

## **AFGHAN THIRD ULASI JIRGA ELECTION (OCTOBER 20-21, 2018: A PROMOTER OF STATE BUILDING OR AN INSTIGATOR OF FRAGILITY: AN ANALYSIS**

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### **Abstract**

*The research paper describes and analyzes Afghanistan's third Ulasi Jirga election in light of 'State's fragility' concept, initially theorized in the Western world in 1990s. State's fragility, is a situation where risks and vulnerabilities overwhelms a state's or a society's capacity to overcome these risks. In order to avoid fragility, risks and vulnerabilities are quantified in a number of dimensions, such as, political, economic, justice, security and functioning of core services performed by the State. Election, as a sub part of political dimension of fragility, is assessed and analyzed in this paper to determine how far it add or flout state's fragility, in terms of addressing level of violence, response of state's institutions and how far electoral practice contribute to socio-political climate to lessen state fragility as perceived in a liberal model.*

**Key Words:** Transparency, OECD, Registered Voters, Independence Election Commission, IECC (Independent Electoral Complaint Cell), Afghan Constitution 2004

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## Methodology

The purpose of research is descriptive and analytical; it makes sense of *Ulası Jirga* (lower house of legislature) election held in 2018, by employing ‘state fragility’ framework as a mode of analysis. It is an inductive effort using research strategy, a case study of Third *Ulası Jirga* election, in 2018, ground its data in public media discourse, such as, newspapers, journals, online sources on the subject, relevant websites, and input of research think tanks, such as, ANN (Afghan Analyst Network)

## Introduction

The concept of ‘State’s fragility, is yet to take a final and agreed-upon-definition because it is associated with a number of socio-cultural, economic and political drivers. However, among the epistemic community there is a growing consensus that major determinants of fragility are context specific.<sup>1</sup>The liberal institutions, such as, OECD (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development)<sup>2</sup> and World Bank draws state’s fragility on various socio-political and economic drivers that ultimately brings in conflict and violence. Both OECD and World Bank argue that fragility and conflict are mutually reinforcing and recently conflicts in fragile states are on rise.<sup>3</sup> According to one survey, “in 2016 more countries experienced violent conflicts than any time in 30 years”<sup>4</sup>Furthermore, there is growing belief that if conflicts in fragile States could not confine to national borders, the negative spillover can engulf the neighboring States

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<sup>1</sup> Shahida Aman, *State Failure and State Building in Post Conflict Societies: A Case Study Of Afghanistan*, Unpublished Ph.D dissertation, (Peshawar: Area Study Centre University of Peshawar, 2013), P. 25

<sup>2</sup> OECD (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development ) established in 1947 where 34 democracies with market economies work with each other as well as with more than 70 nonmember economies to promote economic growth, prosperity and sustainable development . It is a forum where governments work together and seek solution to common problems. The OECD set international standards on a wide range of things from agriculture to tax to the safety of chemicals. Roots of the organization go back to the rubble of Europe after World War II. It determine to avoid the mistakes of its predecessors in the wake of World War I, European realized that the best way to ensure lasting peace was to encourage cooperation and reconstruction rather than punish the defeated . OECD was established in order to run the U.S- financed Marshal Plan for reconstruction of the continent ravaged by war. By making individual governments recognize the interdependence of their economies. It paved the way for a new era of cooperation that was to change the face of Europe. online available at : <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YF51mpd0AI>

<sup>3</sup> Lahai Idriss John, Strokirch Von Karin, Brasted Howard & Ware Hallen, *Governance and Political Adaptation in Fragile States*, (Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), P. 85

<sup>4</sup> World Bank Group, *Pathway for Peace*, (Library of Congress , 2018), P. xvii

and finally can pose a threat to international security.<sup>5</sup> The realization that fragility does not confine itself to its epicenter developed after the 9/11 terrorist attack in U.S. (United States). In wake of this growing concern, the concept of state's fragility and its various dimensions has been the focus of conceptualization.

The academics and policy makers measures fragility in a variety of ways and understand through a number of arbitrary correlations between various variables. First, fragility was associated with underdevelopment (poverty), it was later equated to State's capacity-deficit to undertake core functions (justice, security, health and education) including failure of its institutions. Currently, a more standardized fragility index under CPIA<sup>6</sup> (Country Policy and Institutional Assessment) developed by World Bank, utilized by practitioners. CPIA uses sixteen criteria, grouped in four equally weighted clusters: Economic Management, Structural Policies, Policies for Social Inclusion and Equity, Public Sector Management and Institutions of States. OECD instead, look at fragility as a matrix of risks and vulnerabilities which is reflected in five dimensions, (1) violence (peaceful societies), (2) access to justice for all, (3) effective, accountable and inclusive institutions, (4) economic foundations and (5) capacity to adapt to social, economic and environmental shock and disasters.<sup>7</sup> However, despite such a calibrated and sophisticated fragility framework, when applied in fragile States' fall short of achieving State building that also evoke academic attention. A section of scholarship blame the framework for introduction of institutions alien to local culture, geography and politics. In case of Afghanistan, the critics of

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<sup>5</sup> Lahai Idriss John, Strokirch Von Karin, Brasted Howard & Ware Hallen, *Governance and Political Adaptation in Fragile States*, (Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), P. 86

<sup>6</sup> The CPIA consists of 16 criteria grouped in four equally weighted clusters: Economic Management, Structural Policies, Policies for Social Inclusion and Equity, and Public Sector Management and Institutions. For each of the 16 criteria, countries are rated on a scale of 1 (low) to 6 (high). The scores depend on the level of performance in a given year assessed against the criteria. The ratings depend on actual policies and performance, rather than on promises or intentions. In some cases, measures such as the passage of specific legislation can represent an important action that deserves consideration. However, in the end it is the implementation of legislation that determines the extent of its impact and overall, CPIA score for a country. The 16 items, assessed, are grouped into four clusters. Each of the four clusters has a 25 percent weight in the overall rating. Within each cluster, all criteria receive equal weight, although components within a criterion may be weighted differently. Reference, online available at: <http://datatopics.worldbank.org/cpia/cluster/overall-cpia-score>, retrieved on June 22, 2019,

<sup>7</sup> Lahai Idriss John, Strokirch Von Karin, Brasted Howard & Ware Hallen, (2019)

development package, under the fragility frame, for example, lambast the practice of imposing centralized state institutions, in a historically decentralized State. Another section criticize the project of promoting democracy, in the country, in absence of low performing State structures and absence of institutional framework for resolving disputes.<sup>8</sup>

In index of fragility, modern liberal election based on the principle of one-man-one-vote, is a core function of liberal-State-building activity. It is a source of government legitimacy and a peaceful device of transfer of power. OECD looks at fragility, as mentioned above, as a matrix of risks and vulnerabilities, in five dimensions. This study on election of the third *Ulasi Jirga*, 2018, assesses the state's fragility framework, in the election, specifically in two areas, containment of violence and accountable institutions as prescribed by OECD. The paper test the two areas at three levels of electoral process, registration, campaign and polling day. It is hypothesized that if there is less violence in the election and institutions perform accountably then there is a chance of mitigation of state fragility.

### **Background and Significance of Election in Afghanistan**

The historical and cultural matrix of the Afghan State embedded in socio-political hierarchies based on patriarchy, tribe, clan and religion, all stifling the liberal political socialization including modern elections. King Amanullah (r. 1919-1929) was charge sheeted through 19-column religious edict (*Fatwa*) issued by *mullahs* (religious leaders) of Kabul, termed him a *Kafir* (infidel).<sup>9</sup> The violent reaction against king Amanullah liberal reforms cost the kingdom one-year budget. Arnold Toynbee considered Amanullah's attempt to westernize Afghans was the crowing folly that cost him the throne.<sup>10</sup> A more pragmatic, indigenous solution was adopted by king Amanullah's successors, Nadir dynasty (r. 1929-1978), framing 1931 Constitution within Islamic flavor to avoid violence. It was a cultural turn, democracy of Afghan type. The ruling family manipulated elections in such a way that only pro-ruling family tribal and religious leaders could return to *Ulasi Jirga*.<sup>11</sup> With the exception of one election, the 7<sup>th</sup> *Ulasi Jirga*<sup>12</sup>:in

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<sup>8</sup> Shahida Aman, *State Failure and State Building in Post Conflict Societies: A Case Study of Afghanistan*, Unpublished Ph.D dissertation, (Peshawar: Area Study Centre (Russia, China & Central Asia, University of Peshawar, 2013), P. 20

<sup>9</sup> Atae Ibrahim (*Da Afghanistan Per Mauser Tarikh Yao landa Katana* (Pushto).(A short history of Afghanistan).(Banga Intisharat Miwand Saba Kutab Khana, 1380/2001), P. 205

<sup>10</sup> Toynbee Arnold. *A Study of History*, Vol., VI. (Oxford Press), p. 103. See Arnold Fletcher. (1965). *Afghanistan: A Highway of Conquest*. ( New York: Cornell University Press, 1939). p. 222

<sup>11</sup> Louis Dupree. Comparative Profiles of Recent Parliament s in Afghanistan: Emphasis on twelfth and thirteenth. *South Asia Series: Vol. XV. No. 4*, the American Universities

1949, held impartially, brought much anti-government liberal educated class to assembly that deterred the monarch. Successive Afghan governments, ranging from monarchy, communists and Islamists, practiced superficial modern elections, if there were any, and eliminated public voice in national policies. State fragility suffered as violence increased with more suppression of political opponents. The flaw was not in democratic electoral process but the subjective way of conducting it.

The period under coalition government of Islamic parties (r.1989-1992), followed by Taliban rule (r.1996-2001), the political system remained authoritarian, without elections, resulted in more violence and political exclusion. Authoritarianism invited a complex of risks and vulnerabilities, especially crises of legitimacy that pushed the country losing control over sub national groups and non-state actors, such as, Al-Qaeda. The spill over impacts of fragility resonated in the neighboring states and finally turned into 9/11 terrorist attack. The fragile context created space and justification for neoliberal world, led by US, to go for humanitarian intervention.

U.S and its coalition partners ousted Taliban's in 2001 and put Afghanistan under the liberal model, the Bonn Process and the Constitution of 2004.<sup>13</sup> The new liberal model attempted to address problem of fragility, apart from ensuring delivery of core services, such as, security to individuals, access to justice, human rights, free market competition, guaranteed people's franchise to elect their representative.

### **Elections in Post Conflict Period**

Since 2004, successive governments organized elections both presidential and parliamentary, until now total six by Independent Election Commission (IEC). The liberal world idealized electoral exercises as panacea for tackling state fragility, lessening violence and creating a climate for political change. The current seventh election and the third *Ulasi Jirga*, under 2004 Constitution, is analyzed in order to assess how far it addressed

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Field Staff: Afghanistan,. An analysis of the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> *Shuras* (Parliaments). July 1971

<sup>12</sup> The House of the People or *Ulasi Jirga* is the lower house of parliament and directly elected through the principle of SNTV (Single Non Transferable Vote). Total strength of the house is 250 and the Constitution guarantees 64 members of the house to be female. Nomads (*Kuchis*) elect 10 representatives to *Ulasi Jirga* through a Single National Constituency. *Ulasi Jirga* main responsibility is to make and ratify laws and approve the actions of the President.

<sup>13</sup> Tim Young's, *Afghanistan: the culmination of the Bonn process*, Research Paper, International Affairs & Defense Section, (House of Commons Library), available online at : [file:///C:/Users/Shafi/Downloads/RP05-72%20\(2\).pdf](file:///C:/Users/Shafi/Downloads/RP05-72%20(2).pdf), (October 26, 2015), retrieved on June 18, 2019

fragility of Afghan State, focusing two dimensions, violence and institutional performance.

### **Registration Process (April to June 2018)**

In April IEC announced voter registration (VR), in all 34 provincial capitals of the country in three phases over a period from April 14 to June 12, 2018.<sup>14</sup> The commission advised the voters to register vote in the center where one desires to cast vote.<sup>15</sup> ACCRA (Afghanistan Central Civil Registration Authority) did a better job by issuing all *Tazkera* (identity cards), registered more than nine million (9,072,208) voters, five million male (63.7 %) and more than three million (34.3 %) female.<sup>16</sup> However, one main issue, observed in many registration centers, was insurgent's threat to attack registration centers. Consequently, if insurgents effectively disenfranchised voters in a given district it could question effectiveness of institutions to ensure security. Paradoxically, even in several provinces with higher threat-level, the registered voter's data was found implausibly higher than the total local population. In the most insecure provinces, such as, Paktia, Nimruz, Nangarhar, Nuristan, Baghlan, Kandahar, Khost and Kunduz, higher registration rate, raises questions regarding transparency of the electoral process. Failure of security, a dilemma, it led to disenfranchisement of voters on one and on other it resulted in unbridled fake registration. In some provinces, the voter registration was even higher than in Kabul, the most developed province and with less threat of insurgents.<sup>17</sup> Paktia has registered an implausible 141 per cent of its estimated eligible population. In the previous elections of 2014, 2010 and 2009, audits of ballot boxes in most of these provinces also revealed high rates of fraudulent voting. Thus, there is a clear nexus between security, disenfranchisement of voters, fake registration, put question mark on the institutional accountability, whether IEC, EEC or national security apparatus to hold fair elections. Institutional accountability a hallmark of State fragility index under OECD, if compared to the underperformance of IEC and others

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<sup>14</sup> First phase, from April 14 to May 13, Second phase at capitals of districts from May 15 to May 28 and the third one at villages from May 30 to June 12, as reported online at: <http://www.iec.org.af/media-section/press-releases/1039-vr-commencement-2018>, retrieved on November 12, 2018.

<sup>15</sup> Independent Election Commission of Afghanistan, online available at <http://www.iec.org.af/prs>. Retrieved on April 22, 2019.

<sup>16</sup> Ali Yawar Adili and Thomas Ruttig (May 27, 2018), *Afghanistan Election Conundrum (8): Controversies over voter registration*. Afghan Analyst Network, available at: <https://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/>, retrieved on June 22, 2019.

<sup>17</sup> Worden Scott (*Afghanistan Election Conundrum: New voter registry too good to be true* Afghan Analyst Network, available at <https://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/>, (August 28, 2018), retrieved on June 22, 2019.

during election, is seriously lacking in performance. The poor performance has significant effect on drivers of fragility, violence and legitimacy.

### **Woman Participation**

Fake registration or less registration is a challenge and questions credibility, capacity of the specialized institutions, especially IEC and national institutions responsible for security. Some patriarchal families in remote areas of Nangarhar province did not allow their women to register as voter. In Achin, a district in Nangarhar province, voter registration center was far away from villages and local people dislike sending their female to take their voter cards. IEC head for Nangarhar confirmed IEC poor performance in public awareness but cited cultural reason to limited turn out of female to register as voters though. Taking security issue as a single variable and paying less attention to institutional performance is to obfuscate issue of voter registration to avoid a deeper understanding of the problem, especially performance of institutions. Despite, all these logistic and security issues, women participation was encouraging as out of total 2565 candidates for Ulasi Jirga, 417 are women, a one-fifth.<sup>18</sup> When registration process was closed, the total national registration, both male and female, stood at 40 per cent. If half of them cast vote it would confine turn out to 20 per cent, rising questions over how many people the elected members would actually represent their provincial constituencies. If the elected government is representative of 20% people, it is harmful to its legitimacy and monopoly over power. If registration of voter is low and violence is not controlled, elections may not be effective tools of addressing fragility. Here again, surfaces the role of effective accountable institutions to ensure transparent electoral process.

### **Violence and Registration**

In the initial phase of voter registration, in month of April 31 a suicide bomber killed 31 people in an attack on a registration center at Kabul.<sup>19</sup> Similarly, a district police chief in the northern Balkh province died of his wounds when shot dead by insurgents during a gun battle against them. Taliban claimed responsibility for the killing.<sup>20</sup> Thus, registration

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<sup>18</sup> The daily, The Frontier Post, Peshawar quoting Pajhwok, (Afghan News Agency, September 29, 2018)

<sup>19</sup> Tolba Ahmed, Islamic State claims responsibility for Kabul blast: group's AMAQ news agency, available on line at: [https://www.reuters.com/article/us-afghanistan-blast-claim/islamic-state-claims-responsibility-for-kabul-blast-groups-amaq-news-agency-idUSKBN1HT099?il=0\\_](https://www.reuters.com/article/us-afghanistan-blast-claim/islamic-state-claims-responsibility-for-kabul-blast-groups-amaq-news-agency-idUSKBN1HT099?il=0_) (April 22, 2018), Retrieved on April 28, 2019.

<sup>20</sup> Faiez Rahim, *Islamic State suicide bomber kills 57 in Afghan capital*, ( April 23, 2018),

started in an organized manner but marred fear of attacks. The threat and fear environment haunted the electoral process resulting in flawed registration, low turnout and ultimately under representation of people. The report released by UNAMA (United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan) on May 10, 2018, verified total 23 election related security incidents resulting in death of 85 deaths and 185 injured, including abduction of 26 civilians. Taliban did not claim all these attacks, is thought provoking.<sup>21</sup> Defense Minister and Interior Minister informed the *Ulasi Jirga* in early May (media report) that they considered 216 districts to be insecure and that security forces would launch clearing operations there before the start of the second phase of voter registration.<sup>22</sup> If institutions fail and fall short of their responsibility to ensure what is expected of it especially security, when it is known important, next comes the question of their accountability.

### **Election Campaign**

After much bloodletting during registration, the election campaign started on September 29, 2018 and dully closed on October 18, two days ahead of polls, October 20, 2018.<sup>23</sup> Total 2500 candidates (including 400 women) were contesting election from 32 provinces except Kandahar and Ghazni. (Election in Kandahar held after a week). The IEC directed the public sector employees and security officials to remain neutral and assist in fair and timely election. It also punished a few candidates with fine for starting election campaign before time, first time demonstrated presence of institutional accountability.<sup>24</sup>

### **Main Patterns of Election Campaign**

Main roads and other public places at Kabul and other main urban centers were decorated with a variety of colorful posters, banners and pictures of candidates. The campaign could equally reflect a struggle of current political actors, occupying important government positions to retain their share in political system. A patrimonial streak could also be observed as brothers of ministers, daughters of MPs and relatives of heads of politico-religious groups were contesting election. Close relatives of First Vice President, second Vice President, chief Executive office, some ministers,

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<https://www.apnews.com/2f09c88c00e0411c80ada0a15817cbeb>, retrieved on April 25, 2019.

<sup>21</sup> Ruttig Thomas and Adili Yawar, *The Afghanistan Election Conundrum (8): Controversies over voter registration*, ( May 27, 2018) <https://www.stabilityjournal.org/articles/10.5334/sta.dk/print/>, Retrieved on June 7, 2018

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> *Daily, The Frontier Post*, (Peshawar, September 29, 2018)

<sup>24</sup> *The daily Pashto newspaper, Wahdat*, (Peshawar, September 29, 2018)



governors, police chiefs, High Peace Council, Deputy head of national security council, deputy Head of national directorate of Security (NDS), the Presidential Administrative office, special representative of the President, members of *Ulas Jirga*, *Mushrano Jirga* (Upper House) and political leaders were contesting elections.<sup>25</sup>

### Violence during Campaign

Throughout election campaign insurgents tried to intimidate and discourage both the candidates and people through terrorist attacks and threats. Some thirty attacks against candidates were registered.<sup>26</sup> Haji Hayat, a candidate for *Ulas Jirga* from Nangarhar killed by militants on July 31 while coming to Jalal Abad from Kot. Haji Hayat was active against militants in the region and a believer in peace.<sup>27</sup> Total 10 candidates lost their lives since beginning of the electoral process in July.<sup>28</sup> After much killing, attacks and threats the poll day drew near.

### Polls Day October 20, 2018

Taliban a few days before election tried to interrupt the election by calling on people to remain at home rather head to polls.<sup>29</sup> The central government deployed some 70000-security force to safeguard polls. Some twenty thousand accrediting letters issued by IEC to national and international election observers. Prominent Afghan election watch dogs, such as, Free and Fair Election Foundation of Afghanistan (FEFA), Transparent Election Foundation of Afghanistan (TEFA) and Election Watch Afghanistan (EWA), were also active and part of election observers. Total Polling Centers created in 33 provinces, were 5100, when polling started only 4900 could be operationalized.<sup>30</sup>

There was confusion in IEC estimates on total number of polling centers, opened and those remained closed, on poll day. Nothing was said about the number of centers opened late and it was only after media report that forced the IEC for an impromptu decision to keep the polling on next day. However, it was not indicated how many polling centers will open in addition to 370 centers.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> *Daily, The Frontier Post*, (Peshawar, September 29, 2018)

<sup>26</sup> AIHRC (Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission), available online at: <https://www.refworld.org/publisher,AIHRC,5b1a7f7a4,0.html>. Accessed on April 2, 2019

<sup>27</sup> *Daily Wahdat* Pashto Newspaper, (Peshawar, August 1, 2018)

<sup>29</sup> *Daily, The Frontier Post*, (Peshawar, October 21, 2018)

<sup>30</sup> Ibid

<sup>31</sup> Clarke Kate, Ruttig Thomas (October 21, 2018). *Voter Determination and Technical Shambles* available online at:

### **Poor Institutional Performance**

Against the previous election of *Ulasi Jirga* in 2010, Afghan government beefed up security this time intensively. However, the poor logistic and technical support by IEC to the far flung election offices, polling centers blemished the electoral exercise. Issues includes lack of correct voter lists, appointment of trained election staff to operate new biometric machines, weak liaison between the central office and regional offices, were some manifestation of poor performance of institutions. A daily in Pakistan presented the following picture of polls day:

In a large number of Polling Centers and stations, polling have not been resumed and activated yet. In a number of Polling Centre's, the necessary electoral materials, totally or partially, were not provided to the IEC staff on time. In some Polling Centers, the biometric system encountered problems and was not activated on time. In some Polling Centers, observers were prevented or faced threats. Reports received of boxes containing sensitive electoral materials not being intact. In some Polling Centers, representatives of the ECC were not provided with the opportunity to be present.<sup>32</sup>

Slow working of biometric machine, in many cases did not work at all, forcing voters to wait in long ques. However, the technical and logistical problems were not evident at every polling center in the country, but they were widespread enough to call IEC preparations poor and in shambles.

### **Violence on Poll Day**

Both government and private sources confirmed reports of attacks on polling centers. Wais Barmak, Minister of Interior, reported total 192 attacks that killed 17 and wounded 83 civilians. More violent attack was made by insurgents in Baghlan province on a polling station killing 12 and injuring 100, followed by another suicide attack in *Sar-e Kotal area*, a part of Kabul province, killing 15 people including 5 policemen and injured 25. The daily frontier Post, Peshawar reported the death on poll day as total killed 21 while another Peshawar based Pashto daily, *Wahdat* put the death at 42.<sup>33</sup> AFP, French news agency, quoting officials reported 170 civilians killed and injured.<sup>34</sup>

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<https://www.stabilityjournal.org/articles/10.5334/sta.dk/print/>, Accessed on November 7, 2018

<sup>32</sup> The Daily, The Frontier Post, Peshawar, October 21, 2018

<sup>33</sup> The daily, the Frontier Post, Peshawar and Pashto daily, *Wahdat*, (Peshawar, October 21, 2018)

<sup>34</sup> Clarke Kate, Ruttig Thomas *Voter determination and technical shambles*, Afghan Analyst Network, available at: <https://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/>, (October 21, 2018),

### **After Polls Complaints and Institutional response**

The IEC representative confirmed receiving almost 11000 complaints related to fraud and rigging. A well know news agency, *Tolo News*, alone, received almost 10,000 complaints across the country via WhatsApp and Facebook, related to a wide range of electoral issues. The same news agency reported practices, such as, ballot stuffing for a few candidates, voter's intimidation, use of bribe and force in the province of Logar. In the province, in total 100,000 registered voters only 11000 could poll votes. After much wrangling and differences over the issues of fraud, both the IECC and the IEC agreed on a formula to solve complaint related to fraud, fake votes through eight-point agenda solution.<sup>35</sup> This time, some 137 criminal cases, related to election, were registered by AGO (attorney general office). AGO handles election related crimes under Electoral laws in Chapter 6, Articles, 224 and Article 534. While election complaints are handled by ECC. Election crimes, such as, offering bribe, intimidating election staff or contestants or manipulating voters, inducing observes, watchdogs and media have punishment of five years in jail. Similarly, there are laws to punish government servants found involved in violating electoral rules in terms of fines. Despite all problems and challenges, finally the polls completed. However, the results delayed due to multiplicity of complaints.<sup>36</sup>

### **Results of Election Delayed**

Election was held in the month on October 20-21, 2018 but the new parliament was inaugurated on April 26, 2019, almost after a delay of six months even though without presence of representatives of two provinces, Kabul and Ghazni. It was only on May 14, 2019, the IEC published the results of the Kabul vote, thereby concluding the 2018 parliamentary elections. Even now, Afghanistan does not have a completely newly-elected *Ulas Jirga* as Ghazni's elections have yet to take place, planned for 28 September, 2019 (together with the presidential and provincial council elections).<sup>37</sup> If these elections were faulty, it was not because of a lack of

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<sup>35</sup> It was agreed that voter vote through manual method but under biometric system would be matched with database and would be validated if found matched. Ballot boxes of polling stations would be declared trustworthy with the approval of head of the Polling Station, observes and other staff. No biometric votes, without voter list, manually registered without observers, election staff would be invalidated, the daily, *The Frontier Post*, Peshawar, November 1, 2018

<sup>36</sup> Retrieved From, <https://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/publication/aan-thematic-dossier/thematic-dossier-xxi-parliamentary-elections-2018/>,

<sup>37</sup> Available on line at: [webteam@rferl.org](mailto:webteam@rferl.org), May 15, 2019 06:28 GMT, Radio Free Afghanistan

commitment shown by Afghan citizens. Hundreds of thousands of Afghans went to vote, showing commitment and bravery in the face of Taliban threats, and patience in the face of an often shoddily run election. President Ashraf Ghani had a scathing criticism over the performance of IEC and EEC and dubbed the seven-month-long election a catastrophe. He associated the inefficacy to the former election commissions, Independent election Commission and Electoral Complaint Cell.<sup>38</sup>

## **Findings**

The pattern of poor institutional performance especially IEC and EEC, which has continued during various elections, resulted in many technical and logistic shambles. Lack of institutional accountability was writ large in various electoral exercises, first time, pointed by President Ashraf Ghani. During the current election, more serious were technical issues, such as, shortage of trained staff, malfunctioning of newly introduced biometric machines for verification of voters' identity, long queues of voters to cast their vote and defective voter list. The introduction of biometric verification at last minute was a mistake.

The IEC and EEC were heavily criticized for delay in announcing parliamentary result. The inefficiency of IEC also marred the election due to absence of electoral staff and issuing voting materials. In the same vain, the poor performance of institution like ACRA, supposed to verify the true voters but failed to do so. Violence prevailed during all the three phases of electoral process: registration of voters, election campaign and polling day. The IEC announced the preliminary election results in January 2019. Almost 30% votes were missing in Kabul province while finalizing results. President Ashraf Ghani fired the staff of IEC for allegedly abusing their authority. A culture of violence, fraud and corruption in election prevailed.

## **Conclusion**

The OECD's fragility framework on State's fragility comprises of five dimensions. This paper has picked two dimensions, violence and accountable institutions. The first dimension, violence (peaceful societies), was assessed through two indicators, the dead and the injured in the three phases of election. During the election, total 144 were killed and 268 injured. The highest casualty and attacks occurred during initial phase of voter's registration. When registration process was closed, the total national registration, both male and female, stood at 40 per cent. If half of them cast vote it would bring down turn out to 20 per cent, raising questions over how many people the elected members would actually represent in their provincial constituencies. If the elected government is representative of 20%

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<sup>38</sup> Adili Yawar Ali *Political Landscape*, (Afghan Analyst Network, 17 May 2019), available at: <https://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/>,

people, it is detrimental to its legitimacy and monopoly over power. Prevalence of violence inversely affected overall electoral exercise which has resulted in a weak democratic practice. Further, intimidation of voters and candidates marginalized the voice of public to participate freely in election. Frustration and distrust over the legitimacy of government is another outcome of such practices that results in increasing fragility of Afghan State rather than reducing it. Fragility of State is associated with prevalence of violence in a society, electoral practice also a part of society. Therefore, if violence could exist in the election, the same could also be said about the Afghan State at large. Appraising the second dimension of fragility, the accountable institutions, the IEC failed to plan effective security measures during the three phases of electoral process. The performance of EEC and ACRA was equally poor. Poor institutional response haunted the electoral process right in its initial phase of voter registration that resulted in flawed registration. During election campaign and polling day, national institutions could not put a matching response to insurgents. The poorest institutional response was glaring in IEC coordination with field offices. On poll day, there was confusion in IEC estimates on total number of polling centers opened and those, which remained closed. Tempted by media report the IEC went for an impromptu decision to keep the polling on next day. Issues, such as, lack of correct voter lists, appointment of trained election staff to operate new biometric machines, weak liaison between the central office and regional offices, were some manifestations of poor institutional. Institutional accountability, a dimension of State Fragility under OECD framework, deemed vital for mitigating state fragility is poorly reflected in the current election. Election was a test case of measuring the strength and worth of the institutions to deliver services. Failure of the institutions and the government to hold transparent elections results in further political crisis. The small increase in satisfaction with democracy may not be sustainable as portrayed in Asia foundation survey report 2018. Thus, the hypothesis that if there is less violence in the election and institutions perform accountably then there is a chance of mitigation of state fragility is probably true.

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