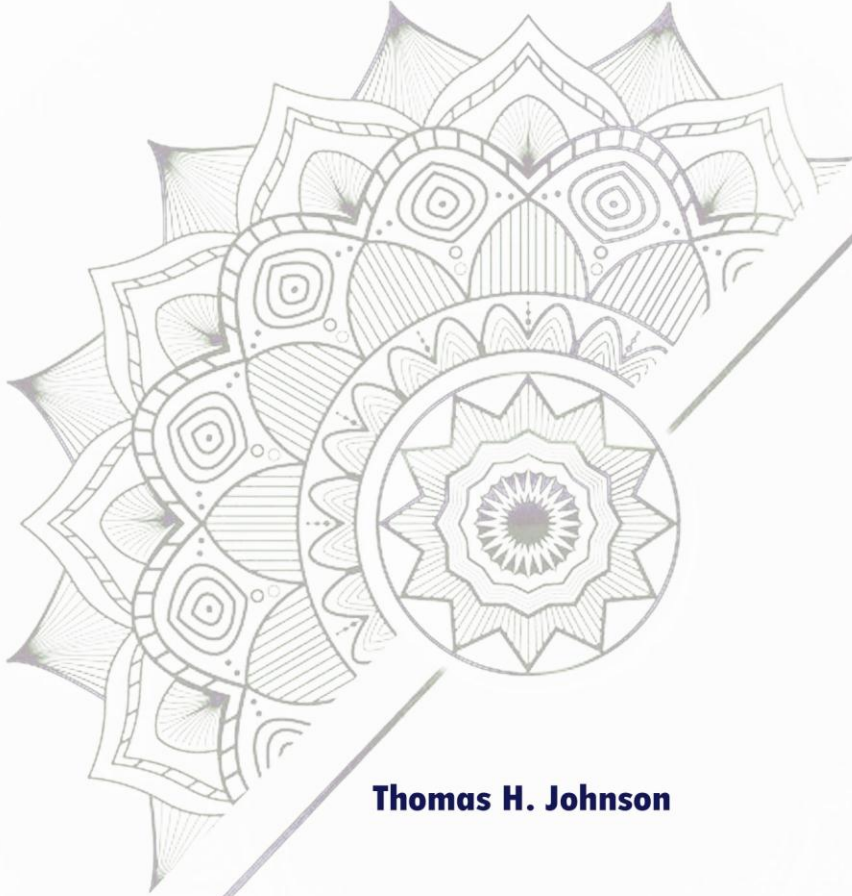
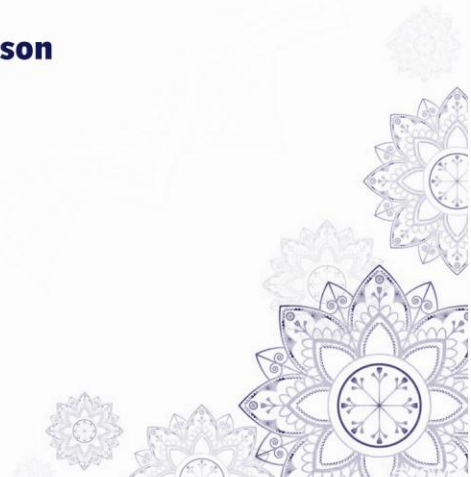


The 2019 Presidential Election

A Continuation of Problematic Processes and Results



Thomas H. Johnson



Afghanistan Institute for Strategic Studies



**The 2019 Presidential Election: A Continuation of
Problematic Processes and Results**



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FOREWORD

This paper is published under the aegis of the Afghan Institute for Strategic Studies (AISS) Constitutional and Political System Reform Studies series. Other publications under AISS's Afghanistan Constitutional and Political System Reform Studies series include The Afghanistan Constitutional and Political System Reform includes the following publications: Afghanistan's Constitution and Society in Transition: Assessment of public opinion and proposals for a constitutional amendment (2016), The Challenging Path towards Democracy in Afghanistan: An Assessment and Critique of National Debates on Alternative Political Systems in Afghanistan (2018) and Electoral Reform and Experience of Parliamentary Elections (2018), The Myth of Afghan Electoral Democracy; and the Irregularities of the 2014 Presidential Election (2019) and Ethnic Groups and Distribution of Political Power in Afghanistan: Modifying or Changing of the Political System (2019).

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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this paper is to explicitly, objectively and systematically assess Afghanistan's Presidential Election of 2019.¹ This is the fifth in a series of election papers published since 2006 concerning all elections in Afghanistan since 2004.² All analyses presented in this paper utilize official Afghan election data from The Afghan Independent Election Commission (IEC). To a certain degree this paper and its associated assessments mimic our 2014 election paper. The major and important difference is that this paper will not include a detailed examination of individual polling center data. These analyses will eventually be conducted but the data were received too late to be included here.

This study will utilize some simple statistical analysis, such as correlation analysis, to systematically assess relationships

¹ The views expressed in this paper are the author's alone and should not be construed as an official position or policy of the U.S. Government, Department of Defense, or Naval Postgraduate School. The author would like to thank Jenna Whetsel and William Lange for their invaluable research assistance on this paper. I would also like to thank Professor Jen Murtazashvili for making valuable comments on an earlier version of this paper.

² Thomas H. Johnson and Ronald J. Barnhart, "An Examination of Afghanistan's 2018 Wolesi Jirga Elections: Chaos, Confusion and Fraud," *Journal of Asian Security and International Affairs*, April 2010, forthcoming. Thomas H. Johnson, "The Myth of Afghan Electoral Democracy: The Irregularities of the 2014 Presidential Election," *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 29 No. 5-6 (2018): 1006-1039; Thomas H. Johnson, "The Illusion of Afghanistan's Electoral Representative Democracy: The Cases of Afghan Presidential and National Legislative Elections," *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 29, No. 1 (2018): 1-37. Thomas H. Johnson, "Afghanistan's Post-Taliban Transition: The State of State-Building after War," *Central Asian Survey* 25, No. 1-2 (March-June 2006): 1-26.

between variables. For example, since the initial 2004 Afghanistan Presidential Election, we have witnessed the importance of various ethno-linguistic groups voting in near blocks. Correlations can indicate the strength of an ethno-linguistic group's voting patterns. It is important to recognize that such analyses do not portend to represent actual causal relationships but they do posit, as suggested below, to reveal important patterns and conditional probabilities of certain events that require attention for any systematic election study.

Before we assess the 2019 election and its preliminary results, it is useful to review a bit of history and its impact on Afghan Elections.

The Bonn Conference and Accords

In late November and early December 2001 (25 November-5 December),³ after the fall of Kabul and Kandahar, when it was apparent that the Taliban Regime was going to be toppled, an extremely important conference in Bonn Germany under the auspices of the United Nations was held to establish an interim

³ Bonn Agreement (Afghanistan), retrieved from [http://self.gutenberg.org/articles/Bonn_Agreement_\(Afghanistan\)](http://self.gutenberg.org/articles/Bonn_Agreement_(Afghanistan)); Astri Suhrke, Kristian Berg Harpviken and Arne Strand, "After Bonn: Conflictual Peace Building," *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 23, No. 5, *Reconstructing War-Torn Societies: Afghanistan* (October 2002): 875-891. For an excellent review of Bonn, see; William Maley, "Looking Back at the Bonn Process," in Geoffrey Hayes and Mark Sedra (eds.), *Afghanistan: Transition Under Threat*, (Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2008).

Afghanistan Government. This conference also was tasked with basically compiling a “roadmap” for Afghanistan’s political future.⁴ Before addressing a brief assessment of the ultimate impact of the Bonn Conference, it is first necessary to understand that the conference was quickly cobbled together. This is not necessarily a criticism of Bonn and its resulting Accords, but rather recognition that the Taliban Regime was destroyed much quicker than initially expected by the United States. Most U.S. military and intelligence personnel believed that the U.S., Northern Alliance, officially known as United Islamic Front for the Salvation of Afghanistan,⁵ and its coalition would ultimately destroy the regime by late winter of 2001 or early spring 2002.⁶ Few felt that the Taliban Regime would be defeated as quickly as it was. Hence, there was not an abundance of time to prepare for Bonn and associated recommendations.

Four primary Afghan factions participated at Bonn – 1. The Northern Alliance (primarily Tajik); 2. The Rome Group (Zahir

4 Early Bonn reports and writings; An explicit overview of the agreement included the provisions for an Interim Authority to be established within 6 months, the establishment of a 21-member special independent commission to call for an emergency Loya Jirga that was to elect a Transitional Government and a multinational force to protect and secure Kabul.

⁵ It was a large coalition of groups led by late Ahmad Shah Massoud, and included all ethnic groups of the country including Tajiks, Pashtuns, Uzbeks and Hazaras. The groups became known wrongly in Western media as the Northern Alliance perhaps under influence of Pakistani media.

⁶ The author’s discussions with numerous U.S. military and intelligence managers and analysts in September through October 2001.

Shah's delegation); 3. Cyprus Group (Iranian backed and Hekmatyar), and; 4. The Peshawar Group (Pakistan based and composing many of the anti-Soviet Mujahidin parties). But it is very hard to suggest that the United States was not the key player at Bonn and their desires concerning Afghanistan would not be accepted and instituted. Moreover, all evidence suggests that the United States was not going to allow anyone other than Hamid Karzai to be appointed Interim Afghan President. But even more importantly than the Karzai appointment, the conference established an extremely ambitious time line for the development and implementation of a western-style representative democracy with elections to be held to replace a transitional authority that was to be decided via an Emergency Loya Jirga in June 2002. Many people forget that these planned elections were to occur in summer 2004 and were originally planned to involve national, provincial and district elections.

From my perspective, as well as others, the dilemma of the Bonn Accords was that they:

- attempted “nation and state building” during a time of conflict and national emergency;⁷

⁷ For example, see David Kinsella and David L. Rousseau, “Democracy and Conflict Resolution,” *The Sage Handbook on Conflict Resolution*, (25 May 2008): 477-493; Khabele Matlosa, “Democracy-Building In Conflict- Affected And Fragile States: The Role Of The African Union,” *International Institute for Democracy and Electoral*

- attempted to build a government and associated processes (e.g. a constitution, processes, official relationships) literally in 2 and ½ years what took 3 decades to totally to destroy;
- refused to recognize that central, strong “presidential-type” governments were historically ineffective to Afghanistan where weak central governments and traditional systems of local and village governance had flourished,⁸ and;
- Did not allow for the participation of political parties.

I believe that the Bonn Accords tried to establish extremely important institutions via an unrealistic time frame that continues

Assistance,” 2016, <https://www.idea.int/sites/default/files/publications/democracy-building-in-conflict-affected-and-fragile-states-the-role-of-the-african-union.pdf>;
 Joanne Gowa, “Democratic States and International Disputes,” *International Organization* 49, No. 3 (Summer, 1995): 511-522; Christopher Zambakari, “Challenges of Liberal Peace and Statebuilding in Divided Societies,” *Conflict Trends* (16 February, 2017), <https://www.accord.org.za/conflict-trends/challenges-liberal-peace-statebuilding-divided-societies/> ; Kristian Skrede Gleditsch, “Political Opportunity Structures, Democracy, and Civil War,” *Journal of Peace Research* 47, No. 3, 2010. 299–310; Kristine Höglund (2009) “Electoral Violence in Conflict-Ridden Societies: Concepts, Causes, and Consequences,” *Terrorism and Political Violence* 21, No. 3, 412-427, DOI: 10.1080/09546550902950290; D. Bekoe and S. Burchard, “The Contradictions of Pre-election Violence: The Effects of Violence on Voter Turnout in Sub-Saharan Africa,” *African Studies Review* 60, No. 2 (2017): 73-92. DOI:10.1017/asr.2017.50.

⁸ See: Louis DuPree, *Afghanistan*, (Oxford University Press; Revised edition (2002) and Thomas Barfield, *Afghanistan: A Cultural and Political History*, (Princeton University Press, 2012). Jennifer Murtazashvili, *Informal Order and the State in Afghanistan* (Cambridge University Press, 2016).

to plague the country. The actual political road map ascertained was extremely ambitious with tremendous and significant changes expected over a short period of time. Consider Figure 1, for example, which represents the compact schedule for the initial Afghanistan Presidential Election. This time line is actually much more condensed than the time line for an American Presidential Election and, of course, the U.S. is a mature representative democracy that has experienced 58 Presidential Elections. Initially Bonn called for national, provincial and local election of councils to be held simultaneously in July 2004. The United Nations suggested that the initial Wolesi Jirga (legislative) Elections might be the most “difficult elections ever held” with their complexity and being held in an on-going conflict environment in Afghanistan. The Wolesi Jirga elections were postponed until mid-September 2005 with the National Presidential Election being scheduled in July 2004, but eventually held on 9 October 2004.

Such a process and compressed time frame for an extremely complicated election, especially in a state that was in the midst of an intense conflict situation, mirrors Larry Diamond’s proposition that:

Ill-timed and ill-prepared elections do not produce democracy, or even political stability, after conflict. Instead, they

only enhance the powers of actors who incite coercion, fear, and prejudice, thereby reviving autocracy and even precipitating large scale strife...There are thus powerful reasons to defer national elections until militias have been demobilized, moderate parties trained and assisted, electoral infrastructure created, and democratic media and ideas generated.⁹

Implications of the Bonn Conference and Accords to Afghan Elections

Let me conclude this discussion of the Bonn Accords by suggesting some of the implications of the conference/accords and associated election propositions by positing that the initial presidential election planned for July 2004 was postponed a number of times because of security concerns to October 2004. And this election was only going to focus on the Afghan Presidential Election, as suggested above, it was initially planned that the presidential, provincial and district elections would be held simultaneously. The election witnessed an election worker training and recruitment regime that was much slower and encumbered than anticipated. There were also accusations of fraud that have accompanied every Afghan election since this

⁹Larry Diamond, *Squandered Victory: The American Occupation and the Bungled Effort to Bring Democracy to Iraq*, (New York: Henry Holt and Company), 2005, p. 310.

initial 2004 election, but the fraud of 2004 did not attract the level of international attention when compared to the 2009 or 2014 elections.¹⁰ The initial Wolesi Jirga elections were postponed until September 2005. This was the first legislative election in Afghanistan since 1969 and the Single Non-Transferable Vote (SNTV) significantly and negatively influenced it. The SNTV has had a very negative influence on the next two legislative elections of 2010 and 2018¹¹ partly by weakening political parties that play an important role in creating and fostering public policy. Weakening parties through the SNTV strengthened the executive. The question is why did the US and the Afghan government want to weaken elected institutions like the parliament? One reasonable reason, is that the executive branch wanted to remain strong and in control.

While Bonn and the elections that resulted represented watershed events they were also based on faulty assumptions and not necessarily reflective of Afghanistan's historical dynamics.

¹⁰ For journalist accounts see: "Afghanistan's Troubled Election," *The Dominion*, 11 September 2009, http://www.dominionpaper.ca/weblogs/ariel_nasr/2892 and Robert Marquand, "Western envoys: Expect run-off in the Afghanistan Election," *The Christian Science Monitor*, September 2, 2009, <https://www.csmonitor.com/World/Global-News/2009/0902/western-envoys-expect-run-off-in-afghanistan-election>.

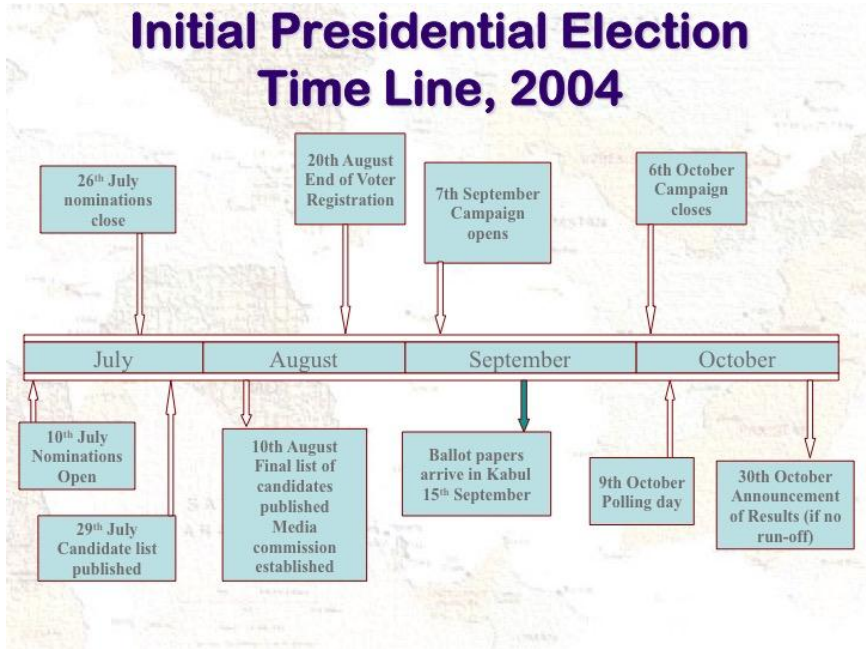
¹¹ Thomas H. Johnson and Ronald J. Barnhart, "An Examination of Afghanistan's 2018 Wolesi Jirga Elections: Chaos, Confusion and Fraud,"; Thomas H. Johnson, "The Illusion of Afghanistan's Electoral Representative Democracy: The Cases of Afghan Presidential and National Legislative Elections," Thomas H. Johnson, "Afghanistan's Post-Taliban Transition: The State of State-Building after War," *op. cit.*

No one ever expected that the realization of a democratic Afghanistan would be easy. Numerous scholars, in addition to Larry Diamond who is quoted above, have suggested that “democracy” is extremely difficult to achieve by any developing country but it is especially challenging for a country that has virtually been in armed conflict for nearly forty years.¹²

Hamid Karzai easily won the initial Presidential Election that replaced the transitional government he led with more than 75% of 12 million registered voters casting ballots. Karzai received 55.4% of the vote – three times greater than any other candidate. The UN’s Joint Electoral Management Body that oversaw the election was generally praised by the international community.

¹² Larry Diamond, *Squandered Victory: The American Occupation and the Bungled Effort to Bring Democracy to Iraq*, op. cit.

Figure 1



This election represented a massive logistics effort to supply all 4,800 polling stations using over 30,000 ballot boxes. The complexity of this election not only involved the logistics of voting during a time of conflict but also getting the ballots counted. More than 2,000 trucks, four Mi8 helicopters, 135 donkeys, and even boats carried the election materials. Similar election logistics problems continue to plague Afghan elections.

Afghanistan's provincial elections of September 2005 had a much lower voter turnout (50% lower than the Presidential

Election) with final election results postponed for a number of months because of accusations of election fraud.

Since the initial presidential election of 2004, Afghanistan has faced significant problems in each proceeding election. The planned 2015 legislative election was postponed by 3 years and both the 2009 and especially the 2014 presidential elections were marred by extremely unusual results that many claimed were fraudulent.¹³

It is now widely recognized that recent Afghan elections have raised significant and serious questions concerning the legitimacy and utility of the entire Afghan electoral system, as well as the Afghan democracy. Indeed the International Crisis Group (ICG) assessing the 2009 Presidential Election suggested that the “prolonged crisis over Afghanistan’s ... elections has undermined (then) President Hamid Karzai’s credibility” and has politically isolated him. The ICG posited that the Afghan election

¹³ For example see: Tony Birtley, “Vote rigging, fraud overshadow Afghan election,” Al Jazeera, 25 September 2019, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/09/vote-rigging-fraud-overshadow-afghan-election-190925142938660.html> ; Mats Staffan Darnolf, “Reducing Voter Fraud in Afghanistan,” U.S. Institute of Peace, Peace Brief, 2 November 2017; Michael Callen and James D. Long, “Institutional Corruption and Election Fraud: Evidence from a Field Experiment in Afghanistan,” *The American Economic Review*, Vol. 105, No. 1 (January 2015), pp. 354-381; Eli Berman, Michael J. Callen, Clark Gibson, James D. Long,” National Bureau of Economic Research Working Paper 19949, 14 February 2014; Thomas H. Johnson, “The Myth of Afghan Electoral Democracy: The Irregularities of the 2014 Presidential Election,” and Thomas H. Johnson, “The Illusion of Afghanistan’s Electoral Representative Democracy: The Cases of Afghan Presidential and National Legislative Elections,” *op. cit.*

process “could plunge the country deeper into not just political but armed conflict.”¹⁴

In April 2014 in the midst of considerable controversy and the inability of President Karzai to run for President again due to term limits, Afghanistan held its third presidential election with 11 candidates officially seeking election. The three leading candidates proved to be Dr. Ashraf Ghani (Ahmadzai), Dr. Abdullah Abdullah and Zalmay Rassoul. No candidate received the required majority of the vote during the April election (Abdullah received 45% of the vote while Ghani received 31.6%) and as required by the Afghan Constitution because no candidate received a majority of the vote (50%+1), a second-round election (runoff) was conducted on 14 June 2014. There were numerous reports of significant fraud with over 3000 official complaints of voting irregularities and violations made concerning the April election.

On 14 June 2014 the second round of the presidential election was held. This election was ‘won’ by Ghani with 56.4 percent of the vote compared to Abdullah’s 43.6 percent. The vote was so controversial that the results were not announced until 21 September. During the months before and after this

¹⁴ International Crisis Group, “Afghanistan’s Elections Stalemate,” Asia Briefing No. 117, (Kabul and Brussels, 23 February 2011, p. 1.

election Afghanistan experienced considerable violence and allegations of significant voter fraud that some argued cost Abdullah from receiving the required majority of the vote. A similar dynamic was witnessed during the 2009 Presidential election where 1.3 million fraudulent votes were discarded.

A detailed and systematic analysis of the 2014 Presidential Election focusing on polling data center data found 606 polling places where Ghani received all 600 votes, the maximum number of votes allowed for any ballot box, and Abdullah received none and another 900 polling centers that gave virtually all its votes to Ghani.¹⁵ Such results are not only substantively highly unlikely but statistically impossible as found by official election studies performed by the Government of the United States using highly sophisticated election models immediately after the 2014 run-off election.¹⁶

¹⁵ Thomas H. Johnson, "The Myth of Afghan Electoral Democracy: The Irregularities of the 2014 Presidential Election," *op. cit.*

¹⁶ Chris Mason, "Fraud and Folly in Afghanistan." *Foreign Policy*, 23 September 2014, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2014/09/23/fraud-and-folly-in-afghanistan/>

The 2019 AFGHANISTAN PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION¹⁷

The Afghan Independent Election Commission (IEC) postponed the Afghanistan Presidential Election originally scheduled for 20 April 2019 to 20 July 2019.¹⁸ The postponement was based, in part, according to the IEC because of election problems that emerged during the 2018 Afghan Wolesi Jirga Election. A particular concern cited was the need for additional election worker's training on the use of biometric identification devices and systems used to verify voters; this was a very contentious issue during the 2018 Wolesi Jirga Elections. The election was further delayed by the IEC on 20 March until 28 September 2019. These delays were precursors to a multitude of serious problems that would be associated with the 2019 Presidential Election.

As suggested above, Afghan elections have constrained time periods for actual campaigning. And during this period in 2019, the Taliban staged a number of brutal events killing people

¹⁷ For two excellent election analyses that this paper builds upon and expands, see: Ali Yawar Adili, "Afghanistan's 2019 Elections (27): The preliminary result, finally, but no end to controversy," Afghanistan Analysts Network, 22 December 2019, <https://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/afghanistans-2019-elections-27-the-preliminary-result-finally-but-no-end-to-controversy/> and Ali Yawar Adili, "Afghanistan's 2019 Elections (29): A statistical overview of the preliminary results," Afghanistan Analysts Network, 8 February 2020, <https://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/afghanistans-2019-elections-29-a-statistical-overview-of-the-preliminary-results/>.

¹⁸ This announcement was made by the IEC on 26 December 2018, see: "Afghanistan presidential election delayed by three months," BBC News, 26 December 2018, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-46686862>.

at a variety of campaign events. For example, two suicide attacks on a single day with one explicitly targeting a Ghani election rally on 17 September killed 48 people and wounded another 42.¹⁹

The election campaign also witnessed a possible leading candidate, Hanif Atmar end his campaign because of some internal discord within his ticket with Atta Mohammad Noor and his concerns concerning the implications of the election to the Afghan peace process.²⁰

In late July, the IEC announced that “400,000 ghost voters” had been removed from the voters list because of “duplication.” “Meanwhile, some of the electoral observer organizations claim[ed] that there [were] nearly 5 million ghost voters on the list and the commission [did] not [have] the ability to separate them from the real voters which provide the ground for frauds. Neither the ghost voters nor the ghost national identity cards [had] been removed. They [IEC members] want to go for the presidential election which will create a catastrophe,” said Dawood Ali Najafi, former Chief Secretariat of IEC.²¹ These

¹⁹ “Dozens killed by Taliban suicide bombings in Afghanistan,” Oxford Mail, 17 September 2019, <https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/national/17908124.dozens-killed-taliban-suicide-bombings-afghanistan/> .

²⁰ Ayesha Tanzeem, “A Leading Afghan Presidential Candidate Suspends Campaign,” Voice of America News, South and Central Asia, 8 August 2019, <https://www.voanews.com/south-central-asia/leading-afghan-presidential-candidate-suspends-campaign> .

²¹ “400,000 Ghost Voters Are Out Of Voters List: IEC,” Ariana News, 26 July 2019, <https://ariananews.af/400000-ghost-voters-are-out-of-voters-list-iec/> .

types of problems eventually had many challenging the numbers surrounding voter turnout as well as the election results.

After months of delay and complaints of fraud and election planning irregularities, the election was finally held on 28 September 2019. The publications of the preliminary results, like the election itself, were delayed at least two times before finally released. For example, on 19 October it was announced that IEC would not meet its own self-imposed deadline of 19 October. Hawa Alam Nuristani, the head of the IEC apologized for the delay but suggested that because of “technical issues and for the sake of transparency” election results could not be released.²² It would be three months after the election before “official preliminary results” were formally published by the IEC.²³ That is, in and of itself, strange and has not been experienced by any other democratic election – especially considering the extremely small voter turnout. Moreover, the explicit and detailed reasons for the delay were never fully explained.

²² Susannah George and Sayad Salahuddin, “Afghan presidential election outcome remains in limbo as results are delayed,” The Washington Post, 19 October 2019.

²³ <http://www.iec.org.af/results/en/home> .

Closed Polling Places

On 19 September the IEC announced they were permanently closing 431 polling places because of security concerns, especially considering that they were concentrated in “insecure or restrictive regions” of the country.²⁴ The polling places closed are presented in Table 1. This table also includes the percentage of votes that Dr. Abdullah Abdullah and Dr. Ashraf Ghani received in each of these provinces of closed polling centers in the 2014 Presidential Election and their differences in terms of percentages. Table 1 can be simply characterized as possibly a devastating comment on attempts at voter suppression that clearly benefited Ghani. Closing of polling stations clearly benefitted Ghani at the expense of Abdullah. Polls were closed due to insecurity in some of the more *secure* provinces.

Of the 17 provinces that witnessed polling place closings before the election, 7 were among the top 15 provinces supporting Abdullah in 2014, by percentage of votes received, while only 2 were among Ghani’s 15 top provinces for voter support in 2014. Moreover, a simple examination of the table suggests numerous

²⁴ Anisa Shaheed, “Security Report on Polling Centers Sparks Backlash,” Tolo News, 20 September 2019, <https://tolonews.com/afghanistan/security-report-polling-centers-sparks-backlash>.

provinces where Abdullah had a clear advantage over Ghani from past voter preferences, and 8 of the 15 provinces had a percentage of voter preference for Abdullah that was at least a 33 percent advantage over Ghani. Furthermore, while the polling places were ostensibly closed in provinces because they were located in violent and less secure areas, the key question is as to why polling places in provinces such as Helmand, Khost, Kunar, Nangahar, Paktika, Paktya, or Zabul, that have traditionally been some of Afghanistan's most violent not on the list of polling places were not closed? These provinces have surely been considered "restricted areas" for years. Table 2 may present an answer.

In addition, it is worth mentioning that it has been reported that on the Election Day a far larger polling centers might have been closed, but the IEC has failed so far to release a complete list of closed polling centers despite constant demand of presidential tickets.

Table 1: Polling Center Closed and 2014 Preliminary Results in Those Provinces

Province	Number of Polling Centers Closed	Percentage of Votes Received by Abdullah in 2014 Preliminary Presidential Election and (Difference between Abdullah and Ghani)	Percentage of Votes Received by Ghani in 2014 Preliminary and Presidential Election
Badghis	31	67.19 (+57.43)	9.76
Badakshhan	29	64.65 (+50.27)	14.38
Balkh	89	60.54 (+32.71)	27.83
Baghlan	12	59.95 (+39.53)	20.42
Takhar	14	49.85 (+11.97)	37.88
Jawzjan	7	19.57 (-48.36)	67.93
Sar-e-Pul	11	50.00 (11.79)	38.21
Samangan	20	60.69 (+33.86)	26.83
Ghor	66	59.44 (+46.36)	13.08
Faryab	46	29.12 (-35.87)	64.99
Farah	11	31.45 (-8.16)	39.61
Kapisa	3	78.70 (+74.59)	4.11
Kunduz	7	46.60 (9.06)	37.54
Kandahar	5	10.43 (-3.23)	13.66
Nuristan	20	14.57 (-23.03)	37.60
Herat	29	60.87 (49.84)	1.03
Wardak	31	36.03 (+21.06)	14.97

Table 2 presents election data in those provinces considered highly conflictual and “restrictive”. These data present results that are in direct contradiction to the results of Table 1. Table 1 suggests that the vast majority of provinces that experienced polling center closures because of “security issues,” even though many of these provinces are relatively stable and under Afghan Government control, are clearly provinces where the majority of voters support Abdullah – in many cases by significant margins. Whereas, Table 2 presents provinces that are “restrictive” and experience considerable violence and had no or few polls closed by the IEC apparently because these are areas where Ghani got tremendous voter support when compared to Abdullah. The percentages range, as you can find in the Table, from 81.5 – 96 percent while Abdullah’s percentages in these same provinces ranged from 1 - 12.8 percent with most hovering around 4 percent or lower.

How can one explain this? Quite frankly, it just does not make any logical sense if the election was indeed free, fair and transparent.

Table 3 possibly helps to answer the provocative questions posed above. This table presents a correlational analysis of the number of provincial polling places closed prior to the election and both the total and percentage of votes received by Ghani and

Abdullah for both the 2014 and 2019 initial Presidential Elections.

The results of this table directly validate some of other analyses presented in this paper and, quite frankly, suggest possible fraud by Ghani's campaign. The main message of this table is that because of the strong positive correlations relative to both absolute votes and the percentage of provincial votes received in 2014 by Abdullah and the polling stations closed before the 2019 election was held clearly and statistically suggests that the two variables are related. In other words, one interpretation of the correlational results presented in this table is that polling stations were deliberately closed in provinces where Abdullah was expected to receive considerable votes in 2019, if 2014 results were to be at least partially duplicated in 2019. This finding is clearly inconsistent with the data presented in Table 2. The polling centers closed could have possibly produced 172,400 votes.

While Afghanistan's Independent Election Commission is supposedly an objective and nonpartisan body, the fact that President Ghani appoints (and dismisses) a vast majority of its commissioners means that Ghani can theoretically control the policies pursued by the IEC. This is evidence of a strong executive; there is no separation of powers. It is not unusual for

presidents and prime ministers across the globe to select members for important commissions and committees based partly on what the president or prime minister wants to accomplish – this is just a fact of political life. And there is no question concerning the fact that Ghani wanted to win the 2019 election. Having the IEC make decisions on what polling places should remain opened or closed could have a significant impact on Ghani’s viability as a candidate and it would not be unusual at all for him to select commission members that could enhance his desires.

There is strong evidence that the IEC and the government were involved in voter suppression. As suggested by previous analyses presented above, the negative correlation between polling places closed in a particular province and votes Ghani received in that province, both in total and percentage terms, implies that voter support might well been a factor in the closure of particular polling places. Abdullah, on the other hand, witnessed a positive correlation in those provinces that closed polling places. These results in combination with other findings imply a strong probability that polling places’ closures again were partly and possibly strongly a political decision that favored Ghani’s candidacy.

Table 2: Total Votes and Voting Percentages Announced by IEC in a Variety of Insecure or “Restrictive” Provinces

Province	Total and Percentage of Votes Received by Ghani	Total and Percentage of Votes Received by Abdullah
Helmand	31,072 (81.47%)	4,878 (12.79%)
Khost	75109 (96.46%)	787 (1.01%)
Kunar	54,907 (85.52%)	5,702 (7.90%)
Nangahar	188,462 (92.22%)	4,949 (2.42%)
Paktika	29,499 (93.61%)	828 (2.63%)
Paktia	35,657 (92.89%)	1,643 (4.28%)
Zabul	5,380 (89.92%)	262 (4.38%)

Table 3: 2019 Provincial Polling Stations Closed Prior To Election vs. Percentage of Votes Received (2014 and 2019).

	Percentage of Votes Received in Preliminary Elections			
	Ghani (2014)	Abdullah (2014)	Ghani (2019)	Abdullah (2019)
Stations Closed Prior To Election	-19.25	29.77	-37.80	35.01
2019 Provincial Polling Stations Closed Prior to Election vs Total Votes Received (2014 and 2019).				
	Total Votes Received in Preliminary Elections			
	Ghani (2014)	Abdullah (2014)	Ghani (2019)	Abdullah (2019)
Stations Closed Prior To Election	7.67	40.39	-18.84	12.25

Voter turnout and the closing of polling stations must be a focus of attention because of possible implications for fraud and voter suppression. The clear message of Tables 1, 2 and 3 are that the IEC either helped Ghani win this election or that voting was fraudulent in certain provinces. Clearly, decisions made by the IEC to close polling places appear to be politically motivated. There are no competing explanations that can explain these outcomes.

Consider the observation by the Afghan Analyst Network (AAN) that voter turnout was not initially made public by the IEC. As suggested by the AAN:

On 1 October at the press conference read-out, the turnout in Jawzjan was given as 38,135 voters in 835 polling stations, despite the fact that the IEC had planned to open only 322. According to Mawlana Abdullah this kind of errors were numerous. “We had similar problem in other provinces, too, he told AAN, adding that “our [IEC] information delivery and reporting was not up to standard.”²⁵

Table 4 presents a correlational analysis of provincial invalid votes found in the 2019 Presidential Election and the

²⁵ AAN Team, “Afghanistan’s 2019 Election (17): IEC tally process underway but figures remain murky,” Afghan Analysts Network, 12 October 2109. The AAN has published a series of excellent articles concerning many of the issues raised here.

percentage of provincial votes received by Ghani and Abdullah. This table presents some extremely interesting results. This table suggests that there was a significant negative relationship between Abdullah's percentage of votes he received in the 2019 election and the invalid provincial votes he received in 2019. Meaning that the percentages of provincial votes Abdullah receive were not strongly related to provinces' invalid, possibly fraudulent, votes. On the other hand, Ghani had a strong positive relationship between the percentage of a province's vote he received in 2019 and the percentage of invalid votes he received in that province. One explanation of this finding, as suggested previously, is that Ghani's candidacy was directly involved in the production of invalid votes and was caught while the negative correlation for Abdullah suggests his campaign was not responsible for producing invalid votes. These results demand further examination related to the relationship of the candidacies, especially Ghani's, and the possible production of fraudulent votes because it obviously could be a possible indicator of fraudulent behavior by the Ghani candidacy. If findings such as those posited in Table 4 were isolated, one might rightly disregard any reprehensible implications of the results, but when such results reinforce and apparently validate the findings of other

objective examinations, one necessarily has to consider the possibility of considerable election fraud.

Table 4: Correlational Analysis of Provincial Invalid Votes of the 2019 Presidential Election and the Percentage of Provincial Votes Received by Ghani and Abdullah.

Correlational Analysis (Pearson r)		
	Provincial Percentage of Votes Received in Preliminary Elections (2019)	
	Ghani	Abdullah
Invalidated Votes	36.51*	-34.10*

The Election Results²⁶

Finally on 22 December 2019 the preliminary election results were announced with incumbent President Ashraf Ghani winning by receiving 923,868 (50.64%) out of only 1,824,401 total votes – by far the lowest of any previous Afghan election. Ghani’s primary challenger, Dr. Abdullah Abdullah, received 720,099 votes (39.52 %). The head of Hizb-e-Islami, Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, came in a distant third, with 70,243 votes (3.85 percent). The remaining 11 other candidates, including Rahmatullah Nabil, Faramarz Tamana, Enayatullah Hafiz, Mohammad Hakim Torsan, Ahmad Wali Massuod, Mohammad

²⁶ The source for these data are the Afghanistan Independent Election Commission, http://www.iec.org.af/results/en/home/priliminary_votes .

Shahab Hakimi, Ghulam Farooq Najrabi and Noor Rahman Lewal whom had together formed the Council of Presidential Candidates on April 15, 2019 in aggregate received 5.99 percent of the vote. The preliminary election results suggested that Ghani needed to only lose or Abdullah gain 12,000 votes to force a runoff election.

Afghanistan at the time of the election had 9,665,745 million (the exact number released by the IEC on August 18, 2019) registered voters. Only 1,929,333 of these voters exercised their right to vote (19 percent), 104,932 of the registered voters, approximately one percent, were found invalid. Compare this to the 2014 Presidential Election where the voting percentage was 58 percent of eligible voters.

As was discussed above and will be discussed in some length below, almost immediately after the voting ended, most candidates claimed numerous allegations of fraudulent voting. According to Abdullah's team 300,000 suspicious and fraudulent votes were cast and counted. Abdullah immediately demanded that the Independent Electoral Complaints Commission (IECC) invalidate hundreds of thousands of votes. Not unexpected as early as 30 September because of competing claims of fraud made by the two election frontrunners, Ghani and Abdullah, both

declared victory, “echoing an election crisis five years ago when competing claims by the two men led to months of turmoil.”²⁷

Table 5 presents the preliminary election results of all candidates that received at least 10,000 votes. As suggested by the table, Ghani won the majority in 16 provinces, including in the largest constituency, that of Kabul, as well as expected in the south, east and southeastern areas of Afghanistan, which are primarily inhabited by Pashtuns. Abdullah, also as expected, won the majority of the 18 provinces in the north, northeast, central and west that are the homelands of many Tajiks, Uzbeks and Hazaras. The voting by ethnic groups has been a characteristic of all Afghan Presidential Elections.

Ghani received majority of votes in all 16 provinces of the south, southeast (except Ghazni), east, plus Kabul (which had the highest number of votes cast) and Ghor. Abdullah’s strongholds were the entire northern and northeastern region plus Bamiyan, Daykundi and Ghazni as well as Wardak, Parwan, Kapisa and Panjshir. While there are many interesting dynamics suggested by this table, one should note that more votes were cast in Khost, a Ghani stronghold, than in Badakhshan, an Abdullah stronghold, even though Badakhshan’s population (950,953 circa 2015) is

²⁷ STAP, “Afghanistan: Fractious Vote – Analysis,” Eurasian Review, 30 December 2019, <https://www.eurasiareview.com/30122019-afghanistan-fractious-vote-analysis/>.

over 40 percent the size of Khost's Population (574,582 circa 2015).

Figure 2 presents a map of provincial voting patterns. A close examination of this map suggests that the traditional ethno-linguistic splits in the country remain at the forefront of Afghan voting patterns and politics.²⁸ This will be discussed in a section below.

Table 6 presents and compares the electoral performance of Ghani and Abdullah in the initial Presidential Election in 2014 as compared to their respective 2019 performances by percentage in each Afghan Province. What immediately draws one's attention relative to the data presented in this table is the fact that in 26 provinces Ghani improved his electoral performance as compared to 2014. On the other hand, Abdullah electoral performance decreased in 24 provinces and improved in only 7 provinces. Some of these changes are surely possible and explainable especially considering that Ghani received 50.64 percent in 2019 versus 31.37 percent in 2014 and Abdullah received 39.52 percent in 2019 compared to 44.72 percent in 2014.

²⁸ For the seminal work on the ethno-linguistic fragmentation in Afghanistan see: Barnett R. Rubin, *The Fragmentation of Afghanistan: State Formation and Collapse in the International System*, (Yale University Press, Second Edition,

The percentage of votes that Abdullah received in the provinces is relatively consistent over the two elections although, as suggested above, they decreased in the vast majority of provinces. But in only 11 provinces did his votes change by over 10 percent between 2014 and 2019. Ghani, on the other hand, experienced changes of over 10 percent in 27 different provinces. Table 7 also suggests this finding where the candidates' results between the two elections are correlated. As can be seen in this table the conditional probability of Abdullah receiving similar provincial results is approximately 75 percent while Ghani's probability is approximately 55 percent, suggesting considerably more change in his election results between the 2014 and 2019 results as compared to Abdullah. Another key finding presented in Table 6 that is consistent with other findings presented is that where there were significant provincial voting changes for Abdullah they had a probability of being smaller in 2019 when compared to 2014 ($r = -80.25$) and these changes were consistently smaller than Ghani's changes over the two elections. In fact, Ghani had a conditional probability of having a 56 percent higher percentage of votes in 2019 when compared to 2014.

Returning to the findings of Table 5, the most significant changes in votes by percentage received in provinces include:

1. Ghani improved his vote count in Farah by 38 percent while Abdullah had a decrease of 20 percent in his votes.
2. Abdullah increased his votes in Faryab by 48 percent, while Ghani's vote was decreased by 45 percent.
3. Ghani improved his performance in Ghor by 31 percent while Abdullah's vote count was reduced by 19 percent.
4. Ghani's vote in Helmand improved by 49 percent while Abdullah's percentage of votes in the province decreased by 4.19 percent.
5. In Jawzjan Province, Abdullah's percentage of votes.

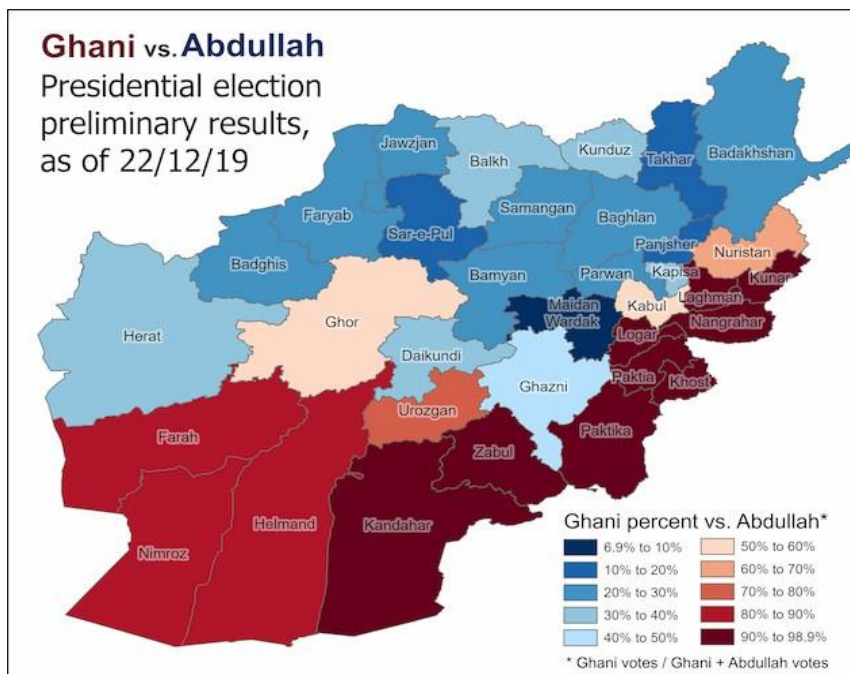
Table 5: Preliminary Results of September 2019 Afghanistan Presidential Elections

Province	Ghani	Abdullah	Hekmatyar	Nabil	Tamana	Jalili	Pedram	Hafiz	Total
TOTAL	923868	720990	70242	33921	18066	15526	12608	11374	1824401
BADAKHSTAN	15234	39246	6368	432	283	436	7216	25	70127
BADGHIS	2374	6209	336	80	140	147	21	11	9664
BAGHLAN	5834	21011	1648	311	163	200	545	20	30268
BALKH	24073	40078	1448	3163	425	1219	612	511	72345
BAMYAN	15021	55795	1859	4120	367	1339	240	2707	82452
DAYKUNDI	29742	62521	303	3122	277	651	130	283	98170
FARAH	3552	539	220	21	62	71	5	1	4541
FARYAB	5207	20476	175	181	99	171	52	3	26596
GHAZNI	19259	26946	685	2941	293	562	202	664	51923
GHOR	21553	19849	1127	3449	208	722	102	796	48540
HELMAND	31072	4878	1139	279	84	302	35	57	38137

HERAT	34199	56117	7504	2968	12718	954	175	372
JAWZIAN	7305	29006	248	225	102	260	48	28
KABUL	166619	141881	14904	9056	1458	5032	1934	4571
KANDAHAR	59467	3667	3207	373	187	586	65	63
KAPISA	4599	7089	1814	56	59	121	57	5
KHOST	75109	787	1625	72	35	70	9	1
KUNAR	54907	5072	3417	498	13	76	15	4
KUNDUZ	3636	8074	290	70	65	114	191	9
LAGHMAN	22769	469	2360	46	19	96	7	2
LOGAR	13344	503	216	10	18	64	11	0
WARDAK	1279	17139	274	248	28	109	32	647
NANGARHAR	188462	4949	9515	221	70	294	30	11
NIMROZ	7186	1482	641	77	71	135	13	21
NOORESTAN	6290	3516	932	31	32	34	0	0

PAKTIKA	29499	828	794	121	18	81	8	5
PAKTYA	35657	1643	727	81	22	94	8	3
PANJSHIR	2079	15343	110	92	79	59	120	5
PARWAN	7783	20448	3324	257	203	357	165	270
SAMANGAN	7123	28392	687	264	90	203	61	116
SARE PUL	6154	26323	219	581	110	351	48	103
TAKHAR	8583	49516	1407	303	220	504	419	39
URUZGAN	3518	936	525	135	43	92	26	20
ZABUL	5380	262	194	37	5	20	6	1
TOTAL	923868	720990	70242	33921	18066	15526	12608	11374

Figure 2:²⁹



Increased by 57 percent while Ghani's percentage of vote in the province decreased by 49 percent.

6. In the important province of Kandahar, Ghani improved his percentage of vote by 73 percent while Abdullah's decreased by 5 percent.
7. In the Laghman Province, Ghani improved his percentage of provincial votes by 38 percent while Abdullah's votes were

²⁹Source: Roger Helms for AAN. Afghanistan Analyst Network - Afghanistan's 2019 Elections (29): A statistical overview of the preliminary results, *ibid.*

decreased by 8 percent.

8. Ghani increased his Logar provincial vote percentage by 31 percent while Abdullah's percentage provincial vote decreased by 15 percent.
9. Abdullah increased his percentage of votes in the Wardak Province by 50 percent while Ghani lost 8 percent of his vote in 2019 when compared to 2104.
10. Finally, Ghani increased his percentage of votes in the provinces of Nangahar, Nimroz, Noorestan, Paktya, Uruzgan and Zabul by 33, 40, 43, 31, 39 and 52 percent respectively while Abdullah decreased his percentage of votes in these same provinces by 16, 5, 5, 1, 6 and 14 percent respectively.

These election results are very suspicious and need further investigation. Much of the reasons for suspicion is the fact that Afghanistan's ethno-linguistic groups have traditional and irrefutably voted in blocks and these groups have not geographically moved over 2104 to 2019, time period, hence you would not expect such drastic changes.

Table 6: A Comparison 2104 and 2019 Voting Patterns: The Differential in Votes (%) from Ghani and Abdullah by Province³⁰

Province	2019 IEC Voting to 2014 Preliminary Voting Differentials	
	Ghani	Abdullah
BADAKHSHAN	7.34%	-8.68%
BADGHIS	14.81%	-2.94%
BAGHLAN	-1.14%	9.46%
BALKH	5.44%	-5.14%
BAMYAN	7.24%	0.13%
DAIKUNDI	19.20%	-11.01%
FARAH	38.61%	-19.58%
FARYAB	-45.41%	47.87%
GHAZNI	18.15%	-1.95%
GHOR	31.33%	18.55%
HERAT	18.40%	-12.57%
JAWZJAN	-48.56%	57.35%
KABUL	16.20%	-8.85%
KANDAHAR	73.32%	-5.07%
KAPISA	28.47%	-28.47%
KHOST	22.77%	-2.55%
KUNAR	21.23%	-4.36%
KUNDUZ	-8.86%	17.10%
LAGHMAN	38.33%	-8.53%
LUGAR	31.00%	-15.00%

³⁰ Data from Table 2 and Table 5 from Thomas H. Johnson, “The Myth of Afghan Electoral Democracy: The Irregularities of the 2014 Presidential Election,” op. cit.

WARDAK	-8.54%	50.10%
NANGARHAR	32.67%	-16.50%
NIMRUZ	40.52%	-5.27%
NOORISTAN	43.30%	-5.25%
PAKTIKA	28.95%	-7.83%
PAKTIA	30.73%	-1.08%
PANJSHIR	10.92%	-3.78%
PARWAN	17.84%	-10.08%
SAMANGAN	-7.25%	15.23%
SAR-E PUL	-20.22%	26.97%
TAKHAR	-24.00%	30.23%
URUZGAN	38.58%	-5.87%
ZABUL	52.11%	-14.36%

Table 7:

Correlation Coefficients (Pearson r) of 2014 to 2019 Presidential Election Preliminary Data³¹			
		2019 Results	
		Ghani	Abdullah
2014 Results	Ghani	55.61***	-46.45**
	Abdullah	-80.25***	74.69***

³¹ Correlation significant levels of $p < 0.05$ is indicated by *; $p < 0.01$ is indicated by **; $p < 0.001$ is indicated by ***. These symbols will be used in all tables presenting correlation results.

Election Complaints Commission.

Candidates and others have formally presented complaints that challenged over 300,000 votes. And the data and discussion presented above that only focus on the impact of closed polling places would seem to involve well over 12,000 votes and thus force a runoff election especially considering, as suggested above, that the polling centers closed before the election alone could have produced 172,400 votes. Throwing out new invalidated votes would seem to additionally change enough votes to force a runoff election. According to the AAN focusing polling centers and deployed biometric devices to verify voting logs posited that:

In addition to the irregular polling stations that the IEC needed to decide on, there were two other categories of irregular votes. First, there were the 137,630 votes which were the result of a discrepancy between the processed voters and the biometric data. They come from 4,563 polling stations spread across 34 provinces of the country). Many candidates, including Chief Executive Abdullah's campaign, called this category of votes suspicious and said it had to be excluded from the count. However, the IEC, in its decision 108, decided that the difference between the processed voters (i.e. 218,155 processed voters) and those that were backed up by Biometric Voter Verification (BVV) data (i.e., 355,785 BVV data) was "due to

technical problems which had been created by the Dermalog Company” and that there were “no specific problems” that warranted their exclusion from the count. The 137,630 votes were thus included in the count.³²

On 23 December 2019, Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, another presidential candidate, accused the IEC of stealing his votes and claimed that the devices of 2,400 polling centers were stolen with ballot boxes being sent back empty.**33**

Others also claimed massive voter fraud. For example, Humayoun, former Deputy House Speaker of the Wolesi Jirga claimed considerable voter fraud in Khost Province by stating, “Ballot boxes were stuffed during the night time in favor of President Ashraf Ghani in remote districts. They transferred the ballot boxes to district administrative compounds and used 10 finger prints to manipulate the biometrics system.” Humayoun also suggested that less than 35,000 people cast votes in Khost, while the IEC claimed that 77,866 votes were cast. Another former member of the Wolesi Jirga claimed that in Kandahar and Zabul Provinces, “Ballot boxes were stuffed in the houses of powerful individuals in Arghandab, Panjwai and Spin Boldak

³² Afghanistan Analyst Network - Afghanistan’s 2019 Elections (29): A statistical overview of the preliminary results (2) <https://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/afghanistans-2019-elections-29-a-statistical-overview-of-the-preliminary-results/>.

³³ STAP, “Afghanistan: Fractious Vote – Analysis,” Eurasian Review, op. cit.

districts, in collusion with the election workers and in coordination with the governor and district administrative chiefs.”³⁴

Tables 8 and 9 present data on invalidated votes of the 2019 Presidential Election. Specifically, Table 8 presents data concerning invalidated votes by province and their percentage of total provincial votes cast. Table 9 presents similar data as they relate to different regions of Afghanistan.

³⁴ STAP, “Afghanistan: Fractious Vote – Analysis,” Eurasian Review, op. cit.

Table 8: Initial IEC Invalidated votes by Province³⁵

2019 IEC Data - Preliminary Results		IEC Invalidated Data			
Province	Total	Number of Audit and Recount Polling Stations	Invalidated Votes	Number of Polling Stations Invalidated or Closed	Percentage of Total Votes Invalidated
BADAKHSTAN	70,127	286	694	138	0.99%
BADGHIS	9,664	5	8	2	0.08%
BAGHLAN	30,268	712	1621	583	5.35%
BALKH	72,345	35	272	504	0.38%
BAMYAN	82,452	17	335	6	0.41%

³⁵ Based partly on Table 4 of Ali Yawar Adili, “Afghanistan’s 2019 Elections (29): A statistical overview of the preliminary Afghanistan Analysts Network, 8 February 2020, <https://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/afghanistans-2019-elections-29-a-statistical-overview-of-the-preliminary-results/> . According to the AAN: “ AAN went through the list of invalidated and closed polling stations, province by province, and found 102,021 votes that had been invalidated by the IEC, according to these provincial lists. Table 4 shows the provincial breakdown of these invalidated votes, as well as the original recount and audit data.”

DAYKUNDI	98,170	58	967	8	0.98%
FARAH	4,541	89	2568	67	56.55%
FARYAB	26,596	234	0	305	0.00%
GHAZNI	51,923	346	3158	175	6.08%
GHOR	48,540	246	1159	344	2.39%
HELMAND	38,137	590	9281	85	24.36%
HERAT	116,210	177	2102	227	1.81%
JAWZIAN	37,710	13	0	26	0.00%
KABUL	349,082	1132	5230	196	1.50%
KANDAHAR	68,373	741	21149	149	30.92%
KAPISA	14,114	189	508	68	3.60%
KHOST	77,866	327	2379	75	3.05%
KUNARH	64,205	125	125	5	0.19%

KUNDUZ	12,676	51	222	213	1.75%
LAGHMAN	25,930	60	6	76	0.02%
LOGAR	14,196	152	487	59	3.43%
WARDAK	19,901	193	759	289	3.81%
NANGARHAR	204,356	774	246	95	0.12%
NIMROZ	9,801	53	109	26	1.11%
NOORESTAN	10,869	106	211	125	1.94%
PAKTIKA	31,512	388	2149	174	6.82%
PAKTYA	38,386	715	44116	507	114.93%
PANJSHIR	18,393	9	322	6	1.75%
PARWAN	33,211	106	349	25	1.05%
SAMANGAN	37,393	28	362	97	0.92%
SARE PUL	34,202	43	0	63	0.00%

TAKHAR	61,835	77	0	246	0.00%
URUZGAN	5,434	24	180	18	3.31%
ZABUL	5,983	154	947	48	15.83%

Table 9: Initial Invalidated votes by Region

Invalid Votes			
Region	Total Number of Preliminary Votes	Total Number of Invalidated Votes	Percentage Total Votes that are Invalid
Northeastern	174,906	2537	1.45%
Northwestern	208,246	634	0.30%
Central	448,897	7655	1.70%
Eastern	305,360	588	0.19%
Southeastern	199,687	51802	25.94%
Southwestern	225,898	32633	14.44%

It is literally amazing to note that in Paktya where Ghani won with over 93 percent of the vote, the invalid votes represented 114.9 percent of the vote; obviously significantly larger than the total number of votes castes per IEC statistics. This fact alone points to the tremendous problems facing Afghanistan elections. These types of dynamics just do not happen in free, fair and transparent, democratic elections. And there were three additional provinces where the invalid ballots represented over 25 percent of the total provincial votes – Farah (56.5%) where Ghani got over 78 percent of the vote; Kandahar (30.9%) where Ghani received 87 percent of the vote, and Helmand (24.3%) where Ghani received over 81 percent of the vote.

Table 9 which breaks down the invalid vote by regions and clearly suggests that extremely few invalid votes were realized in NE, NW and Central Afghanistan – 1.5 percent, .03 percent, and 1.7 percent respectively – all Abdullah regional strongholds of support. Compare these results to Ghani strongholds of Southwest and Southeast where the invalid votes were 29.9 percent and 14.4 percent respectively.

Other serious problems identified by the Afghan Analysts Network, whom have done more analytical work assessing the election than any other organization or person, has posited the following problems:

- “The votes from 2,299 polling stations were invalidated in full by the electoral commissions, without explaining why and how many votes they represented. In the end, 24,281 polling stations are included in the primary results of the presidential election.”
- “According to a source from the ECC, the IEC and ECC commissioners had agreed in a meeting on 10 December 2019 that:
 - The IEC should invalidate the 2,423 suspicious boxes
 - The ECC should invalidate the 102,012 votes cast outside the polling hours
 - And that the remaining 137,630 votes should be audited again.”
 - “200,000 suspicious votes and a recount of almost 600 polling stations where there were discrepancies or missing biometric data.”
 - “When the IEC announced the preliminary results on 22 December, it provided a total of 1,824,401 votes. Based on these figures, we can deduce that 18,706 votes (1.02 percent) were discarded by the IEC from the figure of 1,843,107 that it had reached after de-duplication of 86,225 out of the 1,929,333 votes (although it becomes 1,843,108). At that

point, 852,783 votes (31.63 percent) had already been removed from the initial turnout figure of 2,695,890.”

- “Before the announcement of the preliminary results, the IEC made a number of decisions about which votes to count and which to discard. These decisions were made public only after the announcement of the results. The most important decisions related to
- “2,423 polling stations [had] either the biometric device or the memory card ...missing.”
- “137,630 votes which were the result of a discrepancy between the processed voters and the biometric data; and
- 102,012 votes that had been cast outside official polling hours.”³⁶

Let me conclude this discussion by suggesting that the extent of possible electoral fraud is well illustrated and simply suggested by the fact that on 28 September 2019 Jalalabad’s Election Commission Chief sent an email at the end of the voting at 1800 hours that the total votes in his area numbered 77,586 but on the IEC’s official website where they presented the

³⁶ Ali Yawar Adili, “Afghanistan’s 2019 Elections (27): The preliminary result, finally, but no end to controversy,” Afghanistan Analysts Network, 22 December 2019, <https://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/afghanistans-2019-elections-27-the-preliminary-result-finally-but-no-end-to-controversy/> and Ali Yawar Adili, “Afghanistan’s 2019 Elections (29): A statistical overview of the preliminary results,” Afghanistan Analysts Network, 8 February 2020, <https://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/afghanistans-2019-elections-29-a-statistical-overview-of-the-preliminary-results/>.

preliminary results, the votes numbered over 200,000 votes with over 190,000 going to Ghani.³⁷

The Role of Ethno-linguistic Groups in the 2019 Presidential Preliminary Election Results

Ethno-linguistic groups voting for members of their particular groups have been demonstrated in every Afghan election held since 2004.³⁸ In order to more explicitly explore the notion that the results of the 2019 initial Afghan Presidential Election continued to reflect long-standing ethnic divisions in Afghanistan, provincial election data for each of the three leading candidates and the aggregated “other candidates” were gathered as well as data for each of the 34 Afghan Provinces relative to their ethnic breakdown or composition. Simple correlation analysis was then performed on these data representing provincial voting results and provincial ethnic composition.³⁹ The correlation results of this

³⁷ From a senior Afghan Government Official’s conversation with the author and the IEC official website: <http://www.iec.org.af/en/>.

³⁸ Thomas H. Johnson and Ronald J. Barnhart, “An Examination of Afghanistan’s 2018 Wolesi Jirga Elections: Chaos, Confusion and Fraud,” op. cit.; Thomas H. Johnson, “The Myth of Afghan Electoral Democracy: The Irregularities of the 2014 Presidential Election,” op. cit.; Thomas H. Johnson, “The Illusion of Afghanistan’s Electoral Representative Democracy: The Cases of Afghan Presidential and National Legislative Elections,” op. cit.

³⁹ Provincial ethno-linguistic data came from: <http://www.aims.org.af/>; Ludwig W. Adamec, ed., *Historical and Political Gazetteer of Afghanistan*, 7 Vols, Vols 3–5 (London: HMSO, 1914; rev. and rep. Graz, Austria: Akademische Druck-u. Verlagsanstalt); Thomas H. Johnson et al., *Afghanistan: The Northern Provinces* (Silver Spring: The Orkand Corporation, 1988), chap. 3; Thomas H. Johnson et al.,

analysis are presented in Table 10.

The results of this table are consistent to that experienced in all other Afghanistan elections. This analysis clearly supports the notion that the results of the Afghan presidential election represent and reflect historical ethnic patterns that have long driven conflict dynamics in the country. Ghani did not receive significant support outside of the Pashtun population, his particular ethno-linguistic group. His claim to represent be a truly national candidate with support across ethnic lines is not borne out by these data. Non-Pashtun ethnic groups tended to vote for Abdullah and the votes received by Hekmatyar and the “other candidates” do not fit any particular pattern other than Hekmatyar surprisingly got a significant percentage of Tajik votes.

Another unexpected result was that Abdullah’s vote among the Tajiks had a significantly smaller correlation when compared to his presidential runs in 2009 and 2014 where he garnered respectively correlations of 80. And .69. One explanation for this relatively low correlation could be based on the fact that other candidates were running in 2019 might have

Afghanistan: The Southern Provinces, (Silver Spring: The Orkand Corporation, 1989), chap. 4.; Thomas H. Johnson, et. al., Afghanistan: The Western Hinterland Provinces (Silver Spring: The Orkand Corporation, 1989), chap. 4; NPS Program for Culture and Conflict Studies (<https://my.nps.edu/web/ccs/afghanistan1>), and; South Asia Program at Hudson Institute (<http://www.southasiaathudson.org/afghanistan-provinces-1/#>).

attracted Tajik votes and that over the past year Abdullah had somewhat of a falling out with his old Afghan Jamiat-e-Islami party that consists primarily of Tajiks. But it could also reflect irregularities in the voting system.

Table 10: Correlation coefficients (Pearson r): 2019 IEC Data by Province and Ethno-linguistic Provincial Votes Received (%)

	Ghani (Pashtun)	Abdullah⁴⁰	Hekmatyar (Pashtun)	Other
Pashtun	79.91***	-77.99***	3.45	-41.56**
Tajik	-54.34***	48.83**	24.74	38.20*
Hazara	-38.84*	39.34*	-36.38*	37.85*
Uzbek	-48.30**	54.75***	-37.58*	-3.97

⁴⁰ While Dr. Abdullah Abdullah is the son of a Pashtun father from the Kandahar area, and a Tajik mother from the north, politically he is most closely identified with the main Tajik political party in the north. During the anti-Soviet jihad, Abdullah was a major player in the main Tajik mujahedin party, Jamiat-e Islami and later became the main spokesman for the Northern Alliance but also a spokesman for Ahmad Shah Massoud.

CONCLUSION

The analyses presented in this paper suggest a high probability that fraud, and in some instances massive fraud, was committed during the 2019 Presidential Election. One must ask if these disturbing findings were merely random events or were the result of more nefarious IEC actions? It is relatively easy to become suspicious when an election date is consistently postponed during an election, as well as the fact, that even with the small number of votes cast it took the IEC three months to announce the preliminary results.

Immediately after the polls originally closed for this election there were widespread complaints from both major candidates and more importantly voters that they could not vote because voter lists were missing or incomplete. Also, it is problematic that there were dysfunctional and missing biometric identification machines at polling centers that were intended to reduce fraud and, moreover, the election workers were not adequately trained on how to use them. Moreover, Afghanistan's Independent Election Commission said it had lost contact with 901 of the country's 5,373 polling centers. Tolo News reported that Habib-Ur-Rahman Nang, head of the IEC secretariat, said the commission was unable to communicate with polling centers in the provinces of Badakhshan, Takhar, Kunduz and Baghlan,

where telecom services were not active. Finally at least 464 polling centers in 17 provinces were closed, including 33 centers that lacked actual election materials.⁴¹

Now it is very possible that some of these problems just reflect the ongoing fragility of Afghan “democracy” and its associated organizations and processes. However, the Afghan Government had considerable time to plan for a smooth execution of this election, especially with its continual delays and postponements. Moreover, this paper’s objective analyses suggest something highly more nefarious might have taken place similar to the 2014 Presidential Election that was fraught with so many irregularities that numerous ‘election watchers’, as well as candidates, called the results illegitimate.

From an outrageously low voter turnout to suspicious polling places being closed before the election, to an incredible number of invalidated ballots that Ghani received to some provincial election results representing 73 percent - 96 percent of the vote being received by Ghani, these types of events and dynamics are just unheard of in any real democratic free and fair election.

⁴¹ “Afghanistan presidential election: All the latest updates: Complaints over irregularities and sporadic violence amid reports of low turnout in Afghanistan’s presidential election.” Al Jazeera, 28 September 2019.

Rather, these types of election results, quite frankly, are similar to those reported by Central Asian Republic repressive dictatorships.

As I have recently suggested, “it is clear that significant changes need to be made in the Afghanistan electoral system and processes. At a minimum, votes should tallied by at the original voting center by objective election officials and results either immediately called in or driven to the IEC in Kabul. It makes absolutely no sense that it took almost 3 months to announce preliminary results of this 2019 presidential election. Second, as many election polling centers as possible should have had objective and official election observers assessing the votes and voters. Finally, the Afghan voter registration and identification process needs significant improvement. Until such changes are made in the Afghan electoral system, Afghanistan’s “democracy” appears to be in name only because free and fair elections are the foundations of any democratic country.”⁴² And this clearly does not seem presently to be the case for Afghanistan.

⁴² Thomas H. Johnson, “Opinion: Serious Questions Concerning the Preliminary Results and Suggested Changes to the Afghan Electoral System.” The Khaama Press, 29 December 2019, <https://www.khaama.com/serious-questions-concerning-the-preliminary-results-and-suggested-changes-to-the-afghan-electoral-system-201909/>.

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