the tendency to “interfere in the prime ministers’ work and banned political parties, and important channel of public participation in the government decision-making process.”<sup>17</sup>

According to Bjornlund, Cowan and Gallery, for those states that want to recover from long-standing conflicts and transit to democracy, “elections and other political arrangements are typically central to peace agreements”.<sup>18</sup> They argue that “the development of inclusive, effective and internally democratic political parties

---

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 265.

<sup>15</sup> M. Ibrahim Warsaji, *Jihadi Afghanistan wa Jang Sardi Qudrathay-e- Bozurg* (Afghanistan’s jihad and the cold war of the big powers) (Peshawar: Saboor Publication, 2002), 511.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 513.

<sup>18</sup> Eric Bjornlund, Glenn Cowan, and William Gallery, “Election Systems and Political Parties in Post-Conflict and Fragile States”, in *Governance in Post-Conflict Societies: Rebuilding Fragile States* (London: Routledge, 2007), 64.

goes hand in hand with support for elections”.<sup>19</sup> Voting is an accepted norm and the most direct means by which citizens of a country can participate in the political process, which can be practically fruitful with the existence of political parties. They believe that fragile and post-conflict states in order to establish genuine democracy and effective governance, require “political parties that are inclusive, transparent, accountable and internally democratic”.<sup>20</sup> Examining the 2005 election in Afghanistan, they believe that the electoral system in Afghanistan, as it was suggested and shaped by the international community, side-lined the role of political parties to form democratic outcomes. They conclude that international community failed to address the issues of electoral system design and political party development.<sup>21</sup>

According to Ruttig, Afghanistan’s “political organizations look back to a long history”<sup>22</sup> that its roots are found in the 1903-1909 constitutionalist movement or *mashrutiat*, as it is called by the Afghans. He states that in the 1960s, Khalilullah Khalili, advisor to King Mohammad Zaher Shah failed to set up *Hezb-e Ittehad-e Milli* (National Unity Party); there has never been again any compact effort “to organize moderate non-leftist and non-Islamist pro- status quo party”.<sup>23</sup>

Ruttig provides an abstract of political parties’ history with particular attention to the development of organized political movements. In this semi-historical comparative view, he uses the descriptive method to elaborate the existence of political parties in Afghanistan and the political events by which the political parties have influenced and reshaped, the notion by saying, it is a “misperception, mainly

---

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 85.

<sup>22</sup> Thomas Ruttig, *Islamists, Leftists--and a Void in the Center: Afghanistan's Political Parties and where They Come from (1902-2006)*, (Kabul: Konrad Adenauer Stiftung: 2006), 2.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 39.

among foreigners, that party system in Afghanistan is a post-Taliban development”.<sup>24</sup> Contrary to common sense, there are political parties in Afghanistan but not “in a western sense, of course: most lack cohesion and structure, a distinguishable program, and internal democracy”.<sup>25</sup> Three main currents are named by him as means to categorize the political parties in the past, which are “the political-religious (Islamic) current, the communist Left (sub-divided into formerly pro- and anti-Moscow groups), and a variety of ethno-nationalists”.<sup>26</sup> In Ruttig’s account, newly born national democratic parties which came to existence recently in post-Taliban period can be considered as a fresh attempt to build moderate parties.<sup>27</sup>

In *March towards Democracy? The Development of Political Movements in Afghanistan*, Antonio Giustozzi looks at the post-2001 period in Afghanistan sceptically and compares it to the process of democratic opening, which was interrupted in the early 1970s. He believes that there are many differences between the development of political movements up to 1978 and after 2001. Studying the fast modernization trend which was initiated in the 1960s and post-Taliban period, he argues that the “availability of resources on a large scale following international intervention in 2001 drove the Afghan political system in a different direction” than when it was formerly started domestically by enlightened reformists.<sup>28</sup> He points out that mobilization of support from the citizens in post-2001 era was mostly focused on either “participating in election” or “distributing patronage”.<sup>29</sup> The predominant obsession of party leaders had been to secure as much as they can from patronage

---

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 2.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 1.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 2.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 38.

<sup>28</sup> Antonio Giustozzi, “March Towards Democracy? The Development of Political Movements in Afghanistan”, *Central Asian Survey*, vol. 32, no. 3 (2013), 318.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 332.

resources that became available through international intervention. He concludes that “premature focus on participation in the electoral process contributed negatively to political-party development” by dispiriting the parties from supporting “radical causes” or “expressing deep popular grievances”.<sup>30</sup>

Renne Tiggeler is more optimistic about the New Democratic Parties (NDP) that came into being after the 2001 Bonn Conference. This is simply because there is a link between other parties to ex-mujahidin military factions which were previously active in Afghanistan’s civil conflict. After looking at the brief history of parties, he believes that the term “proto parties” can be applied to Afghanistan’s parties because of the lack of institutionalization associated with them in the conventional sense.<sup>31</sup>

Anna Larson explains the nature and the future challenges of new democratic parties shaped after 2001. She assesses how new democratic political parties could contribute to the process of organizing new democracy in Afghanistan by conducting a qualitative study and interviewing some important members of these parties and other social groups. This is because from the government’s point of view, it is feared that “encouraging parties may fuel the civil differences and intensify the insecurity situation”.<sup>32</sup> She believes that the only way to have legitimate elections in the future is to build a political culture by which people get introduced to democratic participation and parties play the core role of reaching this goal. Political parties, in the history of their existence, have been source of conflicts. From the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century until 2001, with some few exceptions, there has not been an appropriate political atmosphere in

---

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Rene Teijgeler, “Afghan Political Parties: A Short Outline,” [www.cultureindevelopment.nl](http://www.cultureindevelopment.nl), accessed on March 05, 2014, <http://www.cultureindevelopment.nl/file.php/135/Afghan%20Political%20Parties-a%20short%20outline%202009.pdf>.

<sup>32</sup> Anna Larson, “Afghanistan's New Democratic Parties: A Means to Organize Democratization?” <http://www.areu.org.af>, March, 2009, accessed April 25, 2014, available at <http://www.areu.org.af/EditionDetails.aspx?EditionId=69&ContentId=7&ParentId=7>.

which parties could compete as political institutions in opposition to a ruling regime. This has shaped a culture of political ambiguity. Information about parties and their membership is not publicly accessible.

Larson believes new democratic parties can bring change to the situation and she names several factors which typically challenge the strengthening and improvement of new democratic parties. The legal provision, the political parties' law which defines the process of registration and the electoral system, bring the most important challenges. Today, political parties in Afghanistan are controversial and relate to the conflicts and within ethnic groups or military factions; therefore, they are not reflected as potentially positive forces by the public and the government.<sup>33</sup>

Ibrahimi provides an institutionalist approach to post-Taliban Afghanistan's political development by evaluating the institutionalization of the country's political parties. He adopts the Huntington's model of institutionalization which draws on four variables of adaptability, complexity, autonomy and coherence. However, this model explains more specifically the internal factors of party institutionalization. He concludes that political parties have failed to be successfully institutionalized in Afghanistan during the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. In his findings, parties in Afghanistan are broadly under the influence of ethnic and religious leaders and consciously follow the traditional system of values. In his account, the supreme role of the three major ethnicities in Afghanistan has caused the parties to establish along ethnic lines and divide the country's high level political positions among them based on the population ratio of each ethnicity. He examines the 2014 presidential election

---

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

and invokes the multi-ethnic structure of competing teams as a reason to show the primacy of ethnicity in Afghanistan's political culture.<sup>34</sup>

The literature review above mainly discusses the importance of political parties in building democracy in Afghanistan. It also makes a rare reference to the importance of the institutionalization of political parties in consolidating democracy in Afghanistan. The literature suggests that there is a need for analysis of factors that prevent or facilitate the consolidation of political parties in Afghanistan, which is the focus of this study. This study, unlike other works on political parties of Afghanistan, provides a framework to explain different dimensions, including social dimension, legal dimension and political dimension, which shaped the existing format of parties and the patterns of their behaviour. The study elaborates the state of political parties in a chronological order from their emergence until they reached to a more organized form. It relied on theory based analytical discussion of institutionalization, factors that facilitate or prevent the institutionalization and enriched each part with practical examples.

## **1.6 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK**

This study examines factors of political party institutionalization in Afghanistan. The theoretical framework in this study consists of a number of interrelated core concepts, which are political party, institutionalization and factors of party institutionalization. Each of these concepts bear some issues that are worthy of being explained and discussed.

---

<sup>34</sup> S. Yaqub Ibrahim, "Political Parties and Political Development in Afghanistan" [www.atlantic-community.org](http://www.atlantic-community.org), April 17, 2014, accessed December 23, 2014, <http://www.atlantic-community.org/-/political-parties-and-political-development-in-afghanistan>.