Ethnic Politics, Ethnic Political Parties and the Future of Democratic Peacebuilding in Afghanistan

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Ethnic Politics, Ethnic Political Parties and the Future of Democratic Peacebuilding in Afghanistan

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Abstract

Political parties are thought to be an important pillar of a well functioning democracy. But the role of ethnic political parties in democratization and consolidation of democracy is contentious. The main argument that often recurs in the relevant literature is that in post-conflict multi-ethnic societies ethnic political parties deepen social divisions and endanger peace and democratic stability by manipulating the social cleavages. This article argues that ethnic political parties can play a positive role in the transition period by representing the major interests of social groups, drawing from the existing literature and the observed realities of the political processes in post-2001 Afghanistan. But in the consolidation phase, if political institutions lack appropriate procedures and institutional mechanism to accommodate political parties within that political system, it can induce the political parties to retreat to their ethnic support bases and resist political change. This article therefore explores the impact of policy arrangements and institutional design, especially the impact of electoral system on political parties' function by discussing the role of political parties in consolidation of democracy through elections and democratic competition in Afghanistan. Key analytical topics in this article are the impact of change in political environment in post 2001 Afghanistan on the patterns of resource mobilization among political parties and the possibility of de-ethnicization of political parties. Furthermore, this article indicates shortcomings of existing approaches to democratic peacebuilding in Afghanistan, namely the lack of a mechanism to assist political parties, and the necessity of empowering political parties to adopt democratic changes rather than attempting to marginalize them.

アフガニスタンにおけるエスニック政治，エスニック政党と民主的平和建設の将来

M．カシム　ワファエザダ

要旨

　政党は，よく機能する民主主義の重要な柱と考えられている。しかし，民主化と民主主義の確立におけるエスニック政党の役割については諸説ある。関連文献に頻出する主流的見解は，紛争後の多民族国家においては，エスニック政党は社会的分裂を煽ることで社会的分断を深め平和と民主的安定を脅かすと言う。本稿は，既存の文献と2001年以降のアフガニスタンで観察された現実に依拠して，エスニック政党は社会集団の主要な利益を代表することで，移行期に積極的な役割を果たしうると論じる。しかし確立期においては，もし政治制度が政党を包摂する適切な手続きと制度的機構を欠くならば，政党をその民族的支持基盤に引きこもらせ政治的変化に抵抗させかねない。そこで本稿は，アフガニスタンでの選挙と民主的競争を通じた民主主義確立における政党の役割を検討し，政策措置，制度的機構，選挙制度の政党に対する影響を論じる。本稿の主要な分析テーマは，2001年以降のアフガニスタンにおける政治的環境の変化が政党間の資源動員パターンに与えた影響と，政党の脱エスニック化の可能性である。加えて，本稿はアフガニスタンの民主的平和構築における既存の取組みの欠陥，すなわち政党支援機構の欠如を指摘し，政党を弱体化させるよりそれらが民主的変化を受け入れるよう支援することの必要性を示す。

キーワード

　民主化，政党，エスニック集団，アフガニスタン

1. Introduction

It is widely accepted that political parties are the keystone of any effort to construct a well functioning democracy[1] (Schattschneider, 2009; Reilly, 2008) and that parties are important for managing conflicts and upheavals which are an unavoidable part of democratic transitions (Hicken, 2009: 6). But the role of political parties in divided societies has been debated among scholars of democratization and peacebuilding. The roots of the contention are primarily in the challenges that deep societal divisions such as ethnic or religious ones pose to democratization (Lijphart, 2004: 96-7). Some scholarly research indicates that political parties are the potential agents of national integration, political stability and modernization even in divided societies (Randal, 2007: 636-7). But the counter argument that recurs most frequently in the literature is that democratization unleashes "the window of opportunity" for the expression and mobilization of old and new grievances that in turn causes ethnic conflict. In this sense, democratization and ethnic conflict are thought to be empirically 'correlated phenomena' (Alonso and Ruiz-Rufino, 2007: 237). Rabushka and Shepsle (1972: 92) even argue that:

> "Democracy, at least as it is known in the West, cannot be sustained under conditions of intense, salient preferences because outcomes are valued more than procedural norms. The

plural society, constrained by the preferences of its citizens, does not provide fertile soil for democratic values or stability."

The main feature of an ethnically divided society is that politics is practiced almost exclusively along ethnic lines. Hence, the reciprocal relation between the political parties and society often develops in the context of ethnic politics. The social divides usually cause the emergence of ethnic political parties that in Horowitz' definition (2000: 291) "derives its support overwhelmingly from an identifiable ethnic group (or cluster of ethnic groups) and serves the interests of that group".[2] But the key analytical question is how serving the interests of a particular ethnic or religious group endangers democratic stability? The proponents of the majoritarian democracy argue that because a party's majority in a divided society is usually based on the ethnic majority, 'alternation from one government to another is less frequent and the inclusion of minorities in governing coalitions is unlikely'. Consequently, an exclusive majoritarian democracy is less likely to be stable over the long term, 'threatening both peace and democracy' (Rothschild, and Roeder, 2005: 8). In contrast, consociationalists such as Lijphart (1977) support acknowledgment of social cleavages and creation of ethnic parties to represent the interests of all social groups. Consociationalism underemphasizes the role of political parties (Luther, 1999: 2) and instead relies heavily on the elites' political behavior and their cooperation and accommodation within the government.[3] But generally for consociationalists ethnic political parties are not a destabilizing factor for democratization, and rather facilitate democratic transition in deeply divided societies. Consociationalism is criticized for institutionalizing

and consolidating the primordiality of ethnic identities and thus leaving the social gaps intact with political compromise. In addition, it is argued that the incentives created by power-sharing institutions encourage the ethnic elites and parties to escalate their demands on behalf of their ethnic groups as well as to manipulate ethnic divisions in order to maintain their power, which in turn hampers democratic transition (Roeder, 2005: 56).

Another principal mechanism that links the ethnicization of political parties to the destabilization of democracy is the so-called outbidding effect. According to the theory of ethnic outbidding, "the politicization of ethnic divisions inevitably gives rise to one or more ethnic parties. In turn, the emergence of even a single ethnic party 'infects' the rest of the party system, leading to a spiral of extreme ethnic bids that destroy competitive politics altogether" (Chandra, 2005: 235; Coakley, 2008). Most of the assumptions on consociational arrangements for democratic transition are based on moderation of the elites on ethnic issues. But if ethnicity becomes salient it results in interpretations of all issues in ethnic terms and under such conditions the mutual trust and cooperation among the elites of various ethnic groups weakens (Rabushka and Shepsle, 1972: 86). Subsequently, political parties employ strategies that combine 'robust ethnic identity representation with increased pragmatism over resource allocation' (Mitchell, Evans, and O'Leary, 2009: 397). However, the contextual differences of such assumptions should not be ignored. The degree of negative role of ethnic political parties in divided societies depends, on the one hand, on the intensity of ethnic competition, and on the other, on the nature of inter-ethnic relations. For example, the existence of cross-

ethnic identities such as religion and language is assumed to soften the ethnic antagonism. In addition, since the ethnicization of political parties is not merely the result of the elites' machinations, and the structural problems (e. g. discriminatory policies and practices) and past grievances lay the ground for the elites to play the ethnic card. Therefore, it can be argued that democratization of political structure can decrease the significance of ethnicity in political and social issues.

In this article I argue that for a careful analysis of the role of ethnic political parties, it is important to make distinctions between the requirements of the two phases of democratic transition and democratic consolidation. In tribal societies (I take them as societies in which numerous small communal units and groups are active) ethnic political parties do facilitate democratic transition by representing major interests, making them easier to address rather than hodgepodge and fluid tribal interests. In democracy theory, political parties are 'ascribed the task of fusing the boundless individual wants and interests of citizens into collective platforms' (Elliot, 2009 : 3). In post-conflict societies where negotiations for achieving agreement between political parties are vital in order to transform the violent competition into a peaceful one, the unorganized tribal society with numerous groups in various loci poses a grave problem to the processes of negotiations and political transition. In contrast, I argue in this article, that in the consolidation phase, ethnic political parties may endanger democratic stability and peace by manipulating ethnic or religious identities. As Horowitz (2000 : 291) notes:

"By appealing to electorates in ethnic terms, by making ethnic demands on government,

and by bolstering the influence of ethnically chauvinist elements within each group, parties that begin by merely mirroring ethnic divisions help to deepen and extend them."

Yet, the negative potential of ethnic political parties cannot be taken for granted. Several assumptions can be made on the interaction between the party and ethnicity. First, ethnic groups are not usually unitary actors but rather several political parties might claim to represent a single ethnic group with different agendas that vary from moderate to extreme ones. The plurality of political parties within the same ethnic group is conducive to the emergence of cross-ethnic coalitions, which increases their willingness to pursue more rational choices and to embrace democratic power mechanisms. Second, embranchment and splits within political parties over the long period of frustrating civil wars in countries emerging from conflicts have proved to be important in changing the parties' ethnic manifestations. The frustration of the masses with the party performances and achievements is another factor that changes the nature of the party and society relations. If we put it in the terms of Duverger (1962), the motivation to support a party or to become a member of it can change from primarily *ideological* incentives to *outcome* and finally *process* incentives, which decreases the ethnic and ideological importance of the party.[4] Therefore, both variables of the multi-party representation of a single ethnic group and the change in motives of the masses to support a party are important in analyzing the role of parties in transition to and consolidation of democracy as well as the representation of social groups and major interests.

Moreover, the institutional mechanism, electoral systems, and the structure of the political

system have important implications for the dynamics of political parties in post-conflict societies. In other words, although democratization can transform the nature of ethnic and political competition, the institutional mechanisms to administer the deep-rooted social and political divisions matters greatly in maintaining democratic stability. For example, given the centrality of the elections in consolidation of democracy in multi-ethnic societies, the type of electoral system plays an important role in structuring or restructuring party systems (Lindberg, 2005). Furthermore, as Ishiyama (2012: 157) argues, the design of the electoral system can have a wide range of political outcomes which affects "the quality and the breadth of representation, the fractionalization and polarization of political party systems, voter turnout and voter behavior, and the stability of the government and the political system."

Moreover, an important issue that this article focuses on in the case of Afghanistan is the necessity of empowering political parties as part of political reconstruction. In the literature on post-conflict democratization and peacebuilding, the role of political parties has been overlooked. Ethnic political parties are seen as part of the conflicts and thus restraining the political parties has been the principle approach in peacebuilding and democratization rather than empowering them to adopt democratic structures. In addition, political parties have been thought of as a delicate sphere of involvement for international peacebuilders, but not to assist the political parties in order to enable them to follow the pace of democratization is a grave mistake (Paris, 2004). To date, there is no defined mechanism for assisting political parties, especially in terms of political finance. This has lead to more unorganized assistance

to parties and party candidates, which in some cases has proved to be problematic. One example is the overt financial and political support by international peacebuilders to moderate candidates in the election campaigns in Bosnia during the elections of 1997, which was perceived to be part of the larger scheme of 'encouraging a split within the ruling Bosnian Serb party' (Paris, 2004: 104). Similarly, in Afghanistan elections, international organizations provided financial assistance to certain moderate candidates. Given the exclusiveness of such financial assistances it was perceived as interference with election affairs, rather than a contribution to political reconstruction.

Given the above mentioned arguments on the role and function of political parties in general and ethnic political parties in particular, this article explores the role of such parties in promoting democratic stability both in the transition phase and the consolidation phase of democratization in post-2001 Afghanistan. I shall explore what factors are conducive to ethnic manifestation of political parties and how ethnic agendas of political parties can affect political stability in Afghanistan. Furthermore, political engineering, political finance, electoral system and their impact on parties' functions and the question of de-ethnicization of political parties and politics shall be discussed generally as well.

2. The nature of inter-ethnic relations in Afghanistan

Afghanistan is home to over thirty ethnic groups among which Pashtuns, Tajiks, Uzbeks, and Hazaras are the larger ethnic groups, comprising over 90 percent of the population. The history of inter-ethnic relations in Afghanistan is 'one of co-existence, but also

unequal opportunities and conflict' (Simonsen, 2004 : 706). As modernist and development theories suggest, group consciousness and self awareness increased with developing inter-ethnic contacts which resulted from the modernization of the state and contributed to the creation and intensification of ethnic identities (Newman, 1991 ; Ake, 1974). In the literature on state-building the politicization of ethnicity is interpreted as the central aspect of modern state-building as well (Wimmer, 1997). Similarly, in Afghanistan ethnicity has become salient with the modernization of the state. Politicization of ethnicity in Afghanistan dates back to the era of state-formation during the reign of Amir Abdur Rahman Khan (1880-1901). The Amir relied extensively on coercive force in order to create a centralized administration, which resulted in an "ethnically polarized Afghanistan" (Saikal, 2004 : 25). He suppressed Pashtun rebellions and then unified and mobilized them to suppress non-Pashtun ethnic groups, and finally mobilized Sunnis for a jihad against the Hazara Shiites (as heretics), 'whom they plundered, displaced and sold into slavery' (Rubin, 2002:50; Bird and Marshall, 2011 : 12). The ethnocide by the Amir and his social engineering (i.e. displacing the Tajiks and Uzbeks of the north and Hazaras of the central Hazarajat and western plains as well as resettling Pashtun tribes) for the state making left deep scars in the social memory of Afghanistan's ethnic groups, which caused ethnic animosity, hatred, and alienation based on social cleavages.

In the following decades, the successors of the Amir made little effort to alleviate the ethnic grievances and instead increased social tensions over issues such as the official language (Pashtu replaced Dari), religious exclusion of Shiites, discriminatory taxation,

etc, particularly during the reign of the Musahiban dynasty (1929-1973). Many of the Afghanistan's civil conflicts in the last three decades have their roots in the aggravated grievances and ethnic polarization which occurred within a period that spans from 1880 to 1978. In short, inter-ethnic relations in Afghanistan have been one of domination by the Pashtuns and subordination of other ethnic groups, but generally "a sort of political balance evolved among the various groups and all of them had allocated spaces within the hierarchical system," until the communist coup in 1978 (Rais, 1999 : 2).

The communist coup of 1978 marked the end of the traditional political order and opened a window of opportunity for the long-suppressed ethnic groups to change their political and social status. The political consciousness formed by the changes of political and social structure and more importantly by the Soviet invasion to some extent provoked a nascent nationalism among Afghans. In addition, the increased self-consciousness among ethnic groups caused the creation of collective organizations based on ethnic identity or ideology, primarily as social movements. These movements were later organized into political parties to represent ethnic, religious, or local interests. Although all political parties publicly shared a common objective of defending the country against the 'godless communists' and the Soviet invaders, in the course of political development during the Afghan-Soviet war, the parties splintered into several factions defined by their ethnic affiliation, religious outlook and *modus operandi* (Kashima and Wafayezada, 2012: Rutting, 2006). Ethnic politics came to define the political and social developments in the following years and resulted in the breakout of civil wars in the 1990s.

The civil wars (1992-1996) following the collapse of the communist regime in Kabul were an overtly ethnic conflict. Major jihadi political parties lined up along ethnic cleavages to champion ethnic rights and interests. Hekmatyar's Hezb-e-Islami, and Sayyaf's Ettehad-e-Islami came to represent Pashtuns; Rabbani and Massoud's Jamiat-e-Islami as Tajik, Hezb-e-Wahdat as Hazara, and Dostum's Junbesh-e-Melli as Uzbek parties fought each other with overt ethnic manifestations. The atrocities and violence that occurred in the 1990s' civil wars further widened the social gaps and increased the inter-ethnic animosity, and in the words of Ahmad Rashid 'irreparably damaged the fabric of the country's national and religious soul' (Rashid, 2010:83). Furthermore, ethnicization of war and politics changed the political and social parameters in Afghanistan and impeded state-building and reconciliation for a decade until 2001. Under such an ethnicized political environment even some movements like that of the Taliban that emerged with religious agendas also appeared as an ethnic organization representing Pashtuns. As a result during the surge and advance of the Taliban the country was divided into the north (non-Pashtun ethnic enclaves) and the south (Pashtuns' area). The Taliban explicitly pursued an objective to restore Pashtuns' traditional domination during the conflicts of 1996-2001 against the Northern Alliance (predominantly composed of non-Pashtun ethno-political factions). In short, salient ethnic cleavages played a central role in shaping the politics in Afghanistan.

However, some scholars argue that politics in Afghanistan was ethnicized but not the society. In this view ethnicity has been manipulated by political leaders and elites while the inter-ethnic relations among ordinary

people have been one of cooperation (Simonsen, 2004:709). Although, this is true to a large extent, the aggravated grievances and the long history of discrimination and exclusion have imposed the politicization of ethnicity down to the masses. In fact, the ability of ethnic political parties to mobilize their ethnic groups and to emerge as powerful and influential players has its roots in the political consciousness of the masses among all ethnic groups. Although the role of the ethnic elites in politicization of ethnicity and manipulation of identity is an undeniable fact, the ethnic competition did exist in a wider context that included the local elites and the masses as well. The three decades of ethnic warfare created a new political culture characterized by alienation, fragmentation and animosity that have overshadowed the efforts for democratization and peacebuilding. Deconstruction of the culture of war and construction of a culture of harmony, national unity and peace will take a long time. Among several factors influencing the prospects of democratic peacebuilding in Afghanistan, this article focuses on the role of political parties in the two phases of democratic transition and consolidation of democracy.

3. Political parties and democratic transition in Afghanistan

3.1. The role of political parties in the success of the Bonn process

Transition to democracy in Afghanistan came with the agreement on 'Provincial Arrangements' for democratization and re-establishment of permanent government institutions at Bonn Summit, held from late November to early December, 2001. The Agreement set a "road map" for peacebuilding and democratization in Afghanistan in order to end the long-lasting

civil conflicts and create a legitimate and democratic authority. In addition to the international support the role of political parties was important in many ways to achieve the agreement. First, the participation of diverse political parties ensured representation of all major interests and social groups in the new political structure, which was the vital issue for the conclusion of the agreement. Second, the 'elite and party continuity' was the main factor that contributed to peaceful transition to democracy. The 'elite continuity' and the 'party continuity' pattern in democratic transition is 'characterized by little or no violence' (Morlino, 2009: 205-6). The elites and political parties that represented certain social groups in the Bonn Summit had strong links with and influence on local elites, strongmen, and tribes, which contributed to the successful implementation of the Agreement provisions and facilitated democratic transition in Afghanistan.

At the Bonn Summit, representatives of four Afghan groups - the Rome Process (linked to the former king), the United Front, the Cyprus Group, and the Peshawar Group - participated, but the Taliban were excluded from the talks. The Rome Process was composed of some Afghan technocrats and former urban elites who migrated to the West, representing a pro-monarchy faction. It was not overtly powerful, and their presence was seen as strengthening Pashtun representation that was thought to be underrepresented with the absence of the Taliban and Hizbe Islami (Islamic Party) of Hekmatyar, the major political factions among Pashtuns. The other two groups (The Cyprus Group and The Peshawar Group) led by Humayoun Jarir and Pir Sayed Ahmad Gailani also lacked political power but their presence could ensure sufficient inclusiveness of the Bonn Summit

and legitimacy of the agreements concluded by the participants. Among the factions attending the Bonn Summit, the United Front or the Northern Alliance included the most powerful political parties representing various ethnic and religious groups mainly from non-Pashtun ethnic groups who fought the Taliban and provided the ground support for the US-led coalition to oust the Taliban regime. The Northern Alliance constituted of major non-Pashtun ethnic political parties (Tajiks, Hazaras, and Uzbeks) but included some smaller Pashtun political factions who fought each other during the bloody civil wars of 1992-1996 and then joined forces to fight the Taliban.

In sum, ethno-political factions played an important role in democratic transition by agreeing on the provisional arrangement that envisaged peacebuilding and democratization in Afghanistan. Initially, an outcome of the Bonn Agreement was the creation of an Interim Administration "as the first step toward the establishment of a broad-based, gender-sensitive, multi-ethnic and fully representative government" (Bonn Agreement, 2001).

The role of ethnic political parties in facilitating the democratic transition can be better understood if we consider the nature of the socio-political structure in Afghanistan. If divided societies are not fertile soil for democratic values as Rabushka and Shepsle (1972) say, certainly the success of democratization was questionable in Afghanistan. As Smith (2011: 11) notes:

> "Non-institutionalized systems like Afghanistan's are far more difficult to decode, since the loci of consensus are buried in tribal lore, family relations, financial connections, longstanding feuds and other considerations that are not easily penetrated by the modern political mind or organized by modern political institutions."

In addition to the social and political fragmentation resulting from the long-lasting civil conflicts, the tribal nature of almost one half of the Afghan society (Pashtuns) posed a grave problem for transition to democracy and ensuring peace and stability in Afghanistan. Therefore, the ethnic political parties contributed to the initial success of democratization and the implementation of the Bonn Agreement provisions by representing the major interests of social groups and using their influence on the tribes and local elites. The ethnic parties' overwhelming presence in the government and political institutions was pushing the political process toward a more elite-driven one, but the ethnic or religious political factions' ability to mobilize support of the tribes and ethnic groups for strengthening the new administration was vital. As noted by National Democratic Institute (NDI, 2011:1), "The groups that had operated earlier as military factions had established extensive management, organizational and communication structures – and these allowed the groups to command resources and public recognition in the post-Taliban era."

In this phase the ethnic manifestation of political parties and their clientelistic structure – though non-democratic it may seem – enabled them to win the support of ethnic and religious groups for the democratization and peacebuilding processes and to lead the country to a gradual political transformation. In sum, the role of the ethnic political parties in democratic transition was not destabilizing but rather facilitative and supportive.

3.2. Re-defining and de-ethnicizing political parties: The legal framework

The political parties as discussed above have played an entrepreneurship role championing the rights of certain ethnic groups. Many of the political and social confrontations and conflicts are attributed to the way the political parties or elites have conducted themselves. The structural problems and discrimination, as well as the historical background of unequal rights and opportunities have provided a solid ground for ethnic politics in Afghanistan. Therefore, the creation of political parties along ethnic lines was natural considering the deep-rooted social and political problems.

The 2004 Constitution for the first time in the history of Afghanistan provided a new definition of the rights of citizens as well as the party system in Afghanistan. The Article 22 stipulates that, "Any kind of discrimination and privilege between the citizens of Afghanistan are prohibited." This Article put an end to the hierarchical social and political system which had dominated the modern history of Afghanistan at least in legal terms. In order to depoliticize ethnicity, the Article 35 on registration of political parties defines legal eligibility criteria that are in line with international standards:

(1) The citizens of Afghanistan have the right to form social organizations for the purpose of securing material or spiritual aims in accordance with the provisions of the law.

(2) The citizens of Afghanistan have the right to form political parties in accordance with the provisions of the law, provided that:

– The program and charter of the party are not contrary to the principles of sacred religion of Islam, and the provisions and values of this Constitution.

– The organizational structure and financial sources of the party are made public.

– The party does not have military or paramilitary aims and structures.

– The party should have no affiliation to a

foreign political party or sources.

(3) Formation and functioning of a party based on ethnicity, language, Islamic school of thought [Sunni and Shiite] and region is not permissible.

Accordingly, the Law of Political Parties (2003) in its Article 6 made further clarifications on prohibited issues regarding the activities of political parties such as pursuing objectives opposed to the principles of Islam, use of force, inciting ethnic, racial, religious or regional discrimination, military organizations or affiliations, and receiving funds from foreign sources. These provisions are repeated in the 2009 amended version of the Law as well. The legal framework defined in the Constitution and the Law of Political Parties as discussed was part of the government's policy for creating democratic parties, which entailed de-ethnicization of political parties as well. But on the ground realities proved to be much complex and also resistant to such changes. While the parties ended their affiliation with foreign sources (at least in official terms) and dismantled their military branches that could undermine the party's legitimacy or outlaw the party, de-ethnicization required more flexibility and time. Although, all political parties officially deny their mono-ethnic base, in practice ethnicity provides the main political source for parties. It was obvious for ethnic political parties that political change and democratic transition have posed a big challenge for the continuity of parties and the way they operated and functioned till then. The most important challenge was losing political resources and mobilization tools, which a practical de-ethnicization could cause, as the availability of ethnic supporters was vital for political parties in order to maintain their competitive strength. In the words of

Rabushka and Shepsle (1972: 187), "Racial, religious, linguistic, and tribal communities all represent ready-made sources of political support that political entrepreneurs repeatedly try to tap and mobilize." Consequently, ethnic political parties preferred to maintain their ethnic and religious networks of supporters until they were able to move beyond ethnic boundaries. As I will discuss in the following section, some policy arrangements and approaches toward major political parties which limited their choices also created incentives for these parties not to abandon their ethnic bases of support.

3.3. Weakening of political parties and the lack of substitute

The coexistence of strong political parties with wide ethnic support bases, the networks of centrifugal warlords, and a weak central government posed the question of how to strengthen the central authority. The policy makers in the United States saw the domination of the so-called jihadi parties[5] as a major obstacle for empowering the central government to extend its authority beyond Kabul and project its power throughout the country. Furthermore, the Jihadi's conservative and Islamic agendas were thought to hamper democratization in a way that was favored by the West as well as Afghan technocrats who had more liberal views. Generally, concerns that political parties are formed 'along fractious ethnic and religious divisions led many to conclude that a party-based political system could be destabilizing in Afghanistan' (NDI, 2006). Especially the Karzai administration believed that "encouraging parties may fuel civil tensions and contribute to the already deteriorating security situation" (Larson, 2009: 2). In addition,

the slow pace of disarmament attributed to the 'centrifugal' warlords motivated the United States and President Karzai to curb the power of the ethnic political parties and their affiliated warlords (Suhrke, 2008; Sedra, 2002).

The new policy aimed to sideline political parties, minimize their role in politics, and target their power in the central government as well as their social/local strongholds. A threefold approach was taken in order to weaken the established ethnic political parties and their local clients (warlords): first, as part of the institutional reform the number of cabinet seats for Jihadi leaders and parties was decreased dramatically. In addition, they were removed from key civil and military positions and replaced by technocrats educated in the West and bureaucrats and generals of the former communist regime. Second, local strongmen such as Ismail Khan in western Herat province, Hazrat Ali and Haji Qadir in eastern Nangarhar province, Abdul Rashid Dostum, and Haji Mohammad Mohaqqeq in the north, and Gul Agha Sherzoi in the south were removed from their strongholds and brought to Kabul under close surveillance of the government. Third, supporting and encouraging more liberalist oriented political parties with overt rhetoric denouncing the jihadi parties.

These policies marked an emerging gap between the Jihadi leaders and the Karzai government. In fact, weakening and sidelining of the ethno-political factions made the Karzai government directly deal with the unmanageable tribal and traditional system. In other words, the time was not apt for sidelining political parties, which to some extent deprived the government from a powerful and influential source of support (jihadi political parties). On the other hand, these moves limited social and

political choices for parties, leading them to pursue more extreme options to demonstrate their influence and to prove that they had yet the power to change the course.

The cooperative environment between the Karzai government and the powerful ethno-political factions set by the Bonn Agreement waned in face of the new policy arrangements of the Karzai government and its international supporters, especially his *eminence grise* Zalmai Khalilzad. What was believed to be part of state-building strategy resulted in weakening of the state. However, the obstacles that local warlords set against the authority of the central government are not to be ignored, but a more gradual and phased policy would have been more effective for democratic state-building. The ethnic political parties as discussed could play a more significant role in transition to democracy in Afghan society where few 'have a clear impression of what democracy is in actual fact' (Wilder, 2005: 11).

3.4. Decomposition of established political parties and the rise of maverick politicians

Marginalizing political parties became the policy adopted by the Karzai administration but the initiatives taken for weakening these parties were devoid of alternative options to fill the vacuum created by the weakening of such parties. While new, more democratic political parties couldn't take root in the highly fragmented and ethnicized society, the policy for weakening the ethnic political parties and their associated warlords resulted in considerable decomposition of these parties. In addition to the official policy discussed above, various factors contributed to the degradation of major political parties, such as loss of financial supports from outside, loss of their income

from customs and the network of war economy developed during the wars. Furthermore, the inability of the political parties to adapt themselves to the new political environment led to the decay and finally splits within the parties and the rise of individual leaders.

President Karzai preferred to co-opt warlords rather than cooperation with major political parties and rewarded the loyalty of well known figures with government support and positions. The policy of co-optation resulted in splits within the parties and consequently, major figures of the political parties emerged as independent politicians, changing the political structure into a more persona-centric one. The leading figures of various political parties which had their own support bases as well as an accumulated fund enough to finance a small-scale political faction, tended to act independently from the party and to enter negotiations with the government by themselves. While the leading organ of the political parties was no longer able to provide financial support to local clients and warlords, the charismatic leaders were not willing to share their wealth with the party but rather wanted to invest it for the purpose of strengthening their own position.

For example, Jamiat-e Islami, a predominantly Tajik political party, broke up into several smaller factions around former key figures. Atta Mohammad Noor who governs the northern province of Balkh preferred to act more independently from the Jamiat party. Yonus Qanoni, the former Minister of Interior, established a new party named *Afghanistan e Nawin*. Marshall Fahim, the Vice President, preferred to rely on his Panjshiri fellows and the Shura-e-Nezar faction. The Massoud brothers, Ahmad Wali and Amhad Zia, also went their own ways. The first created a party

called Nehzat Milli Afghanistan, and the second served as the Vice President (2004-2009). Dr. Abdullah Abdullah, the former Minister of Foreign Affairs, came to lead a new coalition named Taghir wa Omid, and Prof. Rabbani remained the titular leader of Jamiat until his assassination in a suicide attack linked to the Taliban in 2011. Later, some younger figures namely Amrullah Saleh the former head of the National Directorate of Security (2004-2010), also emerged as an independent and influential politician. Other figures such as Ismail Khan have acted more independently long before the Jamiat's decay.

In the case of Hezb-e-Wahdat, the main Hazara political party too, splits into several persona-centric factions overshadowed the party's activities. Mohammad Mohaqeq the former Minister of Planning and head of the political committee of Hizb-e-Wahdat, established his own party of Hizb-e-Wahdat e Islami Mardum Afghanistan. Quban Ali Erfani, the former vice chair of the party, also created another faction named Hizb-e-Wahdat e Islami Mellat Afghanistan, and Karim Khalili, the current Vice President, continued to lead the remaining faction under its original name. Other smaller Hazara political parties such as Hizb-e-Wahdat Milli of Mohammad Akbari was divided into two factions, another having been led by late Mustafa Kazimi, the former Minister of Commerce in the transitional government (currently led by his brother Ali Kazimi). Harakat-e-Islami, also a predominantly Shiite/Hazara political party, was split into two factions; one being led by Sayed Hussein Anwary, the former Minister of Agriculture, and the other by Sayed Ali Javid, the former Minister of Transportation (later resigned from the party and Ghani Kazemi took his position).

Among Uzbek political factions also splits and divisions appeared but not to the same degree as the two mentioned ethnic groups. Junbesh-e-Milli under the leadership of General Dostum continued to dominate over smaller Uzbek political factions, yet the co-optation policy of President Karzai indeed introduced new independent politicians such as Noor Mohammad Qarqin, Qari Alam Rasikh, Shaker Karger, the former Minister of Labor, Qarabig Eized Yar and others.

Among the predominantly Pashtun political parties, while Hizb-e-Islami of Hekmatyar and the Taliban were outlawed, a smaller faction of Hezb-e-Islami under Wahidullah Sabwoon continued its precarious political presence. Other parties such as Ettehad-e-Islami of Abdurrab Rasul Saayaf, and Afghan Mellat, a Pashtun nationalist party under Anwarul Haq Ahady, the former Minister of Finance, remained immune from division.[6] Emergence of new, more powerful political parties among Pashtuns didn't take place, partly because of President Karzai's policy of co-opting the main influential figures of Pashtuns, either tribal elders or former leading figures of Pashtun political parties, mainly members of Hezb-e-Islami. As noted in a NDI (2011: 10) report, "Karzai himself was rumored at the time to attribute the nation's instability to parties, and according to some sources was concerned that facilitating party development might allow a Pashtun opposition party to form among those already dissatisfied with his performance." This was also clearly expressed by some Pashtun politicians according to the International Crisis Group (ICG), quoting from an official in Kandahar that, "Karzai does not want to see the creation of Pashtun protest parties in his home province" (ICG, 2005).

The decay of major political parties and decomposition of ethno-political factions had negative impacts on the democratization process, although it increased the inter-party interactions. Smaller factions with a persona-centric structure lacked the organizational capacity to mobilize support of the various communal groups; therefore their choice was limited to certain clusters of their followers usually within ethnic contexts. While the established political parties could have been more accountable and responsible in pushing their political agendas, maverick and charismatic leaders were more ready to utilize all means to maintain their legitimacy and survive the changes in the course of political transformation. Among available means was to manipulate ethnic grievances and to frame their political agendas on ethnic grounds. The increasing dissatisfaction with the performance of the government (e.g. increasing unemployment, unequal reconstruction and economic development, etc.) provided opportunities and solid grounds for such leaders to play the role of ethnic rights champions mainly as opposition groups to the government. Consequently, the ethnic manifestations of leaders in the absence of a party-based political system marked re-ethnicization of politics and revival of ethnic factor as the core of political struggles.

The 2003 Political Parties Law paved the way for the creation of new political parties that have mushroomed[7], but with the lack of international support and attention to the role of political parties, the Law fell short of establishing a well functioning party system. In other words, the exponential growth of parties has been accompanied by insufficient capacity building and promotion of intra-party democracy. In a highly ethnic and fragmented socio-political environment few of the newly created

parties had a chance to position itself as an established and well organized party. While the bifurcated branches of former major political parties have turned into the support bases of political leaders, the new and much smaller political parties lack organizational capacity and financial resources. The newly established political parties mostly lack a wide support at grassroots, and thus have remained what Duverger (1962) dubbed as 'cadre parties' or 'caucus-cadre' organizations. This model of organizations is characterized by being essentially based on political elites with 'leaders selected by smaller circles of acolytes, local notables and financial backers, with a minimal role for a wider membership and formal organizational structure' (Norris, 2002 : 105).

3.5. Political finance and assistance to political parties

During the long periods of war the former jihadi parties established a system in which parties were seen as financial resources for the clients rather than the other way around.[8] When the cash flow to the clients ceased, the loyalties to parties declined and tended to cluster around individual leaders. The culture of fund raising and paying membership contributions never existed before. Therefore, the lack of legitimate financial resources has undermined the ability of the parties to operate more actively, especially in elections. As NDI (2009 : 11) explains :

> "Only a handful of parties have developed an identifiable policy platform and ideology. Some parties are well-established but lack legitimate funding sources, while others have very little money and great difficulty raising funds. Internal organization structures are weak due to a combination of elements including a lack

of resources, limited input from the wider membership, and a lack of organizational experience and strategy."

Therefore the political parties till now are not accountable on their financial resources (NDI, 2011). Because they are financed either by the accumulated wealth of the individual leaders who are not willing to report on it or the parties rely in some cases on external support. Receiving funds and financial support from abroad is not unknown to Afghans. Political parties have long been receiving donations in cash from certain neighboring countries or other regional powers. Even President Karzai was reported by the New York Times (October 23, 2010) to have accepted Iranian assistance approximately $2 million per year, provided in cash and Karzai acknowledged this financial arrangement.

The questionable financial resources of the parties have caused some parties to be loyal to the leaders' agendas or to serve the interests of its patrons. The political finance, especially supporting political parties, was not given attention by both international donors, and the Karzai administration. The Afghanistan National Development Strategy 2008-2013 (ANDS) doesn't mention empowering political parties as part of political reconstruction or in its list of prioritized pillars. Some ad hoc supports provided by INGOs such as USAID or NDI for training the party members on organizational and capacity building issues have had little tangible effect. Obviously political parties that developed during the war in Afghanistan internalized a political culture as well as a kind of organization that responded well to the situations of conflict. In face of the democratization they need to domesticate new values and restructure their political organization to be

able to compete in democratic terms and procedures. In most cases the political parties are unable to follow the democratization process with the same pace, unless helped by the government or international bodies involved in peacebuilding and democratization.

Given the fragility of the political processes in post-conflict societies, emerging competitive political party structures require resources to be effective. Lack of regulation of political finance causes unequal access to financial resources or even funding from undesirable sources that can affect the electoral competition as well (Horacio and Dahl, 2006: 16). The Law of Political Parties identifies five permissible sources of funding for political parties: 1) membership contributions; 2) donations by legal persons of up to two million Afghani per year; 3) income from a party's movable and immovable property; 4) subsidies by the government in connection with elections; 5) Other contributions by members. But in reality none of these sources are available for political parties, which open a way to accepting illegal funds. Therefore, political finance is important for empowering political parties and making a transparent electoral system in Afghanistan.[9]

4. Political parties and consolidation of democracy in Afghanistan

4.1. Electoral system and its impacts on political parties' role and their performance

The most important feature of consolidation of democracy in divided societies is the transition from a situation in which violence represents the ultimate source of power to one in which votes and ballot boxes become the source of power and provide legitimacy (Pouligny, 2000). Within this context the

institutional design and the type of electoral system are decisive and important, because in divided societies, institutional arrangements and electoral design can systematically favor or disadvantage ethnic, national, and religious groups (Belmont et al. 2002: 3).

In Afghanistan, therefore, holding fair and free elections and adopting an electoral system that would meet the requirements of the Afghan society was important for successful democratic peacebuilding and the institutionalization of democratic culture. Central to this issue was to ensure a balanced representation of all ethnic and communal groups that would give them a voice in decision-making process and create an incentive for social groups to 'abandon extra-institutional action strategies' (ICG, 2005: 1; Alonso and Ruiz-Rufino, 2007: 237). In addition, the role of political parties further posed the question of which electoral system should be adopted, because the type of the electoral system is believed to play a role in structuring party systems (Lindberg, 2005).

4.2. PR versus SNTV electoral systems

In 2004, when the discussions over the electoral system started, the proportional system (PR) appeared to have more supporters among the major political factions. The proponents of the PR model argued that it would contribute to the development of a democratic party system and therefore can result in a more balanced relationship between the legislative and the executive branches of the government. In addition, a PR system can ensure representation of minority groups and a more inclusive parliament where every social group has its voice in the decision making process.[10] Furthermore, civil society and political activists as well as international advisors for the Joint

Electoral Management Body (JEMB), especially the UNAMA, supported a PR model (Aras and Tuktas, 2008:43). The reason behind these contentions was to provide the opportunity for creation of a party system that in King's (1969: 120-40) definition could contribute to vote structuring, integration and mobilization of citizens, organization of the government, policy formation, and interest aggregation in a highly fragmented society. Furthermore, a party system could provide a means to organize the institutional foundations of democratic politics which cannot be fulfilled by other bodies such as civil society or private organizations. In sum, PR was thought to be more conducive to the emergence of strong political parties that can influence the ethnicized Afghan milieu. Lack of major political parties could lead the political structure toward a more persona-centric one where maverick or charismatic political leaders are the main players, with low or no ability to aggravate the interests of various social groups.

On the other side, President Karzai and his technocrat team supported a Single Non-Transferable Vote (SNTV) system. Karzai attributed the past violence to the political parties and indicated their negative role in the past three decades of conflicts and ethnic confrontations. According to the International Crisis Group's (2005:6) report the Karzai administration justified its support for SNTV on a number of grounds: "It argues that it will prevent large regional or ethnic parties or parties associated with violence, illegal militias or the drug trade from entering and controlling the parliament through bribery and coercion, that votes can be counted more easily, and that it would also be easier to convey election results to a largely rural and uneducated

population". Given the bitter realities of the past and bad experiences of the parties, Karzai was not alone in mistrusting the former political parties, but the emphasis on SNTV that could obviously disadvantage political parties emanated from a larger official view that opposed a party system and rather favored a centralized government with weak political parties unable to challenge it. The Karzai administration in the absence of parliament (yet to be established) approved the SNTV system for parliamentary (Wolesi Jirgah)[11] elections and the creation of the JEMB on May 27, 2004. The SNTV electoral design ignored the political parties' lists for election (Rutting, 2006), which even violated the Articles 12 and 47 of the Law of Political Parties. The Law stipulates that all registered political parties can introduce candidates in all elections, and that the Independent Election Commission (IEC) 'must compile and exhibit a list of the eligible registered political parties and independent candidates including final lists of candidates for each of those parties' (Article 47).[12]

The decision was criticized by major political factions as well as international organizations. The ICG released a report which warned the Karzai administration on the negative consequences of the SNTV system and among a number of recommendations asked for change of the electoral system to the PR model (ICG, 2004:ii). The adoption of the SNTV system disadvantaged political parties and resulted in their marginalization in political competitions. The presidential elections of 2004, prior to the parliamentary elections of 2005, proved the persona-centric political tendency that prompted the leading candidates to mobilize ethnic support and rely on their ethnic core votes. The ethnic voting pattern in

the 2004 presidential elections was interpreted by many political circles as head-counts of ethnic groups in the absence of a national census.[13]

In sum, the adoption of the SNTV reduced the chances for development of a dynamic and accountable party system. In addition, as Riphenburg (2007: 16) notes, "this system does not force party amalgamation or encourage coalitions between parties." An electoral system that encourages the creation of coalitions and political alignment between groups of political parties is in the long term conducive to de-ethnicization of political parties and emergence of cross-ethnic coalitions. De-politicization of ethnicity is an important issue for the success of democratization and peacebuilding process. In addition, given the persona-centric nature of the political parties in Afghanistan, the elections in general and under the SNTV in particular exacerbate the problem of focusing on individuals rather than parties. In other words, the SNTV system under such circumstances "provides a very public platform for the self-promotion of these individuals" (Larson, 2010: 14).

In the absence of a party-based political system, even coalitions are created based on ethnic criteria. An example is the alliances and coalitions which emerged in the wake of the 2009 presidential elections. President Karzai allied with major political parties and the leaders of Hazaras, Uzbeks and a political faction of Tajiks led by Marshal Fahim. The alliance was created in order to win the support of ethnic groups. On the other side, another coalition named United Front was built around Buhanuddin Rabbani, the former president. Its main cause was to support Dr. Abdullah for the presidential elections. The results of the votes appeared to be sharply

divided along ethnic lines. Among the political parties only three were active during the election campaigns (Jumbish-e-Milli, Hezb-e-Wahdat, and the United National Front), that pursued a strategy of attracting ethnic votes (EU Election Observation Mission, 2009: 26).

Political coalitions that emerged outside the government and acted as opposition groups also couldn't overcome the sharp ethnic divides in politics. In fact, most of coalitions were built by co-opting politicians from different ethnicities or political parties. Since the political parties were mostly mono-ethnic, a multi-ethnic composition was seen necessary to strengthen their bargaining power within the political structure.

Among several coalitions that emerged was Jabha-e-Tafahum Melli (National Understanding Front) under Yonus Qanoni formed in April 2005. The coalition was composed of some major political factions from Tajiks, Hazaras, Pashtuns and a smaller Uzbek/Turkmen political faction led by Qarabeg Eizedyar. But the coalition lacked a unified agenda and didn't last long. Some other political coalitions emerged on ideological bases such as the Kabul Accord that aimed at unifying the leftist parties but lacked popular support. In addition to the jihadi political coalitions, the National Democratic Front composed of thirteen small parties created a coalition 'attempting to cast themselves in a Western, liberal and democratic mould, with the assistance of the Washington-based National Democratic Institute for International Affairs' (ICG, 2005: 10). But, most of these coalitions ended in failure or fell short of winning a wider support among the masses or within the ruling body. In addition to the highly ethnicized political environment that undermined coalitions, another reason for the

failure of such coalitions was that they were created to react to certain political events, lacking a broad and long-term perspective and political platform. In other words, as Larson (2010: 14) notes, "The shifting and un-established nature of parties in Afghanistan is both contributing toward and caused by the political instability fuelled by elections." Currently, the political coalition of Taghir wa Omid (Change and Hope) led by Dr. Abdullah has emerged as a powerful opposition to the government, but it also lacks a unified political platform. Ethnic divisions have made it more vulnerable in the face of political changes.

4.3. Voting pattern and the salience of ethnicity

Holding elections and exercising the right to elect representatives and the political leaders of the country was a novel phenomenon for Afghans who experienced elections in 2004 for the first time to elect the president. Therefore, the voting patterns have been shaped mainly by the existing social and political culture rather than democratic norms. As Katzman (2011: 2) notes, the patterns of "political affiliation by family, clan, tribe, village, ethnicity, region, and comradeship in battle often supersede relationships based on ideology or views. These patterns have been evident in every Afghan election since the fall of the Taliban." Although the traditional social structure, religious, ideological (e.g. Islamist, leftist, etc.), and socio-economic factors also played roles in shaping the voting patterns among Afghans (Amiri and Benish, 2010: 17-20), the tendency to vote along ethnic lines has been prevalent.[14] Therefore, the candidates in either presidential or parliamentary elections have pursued campaign strategies designed primarily to assemble blocs

of ethnic and geographic votes, 'although some have also sought to advance specific new programs and ideas' (Katzman, 2011: 2).[15]

In the local level, the traditional structure of society provided obstacles for exercising individual rights to decide to vote for a certain candidate. Asia Foundation (2011) in their survey of Afghan people reported that 56 percent of Afghans thought that they should vote the way his or her community votes, and 42 percent said that voting should be a matter of individual choice (Rennie, 2011: 118). Such traditional pattern of voting creates clusters of ready votes to fill ballot boxes for certain candidates. This pattern, in addition to being attractive to the candidates as easy targets that can be acquired by negotiation with the tribal elders, encourages political parties to pursue more ethnic agenda that would enable them to accumulate and organize these clusters under a larger collectivity (ethnicity). In addition, the lack of larger well organized political coalitions with defined agendas provide room for the non-aligned maverick politicians to manipulate the socio-economic problems by giving promises that is far beyond their grasp to deliver. Such a cycle of hopeful promises and frustrations make the votes more fluid to some degree. While socio-economic demands never receive response, astute ethnic leaders are there to interpret the frustration in ethnic terms, and mobilize the masses behind ethnic agendas. In other words, this trend, when paralleled with the slow pace of change and improvement of Afghan daily life and a dysfunctional government, perpetuates ethnic politics and keeps the ethnic dynamics of the society activated. Thus the potential for more extreme behaviors remains a matter of concern.

4.4. 2005 parliamentary elections and ethnic and political divides

The sidelining of the major jihadi/ethnic political parties in the government brought immense changes to the parties. Because the political choices within the government were getting more limited for the political parties, they changed their strategy to capture the Lower House that could serve as a political base to oppose the Karzai circle of technocrats. The major political parties used their networks of clients extensively to manipulate ethnic divides. As a result, the new parliament of Afghanistan (2005) came to be dominated by jihadi-ethnic political parties and challenged president Karzai and the executive branch. Thus the domination of the ethnic political parties first and foremost worsened the political divide between the executive organ and the legislature. In addition, the dominant faction within the parliament was composed of those who fought each other during the 1990s' ethnic conflicts. Therefore, the political divide paralleled with the ethnic divide within the parliament. In the post-conflict situation where the political structure is fragile and the democratic institutions have not taken root, such divisions pose grave problems for consolidation of democracy and the relative stability and harmony resulting from the Bonn Agreement.

In the Parliamentary elections of 2005, Pashtuns won 118 from the total 249 seats, Tajiks 53, Hazaras 41, and Uzbeks 20 seats. If we compare the party affiliation with ethnic division of the parliament, the ethno-political divide can be demonstrated more vividly. Among the Pashtun members of the parliament 49% were affiliated with parties (predominantly Pashtun parties such as Hizb-e-Islami and

Afghan Mellat), while the next three ethnic groups' party affiliation was stronger. 70 percent of the Tajik members, 80 percent of Hazara Members, and 100 percent of Uzbek members were affiliated with dominant ethnic political factions. Only 69 out of 249 members defined them as non-aligned with political parties or factions (Wilder, 2005:5-8). The ethno-political division allowed the political parties and the jihadi leaders to create factions within the parliament around ethnicity, and in their public rhetoric they heralded the elections as a test that proved the wide support of the Afghans to the jihadi ethno-political factions. But the ethnic division among the so-called jihadi parties was strong to a degree that caused deadlocks frequently in the decision making process, for example over electing the Wolesi Jirga's administrative members and its ethnic composition.

The ethno-political competition within the government and the Wolesi Jirgah culminated to an unprecedented level when most of the President Karzai's cabinet member choices got rejected in late 2009 and early 2010. The Wolesi Jirgah, turned down especially the Hazara nominees for cabinet posts in two repeated times. The disapproval of the nominees marked a turning point in the Karzai government's relations with the legislature, which has been conflictual since then. In addition, the exclusion of Hazara nominees triggered further ethnic tensions within the House, making it a fertile soil for political parties to seek their positions in the top layer of the government by exploiting tensions. For example, Mohaqeq the leader of the predominantly Hazara party of Hizb-e-Wahdat Mardum Afghanistan, took to the streets initiating rallies and demonstrations, thus diffusing the

problem to the masses for the purpose of restoring his severely damaged reputation among Hazaras.

4.5. 2010 parliamentary elections: Parties' decline and the North-South divide

The 2010 Wolesi Jirgah elections came after the fraudulent presidential elections in which President Karzai won the election with 48% of the votes (less than the required 50% plus) after Dr. Abdullah's withdrawal from a run-off. The presidential election had deep impacts on the political process in Afghanistan. First, it put under question the legitimacy of the Karzai administration; and second, the loss of trust over democratic procedures such as election among Afghans gave room to destabilizing forces. Under such circumstances the 2010 Woleis Jirgah election deteriorated the political tensions both in ethnic terms and in the relations of the government institutions. The election was conducted with systematic fraud, including intimidation and ballot stuffing, which brought the decision of the Independent Election Commission (IEC) to throw out 1.3 million ballots, an estimated quarter of the total votes cast. The Electoral Complaints Commission (ECC) subsequently disqualified 21 winning candidates for electoral fraud (ICG, 2011: 1). The loser candidates protested over the final results announced by the IEC and pressed their case through back channels at the presidential palace. Subsequently, President Karzai appeared supportive to the protesters and interfered through different ways. The Supreme Court appointed a special tribunal for election fraud and the Attorney General filed an indictment against some senior election officials and also dozens of parliamentary candidates (ICG, 2011: 1). But the winner candidates in an unprecedented unity rejected all procedures taken by the government and emphasized on the prior decision of the IEC. This caused a stalemate that continued for over a year. The political shifts between parties added to the ambiguity of the political situation. Both elections as mentioned above caused first and foremost the loss of public trust in the democratic procedures and structures, which will take time to restore. There were different factors behind the political crisis that followed the 2010 Wolesi Jirgah elections, especially the ethnic one. The Pashtuns lost around 20 seats, while the non-Pashtun ethnic groups, especially Hazaras, increased their seats in the House. Furthermore, the elections indicated the decline of political parties. The number of party affiliated members of the parliament declined from 72.3% in 2005 to 48.5% in 2010. Over 128 MPs defined themselves as non-aligned and independent making 51.4% of the total 249 seats in the Wolesi Jirgah (Husseini and Faizi, 2011: 16-19). The changes in the ethnic balance of the Wolesi Jirgah strengthened the position of the non-Pashtun ethnic groups and caused certain political shifts. First, the political parties that experienced somewhat dramatic decline within the House took a more ethnic appearance in order to create blocs that would support their position within the political structure. Although the political parties usually suffered from low organizational capacity and had difficulty in bringing party members together as unified bloc, the loss of seats prompted the parties to further utilize ethnic divides.

In addition, a north-south division became clear among major political parties with wider ethnic support. Primarily, this divide was provoked by the elections, but the declaration

of the timeline for withdrawal of international security forces from Afghanistan and the on-going negotiations with the Taliban widened the gap. The main reason was the uncertain future in the post-2014. The fear of being overrun by Pashtuns after the withdrawal of international security forces and the possible inclusion of the Taliban in the government is obvious among the political leaders of non-Pashtun ethnic groups. The political changes in the last decade as discussed above have led the political parties to an unstable condition characterized by frequent shifts of policies and alliances mainly because of the uncertainty they face in the transition to a democratic structure. As Lucian Pye (1963: 54-5) argues,

> "... People in transitional societies can take almost nothing for granted; they are plagued on all sides by uncertainty and every kind of unpredictable behavior. In their erratically changing world, every relationship rests upon uncertain foundations and may seem to contain an unlimited potential for good and evil."

Under such circumstances ethnicity continues to remain as the main political resource and the possibility of de-ethnicization of political parties decreases. Consequently, as long as ethnicity remains salient in politics, political parties are assumed to play on the same playing field. Therefore, de-ethnicization of political parties requires a long-term and phased initiative through institutionalization of democratic values. The main feature of such an initiative would be establishing a party system that provides the political parties with equal opportunities and political finance and also encourages and acknowledges their role as the most important pillar of the political system. If the parties' political and social status is not

defined, the resulting uncertainty causes resistance to the political change on the part of political parties. Legalizing the registration and activity of political parties or *ad hoc* technical assistance is not sufficient for such a purpose. In fragmented societies where preponderant social cleavages occupy the whole political spectrum, only a strong party system (e.g. that of Western democracies) provides an alternative to divisions based on identity. Especially in societies such as Afghanistan where no absolute majority exists and seeking alliance with other social groups to create such a majority is necessary, political competition organized within a party system can replace ethnic competition. For de-ethnicization of political parties, therefore, institutional and procedural designing matters the most.

5. Conclusion

As discussed above, political parties either ethnic or non-ethnic played an important role in the success of the Bonn process and democratic transition in Afghanistan, while in the consolidation phase political parties have contributed to re-ethnicization of politics and thus endangering democratic stability. But how and why have political parties played different roles in the two phases of democratization?

This study suggests that in the transition period in Afghanistan, political parties were the core component of the new political structure. Occupying the central position in the political system made them play a leading positive role in the political transition as they sought a new type of legitimacy that would be provided by appearing as champions of peace and stability. The parties' reputation and position within the political system was not disputed or endangered,

therefore, the leaders of the parties mobilized the support of ethnic groups and their network of clients (tribes, warlords, local elites, etc.) for the new government. In addition, the ethno-political factions provided a mediating channel between the newly established government and social groups by representing major interests in society.

But the policy arrangements by the Karzai administration and the international community in the following years to sideline the political parties had a negative impact on the political process, especially on consolidation of democracy in Afghanistan. The outcome of this policy was a decentralized Parliament in which President Karzai had to constantly attempt to build coalitions by co-opting individual political leaders. Furthermore, the policy encouraged emergence of individual charismatic political leaders and maverick politicians who further utilized ethnicity for resource mobilization and legitimization. Moreover, such initiatives limited the choices for political parties and made them retreat to their traditional ethnic support bases and oppose the government. All these issues have proved to be destructive for the fragile peace and stability and the nascent democracy in Afghanistan. Therefore, the negative role of ethnic political parties in democratic stability should not be taken for granted as most of the literature suggests. As the Afghanistan case shows, the micro-politics of democratic transition and the nature of political development and social dynamics have strong influences on shaping the political role of ethnic parties in post-conflict situations.

In short, in the transition phase political parties were thought to be the linchpin of any effort for reconciliation and peace that would lay the ground for democratization, whereas for the consolidation of democracy civil society organizations were given more importance rather than political parties. Consequently, in the consolidation phase political parties were seen as part of the problem, not the solution. Accordingly, sidelining, weakening and marginalizing ethnic political parties have been favored in order to ensure peace and stability. But as discussed in this article, unelaborated approaches toward political parties can end up in quite the opposite outcome. Limiting the social and political choices of political parties may provoke the leaders to resort to more extreme initiatives for maintaining their power and social and political position. Marginalizing political parties may pose the question of survival of the party in the course of political change and lead to development of ethnic parties or ethnic based coalitions outside the government, which would demand extra-institutional bargaining for maintaining peace and accommodating their interests.

In addition, this study suggests that institutional design has a significant impact on the political behavior of the elites and the function of political parties. The current political system in Afghanistan is less conducive to de-ethnicization of political parties. Furthermore, the SNTV electoral system has weakened the competitive strength of political parties in elections as well as in Parliament. While the current presidential system provides less incentive for political parties in a fragmented society like Afghanistan, and the amendment of the Constitution is long overdue, the author suggests that implementing institutional reforms should help the creation of competitive and strong political parties to play a constructive role in ensuring democratic stability:

Reform of the electoral system: primarily the

change of the current SNTV to the PR electoral system or a combined model. Under the current system the political parties in different constituencies target clusters of votes available in ethnic enclaves. They cannot benefit much from the individual votes of their supporters in different constituencies. A PR model enables parties to make use of each vote, and encourages them to extend their political campaigns beyond ethnic or tribal boundaries. Obviously, the incentives created by such political activities should be greatly conducive to de-politicization of ethnicity and subsequently to nation-building.

Political finance: similarly important as the reform of the electoral system is political finance to empower political parties. Currently, the major political parties lack sufficient financial support, and therefore rely on some suspicious and questionable resources that undermine the credibility of the parties. In addition, inequality in the financial support creates an unfair ground for political competition between parties. Therefore, this study suggests that political finance should become part of the international support for political reconstruction in Afghanistan and must be channeled through the IEC.

Finally, in addition to the two major reforms mentioned above, the author recommends structuring of a political system in Afghanistan based on a strong and competitive party system. Afghanistan has two major political turning points ahead: first, withdrawal of the International Security Assistance Forces (ISAF); and second, end of the Karzai's term. Dealing with the problems that might emerge with the departure of the ISAF and the change in national leadership would require strong competitive and cooperative political parties

that can prevent a relapse to the pre-2001 situation and a total failure of the political process. In other words, an Afghanistan without a strong opposition party or a well organized party system is "too reliant on one good man" to be sustained.

Notes:

[1] However, some scholars argue that "In many democracies, in both developed and less developed countries, there is growing evidence that membership in political parties is declining, and some have argued that parties as institutions are declining." See Diamond and Gunther, p 3

[2] Chandra defines an 'ethnic party' as "a party that overtly represents itself as a champion of the cause of one particular ethnic or set of categories to the exclusion of others, and that makes such a representation central to its strategy of mobilizing voters." Chandra, p 3

[3] Lijphart, the pioneer of consociationalism, emphasizes that a two-party system is better than a multiparty system and serves better to restrict the demagogy of parties. See: Lijphart, (1977), pp 12-13. Generally, in the literature on democratization and peacebuilding the role of political parties has been neglected and instead concentrating on human rights and civil society is thought to be a preferred way to deepen democracy. See: Burnell.

[4] Ideological incentives (the achievement of gaining collective goals and giving expression to deeply held beliefs), outcome incentives (the rewards that come from achieving certain personal goals, such as expanding social networks, getting a patronage job, or becoming an elected representative), and process incentives (derived from the inherent interest and stimulus of being politically active. See: Norris, p 105

[5] Jihadi parties refer to ethnic-political parties;

the two terms are used in this article interchangeably.

6 For more details on Jihadi political parties see: Harpviken.

7 In total, 110 political parties were registered with the Ministry of Justice under the 2003 Law and 43 parties are re-registered under the 2009 Law. The remaining ones are yet struggling to meet the new criteria of the law such as having representatives and members from at least 22 provinces out of 34. See: http://moj.gov.af/fa/page/1700

8 Rubin notes that the parties or warlords benefited from the development of political economy of war from mining, opium trades, predatory act on traders and civilians in the case of local warlords, to printing banknotes in the case of Rabbani and Dostum. See: Rubin, (2000), pp 1789-1803

9 For more detail on political finance in Afghanistan see: Kippen, p 26.

10 In academic works also PR is argued to be more suitable for divided societies. Hoffman, in his study of the two electoral systems, found that countries with proportional electoral systems have higher democracy scores based on the POLITY IV measure of democracy. See: Hoffman, p 239

11 Wolesi Jirgah is the official name of the lower house; therefore in this article I use the Parliament and Wolesi Jirgah interchangeably.

12 Under the current SNTV system and the electoral procedures, the parties can introduce candidates to the IEC, but the name of party shall not appear on the ballot papers. Therefore, only some candidates use the party logo in their election campaigns and it is difficult for the voters to recognize the candidates by their party affiliation.

13 Hamid Karzai was independent candidate. He is a Pashtun but had wide support among other ethnic groups as well. He won with a wide margin of 55.4% (4,443,029 votes); Yunos Qanoni, the former member of Jamiat and a Tajik ran the elections as representative of

Hezb-e-Nuhzhat-e-Mili Afghanistan, and received 1,306,503 votes (16.3%); Haji Mohammad Mohaqqeq, the leader of a faction of Hizb-e-Wahdat and a Hazara, was also registered as independent candidate and received 935,325 votes (11.7%); Abdul Rashid Dostum, the former leader of Junbish, ran as independent candidate and received 804,861 votes (10.0%). The total valid votes were 8,024,536, based on the certification of results. See: JEMB

14 The best example that demonstrates the ethnic voting pattern was the 2010 parliamentary elections in Ghazni province where Pashtun turnout was low because of insecurity and the Taliban's discouragement. Therefore, Hazara candidates won all 11 seats. The main reason for the Hazaras' gain in Ghazni was a better security and higher turnout in Hazaras areas. President Karzai in reaction to the Hazaras' gains in Ghazni called for re-election for the sake of national unity, but the call was rejected by the Independent Election Commission.

15 For more information on ethnic and geographic division of votes and ethnographic data of Afghanistan's elections see: Opening up elections in Afghanistan, at http://afghanistanelectiondata.org/

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