

Teim



TEIM Election Watch Analysis

ELECTORAL REPORT:

AFGHANISTAN/Presidential and provincial elections

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Background to the elections:

The Afghan presidential and provincial elections were characterised by the wave of violence and propaganda against the elections launched by the Taliban and other insurgent groups. This insecurity was the most publicised feature of the pre-election period, although it is important to remember that these were the first elections organised by the Afghans – albeit with assistance – since the overthrow of the Taliban government in 2001. While the extraordinary effort put into organising the elections and registering 13 million Afghans is commendable, the lack of security, terrorism and the inaccessibility to some areas, whether because of the terrain or because of fighting between NATO troops and insurgents, made the complicated task of the Independent Election Commission of Afghanistan (IEC) exceedingly difficult. The bad conditions, combined with the general weariness of a population worn out by corruption and the lack of security and resources all made it possible to predict low participation both in voter registration and voting.

At the same time, the push and pull between the international community and the Afghan government was always in the background. It was not easy to distinguish to what extent the elections were organised by the Afghans or by external forces. The dependence on the support of NATO troops to organise and guarantee the security of the elections, along with economic limitations, forced the IEC to hold the presidential and provincial elections at the same time, thus extending the president's term by almost three months and raising the objections of the opposition. The difference in opinion between the Afghan government and the international community regarding objectives reduced the credibility of the elections, which supposedly were meant to reinforce Afghan electoral and political institutions, in addition to promoting stability.

Quantitative indices of democracy:

Afghanistan was classified in the following democratic performance rankings just before these elections:

Measurement	Name and year of report or database	Institution	Index	Points, ranking and classification
Political rights and freedom	Freedom House Report 2009	Freedom House (FH)	PR: political rights CL: civil liberties	PR: 5, CL: 6 (Scale of 1, free to 7, not free) Classification: Not free
Degree of democracy in earlier elections	Polyarchy 2.0 2004	Peace Research Institute of Oslo and Tatu Vanhanen	ID: Synthetic democracy index, Part: participation, Comp: competition	ID: , max. 49 Part: , max. 70 Comp: , max. 70 (Democracy minimum: ID: 5, Part: 10, Comp: 30) No data

Consolidation of authoritarian and democratic institutions	Polity IV 2008	Center for International Development and Conflict Management, Univ. of Maryland	Democracy: consolidation of democratic institutions Autocracy: authoritarian consolidation Polity: synthesis of both	Democracy: -66 Autocracy: -66 Polity: -66 (Scale of +10, very democratic to -10, very authoritarian) Classification: interruption of independent political life
Perception of corruption	Transparency International Corruption Perception Index 2009	Transparency International (TI)	TICPI: corruption perceptions index	TCPI: 1.3 points out of 10 (Scale of 1, very corrupt to 10, not at all corrupt) Rank: 179 out of 180 countries
Management of political and economic change	Bertelsmann Transformation Index (BTI) 2008	Bertelsmann Foundation	MI: Management Index, quality of transformation management	MI: 4.4 points out of 10, Rank: 89 out of 125 countries Classification: weak
Democracy, including press status and corruption	World Democracy Audit 2009	World Audit	World Democracy Rank: political freedom (FH) + press and corruption (TI)	World Democracy Ranking: 138 out of 150 countries, division 4 out of 4

The election(s) analysed in this report produced the following electoral democracy quantitative results:

Degree of democracy in these elections	Measurement of democracy in these elections according to the Polyarchy 2.0 index, calculated by TEIM Election Watch	ID: 9.1, max. 49 Part: 22.1 ¹ max. 70 Comp: 50.3 ² max. 70 (Democracy minimum: ID: 5, Part: 10, Comp: 30)	Classification of the elections: democratic³
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Definition of the political system:

Afghanistan is an Islamic Republic with a presidential system. The current head of state, President Hamid Karzai, was the first to be elected democratically (2004). The system of government is comprised of the president, who is head of state, and the National Assembly, which in turn is made up of two houses. The

¹ Participation was calculated according to the number of votes cast in the presidential election: 5,918,741 votes (data provided by the IEC). Given that no population census exists, an average was calculated between the population figure from the Statistics Office of Afghanistan, which calculates a population of 25 million Afghans (2008) and the CIA Factbook, which puts the approximate number at 28,395,716 for July 2009. The average of the two is 26,697,858 inhabitants.

² Competition was calculated on the basis of the percentage of votes won by Karzai (49.67%) after the Electoral Complaints Commission (ECC) threw out around a million fraudulent votes in October 2009. In the results table, the opposition candidates appear in red.

³ This classification only reflects the official data for participation and competition.

upper house, the House of Elders (102 seats) is also known as the *Meshrano Jirga*. One third of its members are elected by the provincial councils, the second third by the district councils (which have not yet been drawn up) and the final third is appointed by the president. The lower house is the House of the People (249 seats), known as the *Wolesi Jirga*, whose members are elected by universal suffrage. Additionally, there are provincial councils, whose members – one per province (34) – were chosen in these elections. These councils form the local government and will continue to do so until the district councils are defined and organised.

Definition of the electoral system and parties:

Presidential elections use a two-round majority system (TRS) (wherein if no candidate obtains an absolute majority, a run-off is held between the two candidates with the most votes). Provincial and parliamentary elections, on the other hand, use the rare single non-transferable vote system (SNTV) in which each voter only casts a single vote for a candidate in what are usually multi-member districts, and the candidates with the most votes fill the available posts. In Afghanistan, both the provincial and parliamentary districts are multi-member constituencies, with the provincial districts having between 9 and 29 seats.

Elections in Afghanistan are not organised through political parties; rather, candidates run as independents. Those with a political past are easily recognised by the population, while candidates new to the political scene usually create an ad hoc association to define their political orientation.

Impact of the electoral formula and size of the constituency on the elections:

Since there are no political parties, the best known candidates win the most votes, fostering the personalisation of political life. In Afghanistan, this translates into ethnic affiliations playing a fundamental role in election loyalties. Those candidates who belong to a majority ethnicity, such as the Pashtuns, are more likely to obtain a greater number of votes at national level. Often, each province and its different districts are home to feuding candidates whose conflicts are perpetuated through the ballot box.

In the provincial elections, Afghans have to elect the members of the 34 councils (one per province) made up of a minimum of 9 and a maximum of 29 seats. Instead of political parties, there are political associations, but they do not take part in the election, and although the candidates may be affiliated with one of the groups, they run as independents. According to the SNTV system, Afghans can only vote for one of the candidates, even though several are chosen in that district. The result is a fragmentation of the vote among the numerous candidates (3,180) in total, with many of them elected with less than 10% of the vote, as occurred with the majority of the councillors (see results). The high number of contenders produced a random result for some candidates and it is not unusual to find members of the provincial councils who were elected with less than 1% of the vote.

Election results:

According to the Independent Election Commission, the results gave the victory to Hamid Karzai, who was re-elected with 49.67%. Abdullah Abdullah was

his main rival with 30.59%, followed at a distance by Ramazan Bashardost with 10.46% and Ashraf Ghani Ahmadzai, who was originally expected to be the third candidate with the most potential, but who won only 2.94%. These percentages are the result after the recount of 10% of the votes in 313 polling stations (out of the 3,063 in which signs of fraud were found), corresponding to 210 districts, mainly in three provinces: Ghazni, Paktika and Kandahar.

When Karzai's initial percentage decreased from 54.6% to 49.6% and he lost the majority, the second round of the elections was announced. When Karzai did not remove the leadership of the IEC and no changes were made to ensure a cleaner election, Abdullah Abdullah withdrew from the second round. In the beginning, the IEC decided to maintain the date of the second round, but given that Afghan legislation does not address what is to be done when one of the presidential candidates withdraws during this phase, the decision was made to name Karzai as the winner.

Results for the ten candidates with the most votes

Candidate	No. votes before recount	Percentage	No. votes after recount	Percentage
Hamid Karzai	3,093,256	54.6%	2,283,907	49.67%
Abdullah Abdullah	1,571,581	27.8%	1,406,242	30.59%
Ramazan Bashardost	520,627	9.2%	481,072	10.46%
Ashraf Ghani Ahmadzai	155,343	2.7%	135,106	2.94%
Mirwais Yasini	50,461	0.9%	47,511	1.03%
Shahnawaz Tanai	33,544	0.6%	29,648	0.64%
Dr. Frozan Fana	24,279	0.4%	21,512	0.47%
Dr. Habib Mangal	23,572	0.4%	18,746	0.41%
Mulla Abdul Salam Rakity	22,173	0.4%	19,997	0.43%
Motasim Billah Mazhabi	19,602	0.3%	18,248	0.40%

Source: ICE

It is interesting and even optimistic to see that, despite all of the difficulties, the two women candidates for the presidency held their own. Frozan Fana came in seventh while the other candidate, Shahla Ata, was fourteenth. Considering the total of 38 candidates, this is a positive omen in the middle of so much bad press.

Results of the 2009 provincial elections:

Name of the first elected	Province	%	Name of the first elected	Province	%
Maula Nabihullah	Badakhshan	3.4%	Haj Abdelhakim Suleimankhel	Logar	11.1%
Abdallah Beg	Takhar	3.1%	Haji Bahram Jan	Paktiya	5.6%
Mahmud Uzman Rahimi	Kunduz	3.1%	Arifullah Pashtun	Khost	15.3%
Mahmud Rasul	Baghlan	3.1%	Ghulam Sayi Nawid	Faryab	4.7%
Haj Muhammad Alim "Izdiyar"	Panjshir	10.9%	Muawan Ahmad	Ghor	4.0%
Abd al-Ghafuz	Nuristan	15.9%	Sayyid Mahmud Sadat Nasir	Daykundi	4.2%
Rafiullah "Hidri"	Kunar	8.7%	Abdalyamaa Yamaa	Ghazni	4.8%
Haji Mahmud Rafiq	Kapisa	9.7%	Abdelghani Paktin	Paktika	11.3%
Umadaddin Abd ar-Rahimi	Laghman	6.9%	Haji Mahmud Hashim	Zabul	16.3%
Haji Yamal Jan Qadir	Nangarhar	3.6%	Abdallah	Uruzgan	19.7%
Haj Nizaruddin Baryali	Kabul	2.1%	Azizullah "Nayafi"	Herat	2.6%
Haj Ahmad Daki Zahad	Parwan	6.5%	Abdassater Rahimi	Farah	16.8%
Dr. Diyauddin "Zariati"	Samangan	4.1%	Najibullah Nasir	Nimroz	8.8%
Ustad Abd al-Wakil	Balkh	4.0%	Haj Abdalbari Barakazi	Helmand	11.5%
Maula Abdalhaj Hayat	Jowzjan	9.6%	Ahmad Wali Jan Karzai	Kandahar	11.4%
Sayyid Hayatullah Alami	Sar-e Pul	6.8%	Haji Wali Shah	Bagdhis	7.5%
Hedayatullah Ruhani	Bamyan	3.8%	Mahmud Rafi'	Wardak	16.3%

Source: IEC

The crisis created by the fraud in the presidential elections eclipsed the importance of the provincial elections. The IEC issued the vote count for these elections much later and the first results began to be made public in December 2009. Several provincial candidates complained about the delay to the House of the People, but the IEC had to wait for the decision of the ECC, which was also revising these votes. One noteworthy result is the re-election of Ahmad Wali Khan Karzai, President Karzai's brother, who will once again govern Kandahar, one of the most violent provinces and a Taliban stronghold, despite the accusations of corruption and drug trafficking that have been thrown at him.

Qualitative analysis of the elections:

Participation:

It is difficult to know the exact participation rate for these two elections, since sufficient data does not exist. According to some media sources, it might have been around 30-35%, although it is very difficult to give credence to any number, since attendance at the polling stations was very irregular in the different Afghan provinces. The lack of a population census makes this calculation even more difficult, and thus the electoral roll is being used as a basis. 4.5 million more voters were registered than in the 2004 elections and nearly 13 million Afghans defied the Taliban's order not to register at the registration centres, of whom around 5 million were women. Despite the increase in registered voters, there was a decrease in participation with regard to the 2004 presidential elections, when some 8 million votes (two million more than the 5.9 million in 2009) were counted. One plausible explanation is the fact that Afghans in 2004 were electing their president for the first time and not only was there was great excitement, but security was better.

Some serious questions have been raised about the participation of women. They make up 38% of the registered electorate, but in some districts, male family members were seen voting with the women's registration cards, and these proxy votes were accepted at the polling stations, despite being prohibited by the Afghan constitution. In other districts, especially those where safety was average or low, women did not go out to vote after being expressly forbidden by their husbands or fathers. Finally, in some polling stations for women (separate polling stations are set up for men and women or divided into different sections for the sexes), the auditors, terrified by Taliban threats, did not come to do their job. This meant that even women who travelled in order to vote could not do so, since they were not allowed to vote in the men's section. Generally speaking, in a society as patriarchal as Afghan society, it is difficult to accept women's right to vote, although this is changing with time.

Competition:

There were 38 candidates in the presidential elections, and 3,180 in the provincial elections (for a total of 34 provinces). While there were many presidential contenders, including two women, the candidate with the best prospects was always Hamid Karzai. To begin with, the fact that the president had better resources than his opponents made it possible for him to run a stronger campaign, although he made few public appearances compared with the other candidates. There were some complaints about the security provided for the other candidates – especially for the provincial elections – who were in the line of fire and attacked on several occasions (whether personally or indirectly). Karzai, on the other hand, had the best resources at his disposal (helicopters,

armour-plated vehicles and a strong personal bodyguard system), while the other presidential candidates had to use their own resources to travel around the country.

Regarding the other presidential candidates, Abdullah Abdullah had a ministerial role in the United Islamic Front (also known as the Northern Alliance) from 1998 – 2001, where he was one of the representatives of the Tajik ethnic group (although his mother is Pashtun). He was Minister of Foreign Affairs for Karzai's government from December 2001 to March 2006 and ally of Burhanuddin Rabbani, the leader of the United National Front (the successor to the Northern Alliance) and opponent of Karzai. The third candidate, Ramazan Bashardost, is from the Hazara ethnic group, and although he was Planning Minister for nine months in 2004, he has no political affiliation. He is a strong defender of human rights and a prominent voice against corruption.

Transparency:

Fraud has been identified in these elections, meaning that they were not clean. Several observers sounded the alarm not only regarding irregularities in the voting, but also about attempts to manipulate the results. For this reason, at the end of September the Electoral Complaints Commission⁴ carried out a recount of 10% of the votes in 313 polling locations of the 3,063 in which signs of fraud were discovered. Given that there were 7,000⁵ voting centres and some 28,000 polling places, fraud affected about 10% of the places established for voting (35,000).

Finally, in October 2009, the ECC decided to cancel one third of the total votes. It investigated the polling locations with allegations of fraud, such as those where participation surpassed 95% (in some, it was higher than 100%) as well as those where there was overwhelming support for one of the presidential candidates.

Party representation and debate:

The campaign, despite the lack of security, was lively, and posters for different candidates papered Afghanistan's public spaces. For the first time, television debates were held between the different candidates, although Karzai refused to participate in them. This brought the campaign into the homes of those Afghans who were more fearful of participating in the street campaign and was a direct way to present each candidate's programme to the Afghans, who are for the most part illiterate.

However, although political associations do exist, the candidates run as independents, and thus had to depend on the support of public figures to introduce them to voters and finance their campaigns. Or rather, those very public figures were themselves the candidates. There was no debate regarding the programme of each candidate. Their ideas were publicised during political conventions which were often characterised by a lack of security and low attendance. Furthermore, candidates who presented written programmes had to confront the illiteracy of the population (no exact numbers are available). It is difficult to have party representation and debate among Afghans when their most basic needs are not being met and insecurity reigns. Finally, the topics that most

⁴ The ECC was created after complaints of fraud in the first post-Taliban elections (2004) as an independent body to detect and prevent fraud in later elections. It is made up of two Afghans, appointed by the government and three foreigners, appointed by the United Nations.

⁵ The voting centres were set up in urban centres and served as coordination points for the polling places in their area of influence.

deeply affect the population were scarcely debated. The presidential candidates (except for Bashardost and Ashraf Ghani) largely appealed to ethnic groups and did not define their political goals.

Openness:

Hamid Karzai's election was predictable, with the only question concerning whether he would win more than 50% of the vote and thus avoid a second round. Despite his lack of popularity and the allegations of corruptions hurled at his government, Karzai continues to count on the support of most of the people, in part because many of the other candidates were largely unknown to many Afghans. As discussed above, given the signs of fraud on all fronts, Karzai's power to influence the elections was greater than the others', which gave him a strong advantage.

Significance:

The significance of these elections lies in the great effort made by the Afghans to discover whether they are capable of holding and organising elections according to minimum international standards, although the financing came from abroad, as did the training of the observers and national inspectors and the ICE staff. It was also important for the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) to be able to point to positive signs of stability and strength in Afghan institutions. However, this group was determined to present the elections as a critical sign of advancement in this country, instead of considering them one more step in the uncertain process of normalisation.

Before the elections, the UNAMA recognised that the Afghan government exercised no control over 10 districts and had serious security problems in 165 of the 398 districts in the country. The fact that these elections took place in a climate of deep insecurity in many provinces affected participation and increased the opportunities to manipulate the elections in the most insecure places, given the low turnout of voters and observers. Equally important was the confirmation of the fact that Afghan security forces are still not capable of independently ensuring the safety of the elections.

Finally, divisions between members of the UNAMA led the special representative of the United Nations, Peter Galbraith, to be dismissed on 30 September 2009 after a confrontation with his boss, then the UNAMA director, the Norwegian Kai Eide, due to differences between the two about the management of these elections and the role that the UNAMA should play.

International political reaction and implications:

These elections were very important for the international community, the UNAMA, NATO in Afghanistan and the Afghan state. Hamid Karzai and Abdullah Abdullah claimed victory before the recount, criticised the electoral fraud practically from the beginning of the campaign and, once the results were made public, mutually accused each other of manipulation. After the review of the votes by the ECC and the cancellation of a third of them, the second round planned for 7 November was presented as a real battleground, without any guarantees of preventing more fraud. Abdullah Abdullah's withdrawal from this round gave Karzai a bitter triumph, a victory that cast doubts upon his legitimacy and credibility as president.

Facing Karzai is the House of the People, which is acting as an opposing force to his power. It has twice rejected the ministers that Karzai proposed to

form a government (on 19 December 2010, 17 out of 24 candidates were vetoed and later in January, 10 out of 17). On 23 February, Karzai took advantage of a parliamentary recess to amend the electoral law (against constitutional provisions) to grant himself the power to appoint all of the members of the ECC, who, additionally, would all be Afghans. This decision led the North Americans to cancel an invitation to the White House and in response, Karzai invited Mahmoud Ahmadinejad to Kabul. The subsequent surprise visit to the country by American President Barak Obama (28 March 2010) served as a reminder of the fundamental need to fight against corruption and to dismiss the two main leaders of the ICE, which Washington has asked for. The Americans, focused on their new offensive in the Taliban bastions in the southern part of the country (Helmand and Kandahar), need to curb the serious problem of corruption. But when Karzai seemed to be collaborating once again, parliament dealt him another blow. This time, they voted unanimously against the reform of the electoral law and revoked Karzai's change in the composition of the ECC. On 2 April, Karzai accused Peter Galbraith (the second in command of the UNAMA) and Phillippe Morillon (coordinator of the election observers for the European Union) of fraud.

Conclusions:

Afghanistan's central position in the international agendas of a large number of developed countries and the overwhelming importance that the media ascribed to these elections meant that expectations were inflated and even somewhat unrealistic. It is naive to expect that an inexperienced institution like the ICE organise Afghan elections for the first time and expect them to be a success. The level of insecurity and the numerous attacks were not favourable to successful elections. The geographical difficulties and lack of resources in many sectors, despite international assistance, did not make the elections more successful either. The electoral system chosen and imposed for the election of the provincial councils (and also for members of parliament) and the presidential system does not seem to be the most apt. The lack of any democratic tradition caused the population to basically recognise President Karzai as the only candidate, with the others practically going under the radar.

The fact that several countries (Pakistan, India, Iran, Russia, etc.) are settling their differences on Afghan soil, that the insurgency is strengthened by different criminal groups operating in the country and that Afghanistan produces more than 90% of the world's heroin have all contributed to creating a setting that is less than ideal for free, democratic elections. Given that Afghans lack the most basic services, international aspirations must be adjusted to the reality and interests of the population. Although the elections arrived at a propitious time, many Afghans participated in the worst conditions. It takes time for a democratic culture to take root and this is even more complicated in a country where it seems impossible to break patron-client relationships and where women are invisible, especially in the rural world.

Although the quantitative degree of democracy for these elections as calculated by TEIM indicates that they were 'democratic', the subsequent qualitative analysis shows that they were not, since there was fraud. Although the data relating to participation and competition are within democratic standards, there are other non-numerical factors related to quality that modify the final evaluation.

References to three other analyses of these elections on the Internet:

EU Election Observation Mission to the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, final report available at:

http://www.eueom-afghanistan.org/EN/PDF/Final_report/EU_EOM_AFGHANISTAN_2009_-_Final_Report.pdf

Democracy International (observation mission to Afghanistan), Monograph on the Afghan elections available at: <http://democracyinternational.com/afghanistan>

International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES), Monograph on the country, its elections and its electoral system available at:

<http://www.ifes.org/afghanistan.html>