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April 05th Election; success and challenges

Introduction:

The third round of presidential election after falling of Taliban Regime in Afghanistan was conducted throughout the country, and Afghans voted to elect the second president since falling of the Taliban regime in 2001.

The results are due to be announced on 14/April/2014, but probably the election will go to the second round, due to the plurality of the candidates and that no one might gain 50+1 votes to win in the first round.

The election witnessed some difficulties as well. According to the reports, large



number of complaints has been submitted to the electoral complaints commission, and the military institutions also spoke about several attacks on the polling centers and casualties of tens of Afghan security forces; but in spite all of that the participation of the people had increased comparing with previous elections.

Waheed Muzhda a political analyst in reply to the questions of the CSRS analyzed this event:

The reason of extensive participation of the people:

The widespread participation of the people in this election compared with the previous ones can have two reasons: first, in the two previous elections Hamid Karzai was one of the candidates, and the people thought that their vote might not be that much effective and Hamid Karzai will be the president, so the people were not so much interested. In this election, Hamid Karzai was not among the candidates and the people paid attention to the future of Afghanistan and a scare from the possible threats in the future caused the widespread participation in this election. Secondly, the public awareness that this round of election is very

important for the future of Afghanistan also had a shadow on the participation of people and caused the increasing number of voters.

After the polling day and before the announcement of the results, while the Independent Election Commission has not declared officially or informally the results of the election some of the candidates claim victory, which other candidates might not accept the result and it will cause chaos. This issue will cause the feeling of some candidates that widespread fraud and violations took place in the election. Furthermore, the claim of some of the candidates that they are the winner at the first round and the election will not go to the second round, is questionable, since this is the IEC who decides whether it goes to the second round or not, instead of the candidates.

The fear of ethnic divisions in the second round:

The plurality of the candidates and division of the votes has increased the likeliness of not gaining 50+1 votes through one of the candidates and the second round run-off, which will have its problems and challenges.

But the main fear from the second round run-off is the ethnic divisions, but it is expected that it will be prevented since this will have horrible threats for the future of Afghanistan.

The main challenge against the upcoming government:

The main challenge against the upcoming government is peace and stability; since this process has not been successful yet.

The position of the upcoming government towards foreign troops will clear the destiny of the peace, if the upcoming government could not stand against the selfishness of the foreign troops it will soon be face with serious problems; but if it has its independency and stands against headstrongness of the foreign forces then it will have better chances.

Foreigners and foreign countries were involved in the election process in one or another way, and supported different election tickets, and even provided financial support for them, but with all these, Afghans were more involved in the frauds and irregularities during the election. Now, the two electoral commissions should answer to all these questions and separate transparent from counterfeit votes; and we hope they do so; otherwise the result of the election will be under questions.

Afghan Elections: Transparency and the Positive Propaganda

Introduction:

Before the elections, looking to the past experience, manipulation by foreign countries was feared and it was assumed that elections will be broadly marred by fraud and its legitimacy will come under question.



The question is whether April 5 elections were transparent? CSRS Director Dr. Abdul Baqi Amin talks about this issue along with answering some other questions.

Transparency:

Overall we can say that the transparency of these elections might be better than previous ones, which can be due to the intensive presence of local and foreign observers and candidates' representatives in most of the polling stations, and the new IEC laws and procedures.

However, in some regions IEC staff fraud has been reported which along with a number of other frauds and irregularities affected the transparency. On the other hand security risks had also its role in affecting a high turnout on the polling day.

It is clear that the people in insecure areas did not cast votes in amount that the IEC is claims of; and the media did not concentrate on this issue. Although freedom of media exist in Afghanistan but there is an overall censorship on it to an extent, in these elections media was advised not to reflect negative news and stories about the elections which includes both insecurity and frauds.

Turnout:

Since it's believed that the turnout was high compared to previous elections, the first question raises that whether the turnout was really high? According to the

Interior Ministry 13 provinces were insecure and participation of the people in these provinces was not possible. It is claimed that there were polling stations in most of the insecure provinces while there was no possibility of public participation and the IEC did not name the closed polling stations. Therefore, it's unclear that in the areas where no participation was possible and polling stations were opened whether ballot boxes have been filled or not and if there were votes casted in those polling stations, their transparency is under question and the votes are invalid. If the IEC's claim of seven million voters' participation includes these types of votes as well, then the claim is also false.

In reality the turnout in these elections was high which can have several reasons. First, the transition of authority was imminent so the people showed interest for voting. Secondly, the widespread campaigns of the candidates and their promises to the people for bringing change. Thirdly, Afghanization of the process can also be the reason behind the widespread participation besides it shows that public awareness has been raised and people recognize the importance of their role in electing their future president, which can be a good foundation for peaceful transition of the power.

Run-off:

Due to large number of the candidates and spread of votes among them there is possibility of no one securing a 50 percent plus one vote threshold and a run-off is likely. It's clear that all the problems that existed in the first round of elections will be repeated again besides government might also have economic problem providing budget for it.

Besides in the run-off concerns over ethnic divisions and social instabilities also rise, because the ethnic and tribal tendencies had its role in the first round of election as well. However, these concerns are not that much serious which should cause social destabilization.

Expectations from the Next Government:

The next Afghan government should end the decade-long war and immediately start negotiations and form a government that can unite the entire nation and bring them around it so that foreign meddling is stopped and the need for presence of foreign troops is eliminated. The second importance is self-sufficient Afghan economy, by developing industrial and agriculture sectors we should have enough income to operate the country; Creating new employment opportunities for educated individuals especially for youth so that the rate of crimes, use of narcotics and other social problems are decreased.

The third problem is that Karzai's administration could not transparently hire personnel and procure for government agencies in many sectors rather conflict of interest was largely involved, which the next government should take care of and form a government that is based on specialization. Rule of law is also one of the main problems, currently in all of the government agencies laws are not implemented and the corruption is at its extreme, even if someone tries to work transparently it will cost them losing the job.