

**T.C.**  
**ISTANBUL AYDIN UNIVERSITY**  
**INSTITUTE OF GRADUATE STUDIES**



**THE EXAMINATION OF WOMEN'S POLITICAL PARTICIPATION IN  
HERAT PROVINCE OF AFGHANISTAN IN THE POST TALIBAN REGIME**

**MASTER'S THESIS**

**Mozhdeh HAFED**

**Department of Political Science and International Relation**

**Political Science and International Relation Program**

**AUGUST, 2021**



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**AUGUST, 2021**



**ONAY FORMU**





## **DECLARATION**

I hereby declare with respect that the study “The Examination of Women’s Political Participation in Herat Province in Post Taliban Regime.”, which I submitted as a Master thesis, is written without any assistance in violation of scientific ethics and traditions in all the processes from the Project phase to the conclusion of the thesis and that the works I have benefited are from those shown in the Bibliography.  
(6/8/2021)

Mozhdeh HAFED





## FOREWORD

First, I would like to express my endless gratitude to God for being who I am right now and helping me to find patience, strength within myself to complete this thesis.

I would also like to thank my family not only for encouraging me to go abroad for a master's degree but also for teaching me to chase my dreams and never give up.

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Finally, I would like to acknowledge the important contribution of Istanbul Aydin University to my life, not only from an academic perspective but helping to meet great people that inspire, challenge, support and motivate me.

August, 2021

Mozhdeh HAFED



# **THE EXAMINATION OF WOMEN'S POLITICAL PARTICIPATION IN HERAT PROVINCE OF AFGHANISTAN IN THE POST TALIBAN REGIME**

## **ABSTRACT**

One of the basic conditions of democratic and development systems are the equal participation of all members of society in various social, economic and political spheres. Whereas Afghanistan is a country that has embraced democracy since the fall of the Taliban regime and has ensured the participation of all citizens, especially Afghan women, who have been the main victims of decades of war in Afghanistan, Therefore, with the establishment of this system and providing the necessary grounds for increasing women's political and social activities, it has led to the presence of more women in the political and social arenas. Considering that the issue of women's political participation is one of the basic components of a democratic system and has been neglected by researchers, so this study shows the level of women's political participation in the parliament, provincial council, political parties, and other governmental organs after the Taliban regime. This research has done by doing a literacy survey and field research that has been conducted in Herat province. Although doing this research was hard due to lack of achieving to all representatives of parliament and provincial council, and spreading of covid-19. The results show that the level of women's participation in the political arena has decreased due to many problems and challenges such as security, social, economic and cultural problems. The government should pay more attention to women's participation to develop the country and maintain a democratic system, therefore it needs to take more security measures for women's participation and increase its share in the parliament and the provincial council. And take more drastic measures to remove cultural and social barriers. Also, the integration of women and their struggle against the patriarchal culture is a necessity for increasing their participation.

International assistance and support for women's rights can also increase women's political participation.

**Keywords:** Participation, Political Participation, Women, Taliban, political Parties, parliament, provincial council.



# **AFGHANİSTAN'IN HERAT İLİNDE TALİBAN SONRASI REJİMDE KADINLARIN SİYASETE KATILIMININ İNCELEMNESİ**

## **ÖZET**

Demokratik ve gelişmiş sistemlerinin temel koşullarından biri, çeşitli sosyal, ekonomik ve politik alanlara toplumun tüm üyelerinin eşit katılımı sağlamasıdır. Afganistan, Taliban rejiminin yıkılmasından bu yana demokrasiyi benimsemiş ve Afganistan'da yıllardır süren savaşın ana kurbanı olan Afgan kadınları başta olmak üzere tüm vatandaşların katılımını sağlamış, bu nedenle, demokrasinin kurulması ve kadınların siyasal ve toplumsal etkinliklerini artırmaları için gerekli zemini sağlamasıyla, siyasal ve toplumsal alanda daha fazla kadının yer almasına yol açmıştır. Kadınların siyasal katılımı konusunun demokratik bir sistemin temel unsurlardan biri olduğu ve araştırmacılar tarafından ihmal edildiği göz önüne alındığında, bu çalışma, Taliban rejiminden sonra kadınların parlamento, il genel meclisi, siyasi partiler ve diğer devlet organlarındaki siyasal katılım düzeyini göstermektedir. Bu araştırma, Herat ilinde yapılmış bir okuryazarlık anketi ve alan araştırması yapılarak yapılmıştır. Bu araştırmayı yapmak, her ne kadar genel meclis ve il meclisinin tüm temsilcilerine ulaşamaması ve covid-19'un yayılması nedeniyle zor olsa da. Sonuçlar, güvenlik, sosyal, ekonomik ve kültürel sorunlar gibi birçok sorun ve zorluk nedeniyle kadınların siyasi arenaya katılım düzeyinin düştüğünü göstermektedir. Hükümet, ülkenin kalkınması ve demokratik bir sistemin istikrarı için kadınların katılımına daha fazla önem vermeli, bu nedenle kadınların katılımı için daha fazla güvenlik önlemi almalı ve büyük meclis ve il genel meclisindeki payını/sayısını artırmalıdır. Kültürel ve sosyal engelleri kaldırmak için daha etkili/temel önlemler almalı. Kadınların entegrasyonu ve ataerkil kültüre karşı mücadeleleri (siyasi arenaya onların) katılımlarının artması için zorunludur/ bir gerekliliktir. Kadın haklarına yönelik uluslararası muavenet ve destek de kadınların siyasete katılımını artırabilir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Katılım, Siyasi Katılım, Kadınlar, Taliban, siyasi partiler, parlamento, il meclisi



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## **I. INTRODUCTION**

One of the most important issues of any society is its economic, political, social, and cultural growth and development, which due to its special importance and prestige, is usually at the top of the agenda of governments. According to social thinkers, the development of any society involves a series of principles, criteria, and factors, and in the meantime, the active presence of people in different scenes of society and their so-called political and social participation is a very important and vital factor in development.

The concept of participation has become one of the keywords in the developed culture today. Political participation is one of the dimensions of development in general. Participation in political affairs means conscious participation in government affairs and interference in the administration of society. Political participation is the right of all people, both men, and women. Among these, the participation of women is very important and valuable because reduces injustice, inequalities, and creates a favorable environment for sustainable development. Women make up 50 percent of the population, and because men cannot adequately protect women's interests, women's participation in all political activities is a necessity, if women are in politics as a minority, the democracy is incomplete. (Ghasemiand Maali, 2014, p.132)

Global statistics and data show that at the beginning of 2020, the global average presence of women in the legislatures was 24.9%. (UN Women and inter-parliamentarian Union, 2020) Afghanistan with 27% of seats reserved for women in parliament ranks in the world's top 20 countries for the number of women in parliament. (Wordsworth, 2007, p.1) Also, women in Afghanistan have 20% quotas in the provincial council. (Azad and Haidari, 2015)

Despite many efforts, women's political participation around the world has not been as it should have been. Despite the 27% share of women in Afghanistan's parliament, seems these quotas are symbolic, and there are still challenges and barriers to women's participation in politics, which has destabilized democracy in

Afghanistan. Among the 34 provinces of Afghanistan, Herat province, which has made significant progress in various areas compared to other provinces, we see many women in this city have participated in various areas especially politics, such as participation in provincial councils, parliament, and other government agencies. By doing this research we can see how women's political participation has effects on politics and the public arena, how they work, and what their results are. And which challenges and obstacles have faced. With the clarification of these issues, it is hoped that an important step will be taken to increase women's political participation in Afghanistan.

#### **A. Research Questions**

- What has been the level of women's participation in political parties in Herat Province in the post-Taliban regime?
- What has been the level of women's participation in government in Herat province, in the post-Taliban regime?
- What effects have had women's participation in governmental institutions, such as the parliament and the provincial council, on public sphere in Herat province?
- What challenges and obstacles have women faced to participate in the political arena?

#### **B. Objectives**

Women, as the half of society, their participation in various arena such as political, economic, economic, etc., have an important role in determining the current situation of a country. Afghanistan is one of the countries that have not passed along time from democratizing its system and creating laws for equal rights for men and women that guarantee women's participation. Therefore, Afghan women who have been victims of the patriarchal and traditional system of the country for many years, and whose mouths were always closed by force, under the protection of the law have made great efforts to participate, especially in political affairs, to support the suffering women of Afghanistan. The questions are those, what extent this participation has been? And what obstacles stand in their way? And what are the



effects in the areas of policy-making, socialization, etc.?

One of the objectives of this study is to find the level of women's political participation and examining their performance. Another one is to find out how they participate, and what their work's vacuum is. Also, another goal of this research is to provide solutions to increase women's political participation and take a step in the field of development and progress of a society by identifying barriers and challenges on the way of women's political participation.

### **C. Research Significance**

One of the most important preconditions of achieving development is the use of all human resources, especially women. (Nazari, 2014) Political participation without the presence of women in the political process is meaningless. The presence of women is one of the characteristics of democracy and ways of progress and development of a society. (Azad & Haidari.2015) The growth and development of a society are not possible without the growth and participation of women. Governments need the participation of the people to survive. (Maghsudi and Ghallehdar, 2011)

Kassa and Shimelis (2015) quotes Nelson Mandela as saying: "Freedom cannot be achieved until women in society are freed from oppression and targeted in development programs". They also say that the heart of democracy is the equal participation of all people in management and public affairs. Ibrahim (2014) said that Women's political participation is an important factor for the democratization and well-being of society. The stability of a government is weak if women are deprived of any kind of participation in society. Billaud and Julie (2015) argue that women's political participation legitimizes government.

Afghanistan is one of the countries where the system of government is democratic, and according to Literature Review, women's political participation is important in stabilizing the government and strengthening democracy. In this research, the level of women's political participation in parliament, provincial council, and parties in the post-Taliban regime in Herat city is analyzed, and the challenges are identified. Herat is the second-most populous province after Kabul and one of Afghanistan's relatively safest provinces in terms of security. Therefore,

any research in this province is easier and less difficult for researchers. Herat as the place of the researcher's residence is one of the key provinces of Afghanistan and has a significant share in political and economic development, so the researcher decided to evaluate the level of political participation of women in this province. The researcher hopes to help increase women's participation and the development of the country and strengthen democracy by providing solutions to increase women's political participation.

#### **D. Literature Review**

Afghanistan is one of those countries where women have been recognized as the second sex in society historically, and the roles of women in society have been hidden by men. But after the Taliban regime and changing Afghanistan's system to democracy and giving some quotas to women in government and the recognition of their fundamental rights in the constitution changed the situation of women completely. Today, the participation of women in various areas political, economic, social, and other fields has become significant due to their drives and efforts.

In this literature review, I examine the level of women's political participation in Afghanistan, their performance and making policy, and what challenges and obstacles they face in the post-Taliban regime by reviewing some books and articles.

Jafari (2016), analyzed the women's political participation in Afghanistan and identified challenges and obstacles, and provided solutions to increase women's political participation in Afghanistan. According to Jafari (2016) Afghanistan, a country emerging from the post-Taliban war in 2001 under the influence of the Gender Equality Movement and international treaties to encourage women's political participation, allocated 25 percent of the seats in parliament and the provincial council to women. Although the Afghan Women's quota Law is a good example for the countries of the region and is important, the situation of women is still not so good and improved. In addition to the problems of insecurity, women's financial dependence on men and lack of financial independence, lack of professional capacity of women in political spheres, traditions, and socio-cultural constraints, she pointed to more fundamental problems such as the expansion of religious schools promoting Islamic extremism, political parties, lack of women In the unions and the lack of

large women's coalitions, the lack of job security, social networks and lack of trust in women's political abilities.

Razaei (2016) discussed Afghanistan's women and how their participation is. She mentions that women have a key role in development, and Afghanistan is moving towards development with gender equality and increased participation of women. By identifying the barriers to women's participation and examining the government's performance in planning and policy-making related to women's participation, she offers solutions to institutionalize and increase women's participation.

Emadi (2008) discusses the history of women's roles in parliament. "The performance of 27% of women parliamentarian was better than men, and they worked hard to create gender equality and fought against violence". (Emadi, 2016, p.15) She also said that unfortunately due to the division of women by politics that some women associated with parties and chase the goals of parties, some women were independent and follows their thought, and also they were the minimum of parliament, they had no role in the final decision-making process.

According to the statement of the women and children's legal research foundation (2017), Women's political participation is not effective and satisfactory despite the guarantee of the country's constitution. They have little role in big decisions, they have been removed from governmental positions such as the ministry.

(Mohammadi-Asl, 2004) analyzed the obstacles of women's political participation especially in traditional societies. He adds that the natural inequality of power between men and women is one of the obstacles and has led to the penetration of patriarchy. Also, he analyzes some verses of the Holy Quran that legitimizes women's political participation.

Azad, M.A. (2015) reported that After the Taliban regime, women have made significant progress in gaining representation position in government, but their 100% presence faces various challenges. The most important factors of hindering women's political participation enumerated: security threats and the political situation in the country, customs, and traditions in society, lack of awareness of families about political processes, women's illiteracy, disbelief in women's ability, homelessness, women's economic dependence, Etc. (Azad, M.A, 2015, p. 27)

Maghsudi, M. and Ghallehdar, S. (2011) Examines the history of women's political participation in Afghanistan and the types of participation and recounts the most important psychological, socio-cultural, economic, and political challenges that stand in the way of women. He said that 27% of women in parliament are symbolic and cannot influence in the decision-making process, and this figure is below 30%, the minimum universally accepted level for women's political participation, women should have a 50% quotas in parliament.

Wordsworth, A. (2007) Examines the performance of women whose elected in parliament and states that women's political participation is weak because of the connection between them, women did not come to parliament as a single bloc and were divided politically, racially, and ethnically, also, female representatives due to being a member of some political parties have been caused to prefer goals of the party to their own goals.

Coburn, N. & Wafaey, H. (2019) examined the 2018 parliamentary elections and the level of women's participation. They said women's political participation in political affairs and leadership positions such as ministries and embassies has increased, but there are still challenges and reactions, they said the main challenges are being violence against women that the perpetrators of this violence are both the common people and the Taliban.

Ibrahim (2014) in his article analyzed the women's political participation during two periods of election and the challenges. "One of the contextual issues in women's political participation related to the nature of politics in general and the liberal democracy in particular. Democracy has historically served men better than women. As a political system from ancient Greece to the modern time of the 21st century, it has built on the public-private dichotomy and excluded women from citizenship. Women have been kept outside the public domain of politics as most of the political thinkers and philosophers such as Plato, Aristotle, Rousseau, John Lock, and Hegel considered women fit only for domestic roles in the sphere and maintained that there was no place for women in politics because of their suitability in caring roles as mother and wives. The public-private divide remains the foundation of the various forms of world democracies". (Ibrahim, M. 2014, p.2-3)

Arabnazhad and Akochkian (2010) claimed that the issue of women's political participation is necessary to any government stability by reviewing Quranic

verses and hadiths (Prophet Mohammad's quotations).

Bari (2005) explained that 15% participate in women's legislation in the global arena, by examining the factors of women's deprivation in politics; he expresses the most important challenges and offers important strategies for increasing women's political participation. In this study, ideological factors (patriarchal system), socio-cultural factors such as the dual role of women (mother and woman in society), economic factors (large difference in wealth accumulation between men and women) were identified as the most important obstacles to women's political participation.

Worden and Sudhakar (2012) examined the 2010 election and found out that Afghan women made small but significant gains in participation in Afghanistan's September 2010 parliamentary elections. But their status in Afghanistan's electoral system is precarious. They mentioned cultural, educational, security issues as challenges. Also, the most important challenge was fraud in elections that limited women's political participation.

Larson (2015) spoke about political parties of Afghanistan and the extent of women's participation in parties, He claimed that in 2014, 36 women members of the provincial council were members of parties, but a small number of women still led the party.

Lough (2012) said that the constitution of Afghanistan has increased women's political participation, but there are still cultural challenges, religious insecurity, etc. for women. With the existence of the NAPWA (Women's Action Plan) and the Afghanistan National Development Strategy, women have been empowered, and a survey of women's participation in the 2005 and 2009 elections shows that women's political participation has increased.

In conclusion, by examining this literature Review, the level of women's political participation in the post-Taliban era in Afghanistan has increased, but despite the 27% quotas in the legislature, due to cultural, socio-economic, religious, etc. challenges, their voices have not been heard and they do not play an important role in decision-making. By doing this research, I will examine how this level of women's political participation fluctuates, special in Herat province. And it is assumed that during 20 democratic years, the political participation of women has

decreased again. Therefore, this study provides more specific statistics on women's participation in politics and helps to increase women's participation by further identifying the problems facing women's participation and providing solutions.

## **E. Key concepts**

Participation, Political Participation, Women, Taliban, Political Parties, parliament, provincial council.

### **1. Participation**

Participation means engaging or involved. Today, this is one of the requirements of society for development and democracy. It can be said that participation is an active, conscious, free, and reasoned commitment to give meaning to social action and movement that is realized by involving individuals in group activities. (Nazari and others, 2014)

### **2. Political Participation**

Political participation refers to all the voluntary behaviors of the citizens of a society which through it, directly or indirectly influence the public policies of the society. (Ghasemi and Maali, 2014)

### **3. Taliban**

The Taliban are terrorist militant groups that ruled Afghanistan from 1996 to 2001 under the name of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan and are made up of *Pashtuns* who's living in northwestern Pakistan on both sides of the *Durand Line*. Since the collapse of their regime, they have been at war with the Afghanistan government, the US, and NATO forces.

### **4. Women**

A woman is an adult female human being.

### **5. Political Parties**

Political party means a group of people with common goals, for the realization of which they create special programs, plans, and organizations and fight for participation in political power and administration of society according to their

ideas and goals. (Danesh, 2014)

## **6. Parliament**

Parliament or National Assembly, as the highest manifestation of the will of the people and national sovereignty, It is a force that "lays down rules and regulations to give social relations and to sub-mold and demarcate them, and to formulate the rights and duties of individuals and groups concisely and clearly." (Rahimi, 2004)

## **7. Provincial council**

The Provincial Council acts as an electoral body to establish a structure that ensures the participation of the people and civil society institutions with government at the provincial level and advises the provincial offices on relevant matters. (Law of provincial councils of Afghanistan, article 2)

## **F. Duration and Location**

The researcher found out the roots of the topic issue by getting reference from the literature review, also the researcher interviewed some women of Herat province that include those women that are the representative in parliament, provincial council, and political parties, also some civil right activists. The researcher conducted some interviews face to face in representatives' offices such as the provincial council, the offices of parties, and some online. The interviews were conducted in 5 months, due to the hard accessibility of members of parliament and the lockdown situation of covid-19.

## **G. Methodology**

This study, which examines the women's political participation in Herat province in the post-Taliban's era, examine the level of women's political participation in parliament, provincial council, and political parties and their performance and the challenges that they faced, by analyzing and evaluating the data that collected in the qualitative method that include interviews and textual analyses. The data collection instruments are literary survey and field research. The literature survey is relevant books and articles on the topic. And field research includes

interviews with some female political activists and actors in Herat Province

40 women from Herat province will be interviewed (10 women political activists in political parties, 20 civil political activists, 5 members of Herat provincial council, and 5 members of parliament from Herat). The researcher conducted some interviews face to face in representatives' offices such as the provincial council, the offices of parties, and some online. The most difficult part of the interviews was the interviews with members of parliament because it was impossible to communicate with them due to security issues, but fortunately, after much effort and the use of communication links, the interviews were conducted online. In Afghanistan, there are currently 72 licensed parties from the Ministry of Justice, which currently 33 of them are active in Herat. Interviews were conducted with members of the Green Party, Hizb-ut-Tahrir party, the White Road Party, the National Movement Party, the Freedom Party, the Islamic Party of Afghanistan, and the New Afghanistan Party (Hezeb-e Afghanistan Naween). Finally, the interviews were conducted in 5 months, due to the hard accessibility of members of parliament and the lockdown situation of covid-19. Also, the information will be analyzed by using the thematic analysis method.

## **H. Thesis Structure**

This research study will be organized into three chapters. The first chapter will include the introduction and general information about women's political participation. In The second chapter researcher will have a literature review of women's political participation in the post-Taliban regime in Afghanistan. The third chapter will be allocated to the main finding of the research, also include the speeches of women that are representative of Herat city in parliament, political parties, and provincial council, also shows that which challenges and obstacles they have. This part includes the data of the interview and some reports. Also, one part of this chapter is allocated to the conclusion and some solutions to increase women's political participation, and some recommendations.



## **II. GENERALITIES (DEMOCRACY, GOOD GOVERNANCE AND WOMEN'S POLITICAL PARTICIPATION)**

Political participation is one of the principles of a democratic system and many thinkers consider it as the main sign of political development. Political participation has a hierarchy, the lowest of which is to vote for others in the election, and the highest of which is to take the vote of others to hold public office. It can be said that democracy is meaningless without the participation of the people in the elections of statesmen and rulers, and by eliminating the participation of the people, democracy becomes a dictatorship. In this chapter, we describe basic concepts such as democracy, governance, participation, and political participation. Concepts that are used throughout the research and we intend to examine the role of women in relation to them.

### **A. Definition of Democracy**

Democracy is a word derived from the Greek words *demos* meaning people and *krato* meaning power or government. Demos in Athenian or Greek usage means the sum of the villagers and therefore every rural unit in Athens was called *Demoi* and its inhabitants were called *Demotai*. In the fifth century BC, there was a change in the meaning of Demos, and the term was applied to the community of all the Athenians who gathered and explored to carry out government work. In this sense, Demos included both villagers and townspeople. . In 509 BC, as a result of the reforms of Cleisthenes, the Athenian legislator, the administration of Athenian society fell into the hands of the peasants, and since then the Athenian government has been called Demokratia, the peasant government. This meaning also expanded slightly until democracy became a common name for governments to be handed over to the people. (Alem, 2007: 213)

Direct political democracy is the earliest form of democracy that first appeared in Greek city-states, especially in Athens (fifth century). In this form of democracy, the general public (excluding women and slaves) participated directly in

the making of laws. For executive affairs, people took turns taking positions and electing judges by lot. Plato rejected this kind of government, and Aristotle accepted it as less evil. (Ashori, 1979: 89)

One of Plato's objections to direct democracy was that he made the fate of society a plaything for the masses, and he believed that the masses are incapable of making sound judgments in political matters because they have no experience in important areas of social life, such as foreign policy or economics. And they often judge by the motives of their emotions and prejudices, and although they have pure intentions in this judgment, they do not think correctly. Aristotle says that democracy, which means the rule of the majority, is collectively better than the rule of the minority group, because the masses, although they each have no virtue, find virtue as a whole when they come together. Aristotle himself admits that some people disagree with this view and to reject it, they realize the need for expertise in the work of government. (Alem, 1997: 99-133)

Aristotle mentions five main types for democracy, and he means more than counting the types that not all of them can be governed equally. Aristotle considers only the first type to be the true example of democracy, and this is the democracy that is accepted in the world today. The first type of democracy is that it is closer to the principle of equality than any other type, and does not differentiate between the poor and the rich, and does not rule one over the other, and that is right; Because if, as some claim, freedom and equality can only be found in democracy, this claim is true when all citizens of democracy have full participation in government, and especially the rich do not oppress the poor. In the second type of democracy, having a certain amount of wealth is a condition for holding government positions, although this amount is small and whoever has it is a partner in government, but if he loses his wealth, he will be deprived of his position. In the third type, all citizens whose descent cannot be blamed, for example, their parents are not slaves or foreigners, can come to power, but the final ruling belongs to the law. In the fourth type, everyone who is a citizen has the right to hold office, but the law governs everything. In the fifth type, as in the fourth type, every citizen has the right to hold office, but instead of the law, the common people rule, and the common people themselves are caught in the charm of the deceitful people. And this kind of democracy, because it violates the law and the leaders dictate in the name of the people, is not really different from

the oppressive government. (Enayet, 1998: 41-42)

According to Abraham Lincoln, democracy means the rule of the people, by the people and for the people. (Akbari, 2001: 133). Lenin believed that democracy was in the service of production and that it determined the productive relations of society. (Aghili, 2008:138-153) Montesquieu says in the book *Spirit of Laws* about Democracy and its Concept: When a nation takes over in a republic, this is the way democracy is governed. In a democracy, the nation is sovereign in one sense and obedient in another. The nation cannot be a ruler except by its own vote, which is its will. So the will of the nation is the nation itself. (Nugent, 1892)

With the growth of the population and the geographical extent of the countries, the definition of Lincoln and Montesquieu seems to be a bit rudimentary and largely unworkable. This conception of democracy is conceivable in ancient Greece with a very limited population and small geography, but does not seem practical in the countries of tens of millions and hundreds of millions today. In order to reach a common and more comprehensive definition of democracy, it seems better to pay more attention to the criteria and components of democratic governments. These criteria are: (Jafari, 2016: 26-27)

- Limited power of rulers
- Periodical President
- Free elections
- Social freedoms
- Separation of powers and ensuring the independence of the judiciary
- The rule of law.

By proposing representative democracy, Kant separates the real boundaries of democracy from tyranny. He says that in a democratic government, people participate in the legislative process as citizens through the election of their representatives. Representative democracy is based on the separation of legislative, executive and judicial powers. Therefore, the legislature makes the law and does not involve itself in the implementation of the law. For that the Assembly of Elected Representatives can achieve real democracy in the light of dialogue and wise debate on the issues of the people. Kant calls representative democracy the "republican

system". In the republican system, the people's representatives must objectify the concept of representation in the legislative work and not interfere in the duties of the executive and judicial forces. (Jafari, 2016: 27)

Contemporary scholars have different definitions of democracy, but in a comprehensive definition, we can say that democracy is a government that belongs to the type of collective decision-making. In this government, representatives are elected by the majority of the people to govern them. The elected representatives of the people, after long deliberation and consideration, ratify laws and inform them to the people, by this method they can implement freedom and equality in society. (Alizada, 2004) Democracy, in its sense, expresses the idea that Decisions that affect society as a whole must be made with the consent of all members of that community. Also, all members should have an equal right to participate in decision-making.

From the definitions of democracy, it is clear that the participation of individuals is the main component of democracy, and democracy does not make sense without participation. In the next title, the relationship between political participation and democracy will be fully evaluated.

## **1. Democracy in Afghanistan**

Democracy in Afghanistan is nascent, and Afghanistan still has a long way to go to democratize. Before the fall of the Taliban regime, Afghanistan had never experienced a fully elected (democratic) government. However, in the time of Zahir Shah, this country had experienced parliamentary elections. However, the experience of a fully elected government (based on popular vote) occurred in 2001 for the first time in Afghanistan. The fall of the Taliban in 2001 and the subsequent Bonn Summit on December 5, 2001 to rebuild Afghanistan's political framework paved the way for the emergence of democracy in the country. Afghanistan embarked on a journey of democracy and experienced the first round of elections in 2004-2005. The electoral system in Afghanistan is a fledgling system, and the constitution serves as a reference for answering related questions.

According to the Afghan constitution, the presidential term of the country is 5 years and the president can elect and nominate two deputies during the election campaign. One of these deputies will replace the president in the event of his death. In addition, the constitution states that the Afghan parliament has 249 seats in the

House of Representatives and 102 seats in the House of elder. In the House of Representatives, 25% of the elected members (2 representatives per member in each province) must be women. Women with the highest number of votes in each province hold the parliamentary seat in the Afghan capital, Kabul. Also, in the upper house, 34 seats will be allocated to 34 representatives of the Provincial Council from each province. The district councils also elected and nominated 34 members, and the president himself elected another 34 members (in which the president must nominate 17 women out of his 34 nominees). The Afghan constitution makes men and women equally responsible for the laws of Afghanistan and these laws should not be contrary to Islamic law.

## **B. Definition of Good Governance**

Good governance is a term that has been used extensively in recent years. At present, the concept of good governance has become very important in the domestic politics of countries and, along with other functional and executive concepts, has been seriously considered and is considered as an important indicator of government evaluation internationally. There is a very close relationship between democracy and good governance. In fact, democracy will be effective when it benefits from good governance.

According to the United Nations Development Program's definition of good governance is the process of decision-making and the process by which decisions are implemented (or not implemented). Governance can be used in several contexts such as corporate governance, international governance, national governance and local governance.<sup>1</sup> For good governance, certain components and indicators are included, which include eight characters: (UNDP, 1997)

### **1. Participation**

One of the principles and values of human rights is participation; which has been accepted by nations and governments in the new style of government. It is called democracy and is one of the basic principles. In older forms of government, rulers were usually not required to take into account the views and wishes of various

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/good-governance.pdf>

groups, especially women and minorities, and usually did not recognize their rights in government; But today, one of the basic components and one of the criteria of governance is the level of participation and participation of different sections of society in making and implementing decisions. A society can claim to have good governance that has clear and practical mechanisms for achieving people's participation in the decision-making and implementation process. Participation can be direct or through individuals and institutions representing the people, for which its infrastructures such as freedom of association and institutions, freedom of expression and expression must be strengthened and developed.

## **2. Rule of Law**

Good governance requires independent and impartial law-making systems and institutions that fairly and impartially oversee the law enforcement process on an equal footing, such as the judiciary and the police, which are impartial and non-corrupt. A government that can implement the impartial separation of powers in its country so that in the light of it all spectrums, including minorities, have equal rights and responsibilities before the law, and the rule of law is applied equally to all social spectrums.

## **3. Transparency**

In good governance, the decision-making and decision-making process must follow certain rules and regulations, and individuals in society, especially those affected by these decisions, can freely and easily access information about it. This information must be understandable and available to the mass media. In a system where government information and decisions is publicly available, civil society's activists can easily express their views and can discuss and discuss the strengths and weaknesses of a particular issue. With freedom of expression, citizens can express their opinions freely without any fear or intimidation. This situation forces the government to be more moderate and accountable to the people. With freedom of expression, citizens can express their opinions freely without any fear or intimidation. This situation forces the government to be more moderate and accountable to the people. Most importantly, the government's decisions will be fit with the law, and minority rights will not be neglected.

#### **4. Sense of Responsibility**

All institutions and serious actions must serve all citizens and they must have a common sense of responsibility to citizens, because good governance requires institutions and processes to try to serve everyone within a reasonable time frame.

#### **5. Consensus of Votes in the Directions**

In any society, there are numerous political actors, sometimes with conflicting interests, whose governments, within the framework of their laws and competencies, should try to reach a consensus and mediation between the parties involved in the society. As Barack Obama said in one of his speeches, you may be one hundred percent sure of something, but democracy and good governance means accepting the sometimes wrong views of others.

#### **6. Accountability**

One of the most important conditions for good governance is accountability. In accountability, the definition of governance goes beyond superficial perceptions of governance, meaning that not only government institutions but even the private sector and civil society must be accountable to the general public. In general, an institution or organization will be accountable to those who are influenced by its decisions or actions. Accountability cannot be achieved in the absence of the rule of law and transparency.

#### **7. Efficiency and Effectiveness**

Governments have a lot of responsibilities to the people. The government should try to perform these tasks effectively and efficiently, for example, one of the tasks of the government is to provide security. Normal life will not be possible for anyone if the government does not do this job properly. In addition to providing security, governments have a duty to be efficient in providing services; it means that with the performance of governments, the needs of society must be met. In developed countries, environmental protection, respect for human rights, and the sustainable use of natural resources also include utility and efficiency.

## **8. Equality and Inclusion**

In good governance, people have equal opportunities. The well-being of a society depends on ensuring that all its members feel involved in that society. To achieve this, all vulnerable groups must have the support they need to increase their capabilities. The government must do its utmost to ensure justice so that all citizens of all classes, ethnicities, and races can participate in the government.

Governance refers to the decision-making process in a country. In fact, the core of governance is decision-making and implementation, and governments, as the executive body, gives the word meaning and practicality. These decisions have a direct impact on the inhabitants of a country and society and are therefore important. Under a government that gives practicality to governance, different departments work in different areas and make big and small decisions. For example, non-governmental organizations, political and social leaders, parties, religious leaders, civil society activists, etc. can play a role among them.

No country will be able to survive as an acceptable government that is effective and legitimate without good governance, and the nature of its existence will be questioned. In the absence of good governance, corruption in the country peaks and the high level of corruption in such systems of government can lead these countries to a precarious situation. In fact, in a country with poor governance, its citizens suffer from a lack of rule of law and justice, a high level of corruption, or even persistent clashes. In most cases, countries with poor governance are countries with security problems or war-torn countries, the popularity of the government is low among the people and their citizens suffer from very low social services, and these are usually the countries that in the corruption table are at the top of the table.

Given the above definitions of democracy and good governance, an overview reinforces the notion that without the presence of all segments of the population, especially women, neither democracy nor good governance can be achieved in its true sense. What is noticeable when reviewing the dark history of the country, along with all the historical problems, is the absence of women in the decision-making, executive and monitoring bodies of the laws in the country. Certainly, various factors are the cause of today's unrest in the country, but one of the most undeniable of them can be the lack of attention to the role and presence of women in society and politics.



Ignorance of the role of women and their absence in various levels of government has not only harmed women but in their absence, good governance and democracy have diminished the opportunity for growth and prosperity in Afghanistan. When a government deprives itself, of women's thoughts and ideas and women as law enforcers and as lawmakers and as law enforcers cannot find their proper place in the system, the consequences will be hidden and will harm all sections of society. Democracy and good governance evolve as much as men; without the presence of women, it remains incomplete, and this is a fact that is less considered in traditional societies today. An overview of developed countries reveals a direct and undeniable link between the well-being, peace, development and widespread participation of women in various fields, as well as a look at underdeveloped and war-torn countries. It shows the lack of progress and backwardness in various fields with the absence of women in society and politics.

### **C. The Concept of Participation**

Participation literally means to take part or be involved. Generally the concept of participation is not a new concept; every society has paid attention to this issue throughout human history. But nowadays this issue is one of the necessity of development and democracy of a society. It could be said that participation is an actively, consciously, freely and reasonably obligation in order to give meaning to social action and movement that achieved by involving individuals in group activities.

The most fundamental thought of participation's infrastructure is accepting the principle of human equality, and its purpose is consensus, cooperation and collaboration of individuals to improve the quality and quantity of life in all social, economic and political fields. People can be caused to modifying by participation in decision making process of their countries, cities or region. This modifying usually reflects the majority of people's demands. Participation is one of the necessary conditions for the realization of development in economic, social and political fields, which pays attention to the active, creative and effective role of the people in the development process. In fact participation is a process that involves a variety of individual and group actions in order to intervene in determining their destiny and society's fate, and to influence public affairs' decisions. (Jafari, 2016:35)

Razaei (2016: 54) argued that the concept of participation may be based on these three main values:

- Sharing power and authority between men and women.
- Allowing men and women to control their destiny.
- Opening the way of progress for all people, both men and women.

The political social scientists explained about participation as it is influential act through which people made an effort to make response according to their will for the political system. It is explained: "Participation is a means the leading representatives cognizant about the preferences, priorities and basic needs of the masses which are persuaded to respond to public wishes". (Ibrahim, 2012: 435)

Participation in terms of its level (micro, medium, macro), its creative motivation (endogenous, exogenous) and how people intervene (direct, indirect), its level of inclusion (local, regional, national) and the quality of people's cooperation (natural, spontaneous, voluntary, motivated, imposed or imperative), its executive levels and functional content (service utilization, service evaluation, proposal making, decision-making and planning, implementation, monitoring), and its subject (political, economic, social) can be divided. (Nazari, 2014: 163) As it has cleared, participation has various dimensions that the most important one is political participation. So we will define political participation in next title.

## **1. Political participation**

Political participation in the modern world is an inevitable and essential phenomenon, so even the most bounded political systems in the world and few totalitarian systems do not find themselves without need for political participation. Therefore, there is no doubt in participation and its importance for all societies and countries at various levels and forms. Despite emphasizing its important, there is no theoretical consensus about defining this concept among experts. The existences of several definitions for concept of participation as well as political participation prove this claim.

Jafari (2016) explained that the political participation is a kind of political development, and existence of powerful political parties, influence groups, freedom of press and speech, parliamentarian organs and media for reflecting the truth of

society are symbols of this participation. Nazari, M. and others (2014) know political participation as a free and voluntary activity of citizens which is done to influence politics and government. And it ranges from not getting involved in politics to trying to compete for political positions.

Azad, M.A. & Haidari. A. (2015) argues that political participation is participation of citizens in election, political decision and activities of a country. All layers of society can participate in the political process, regardless of ethnicity, party, language and religion. Maghsudi, M. and Ghallehdar, S. (2011) quotes Sarokhani's definition of political participation that political participation is participate in political affairs and selecting political leaders by people. Also it is a behavior that effect on outputs of governmental decisions. Political participation refers the active involvement and engagement by individual both women and men with political process that affect their lives. (Kassa, Shimelis, 2015, pp. 3)

Ibrahim argued that the classical theorist as Verba and Nie state as the political participation refers to those activities conducted by private citizens that aim at influencing the government, either by affecting the choices of government personnel or by affecting the choices made by government personnel. Another explicit definition of political participation is, "it affords citizens in a democracy as an opportunity to communicate information to government official about their concern and preference and to put pressure on them to respond." It is observed in American politics that widespread expression of public views for political participation is mostly voluntary basis. In European political system political participation means, it is assumed to connect with representative bodies like European Parliament, European Council and Council of Ministries. (Ibrahim, 2014, pp. 435-436)

In Afghanistan, where the political system is democratic, political participation can make sense through voting, campaigning in elections, influencing on politicians, and forming political, cultural, social groups and parties. Arabnazhad, M. and Akochkian, A. (2010) said political participation refers to a set of activities that lead to increase in power or increase the intensity of mobility of a society, in other words, political participation is those activities that have the effect of creating a dignity or humiliation of a society toward other societies. The international Encyclopedia of Social Science provides the following definition of this concept:

political participation is voluntary activities of community members in electing leaders and directly or indirectly participating in public policy. (Ghasemi, H. and Maali, F, 2014: 127) Finally, political participation is an activity that influences or intends to influence the government.

## **2. Political Participation and Democracy**

In a democracy, every citizen has the right to directly or indirectly interfere in all decisions. No one can be deprived of such a right. For this reason, some have defined democracy as the participation of the people in determining their destiny; Political participation is, therefore, a process consisting of a set of actions and behaviors that citizens take to exert, influence, or support the political system. The term democracy was not coined for men only (International Declaration on Democracy, 1997). Jafari (2016: 3) defined the basic principle of democracy as follows: "Access to democracy involves the participation of women and men in politics and is based on equality to complement and benefit each other and to benefit from each other's differences." The main feature of democracy is participation of people in decision-making in matters on which their destiny depends. Among the various political actions that citizens may engage in political participation, the most prominent is voting. Using a ballot is the easiest way to get involved in politics. Voting itself is a sign of the equality of all citizens of a society in democratic governments because each person can only vote and one vote is equal to one other vote.

Jafari (2016) argued that the multiplicity and diversity of political ideas and beliefs are one of the foundations of democracy. This diversity in the form of political parties and groups is the driving force of democracy. Women, men, minorities, various ideological groups, religious groups, racial and ethnic groups all share in a democratic government. Otherwise, that government cannot be democratic. It is only through political participation that the diverse ideas and beliefs of different groups in society are allowed to express themselves. These diverse ideas and beliefs belonging to different sections of society have the opportunity to be expressed. These ideas and beliefs are expressed through freedom of expression, freedom of choice, freedom of association, and the observance of justice and political rights, and these tools are reinforced in a democratic government. All of these are

tools through which political participation is achieved. In principle, thinkers see participation as the basis of the legitimacy of democratic systems; That is, means, the more complete, and more informed the participation, the more authoritative and authoritative the political system will be. In a political system where the people of the society can easily convey their demands to the rulers and the rulers attach great importance to the participation of the people and hearing their demands, all the people are satisfied and always support their government and this is the legitimacy. Which makes democratic governments last. If a government does not pay attention to the will of the people and does not provide the people with the tools of political participation such as freedom of speech, freedom of association and association, strengthening of civil society, and freedom of elections, the people will gradually distrust their government. It loses its legitimacy and moves towards an authoritarian system that will certainly not be supported by the people and its collapse will not take long.

### **3. Political Participation in Afghanistan**

Afghan society has an ethnic and fragmented political and social structure, and the ethnic groups of Afghanistan stand side by side without having comprehensive and constructive interactions with each other. You can see this structure clearly during the elections. Voters linger around ethnic poles and behind prominent ethnic figures, just like iron filings in a magnetic field. The turnout of Afghan citizens in the elections was largely based on ethnic criteria, and what was most important to an Afghan citizen was for someone of his ethnicity to come to power. Parties also serve ethnic interests, and in elections, parties do not usually pursue coherent goals to improve the socio-political conditions of society. This ethnic perspective is widespread in all political and social issues of Afghanistan and at all levels from the national level to the provincial level and cities and villages.

In the governance sector, the division of government positions is not based on merit, and the criteria for selecting a minister, deputy, chairman, and advisor is ethnic affiliation. Government posts in ministries and independent departments are divided between different ethnic groups, and these ethnic criteria are strictly adhered to.

This ethnic view is very detrimental to the growth of Afghan society because it has clearly prevented Afghanistan from developing and growing; For example, the dispute over the word university in Pashto language and Dari language in the third chapter of the Higher Education Law has prevented this law from being passed in the parliament ten years ago, thus stopping the reforms in higher education. These reforms are crucial for Afghanistan's universities, but unfortunately, a purely linguistic and ethnic divide has left Afghanistan lagging behind in higher education and many of the areas affected. Disputes over the inclusion of Afghan ethnic names or the word Afghan instead in the electronic ID card have made it difficult to pass the Afghanistan Population Registration Law.

All these examples show that ethnic divisions hinder the political participation of Afghan citizens in governance. In fact, much of the people's energy is spent on differentiation rather than partnership and convergence for Afghanistan's development. Such differences have sometimes grown so large that the partition of Afghanistan or the formation of a federal government has been seriously considered as a solution and a viable option to prevent the deterioration of Afghanistan's socio-political situation.

Sociologically, a sustainable political system is achieved through the public and conscious participation of citizens as a comprehensive project. Due to the low level of literacy of the people, public awareness of political issues, the interests of the country and society, is very low, both among the public and among the political elites. Many people are not aware of their political rights. Many women are unaware of political processes such as elections and their rights, such as the right to vote and to choose freely or fairly, or freedom of expression. Due to the existence of religious, racial and linguistic prejudices and the lack of a culture of mutual acceptance, a strong national and collective identity has never been established among the people of Afghanistan so that the people can work together to achieve collective and national interests. . In other words, "although the people of Afghanistan have always been sensitive to their own political destiny, from forming their own circles against the monarchy and establishing large and small parties with leftist and rightist ideologies, extremists and conservatives, they resist resistance and petrification. But these partnerships remain in an aura of ethnic and racial prejudice or monopoly and supremacy. Traditional and cumbersome values, dictatorship and white beard,

determination of social status based on ethnic affiliation, authoritarian and ethnocentric perception of each effective contribution to the formation of anti-participatory culture and a serious obstacle to collective participation in the country's politics had". (Jafari, 2016: 47-48)

Political parties, which are the main organizations promoting political participation, have never provided political awareness to the people in the right way. Instead, we have seen that in some cases, national interests have been sacrificed for personal and ethnic interests. Instead of creating a participatory political culture, they have become a culture of political tolerance and assimilation of ethnic identity and emphasis on personal exploitation.

Political participation only crystallizes in a society that has a participatory culture. The creation of a democratic society will not take place unless the structure of the political system, partisanship and partisanship based on a particular ethnicity, changes. The development of higher education and the eradication of illiteracy in the whole society, the development of mass media such as radio and television and the press, the creation of universal security, the eradication of poverty and the creation of productive employment will be effective in the transformation of culture and participation. Just as Afghanistan does not achieve democracy overnight, it does not achieve political participation overnight. Political participation is an evolving process. Political participation requires special institutions to direct the energy and power of the citizens in a certain channel and stream and to prevent riots, coups, and violence. (Jafari, 2016: 49)

#### **D. Women Political Participation**

The gender equality movement has started from decades ago and is not a new phenomenon in the contemporary era. Women have been in power for centuries, and queens have shown their power and influence in various kingdoms. When the French revolution<sup>2</sup> happened at 1789, the democracy came to exist in France and most of people began to talk about women's rights and issues of equality and women's

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<sup>2</sup> The French revolution refers to the period that began with the Estates general of 1789 and ended in November 1799 with the formation of the French Consulate. Many of its ideas are considered fundamental principle of Western liberal democracy.

eligibility to participate in election and voting around the world. However those theories were not widely accepted by the societies, and have not growth very much until 1893 when the voting right of women was granted by New Zealand.

Over time, more women's movements emerged in various countries, especially in the West, and women fought for their human and political rights. With the appearance of the United Nations and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948, women's movements worked harder and try to organize more coordinated programs and meetings to encourage more governments to commit to women's rights in different parts of the world.

In the late twentieth century, with the expansion of the process of globalization and the subsequent rapid movement of people in various societies towards democracy, more international treaties and conference held after the first Mexico City Summit<sup>3</sup> to facilitate political participation for women and their rights. Because “political participation is the central core of democracy as well as a means for achieving greater equality”.(Coffe and Bolzendahl, 2010: 318)

“The heart of democracy is the equal participation of all individuals in management and public affairs” (Kassa, 2015: 1) and one of the most important preconditions for achieving development is the use of all facilities and resources. And women play a significant role as a potential force in society and in the political and social future of a government, and nowadays political participation is meaningless without the presence of women in political processes. As Nelson Mandela<sup>4</sup> said that Freedom will not be achieved until women in society have been freed from oppression and have been targeted in development programs. So women’s participation is essential for democracy and freedom in every society.

By consideration of the low level of women's political participation in different countries of the world, the participants in the Beijing Summit<sup>5</sup> discussed the

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<sup>3</sup> World Conference on Women, 1975 was held between 19 June and 2 July 1975 in Mexico City, Mexico. It was the first international conference held by the United Nations to focus solely on women's issues and marked a turning point in policy directives.

<sup>4</sup> Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela was a South African anti-apartheid revolutionary, political leader and philanthropist who served as President of South Africa from 1994 to 1999.

<sup>5</sup> The Fourth World Conference on Women: Action for Equality, Development and Peace was the name given for a conference convened by the United Nations during 4–15 September 1995 in Beijing, China.



issue of the low level of women's political participation, and finally considered the goal of increasing women's participation by up to 30% in various decision-making areas. And this percentage has to increase to 50% over time. (UN, 1975) At present, women dominate 24.9%<sup>6</sup> of the world's legislature seats, and there are only 12 countries where women hold more than 33% of the seats in parliament.

International treaties encouraged many countries to sign and accept these treaties, forcing them to increase the level of women's political participation in many of these countries. It is politically important for many of these developing countries to show their neighbors and other countries that their governments are interested in democracy in their own countries. for example, Afghanistan as a country emerging from the war after the fall of the Taliban regime in 2001, has given 25% of parliamentary and provincial council seats to women for encouraging women's political participation. The percentages allocated to women's political participation are different from country to country. While not all countries in the world consider such a privilege for women's political participation, this is especially important in post-war countries where women do not have much opportunity to participate in political activities. Due to the many problems in society and living in a patriarchal society, women are not interested to participate in election competition, however, this quota for women's political participation gives women hope, motivation, and courage to run in the elections, and they know that they will have a chance to win over men. However, with this quota, the number of women in politics is small in comparison to men, and this makes their voices unheard. It is widely accepted today that not including women at various levels of government, politics and local and national decision-making sectors and marginalizing women will cause great harm to women, society and the country in the long run. Therefore, in order to have effective development in different sectors, recognizing women's rights and their political participation is essential. Allocated Quotas for women in different countries and different sectors are a way to include women in government and politics, For example, women's political participation in parliament can influence or sometimes omit policies that seek to eliminate women's rights in society.

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<sup>6</sup> UN women, & Inter parliamentary Union, (2020). Women in politics.

With the growing importance of women's political participation around the world, many international organizations have sought to focus on gender equality issues, and derive many projects about gender equality. Also, they have tried to include gender as one of the most important factors of good governance. The focus on gender equality has prompted many developing countries to pay more attention to this issue, and allocate a specific quota for women to encourage them for participation in politics. However, only increasing women's political participation is not sufficient; these women need education, in many of these countries, the quota for women's political participation paves the way for their presence in this field, but not all of these women have enough experience, skills and knowledge in this field. The empowerment of women in this area is another important issue that the international community, national and local institutions and organizations that work on the issue of gender equality and women's political participation should consider, to be their efforts effectively.

### **III. WOMEN'S POLITICAL PARTICIPATION IN AFGHANISTAN IN POST\_TALIBAN REGIME**

#### **A. History of Women's Political Participation in Afghanistan**

Afghan women have witnessed unfair and disproportionate treatment by the male government during Taliban regime and before; these women are considered immature creatures and have been deprived of the slightest inherent dignity and human dignity. Discrimination, oppression, abuse, and all kinds of mental and physical violence have been imposed on women, which is contrary to Islamic values and human rights. Whenever a government comes to power that improves the situation of women and creates conditions for Afghan women in society, there are immediate events happen that have destroyed the achievements and made the conditions for women tighter than before, For examples those events that have explained in next paragraphs.

Women in Afghanistan's traditional and completely patriarchal society gained basic rights for the first time when Amir Amanullah Khan<sup>7</sup> came to power in Afghanistan and began to modernize Afghanistan. Afghanistan's independence was recognized in 1919 after the third short war with Britain and Amanullah Khan took power. (Farhang, 2001:493)

King Amanullah (1919-1929) tried to modernize the country's social, cultural and political institution on the basis of a European model of development and to this end a new constitution known as Nizamnamah-ye-Asasi-e-Dawlat-e-Aliyei-e-Afghanistan was promulgated in 1923. The constitution assured equality of citizens. (Emadi, 2008, pp. 6)

One of the most important aspects of this constitution was the announcement of a list of fundamental rights such as individual freedom, press, and freedom of association, freedom of property, and most importantly, equality and equality of all

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<sup>7</sup> Ghāzī Amanullah Khan was the sovereign of the Kingdom of Afghanistan from 1919 to 1929.

Afghan citizens and fair access to government jobs. Although the 1923 constitution had many violations and the rights and status of women in various economic, political, social, and cultural fields were weak, this law laid the foundation for great progress in Afghanistan and made the legal system of Afghanistan one of the important systems among neighborhood countries. As in developed countries, Amir Amanullah Khan advocated for women's education and rights. During his reign, some significant reforms were made for women's rights and freedom of expression, and new schools were opened for male and female students, and issues of gender equality were considered.

In January 1928, Amanullah undertook new reforms and sought to bring the greatest change in the lives of the Afghan people in the shortest possible time. Therefore, he took a major initiative, which was to elect a delegation of eight to ten women to participate in the *Third Loya Jirga*<sup>8</sup>, which was held in *Paghman*<sup>9</sup> from August 28 to September 5, 1928, and women for the first time lined up as lawyers with the men. Finally, because those actions such as the prohibition of the hijab were costly for the Islamic community of Afghanistan, religious people protest against the government and its reforms and led to the downfall of the government.

After the fall of Amanullah Khan, Habibullah Khan Kalkani and subsequently Nader Shah took over the system one after another and the reforms of Amanullah were revoked and the existing laws include the constitution were repealed and the schools for girls and boys were blocked. Successive governments did not support the cause of women until the government of king Muhammad Zahir Shah (1933-1973). (Emadi, 2008, pp. 8)

Mohammad Zahir Shah ascended to the throne of Afghanistan on November 8, 1933, after the death of his father. The period of Zahir Shah's rule over Afghanistan was peaceful and during this period, Afghanistan did not engage in any war. In 1964, Zahir Shah published the new constitution of the country. The constitution was adopted as a temporary constitution in 2001 with the fall of the Taliban and the return of peace to Afghanistan (with the removal of monarchy articles). During the reign of Zahir Shah, schools reopened and girls were allowed to

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<sup>8</sup> Grand Assembly: it is an assembly that represents nation's voice.

<sup>9</sup>Paghman is a town in the hills near Afghanistan's capital of Kabul.

go to schools and under the constitution, women gained the right to vote, which provided the way for greater political and legal participation for women. During the 1965 parliamentary elections a number of women from upper and middle class families competed in the election. Two women candidates from Kabul, one from Herat and one from Qandahar provinces succeeded in capturing four out of 216 seats in *Shura-e-milii*<sup>10</sup>. (Emadi, 2008, pp. 9)

Zahir Shah was afraid of the transfer of power to the people, despite the very small changes that took place in the country. Until in August 1973, when he was on a pleasure trip to Italy, he was overthrown by a military coup by Daoud Khan with the help and complicity of The People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA), and a republic system was declared in Afghanistan. During this period, Women could study and worked in government, and participated in parliamentary elections, and were the members of cabinet. Eventually, Daoud Khan's government was overthrown by Soviet-backed communists in 1978 during the Saur Revolution led by the communist People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA).

During the 14 years of the communist government, the presence of women and girls in schools, universities and civil services increased significantly. As in the cabinet of Noor Mohammad Taraki, the Minister of Labor, Social Affairs and Tourism was a woman. In the government of Dr. Najibullah, the Minister of Education, Labor and Social Affairs was a woman. The National Council of Women of Afghanistan was also established during this period.

With their ideological goals, the rulers of the communist governments were determined to increase women's political participation, but the structure of Afghanistan's religious community and religious authorities did not allow them, even in the communist realm. And extremist religious groups under the name of Mujahidin (Jihadist groups) revolted against the Soviets and clashes broke out between them. The soviet tried to provide more opportunities for women, but in tribal based areas participation of women outside of the house was unrealistic for them, but during the war between Jihadist groups and Soviet Union, most women in the country lost at least one relative and thousands of families had to leave the

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<sup>10</sup> The National Assembly (Shura-e Milli), also known as the Parliament of Afghanistan. It is the national legislature of Afghanistan.

country because of soviet invasion. (Diyarbakirlioglo, 2017, pp. 211)

After the fall of the communist regime, jihadist groups came to power in 1992 under the name of the Mojahedin government. Their failure to share power between themselves led to a civil war that became a full-fledged battlefield between 1992 and 1996. Women were prohibited from each kind of freedom in society, and women became weapons of war and victims of war. The new regime adopted a constitution in 1992 and stipulated the establishment of Shura-e-Jihadi, Jihadi Council with the task of approving or abrogating agreements between states and government and supervising government policies as done by parliament in the past. Its policy of Islamicization of an already Muslim nation banned women's participation in outdoor activities, a policy that continued until the Taliban militias seized control of Kabul in 1996 and ruled much of the country until they were overthrown by the US-led coalition forces in late 2001. (Emadi, 2008, pp. 12)

During the Taliban era, women witnessed the most severe discrimination and inequality in their rights and freedoms. Women were deprived of their most basic rights and deprived of the right to education, possession right, and even the right to leave home. During the Taliban era, schools and universities were closed to women one after another, and no women were allowed to study. Mullah Omar, the Taliban leader, has taken a hostile stance against international pressure on the violation of women's rights and declared; that women's access to education and educational institutes means pursuing a policy of infidelity and promoting indecency in Afghanistan. And they never allowed to study or work in governmental or non-governmental organizations. During the years of civil war, many men were killed, and women were responsible for large families, all of whom were barred from work under Taliban law. The Taliban initially barred women from even working in women's health centers, but gradually, under very strict conditions, women were allowed to provide health services to women. Although the situation was difficult for women, the women did not resigned and tried to get their rights by cooperating with each other and creating private underground organizations such as educational centers and so on. (Povey, 2003, pp. 8)

As it is clear, the prohibiting of women has been one of the basic principles of the Taliban government, which is, unfortunately, a great shame in the history of Afghanistan. The aftermath of Taliban's black era and the fossilized culture leftover

from that era still haunt Afghan society. The bad situation of women and their deprivation ended with the fall of the Taliban in 2001 by US-led international forces, and the situation of women began to improve after that.

## **B. Women's Political Participation in Post Taliban's Regime**

The destruction of the symbols of material power - the World Trade Center - and military power - the Pentagon in the morning hours of September 11, 2001, was a violent challenge to American supremacy as a symbol of the so-called West. With the events of 9/11, global attention turned to Islamic fundamentalism and its center, Afghanistan and Pakistan. The incidents prompted the United States to head east and dismantle terrorism in Afghanistan and Pakistan.

September 11 marks a turning point in the formation of a new government in Afghanistan. With the US-led invasion of NATO and the fall of the Islamic Emirate (Taliban), a new plan was laid out at the Bonn Conference to form a new government in Afghanistan. The basis of the Bonn agreements was the improvement of democracy, which was based on some mechanisms such as the approval of the constitution, the holding of presidential and parliamentary elections, etc. In the Bonn Conference, in which five of its formal and informal members were women addressed a number of factors: human rights, freedom of expression, a free press, and women's rights, on which the new system in Afghanistan was based.

The final articles of the Bonn Agreement also emphasized the need for the existence of women in the formation of the Emergency *Loya Jirga*. Thus, before the formation of the new power structure in Afghanistan, the issue of women's rights was raised and considered. This issue became more serious with the formation and preparation of the constitution.

An emergency Loya Jirga was held in 2002 with 1551 members that 180 members of them were women, and Hamid Karzai was elected as president. And the constitution that was approved in this Jirga eliminated all discrimination against women and was guaranteed all their rights, and 27% quotas of parliamentary seats were allocated to women, and women were given the right to vote and be elected to government posts.

In the new period of democracy in Afghanistan, women have been able to have a large presence in government after decades. Women's participation cannot be summed up in the cabinet; Afghan women today play a role in most ministries, commissions, departments, provinces, parliaments and schools, and universities. The Ministry of Women's Affairs was established based on Bonn agreements under the Afghan Interim Administration 2001, and Dr. Sima Samar was the first Minister of Women's Affairs ministry. Massoud Jalal also ran as the first female candidate in the second round of the presidential election, despite gaining 1.1% of the vote, but was elected Minister of Women's Affairs in the Karzai government.

The Ministry of Women's Affairs established several institutions and associations over the years to protect women's rights. Since 2001, women have been working in various fields and trying to change the situation of society by changing their situation. Women strive to use most of the available education opportunities very well and be useful in various fields for the improvement of women's rights and their place in society. Afghan women are working to repair as much as possible the destructive effects of decades of war and eliminate the gender divide that has deepened over the years.

### **C. Women's Political Participation in Afghan Laws and International Documents**

Afghanistan's laws and legal documents are rich in order to give the right of participation in politics to women. Many of the country's laws, especially Afghanistan's new constitution (2004) is the most important one, pay special attention to women's rights and encourage women's participation in the social and political spheres. In this section, we will review the laws of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and the international treaties signed by Afghanistan, which provide the women's socio-political participation.

#### **1. Women's Political Participation in Constitution Law**

After the fall of the Taliban regime and the formation of the new political system in Afghanistan, it took a step towards democratization. Undoubtedly, one of the first steps in this way was the establishment of a constitution. The Afghan Constitution, established in 2004, guarantees the fundamental rights of all citizens as



the most valid national bail. If implemented well, it can solve many of the problems of women, related to their political participation, not only at the election but also at other levels and forms of political participation. What is clear is that Afghanistan's new constitution is based on respect for democratic values, including human values and equal rights for citizens.

The preface of the Afghanistan constitution states that the people of Afghanistan have adopted this constitution to create a civil society free of oppression, tyranny, discrimination, and violence, based on law, social justice, the preservation of dignity and human rights, and the guarantee of fundamental freedoms and rights. (The Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, 2004)

Article 1 of the Afghan Constitution states the form of government that is "The Islamic Republic, independent, unitary and indivisible". This article consists of two elements: republic and Islam. The stability of the government is based on two popular bases in the form of republic and Islamic. Both of these elements have the participation of people in themselves.

Article 4 of the Constitution states that "national sovereignty in Afghanistan belongs to the nation, which implement it directly or through its representatives". On this basis, we can see the attention of the nation and citizens in this law are high. The other part of this article states that "the people of Afghanistan include all persons who have the citizenship of Afghanistan." Therefore, it is clear that women are included in this article and have equal rights with other citizens.

Article 7 of the Afghanistan constitution states that "The state shall observe the United Nations Charter, inter-state agreements, as well as international treaties to which Afghanistan has joined, and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The state shall prevent all kinds of terrorist activities, cultivation and smuggling of narcotics, and production and use of intoxicants". Thus, in this article, the Government of Afghanistan has committed itself to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which considers all human beings to have equal rights as human beings and does not consider gender as a factor of separation or discrimination.

Article 22; "any kind of discrimination and distinction between citizens of Afghanistan shall be forbidden. The citizens of Afghanistan, man and woman, have equal rights and duties before the law". This article guarantees that all the

constitution and its articles apply equally to men and women. Also, this article shows that opportunities and tools for women to enjoy all the provisions of the Constitution are not less than men; Therefore, this article reminds us always that equality and non-discrimination are mandatory principles that must be considered in the interpretation and implementation of every article of the constitution, and in especial conditions, positive criteria must be considered to implement justice between men and women.

In article 33 constitution of Afghanistan shows that “the citizens of Afghanistan shall have the right to elect and be elected” and Article 67, which related to conditions of a presidential candidate, states that a candidate must be an Afghan citizen, a Muslim and born from Afghan parents, and not have the citizenship of another country”. So everybody can candidate if they have these conditions, and there is no barrier for women.

It is clear from many articles of the constitution that the government attaches great importance to women, for example in Articles 43 and 44 guarantees women's right to education. Article 48 also recognizes the right of women to work. The importance of women's representation in decision-making and policy-making is addressed in Articles 83 and 84, which state that women's participation in decision-making processes is crucial. It is specified in Article 83 that 27% of parliamentary seats belong to women. This article states that at least two women must be elected from each province in the House of Representatives. Article 84 of the Afghan Constitution is about members of the Meshrano Jirga (upper house), which states that 50% of the members to be nominated by the President must be women, which means 17% of the members of the upper house must be women.

Article 118 of the Constitution provides a general situation regarding membership in the draft court (Supreme Court), which states that both men and women can reach this position by having Afghan citizenship. Therefore, by considering the articles of the Afghanistan constitution, it is cleared that women's political participation has been recognized legally and there is no serious obstacle to women's political participation.

## **2. Women’s political participation in election law**

The Afghanistan Election Law (2016), which has been enacted pursuant to the provisions of articles 33 and 156 of the Constitution of Afghanistan. The goals of

this law are regulating election-related matters, provides participation of women in parliament, the upper house, and provincial and district councils. Article 5 of this law explicitly prohibits imposing any restrictions on voters and candidates, especially about gender.

Articles (38, 39 and 40), of the Election Law state the general conditions for presidential, parliamentary, provincial, and district candidates. In all these articles, it is clear that any Afghan, male or female, with having general conditions can candidate without any restrictions. Article 51<sup>11</sup> of the Electoral Law, with the implementation of Article 83 of the Constitution, guarantees women a 27% share of parliamentary seats. Articles 58<sup>12</sup> and 61<sup>13</sup> of this law stipulate the exclusive share of provincial and district council seats for women, which allocate at least 25% of the seats to female candidates. By examining this law, we have seen that the election law supports the presence of women in constituencies and does not set any restrictions on the presence of women candidates and their campaigning and voting.

### **3. International Conventions and Treaties**

Afghanistan is one of the countries that has acceded to numerous international human rights conventions. Of the nine major human rights conventions, Afghanistan has joined seven of them: the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women and the Convention All forms of discrimination against women.

Article 7 of the Afghanistan Constitution requires the government to obey the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, international treaties. It is assumed that almost all of these legally binding documents have been signed, not out of necessity,

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<sup>11</sup>Article 51: (1) The Commission, for the purpose of the minimum number of female candidates that shall be elected from each province, prepares procedures and a formula that is based on the population of each province so that to meet the requirements of article 83 of the Constitution of Afghanistan that is the number of elected female candidates shall be at least twice the number of the current provinces.

<sup>12</sup> (2) At least 25 % of the seats in each Provincial Council Shall are allocated to female candidates.

<sup>13</sup> Article 61: (1) The seats of the district council are allocated in proportion to the population of each district as below: 1 A district with a population of up to forty thousand, (5) seats. 2 A district with a population of more than forty thousand up to seventy thousand, (7) seats. 3 A district with a population of more than seventy thousand up to one hundred thousand, (9) seats. 4 A district with a population of more than one- hundred thousand, (11) seats. (2) A minimum of 25 % of the seats of each District Council shall be allocated to female candidates.

but rather to gain international acceptance and credibility. Implementation and adherence to these treaties are essential for the Government of Afghanistan as it demonstrates the Government of Afghanistan's commitment to international standards, including human rights and women's rights. Some influential people and elders of the country believe that those standards and criteria are in contrast to the principles of Islam. This commitment to the Afghan government guarantees continued international assistance. Therefore, these covenants play a key role in protecting women's rights, especially women's right to political participation. We will now briefly review some of these treaties.

#### **a. The universal declaration of human rights**

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights is an international treaty adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on December 10, 1948, in Paris. This declaration is a direct result of World War II and, for the first time, universally states the rights to which all human beings are entitled. The Declaration of Human Rights contains thirty articles outlining the United Nations' view on human rights.

In the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, a set of civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights of human beings are recognized as their inherent rights and emphasized the dignity and equality of human beings on the one hand and the universality and solidarity of human rights values On the other hand. "All human beings are born free and equal in human dignity and rights. They all have intellect and conscience and must treat each other in a spirit of brotherhood."<sup>14</sup> The Universal Declaration of Human Rights refers to human beings, without distinction as to skin color, gender, religion, culture, political opinion, origin, national or social origin, and also refers to the rational thinking that human beings are human beings in the first place, not just Citizen of a certain country. Therefore, human beings have rights that the international community is obliged to guarantee.

From the point of view of this Declaration, the human is considered a global citizen and has common rights. The principles and values enshrined in the Declaration give a common legal language to all. For example, all people in every corner of the world can defend their right to live in one language or protest against

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<sup>14</sup> UN General Assembly, Universal Declaration of Human Rights, (1948), 217 A (III), Art. 1.

torture, arbitrary arrests, and discrimination, or demand for a secure job and social security, health and education, and a decent human life. With the recognition of this Declaration, we don't need to discuss the inhumanity of torture or any other principle. Nowadays the issue is the struggle to put those values into practice. Today, different countries are saying goodbye to phenomena such as discrimination, and new governments, moving from war to peace and from dictatorship to democracy, and have incorporated fundamental human rights standards into their constitutions.

Meanwhile, the source of many national laws of most countries is the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Some international human rights institutes have also emerged from this declaration. They monitor the human rights situation around the world and influence global policies by submitting international reports. The United Nations Council on Human Rights, the International Committee on Human Rights, the Committee on Monitoring the Status of Women, Children, and Victims of Discrimination, the Monitoring Committees on the Status of Torture, Discrimination and Torture are the most important international institutes.

In Afghanistan, the Independent Human Rights Commission has been established under the principles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, as well as the provisions of Article 58 of the Constitution, based on a presidential decree. Unquestionably, the establishment of this commission has led to raising the level of knowledge and awareness of people in the society about human rights; also, it has an especial impact on changing the situation of women, especially women's human rights. Unfortunately, in Afghanistan, women have limited access to equal health services, education<sup>15</sup>, job opportunities, economic opportunities, political and power opportunities, and decision-making, development, and growth opportunities at the national level. Violence against women is still rampant<sup>16</sup>, and the culture of impunity has exacerbated this bitter reality. In the meantime, strengthening the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission, which is tasked with monitoring and advocating for the basic human rights of the Afghan people, and especially the suffering women of this country, can help promote the participation of women in

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<sup>15</sup> According to a report of UNICEF (2020) Only 16 per cent of Afghanistan's schools are girls-only, and an estimated 3.7 million children are out-of-school in Afghanistan, 60% of them are girls.

<sup>16</sup> Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission reported (2020) that in the first ten months of this year, it recorded more than 3,400 cases of violence against women.

various aspects of life.

#### **b. International covenant on civil and political rights**

Article 3 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966), to which Afghanistan acceded on 24 January 1983, states: "States Parties to the present Covenant undertake to ensure the equal rights of men and women in the exercise of the civil and political rights provided for in the present Covenant." The issue of equality between men and women was first raised in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and then other human rights conventions ratified it one after another.

The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights is divided into six sections, including an introduction and 53 articles. In fact, these articles are detailed civil and political rights, which are summarized in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, with the difference that the signatory states are committed to implementing it. Section III of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights lists the recognized rights of individuals as follows:

1. The right to life and the prohibition of arbitrary deprivation of a person's life without a permit
2. Prohibition of torture and punishment or cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment
3. Prohibition of slavery
4. The right to liberty and security of persons
5. The right to choose one's place of residence and to move freely
6. Lack of the right to interfere in the private and family life of individuals
7. Prohibiting the infringe on human dignity
8. The right to freedom of opinion, religion, and thought
9. The right to form peaceful assemblies
10. The right to form trade unions
11. The right to marry and to found a family based on equal rights for men and women in the responsibilities of cohabitation and the right to separate and dissolve

12. The right to participate in the administration of public affairs and elections based on equal rights before the law

13. The right of ethnic and cultural minorities to enjoy their language, culture, customs, and religious duties.

These rights, which are among the most well-known rights of individuals, are enshrined in Articles 7, 8, 9, 12, 17, 18, 19, 21, 22, 23, 25, 26, and 27 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and member states are committed to implementing the Covenant. All these rights are the rights that are necessary for the participation of women in life, society, and politics, and given that Afghanistan has signed the above treaty, it is obliged to implement it.

### **c. Convention on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women**

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women is an international treaty ratified by the United Nations General Assembly on 18 December 1979 and entered into force on 3 September 1981. Afghanistan signed the convention in 1980 and formally acceded in March 2003. This convention is the most important UN treaty on gender discrimination and calls for the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women.

Article 2 of the 1979 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, "Establish legal protection of women's rights on the basis of equality with men and ensure the effective protection of women against all forms of discrimination through the competent judicial authorities and other governmental institutions" It also considers "the adoption of necessary measures, including the enactment of laws to amend or repeal existing laws, regulations, customs or practices that discriminate against women", among the obligations of member states.

A Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women has been set up to oversee the implementation of the Convention. According to Article 18 of the Convention, the Government of Afghanistan is obliged to submit its preliminary report one year after accession and to prepare its periodic report every four years and to report to 23 independent experts of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women on the implementation of the Convention. However, due to security problems and lack of adequate capacity, after

nine years, this report was completed in 2012 and submitted to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, and has not submitted another report yet.

The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women issued its concerns and recommendations on July 23, 2013, after reviewing Afghanistan's first and second periodic reports on the state of women's rights. These concerns and recommendations have been expressed in various areas such as health, education, discrimination, access to justice, violence against women and capacity building of women, but in the section on women's political participation in Afghanistan, the committee in its report mentioned the following tips:

- Low participation of women in the High Peace Council (9 out of 70) and exclusion of women in peace negotiations. The committee has expressed concern that the needs and interests of women in peace negotiations may be jeopardized by the government's highly patriarchal views. The Committee recommends that the government has to increase the presence of women in the High Peace Council and that give an active part in decision-making processes. The country's elite women and civil society organizations should also be involved in peace talks.
- Protecting the achievements of women's rights: The committee is concerned that some members of parliament are working to reduce the 25 percent share of women in the provincial council and to weaken the provisions of the Elimination of Violence against Women law, which is true in the first case. In the 2014 elections, the share of women in the Provincial Council was reduced to 20% with the approval of the Afghan Parliament.
- Definition of discrimination: Despite Article 22 of the Constitution and other laws in support of the equality of all citizens of Afghanistan; there is concern that there is no clear deterrent to gender discrimination in Afghanistan. The Committee recommends that the Government of Afghanistan enact legislation to eliminate discrimination in public and private spheres and work directly and indirectly under Articles 1 and 2 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.
- Concerns about the low participation of women in political and social life:



The Committee notes that security concerns and patriarchal views have caused severe constraints on women running in elections, as well as targeted killings and threats against women who run for office and occupying the top positions of the government, have made women's political participation very low. The Committee also expresses its grave concern at the lack of female judges in the Supreme Court as well as in other courts and calls on the Government of Afghanistan to pursue sustainable policies to promote the full and equitable participation of women in decision-making and democratic processes in the public sphere and political, pursue professional life at the national, provincial and district levels by setting specific criteria in accordance with Article 4 of the Convention and General Recommendation No. 25 of the Committee. Also, provide effective security support to women in senior government positions and to human rights defenders, and adopt appropriate criteria for increasing female judges in the Supreme Court and women's membership in the Supreme Court.

- Recruitment of women: The committee states that only 21 percent of women in the civil service are women, and the majority is employed at lower levels of government, and there is a negative perception of women's work in society, which particularly affects women's work in the security forces. Also, many women are working informally in various service and agricultural sectors, which means that they are not protected by labor laws and do not have access to social security services.

The signing of international conventions by the Government of Afghanistan is the first step towards the protection of human rights and women's rights. But a major concern for human rights activists is that these international treaties are not being properly implemented, and many of these treaties have only been symbolically signed by the government. However, it is said that the inability to implement and respect human rights can have detrimental consequences for Afghanistan.

In conclusion, everything is legally ready for women's political participation in Afghanistan, but by existence several obstacles and challenges such as the social and cultural conditions of Afghanistan, the spread of corruption, the weakness of the rule of law, insecurity, and low capacity of government departments, etc. that will be discussed, women's political participation is not as effective as it should be.

## **D. Women's Political Participation in Islamic Sharia**

Since the system of the Republic of Afghanistan is Islamic, all Islamic laws are based on the holy religion of Islam and Article 3 of the Constitution clearly states that no law can be contrary to the beliefs and rules of the holy religion of Islam. Political participation is one of the most important issues in many Afghanistan's laws and the participation of the people, both men and women, is essential for the survival of the government. The participation of women in political affairs is one of the most challenging issues that have been discussed for years between religious extremists, jurists, and thinkers. Among these, some people citing the texts of the Holy Quran give reasons for the illegitimacy of women's political participation and consider this right contrary to Islamic values, but others, citing other texts of Quran and speeches of Prophet Mohammad, emphasize the participation of women in the affairs of the country. In this article, the reasons for the pros and cons of political participation will be analyzed.

### **1. Reasons of Proponents for Women's Political Participation**

Proponents cite several texts from the Holy Quran and the speeches of the Prophet Muhammad to prove women's right to political participation.

The first texts of the Quran that expresses the competence and merit, as well as the right of women to participate and play a role in political affairs and power and sovereignty, are the texts related to the Queen *Seba*<sup>17</sup>, which are mentioned in Surah An-Naml (chapter 27), from verses 23 to 44. In these texts, God speaks of an intelligent and prudent woman who rules over the land and became a Muslim by invitation of Prophet Solomon<sup>18</sup>. For this reason that God, through the various scenes of Solomon's life, presents the scene of his relationship with the Queen *Seba* and quotes from the words of the Queen *Seba*, which are a sign of his high wisdom and intelligence, and then ends the story without any criticism, irony or elaboration. Everyone expresses a positive view of the Quran on the role and position of the Queen *Seba* and shows that a woman can be in the highest political position from the

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<sup>17</sup> Queen Seba is the only female Queen mentioned in the Qur'an. Also mentioned in the Jewish and Christian scriptures.

<sup>18</sup> Solomon son of David was, according to the Quran, a King and Prophet of the Israelites. Islamic tradition generally holds that he was the third King of Jewish people, and wise ruler for the nation.

perspective of the Quran. One of the contemporary commentator jurists writes in this regard: The Quran depicts a woman in the face of the Queen of Sheba as a human being, who has intellect and wisdom and does not submit to her own emotions and feelings, because her responsibility has been able to give her maturity and perfection of experience and strength of intellect, To advance to the level of rule and domination over men; Men who saw in her a capable and wise personality and able to managing affairs and social affairs. (Hosaini, 2000: 25-26)

One of the examples of the political presence of women that shows the Quran's positive view of women's political participation was women's allegiance to Prophet Mohammad, which is mentioned in text 12 of Surah Al-Mumtahanah (Chapter 60). In this text, God instructed the Prophet that if women come to you with faith to pledge allegiance and declare allegiance to your message and obey your command, trusts their loyalty. Since (allegiance) in the Arab culture at the time of the revelation of the Quran meant the covenant of loyalty to someone and the declaration of obedience to him, like the phenomenon (choice) in today's political culture that provides the political legitimacy of government and obedience of people. Thus, the text of the Quran explicitly affirms the participation of women in a matter that plays a decisive role in the political destiny of society and the two-way relationship between command and obedience of government and people and forces the Prophet to accept it as the religious and political ruler of society.

One part of power and sovereignty is the part of the legislation, which in the form of the Council (*Shura*) shows a part of the people's participation in determining their social destiny. Although the Quran does not provide a specific method for legislating in the system of government, it has two well-known texts about the council and consultation in general (whether in legislation or other fields); In verse 38, chapter 42 of Surah Shura, one of the prominent features of the believers is stated and in verse 159 of the third Chapter of the Quran (Al-Imran) instructs the Prophet to consult with the believers, and thus teaches them the tradition of the council. On the other hand, there is no doubt that in both verses the believers are men and women, which means that the method of the council, whenever and in whatever context it is used, both men and women have the right to participate and express their opinions. In this way, the Quran gives women the right to participate and play a role, not only in the field of legislation, but also in all areas where the element of consultation is

used as a decision-making or planning tool, and thus, implicitly confirm the woman's competence.

The Holy Quran has mentioned the attributes and criteria of a political leader and leader in various verses, but none of them has considered gender as a characteristic of a standard leader. As in verse 25 of Surah Qasas (chapter 28), from the words of Shoaib's<sup>19</sup> daughters, God states that faith and trustworthiness are the conditions for hiring a servant.

Other attributes of a political leader are knowledge and ability that God considers important, as, in Surah Al-Baqarah chapter 2, verse 247, and the criterion for choosing *Talut* to fight against the authoritarian and tyrannical Goliath of Ishmael's era is wisdom and ability. In this regard, the Prophet Muhammad also said that whoever chooses the governorship among the Muslims while he knows that another has priority over his and is more aware of the Qur'an and rules, he has betrayed God and his Messenger Prophet Mohammad and all Muslims. This speech refers to the importance and necessity of observing the principle of merit and competence in the selection of all managers, which in case of the intersection with the criterion of gender, the above principle prevails.

In verse 58 of Surah An-Nisa '(Chapter 4), God has spoken about justice; God commands for people to judge with justice. He also says in Surah Ma'idah (Chapter 5) verse 45; those who do not judge according to what God has revealed, and then they are the wrongdoers. And in verse 42 of this chapter, he says that and if you judge, then judge between them with justice. In all these verses, what is emphasized is a judgment based on truth and justice. But there is no indication of who the judge is, male or female. Therefore, anyone who recognizes and adheres to right and justice can judge, whether male or female.

The Holy Qur'an considers the duty of social control and reform in all its areas as the public responsibility of the people, and in some cases even states that men and women have an equal share in carrying out this mission and responsibility.

Verse 71 of Surah Tawbah (Chapter 9): faithful Men and women are friends

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<sup>19</sup> Shoaib was an ancient Midianite Prophet, sometimes identified with the Biblical Jethro. He is believed to have lived after Ibrahim (Abraham), and Muslims believe that he was sent as a prophet to a community: the Midianites.

of each other, who hope for good deeds and forbid evil deeds. Verse 104 of Surah Al-Imran (chapter 3): A group of you should invite people to goodness and make them do good deeds and refrain from ugliness. Therefore, the Qur'an not only recognizes the right of women to participate in this part of political activities but also considers it their duty to carry out this mission, and of course, any move that is the prelude to the optimal fulfillment of this mission is a necessary and worthy thing such as forming a party, Association or participation in them.

Some Muslim thinkers have argued with verses that show the dominance of human beings over themselves in order to prove the right of women to participate politically in general and her right and competence specifically for the presidency or rule in the highest position of government and power. Based on this argument, verses such as verse 36 and verse 6 of Surah Al-Ahzab (Chapter 33) indicate that in the absence of the Prophet or the ruling of God and the Prophet, the believers have the authority of their duty, On the other hand, electing or being elected a woman in a position of sovereignty is one of the examples of the right of choice that people enjoy in the absence of the Prophet or the sharia law. And thirdly, we do not have a religious reason that can prove the ruling of incompatibility with this choice, so both the people can choose the woman as an element of the government and the woman has the right to be elected.

## **2. Reasons of Opponents of Women's Political Participation**

The reasons cited by opponents of women's political participation are:

First, verse 34 of Surah An-Nisa '(Chapter 4) is cited as proof that God says: Men are the guardians of women for two reasons, one is that God has made them superior to women and the other is because they spend from their wealth. The reason for arguing this verse is that, due to the generality of the reason mentioned in it, proves that a man is a guardian in general in all social matters such as government, judiciary, defense, etc. Therefore, in all these matters, men have the authority to stand up and do things, not women. (Tabatabaei, 2016: 365) On the other hand, Montazeri (1988: 351) criticize this verse in such a way that the first evidence and the reason for descent of the verse are related to the family system, that is, the wife versus the husband without any connection to social and political issues, including the issue of government and leadership. The continuation of this verse also clarifies

the general direction that speaks about husband and wife. And in the final part of this verse, the first is the disobedience of women and dealing with them, then emphasizing the orientation of the verse in the context of family relationships.

Verse 228 of the second chapter proves a kind of superiority of men over women in the field of social life, and this means that whenever in both areas of social life, such as politics, men and women can both be present, men take precedence over women, and Women do not have the right to be present or play a role. Some of them have gone even further and taken (Superiority) to mean existential superiority and perfection, in which case the verse conveys the imperfection and inadequacy of the existence and intellect of women over men. But the fact is that the superiority in the verse mentioned refers to a series of powers that the man has as the head of the family. First, the verse proves the reciprocal rights of husband and wife in the family to the man. And for this reason, some have said that the purpose of this verse is the right to divorce. (Hosaini, 2001)

In verse 18, chapter 43, God says, "Do they associate anyone with God who has been brought up in adornment and whose speech is vague when arguing?" Explaining that women tend to adorn themselves and emotions prevail in them and politics requires reason and thinking. (Arabnazhad and Akochkian. 2010:270). According to the verses before and after this verse, Hosaini (2001) have considered idols as the subject of the attributes mentioned in the verse, in which case, the interpretation of the verse has nothing to do with women. This is not accepted by most commentators. But if the argument is correct, the reason is specific to the claim in two ways, first, it does not apply to all women, because some of them have a high level of rationality. Then, it still does not apply to political activities because the different areas of political participation are not all the same as the presidency or leadership. This argument is also fundamentally incorrect because the Qur'an expresses the ignorant Arabs' view of women, not their true nature.

Verse 33 Chapter 33 of the Qur'an is another reason for the citation that God says: "Stay in your homes and do not reveal your ornaments like in the days of old ignorance." With this argument, women's political participation and holding government positions are at odds with the issue of housekeeping. This view is incorrect in many ways, because first of all, this verse is about the wives of the Prophet Muhammad. Secondly, assuming that it includes all Muslim women, the

verse does not mean absolute housekeeping and not leaving the house, but it means unreasonable change and coming and going with a lack of sobriety, which indicates in the continuation of the verse.

Other documents opposing women's political participation include a series of statements by the Prophet Muhammad about the imperfection of women. Or another speech of Prophet Mohammad that is: "A nation that chooses a woman as its governor and ruler will never be successful." (Sahih Bukhari, 1407: 90) But by contemplating the time and requirements of the issuance of these speeches we realize that each of the hadiths is not general and is specific to a particular nation, specific women in a particular place and time, and did not mean to influence on the exclusion of the all women from the politics.

By comparing the arguments of the proponents and the opponents, we conclude that the second category of verses either has nothing to do with the category of participation or does not imply the denial of women's rights and competencies, Contrary to the verses of the first category, that some of them were explicit in proving the right and competence to play the political role of women, and some had a clear appearance of in this regard. This means that from the Qur'an's point of view, a woman like a man can be involved in political destiny without any difference and have a share in the system of government and power, and there are no obstacles in that regard.

## **E. Women's Participation in Government**

The government of Afghanistan consists of three branches: the executive, the judiciary, and the legislature, headed by the president. In this article, we examine the level of women's political participation in the executive and legislative branches.

### **1. The Level of Women's Participation in the Executive Branch**

The Afghan executive branch, also known as the government, is the executive body that regulates and enforces the law. According to Article 71 of the Afghanistan Constitution, the government consists of ministers working under the presidency. Ministers are elected by the President and nominated to the Wolesi Jirga (lower house) for a vote of confidence.

After the fall of the Taliban government, which was a nightmare for not only women but all the people of Afghanistan, and the establishment of a democratic system in Afghanistan and the adoption of the constitution, great efforts were made to involve women for further development and progress, also legally give women the right to vote and be elected.

In the first round of the 2004 presidential election, only one of the 18 candidates was a woman. Like other candidates, she outlined her plans for the presidency if she wins. More than 10 million people cast their ballots, about 42 percent of whom were women, with 1.1 percent of the vote going to Massoud Jalal, the first female candidate for the presidency. . Hamid Karzai was appointed President with 55.4% of the vote. In his cabinet, which included 25 ministries, he sought to include women, As the Minister of Women's Affairs Massoud Jalal was appointed, who was Minister until 2006, and then Hassan Banoo Ghazanfar was appointed Minister of Women's Affairs. He also appointed a woman (Ameneh Afzali) as Minister of Information and Culture, but the minister was changed after 2006. Ms. Sedigheh Balkhi was also the Minister of State for Martyrs and Disabled Affairs from 2004 to 2006 but was later dismissed due to its merger with the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs. In 2007, Afghanistan had 17 ambassadors abroad, including two women.

In the second round of the 2009 presidential election, two of the 32 candidates were women, each obtained less than one percent of the vote. In this election, Hamid Karzai won for the second time, and this time he also considered the presence of women in the formation of the cabinet important. For example, Ms. Hassan Banoo Ghazanfar continued to work as the head of this ministry despite not receiving a vote of confidence from the parliament. The Ministry of Public Health and the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs were also run by women.

In the 2014 presidential election, unfortunately, we did not see any female candidates, but with the formation of the National Unity Government, it was hoped that more women would enter the cabinet, but despite many challenges and the traditional Afghan society, the presence of women in the cabinet was low, even a number of women ministers did not get a vote of confidence from the parliament every time. Ms. Narges Nahan, who was appointed Minister of Mines in 2017, continued to work as a supervisor until 2019 when she later resigned. Before that, the



ministry was headed by Ms. Ghazal Habib Yar. Ms. Kamaleh Sedighi was also the head of the Ministry of Trade and Industry for some time. Also initially named two women as the Minister of Higher Education, but both failed to win a vote of confidence in parliament. Another cabinet minister was Ms. Safi, as Minister of Information and Culture in 2018. The Ministry of Women's Affairs was also headed by two women one, after the other.

In the fourth round of the presidential election held in 2019, no woman ran again because of security conditions such as assassination female candidates and other challenges (The traditional culture of patriarchy, insufficient accessibility to the economical sources, and etc...). Once again, a national unity government was formed, headed by Ashraf Ghani and Abdullah Abdullah. The cabinet of this government has not been determined yet, but only 3 women ministers have been introduced to the cabinet so far.

## **2. Level of Women's Participation in the Legislation Branch**

The legislature of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan is also called the National Assembly, which consists of two houses. According to Article 81 of the Constitution of Afghanistan, the National Council of the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, as the highest legislative body, is the manifestation of the will of its people and represents the nation.

A parliament consisting of a 249-seat lower house (Wolesi Jirga, House of People) and a 102-seat selected upper house (Meshrano Jirga, House of Elders) elected simultaneously, if possible, with presidential elections. In the lower house, ten seats are reserved for Afghanistan's Kuchis (nomads), and at least 68 of those elected (two per province, with 34 provinces) "should" be women, giving women about 25% of the seats. The top two women in each province earn seats. For the upper house, 34 seats are selected by provincial councils (one from each of 34 provinces); another 34 are to be selected by nearly 400 elected district councils; and the final 34 are appointed by the President, half of the president's 34 (17%) appointees are to be women. (Katzman, 2006, pp. 1-2)

Provincial and district councils are constituencies at the provincial and district levels of the country that work to meet the government's development goals and regulate affairs and ensure the active participation of the people in local

administrations. As a fixed share for women is set in parliament, 124 of the 420 seats in the provincial council are constitutionally reserved for women. They also have a 25 percent share in the district council. Unfortunately, this 25 percent share of the provincial council was reduced to 20 percent.

Unfortunately, although the law protects the presence of women in constituencies and does not impose any restrictions on women's political participation, the presence of women candidates and their campaigning, voting, and to be elected, the presence of women in politics, especially elections, has faded over the course of last years. Table (1) shows the presence of women in the recent elections in Afghanistan. According to the report<sup>20</sup>, although women make up about half of Afghanistan's population, their turnout was low and declined significantly over time.

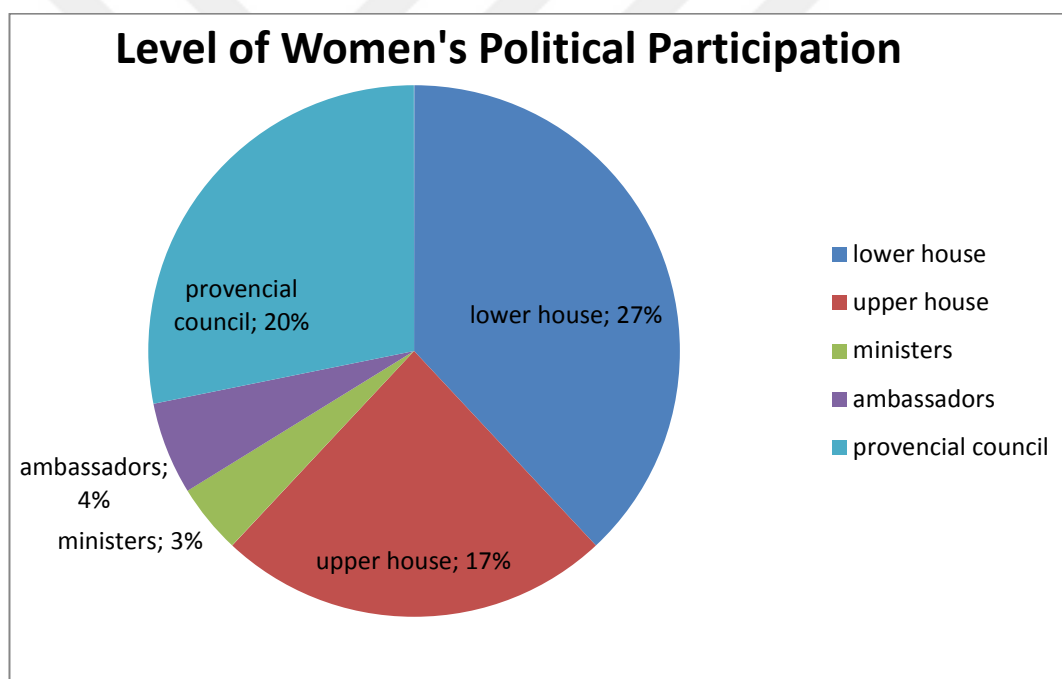


Figure 1 Level of Women's Political Participation

<sup>20</sup> <https://worldpopulationreview.com/countries/afghanistan-population>

Table 1 Female Candidates in Elections

Elections	Total number of candidates	Number of female candidates	Number of female winner	Number of female candidates in Herat province	Female winners in Herat province
Parliamentary election 2005	2835	344	68		5
Provincial council elections 2005	3201	285	124	30	5
Provincial council elections 2009	3196	328	106	28	5
Parliamentary election 2010	2577	406	66	23	5
Provincial council elections 2014	2591	291		21	4
Parliamentary election 2018	2615	401	65	28	5

Although women's political participation is guaranteed in the Afghan constitution, there are specific quotas for women in parliamentary and provincial council elections, And according to the Afghan government's national and international commitments regarding the role of women in the cabinet and other senior government positions, women are present in these positions, but the findings of this study show that this participation is not effective and satisfactory.

Various factors are cited as reasons for the decline in women's participation in elections, but whatever the factors, this decline in women's participation in elections is not a good sign of the fragile situation of women in Afghanistan.

#### **F. Women's Political Participation in Political Parties**

Political parties are the most important political player in democracies. Political parties are an example of the largest political formation that forms the center of political activity in a democracy. A political party is a political gathering with a single opinion. The most important definition of a political party is that Political

party means a group of people with common goals, for the realization of which they create special programs, plans, and organizations and fight for participation in political power and administration of society according to their ideas and goals. (Danesh, 2014) The Afghanistan constitution recognizes the formation of political parties in Article 33.

In democratic societies, political parties play a major role in empowering and empowering women, and this is where women can gain self-confidence and involve themselves in the country's political affairs. On the other side, in the election campaign, women face more support due to party activities and it becomes easier for them to gain power. also can stand up to any decision by the government that goes against the wishes of women and present their plans and demands to correct issues such as the escalation of violence, the removal of women from power, and their non-participation in political structures. In Australia, the Labor Party has a pillar called the National Network of Working Women, whose most important role is to encourage women's political participation. At the same time, the government of that country uses the advice of this pillar for policies related to women. In Canada, the Liberal Party has formed a national commission under this title. The commission's main action is to encourage women's political participation. The commission has set up a foundation called Judy Lamarche to fund liberal women's campaigns. In the United Kingdom, the Labor Party also involves women at all levels of the party, so that the presence of women in the party has become a vital role. The Labor Party Women's Network has taken effective measures, including training in networking and liaising with various groups of women. In the Republican Party of America, an organization called the Republican Women's Federation has been formed. In addition to encouraging women's political participation, the federation is also actively involved in social activities. The Democratic Party of America has also had a Women's Leadership Assembly since 1993. In addition to encouraging women's political participation, this pillar has made serious efforts to empower women and increase their women's political participation. Utilizing the capacity of parties to bring women to power is clear for all today. Few civic political organizations can be found that ignore this issue. But this issue has not yet become a necessity among the parties of the world, especially the parties of Afghanistan. In Afghanistan, most ethnic and tribal tendencies have been the main reason for the formation of

parties.(Jafari, 2016: 163-164)

A look at the history of political parties in Afghanistan reveals three almost distinct periods:

- The communist era and the emergence of political parties
- The period of jihad and the emergence of jihadist organizations with an ethnic, religious approach
- And the period of modern democracy and the continuation of jihadi ethnic parties with the claim of democracy

A look at these three periods and the study of the status of women and the position of women in these parties shows the severe inequality of the position and rights of women within the parties. Although some rhetorical and symbolic parties claim to protect the status and political rights of women; But in reality, none of these parties has a strategic vision and action plan for institutionalizing and equal political participation for women, and no fundamental work has been done by the parties in this regard. And this desire of the parties to involve women is simply because women have a special share in the government apparatus, so that they can easily dominate that share.

Women began their political and social presence before the democratic era and even before the communist era, but became more obscure during the so-called jihad era. During the government of *Mujahidin*, the activities of women are well-remembered. Women have had an exemplary presence behind the front lines, as a healer of the wounded and providing for the needs of the *Mujahidin*. In Herat, there are many stories about *Ama Sakineh*, a woman who rode out of the city on horseback to deliver food and messages to the *Mujahidin* outside the city and sometimes took part in the war. But with the transition from the era of jihad and resistance, the position of women in politics was accompanied by ups and downs in political parties. Unfortunately, we have to admit what we call political parties today and are currently influencing the political destiny of the country; they are a continuation of the same mono-ethnic jihadist arrangements of the past, which also have undeniable military tendencies. Their current political forces also show their power and destructive power. The old parties, most of which have been characterized by ethnic, religious, and linguistic characteristics, are now becoming more family-oriented and

regionalized than ever before in their lives, and there are even many breathtaking conflicts and rivalries between races. It is natural that in such a situation, can't talk about the rights and status of women. In parties that are alien to democratic values and still have intra-party appointments rather than democratic ones, women have a long and difficult way to go to find their place.

When we look at other countries, parties have been considered as the main positions of building and strengthening the cadres, especially the capacity of women, as well as gaining power. Also in today's democratic societies, in addition to the abilities and capacities of women, parties have undeniably increased women's political participation, because the world's democratic parties have realized the close and two-way relationship between women's participation and the development of society. By participating in political parties, women have discovered and strengthened their political and managerial capacities, and by using the potentials available in the parties, with the support of the parties, they have also achieved high government positions. In Britain, Margaret Thatcher became famous with the support of the Conservative Party. In Germany, Angela Merkel was nominated for Chancellor of the Exchequer through the Christian Democrats. In the United States, Hillary Clinton, Madeleine Albright, Condoleezza Rice, and dozens of other successful women politicians are each seeking new opportunities through their parties.

It seems an acceptable rule that parties should naturally seek the presence of women and the support of women in their rise to power, At least to gain the trust of half the community. And more deeply, the belief in the equal presence of women in politics and in the power structure of democratic parties is an attempt to achieve this goal and to have more influence among the people.

Women, with unique characteristics that are common to them, bring different values and norms into the male world of politics, and perhaps one of the concerns of the so-called political parties in Afghanistan today is that their patriarchal world Change with the presence of women who even consciously prefer to welcome women less in political parties and try less to create the ground for the growth and introduction of women politicians.

On the other hand, women in Afghanistan prefer not to enter parties as much as possible and enter the world of politics independently or through civic activities,

as only two of the current members of parliament are affiliated with political parties. Perhaps the not-so-brilliant human rights record of the parties is not ineffective in the reluctance of women to join existing political parties in Afghanistan. Jafari (2016: 168) claimed that the reluctance to joining parties has many factors and reasons, but for women the following reasons can be listed:

- Uncertainty about the political position of women in the party
- Women's lack of assurance about the parties' belief in women's rights
- Existence of corruption and discriminatory views on women
- Absence of women in the party decision-making ranks
- Existence of excessive ethnic structures in the parties
- Lack of assurance in the parties' commitment to women's human and political rights and concerns about the use of instrumentalism in parties.

This decline in women's participation in political parties has been criticized for failing to win popular votes without the support of women's political groups.

#### **G. The Effects of Women's Political Participation and Their Achievements**

After the defeat of the Taliban in November 2001, some positive changes took place for women. Women emerged from complete isolation and achieved equal freedoms in social life, access to education and employment, and participation in peace and reconstruction decisions by gaining equal rights in Afghanistan's constitution. The past 20 years have been a golden age for Afghan women, and women have taken advantage of this opportunity to assert their rights. The right to education, freedom of expression, the right to work in public and private institutions, and many other rights are among the benefits that women have gained in recent years. The passage of the constitution and the creation of positive discrimination in some areas, such as the mandatory allocation of at least 25% of parliamentary seats to women MPs, have increased women's political participation in decision-making.

Despite the existence of many challenges and obstacles, women again fought for their rights and always stood up with courage and bravery against injustices and oppression. Women's political participation has encouraged more women and today more efforts are being made to eradicate the country's patriarchal culture. According

to research, women in parliament are better educated than men, defend women's fundamental and equal rights better, and work hard to eradicate gender bias.

One of the major achievements of the post-Taliban regime is the establishment of the Ministry of Women's Affairs, which is all its staff is female. The ministry has established several institutions and associations to support women's rights. For example, the Afghan Women's Network, the Women's Rights Foundation, and so on. These institutions and associations at the provincial and district levels have made women more aware of their rights and prevented much violence. Other important achievements include women's participation in peace talks, which currently have nine members out of a total of 70 members of the High Peace Council. Although this is a small amount, it is hoped that they will be able to defend their 20-year achievements and never return to the dark and dark days of the past. In general, the overview of the present sources shows that despite the 27% share in parliament and equal rights, this participation is fragile and symbolic, and women cannot play a significant role in important decisions. And this partnership has been declining.

The Afghan Women's Political Statement shows that women's political participation has not been effective for several reasons: First, women's participation in major decisions and government leadership has gradually decreased. Some women working in various levels of government leadership complain about their absence from national and international debates. Secondly, in some leadership positions in the government, such as women ministers and mayors, women have recently been removed from their posts and their responsibilities have been delegated to men. On the other hand, the role of women in provincial councils and other provincial structures is still unclear. Women in most provinces do not participate in any of the peace, security, and development processes. Various other factors have made women's political participation superficial and nominal, and women have little control over resources. These factors will be discussed in detail in the next title.

## **H. Barriers and Challenges of Political Participation in Afghanistan**

However, the political participation of Afghan women in electoral positions is much better than in neighboring countries and the region, and even women's rights activists in some neighboring countries such as Iran consider the Afghan Women's



Quota Law as a suitable model for women in their community and wish to have a similar law in their own country. In other countries in the region, the rate of Afghan women's political participation is exemplary; but there is still a long way to go to improve the situation of women in Afghanistan, we should not turn a blind eye to identifying and analyzing problems and taking action to eliminate them to pave the way for women's participation. A variety of factors can be cited that have prevented Afghan women from participating in politics like other women around the world. These factors include:

### **1. Security Factors**

The poor security situation, especially for women, has reduced voter turnout in many parts of the country, especially in the southern and eastern parts of the country. Women are threatened with assassination if they run in the elections. There are also threats from unidentified groups alongside the Taliban. In the first round of parliament, female candidates were harassed. As a result, 140 women resigned and one was killed. (Emadi, 2008: 15)

In many insecure areas of the country, women were unable to vote. Security problems have led to fewer female election observers, and in many cases, female candidates or their campaigners have been threatened by the Taliban, local commanders, and their rivals. Insecurity in some places prevents women from exercising their right to vote as they wish. For example, in a family, men influence and threaten that a woman should vote for a particular candidate, or ethnic and influential elders in a village threaten that a woman should vote for a male candidate from the same ethnic group. In this way, women are deprived of the freedom to vote.

Insecurity has led to far fewer women in government offices in the provinces than in the capital. In insecure environments, women are the first victims of violence, which is why most restrictions are placed on women. In insecure areas where the government has no control, women are stoned to death, girls' schools are set on fire, and girls and women are strictly forbidden in the community.

Security threats against women are not limited to elections, Women working in offices and institutions have always faced various dangers due to the patriarchal traditions that govern Afghan society. In another period in Herat, motorcyclists sprayed acid on women, and thus threatened their social presence. At the time, these

threats had prompted women activists in Herat to endure severe restrictions as a precaution.

Women parliamentarians, members of provincial councils, civil society activists, journalists and women working for international organizations (including the United Nations), all by anti-government elements, religious or local authorities, their families and various communities, and even In some cases, they are threatened by government officials. Threats are very diverse, including phone calls, night letters, and posters posted in public places, especially in mosques. These women are also verbally harassed on the street, and in some cases even subjected to physical assault, assassination, or murder.

## **2. Social Factors**

Another major obstacle to women's political participation in Afghanistan is misconceptions, customs, and social norms that limit women's participation in public life. Afghan women face unacceptable customs that they have been required to follow for decades. Many of these traditions have no religious or legal basis, but people have accepted them.

Harmful traditions and customs against women and girls are practiced by tribal leaders and religious leaders in the name of religion. It is said that war and insecurity, social unrest and poverty in this country have created and strengthened these false social traditions and norms. For example, the main role of women is limited to staying at home and taking care of children and family responsibilities while men are the head of the house, or many mullahs misinterpret the verses of the Holy Quran and in public opinion, that women have less role and rights than Men have accepted. These false traditions and norms have been extended to all aspects of women's lives, giving way to prejudice and superstition, and women have deprived of all their rights and freedoms, such as property rights, the right to choose a spouse, and the right to social participation that have been recognized by religion.

Patriarchy in Afghanistan is rooted in misconceptions that, as unwritten law, have been passed down from generation to generation throughout Afghanistan's history and have now become a very strong culture in Afghanistan. And this culture affected the three main institutions of society:

- Family institution: Today we see many women being subjected to domestic violence, even those in high government positions. Or, for example, in the parents' family, describe their daughter and son differently, or give different toys, such as dolls, utensils, ornaments, etc., to the daughter, car, gun, etc. to the son, which lead to introduce the childhood of children's minds to its role in society.
- Social media: Many media portray women as a means of adornment and beauty, and men play the roles of superheroes and top roles in society.
- Educational Institutions: In most textbooks, women are portrayed as mothers, wives, sisters, and so on. And women heroes throughout history are hidden behind men.

This culture of patriarchy also governs the formulation of political rules and considers only men suitable for holding high political and social positions, Limits the responsibilities and duties of women in the survival of the generation and the management of the home. Even today, many politicians still oppose women's participation in politics. For example, many female members of parliament are ridiculed by male members. And men do not even vote in favor of women's decisions simply because they are women.

One of the misconceptions that many people in Afghanistan today have is that if a woman participates in a political position and is present in society, she is disrespectful and disgraced, so she is insulted by many individuals and groups. False traditions, traditions, and norms against women are prevalent not only in rural areas and illiterate families but even in urban centers. In fact, there is no clear distinction between rural or urban women who are actively involved outside the home, and both groups are exposed to different threats and are typically deprived of family and community support.

In many cases, women working in high social positions, along with female doctors and journalists, have been forced to quit their jobs and turn to jobs such as teachers due to family pressures. Although literate families are more inclined to allow their female members to study and work, these families may also withdraw support from their female members under the influence of social norms.

### **3. Economic Factors**

Participation in competitive political arenas always requires financial and economic costs. In a country like Afghanistan, where not only women are not supported in the political arena; rather, their political participation is limited in various ways; the first problem women may face in running for office is funding their campaigns. Article 49 of the Constitution stipulates that the maximum propaganda expenses of candidates for provincial council candidates are five hundred thousand Afghanis, equivalent to seven thousand dollars, but it is also very difficult for female candidates to provide the same amount. On the other hand, due to the lack of transparency in the financial system in Afghanistan, other candidates spend more than this amount on their campaigns. . Some candidates spend most of their capital on buying votes to increase their votes and succeed. Others paid large sums of money to the corruption commission in the Electoral Commission to invalidate the votes of the winning candidates, thus raising their votes.

Afghan women due to financial dependence on family men, poor presence in economic activities, non-recognition of their property rights by a large part of society, and other financial restrictions imposed on them by society, traditions, and culture, are less financially able to compete easily with their male counterparts. In Afghan society, women have never been supported for their economic activities, and the presence and participation of women in the Afghan labor market is irregular and insignificant. Many women, because of their role as mothers and wives, are interested in part-time or low-wage jobs, or do not even want to work, which results in their unequal share of economic resources. On the other hand, many women are not allowed to work outside the home, and even if they do, their wages are much lower than their male counterparts. In this way, women who are always indebted and dependent on men in the family and are not given the opportunity for economic development are less likely to participate actively and inclusively in social and political activities.

### **4. Psychological Factors**

In Afghan society, because in recent centuries, capable and politically active women have been less able to be present on the scene, social beliefs about their political and social abilities have gradually weakened, and perhaps women

themselves have believed that politics is not a good place for them, and women in society are more likely to think that men are more capable and reliable in the political arena. They do not believe in the abilities that women can have in the political arena because they have seen less successful models in their society. In recent years, however, women have largely been able to take advantage of opportunities to demonstrate their power and talent, and at least in some areas have demonstrated the trust of society and men in their political ability and commitment; But outside the cities and in remote and insecure areas, there is still no belief in their ability and no significant support.

The natural inequality of physical strength between men and women is another reason that deepens the gender gap and causes the penetration of patriarchy. Feelings of powerlessness and lack of motivation have hindered women's active participation in society and politics.

## **5. Political Factors**

Although Afghan law has given a certain share to women, we still see that this share is not as effective as expected and is more symbolic. The most important factor is that women did not come to parliament as a single bloc and are divided politically, ethnically and racially. Some female representatives are affiliated with political parties and follow the specific agendas and strategies of the parties, or some are affiliated with a particular ethnic group and pursue only the interests of their own ethnic group. On the other hand, because parties play an important role in the political destiny of the country, and these parties are formed mostly on the basis of ethnicity and religion in Afghanistan. If we take a look at the history of these parties, throughout history they have been opposed to the presence of women in society and politics, and today, when they accept the presence of women in their organizations, it is only to increase their power and gain more seats in parliament.

Another obstacle is that they have a small share in decisions because they are at least in parliament, so their decision is considered invalid in front of a large part of parliament. And as we said before, the share of women in big decisions and government leadership is small and is decreasing day by day and women are being removed from major political positions such as minister and ambassador.

Disagreement and lack of unity is one of the biggest problems that even caused the quota for women in the Provincial Council to be reduced from 25% to 20% in 2014 when the Provincial Council law was passed in the House of Representatives, and none of the 69 women MPs were affected. Many women MPs voted in favor without even realizing it.

Another problem is the interpretation of the constitution and the election law. The IEC's interpretation of the women's quota is that women can only hold 27 percent of the seats in parliament or 20 percent of the seats in the provincial council, and if more women get more votes than men in their constituencies, they have no right to occupy more seats. In the 2009 and 2014 provincial council elections, in some provinces, the number of women who won more votes than men was higher than the quota provided by law, but according to the IEC, only 20% had the right to run for the provincial council, and other women were barred from running for the provincial council, despite the higher turnout than men. (Jafari, 2016:88)

As can be seen, there are many challenges to women's political participation, so Afghan women can only achieve equal rights in the long run if they become a recognizable political force within their own country.

#### **IV. INVESTIGATION THE POLITICAL PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN IN THE POST\_TALIBAN REGIME IN HERAT CITY**

According to Article 136 of the Constitution of Afghanistan, the administration of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan is based on national administration and local administrations. The central administration is divided into several administrative units, each headed by a minister. The unit of local administration is the province. By maintaining the principle of centrality to accelerate and improve economic, social, and cultural affairs and involve as many people as possible in the development of national life, the government delegates the necessary competencies to the local government according to the provisions of law. Afghanistan has 34 provinces, of which Herat is the second largest province in Afghanistan after Helmand. Herat province, along with Farah and Nimroz, together form the western provinces of Afghanistan and border Iran and Turkmenistan. The National Statistics Office named Herat the most populous province after Kabul, with a population of 2.1 million. 1078877 people are men, and 1061785 people are women. (Sobh-e Kabul, 2020) The city of Herat has a special reputation for having historical monuments such as minarets, the historic castle of Ekhtiaruddin Shah, and the Grand blue Mosque, and is a tourist center. Herat is also the largest commercial center of Afghanistan with its largest industrial town.

According to Article 138 of the Afghan Constitution, a provincial council is established in each province to achieve government development goals and improve the affairs of the province. The members of the Provincial Council are elected by the residents of the province for four years through free, general, secret, and direct elections. Herat Provincial Council is currently officially active and has 19 members.

Also, to regulate the affairs and ensure the active participation of the people, councils are formed, in the districts and villages, under the provisions of the law. The members of these councils are elected by local residents through free, general, secret and direct elections for a term of three years. (The Afghanistan constitution law, 2004, article: 140) Herat has 19 districts, and each district has a council.

According to article 141 of constitution, a municipality will also be formed to administer urban affairs. Mayors and members of municipal councils are elected through free, general, secret and direct elections. According to Article 142 of the Constitution, the government constitutes the necessary departments to implement the provisions and ensure the values contained in this Constitution. The chairman and members of these departments are appointed by the Independent Administrative Reform Commission through free competition.

This study was conducted to determine the level of women's participation in local administrations and bodies in the city of Herat by conducting interviews with members of these institutions such as members of the provincial council, members of district councils, and political activists. Also, the level of participation of Herat women in the country's parliament (the pillar of government legislation) and political parties, which are groups influencing the country's politics, was determined by conducting field research. The research process was conducted in such a way that these participants were interviewed face to face and online. During the interview, participants were asked semi-structured questions about their motivations for participating in political activities, the obstacles and challenges they have faced, the effects of their participation, and what achievements they had in the community. As there are 33 political parties in Herat, female members of political parties were also interviewed. The questions were about their position in the party and their role in making decisions, and how the party approaches women's participation.

## **A. Methodology**

Throughout this research, an attempt has been made to collect information in two ways. In the first step, pieces of information were obtained through the library studies, which were explicitly stated in the first and second chapters, to create clarity in the reader's mind about this topic and to better understand the topic. In the second step, through field research and interviews with women, an attempt has been made to collect raw statistics and information to indicate how the level of political participation is in Herat city. Herat is the second-most populous province after Kabul and one of Afghanistan's relatively safest provinces in terms of security. Therefore, any research in this province is easier and less difficult for researchers. Herat as the place of the researcher's residence is one of the key provinces of Afghanistan and



has a significant share in political and economic development, so the researcher decided to evaluate the level of political participation of women in this province. The researcher interviewed some women of Herat province that include those women that are the representative in parliament, provincial council, and political parties, also some civil right activists. The researcher conducted some interviews face to face in representatives' offices such as the provincial council, the offices of parties, and some online. The most difficult part of the interviews was the interviews with members of parliament because it was impossible to communicate with them due to security issues, but fortunately, after much effort and the use of communication links, the interviews were conducted online. Finally, the interviews were conducted in 5 months, due to the hard accessibility of members of parliament and the lockdown situation of covid-19.

## **B. The Population of Under Research**

The study population in this study includes the following sections in Herat province:

- Female representatives of Herat province in parliament
- Female representatives of Herat Provincial Council
- Female members of political parties
- Political civil activists

The population under study is 40 women, which according to the chart, 20 of them are civil political activists, 10 of them are members of political parties, 5 members of parliament and 5 members the provincial council. Of course, it should be noted that this population is not entirely from Herat province, only the city center. getting research and interviews with female political activists in districts And the villages are difficult and beyond my power due to the vast area of Herat province and security reasons and the existence of quarantine due to the spread of covid-19. The statistical population in terms of nature and quality includes only women, which includes different age groups, often over 18 years. All questions asked to participants were semi-structured, that focusing on their personal experiences.

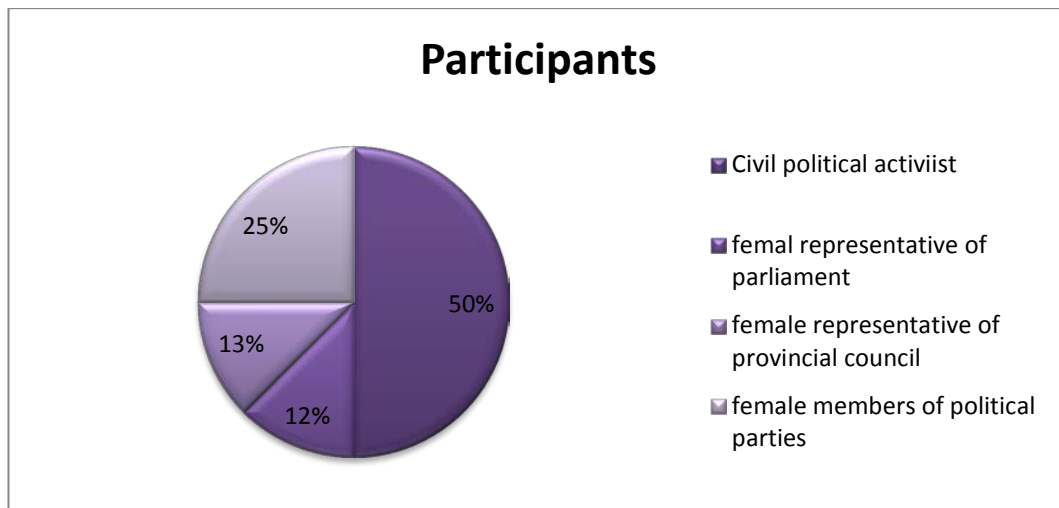


Figure 2 Participants

### C. Data Analysis

In this section, we will analyze the data and information obtained from the interviews conducted.

#### 1. Motivation and Purpose of Women's Participation in Political Activities

As a result of the interviews with the participants, one of the most important motivations for them to engage in political activities was having an experience of the dark and sinister period of the Taliban era. Despite the passage of 20 years since then and the advent of democracy and the recognition of women's rights, the situation of women has not improved as it should. Therefore, most female political activists have entered the field of politics to improve the current situation. This time, women themselves can get their rights and defend the rights of suffering women in Afghanistan without any man's need to support them.

Most of the participants, under the influence of feminist movements, have entered the society and the political sphere, and they are trying to fight against the false tradition of misogyny, to be role models for other women, and also to encourage other women who have been banned from entering society.

These interviews revealed that some women believed that the country's insecurity is the result of not participating of women in politics and that men alone were not able to bring peace to the country, so their presence was imperative.

It is noteworthy that, unfortunately, from the interviews with some of these

participants, it became clear that some of them entered politics just to gain a name, power, and money. Because the current situation in the country is such that corruption is at its peak ,and there is no one to interrogate the high-ranking people, especially political activists who have good influence among the people.

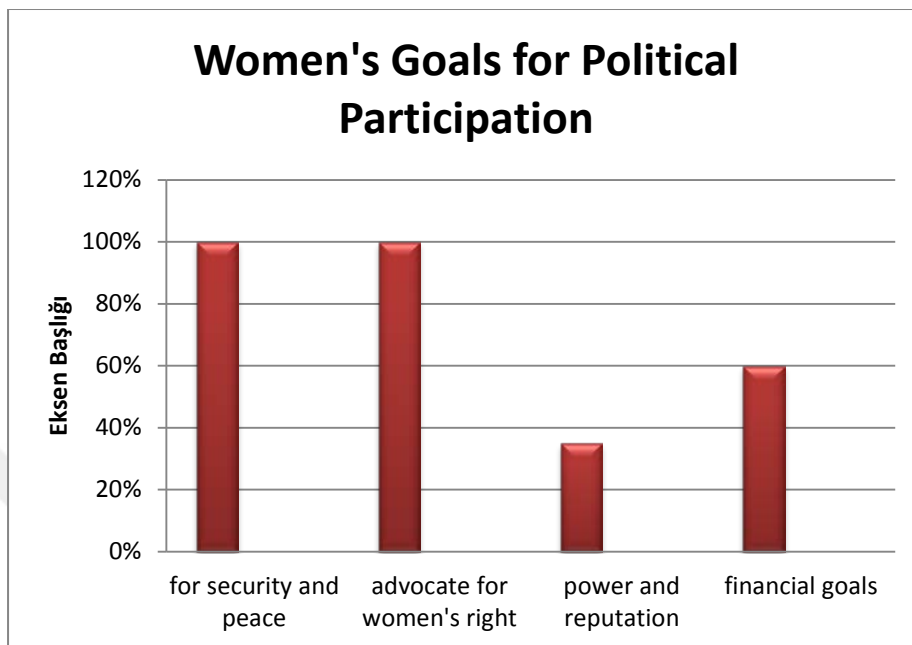


Figure 3 Women's Goals for Political Participation

## 2. The Level of Women's Political Participation

Since Herat province is safer than other provinces (EASO, 2020) and the space in the center of Herat is ready for the participation of women, and the reports of IEC show that in every election, Herat is the second province that its level of political participation is higher after Kabul, but it is still fragile. Because of the obstacles mentioned in the next title, despite the greater interest of women in politics, it still hinders their way and cuts their hands off from politics.

Table 2 List of Candidates in Parliamentary Elections

Afghanistan's provinces	Number of candidates in Parliamentary election 2018	Number of candidates in Parliamentary election 2010	Female candidates in 2018 elections	Female candidates in 2010 elections
Kabul	804	664	120	100
Herat	161	153	28	23
Kandahar	112	50	12	10
Orozgan	25	19	9	4
Badghis	35	40	9	4
Bamiyan	40	43	11	6
Baghlan	76	118	12	12
Badakhshan	88	97	8	15
Balkh	85	82	22	13
Parwan	28	58	10	11
Paktika	33	22	7	5
Paktia	78	58	5	5
Panjshir	12	12	2	2
Takhar	73	94	12	11
Jowzjan	30	47	4	5
Khost	55	58	2	5
Daikondi	41	33	7	6
Zabul	24	16	5	7
Sarpol	33	45	4	11
Samangan	31	37	6	5
Ghazni		84		13
Ghor	30	40	4	12
Faryab	62	93	19	9
Farah	42	34	3	5
Kondoz	90	87	15	12
Kapisa	35	38	8	10
Konar	31	27	3	2
Loghman	33	59	4	6
Logar	35	40	5	8
Nangahar	137	106	17	23
Noristan	18	20	7	8
Nimrooz	12	13	3	3
Wardak	40	37	9	9
Helmand	92	53	9	7

The turnout of women in the presidential election in the first round of voting in Herat province was equal to the number of men, and the highest turnout was from this province. In the second and third rounds, the ratio was 40% to 60%, but in the last round, this figure was equal, although the overall number of voters has decreased.

Unfortunately, the number of candidates has decreased, as there were no female candidates in the presidential election from Herat province, but in the provincial council election, it was reduced from 30 to 28 and in the last round 21. Also, according to Table (1) the numbers of female candidates in Herat province in various parliamentary elections are different. It is the cause of security issues and social challenges that will discuss next. The other problem with the election was that although women participated and voted, they were still elected only by a certain amount of their share, and if any woman candidate had more votes than the man but their share was full, she could not get to the parliament or the provincial council. Unfortunately, from Herat province, there was only one female minister in the government (ministers) and no one has been appointed to the ministry.

According to the interviews, most of the Herat's representatives of parliament and representatives of Herat provincial council were independent. The number of political activists who were members of the parties did not find women's participation in political parties satisfactory. But they say it has increased compared to the past because the parties have a good influence on society, and the parties' approach to women's participation in the party has changed. They state that they can engage in political activities and participate in decisions more easily and without any problems through parties. As political parties in Afghanistan are do not have regular party formation and do not have any specific office, and there are many political parties in Herat, I could not find specific statistics on the presence of women.

Table 3 the Level of Voters in Elections<sup>21</sup>

Elections	Male voters	Female voters
Parliamentary election 2005	50%	50%
Provincial council elections 2005	50%	50%
Provincial council elections 2009	52%	48%
Parliamentary election 2010	60%	40%
Provincial council elections 2014	55%	45%
Parliamentary election 2018	51%	49%

As shown in the table, in 2010, the number of female voters decreased significantly. This decrease is due to security factors and threats to many polling

<sup>21</sup> These data come from the reports of the IEC and national democracy institute of Afghanistan.

stations. According to a report by the National Democracy Institute, many female voters used fraudulent ballots, which were annulled as a result of their disclosure. (NDI, 2010:56)

### **3. The Effects of Women's Political Participation**

The political participation of women has a series of impacts, some of the effects are on society, and some of them affect a person's personal life. We will examine these effects and whether these effects are positive or not, by analyzing the participants' experiences.

#### **a. Impacts of women's political participation in society**

Ibrahim (2014: 435) claimed that the more women in government have a share, the more solutions society will have to solve their problems. Governments are more dynamic, livelier, more active, and more efficient with the presence of women because all the talents and forces in society are used to solve governance problems. Women have an important role in the development of a society. Since development is pervasive in society and cannot happen in only one part of it and has no clear boundaries, due to its dependence on human beings, it is a qualitative phenomenon that has no limits and has various dimensions, including economic, political, cultural, and social development. Every dimension of development that we consider, women can have a huge share in it. Afghanistan government, which has been embroiled in decades of war and with zero participation in women, has lagged in development. Currently, if we consider Herat city, the participation of women in local governmental institutions such as provincial and district councils and more political activities, has led to the development of this city, and the patriarchy culture of the traditional society of Herat, which limited women to fences, has diminished. These developments are not only in the cultural and social sector of society but also show that families have grown better financially and have raised the city's economy. One of the economic developments is the establishment of Afghanistan Women's Chamber of Commerce and Industries in 2018, the result of many advocacies of women. This institution was established to support women's economic and commercial activities as well as to increase facilities and support women in economic activities and to promote production, development and growth capacity at the national and international levels. (AWCCI, 2018) According to the report of

Afghanistan Women's Chamber of Commerce and Industries (2020) there are currently 2,471 Afghan women in official trade, 368 of whom are from Herat. And 54539 women are engaged in informal trade, of which 3589 are from Herat province. These women have created 130,000 jobs, which has increased the country's national income.

Table 4 Female Employees

Activity arena	Number of women
Chiefs of governmental institutes <sup>22</sup>	38 persons
Employees	6897 persons
Security Commander	211 persons
Prosecutor	20 persons
Teachers	38%

The data of this table (4) has given by the chief of women's affair department of Herat. Also, she claimed that there are 38 forums in Herat that allocated for women.

All participants according to their experiences stated that men ignored women's concerns and problems and women's voices have not heard by men. If it were otherwise, the situation of women would have been better. Issues such as the right to work for women, abortion, leave for women who have given birth, gender discrimination, the rights of victims of violence against women can be well understood by women and push the laws of the country in favor of women. Because they understand the problems of their kind better, and in fact, defending these rights is defending their rights. Women can better be the voice of their kind. Experiences in the city of Herat show that violence is better known, and women have become more aware of these issues and have played a significant role by launching various campaigns to defend women's rights.

Some participants special the representatives of provincial council state that women have reduced corruption in government agencies by having higher moral and behavioral standards and by being more committed to the public interest. According to the evidence<sup>23</sup>, if we have a simple comparison of the financial situation of male and female representatives in the parliament and the provincial council, it shows that

<sup>22</sup> They are selected on the basis of free competition (passing a written exam and an interview).

<sup>23</sup> Jafari, F. (2016). Women's political participation in Afghanistan. pp: 136.

male lawyers have not grown much economically and have owned bullet-proof vehicles, houses, and property, while female representatives except The government's livelihood and spending do not change much economically. Interviews with participants revealed that many male representatives abused their power, and enter into macroeconomic deals with mafia circles quickly, thus trying to establish themselves in power networks and at the highest levels of government or Upgrade their current position. The Afghan media<sup>24</sup> has repeatedly reported that members of parliament abusing their power, and have linked to mafia networks and engaging in illegal activities such as widespread land grabbing and drug trafficking.

Afghan women try to stay away from corruption and mafia networks as much as possible because of social sensitivities towards women, their political life, and social status to be in danger easily. Another reason is that women are more concerned with being good than men and have moral standards, and most women are willing to sacrifice their personal interests for the public good<sup>25</sup>.

#### **b. The impacts of women's political participation on personal life of the participation**

As Afghan society has been at war for years and the false culture of patriarchy and misogyny has taken root in the veins of these societies, so not only illiterate families but also educated and enlightened families have been affected by this culture. Therefore, political activities in such societies, especially as a woman, have major impacts on a person's personal life.

Some participants claimed that they were initially opposed and banned by their families due to false labels given to them by the public and society. But with great effort, they were able to change their family's view of themselves and the function of women in society, but one of them claimed that entering the political arena caused a divorce from her husband. All relatives of her husband were against the participation of women, and they believed that any woman want to enter political society she is bad. Finally, the force of the parents of her husband led to her divorced.

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<sup>24</sup> 8am newspaper

<sup>25</sup> Dollar,D. & Fisman,R. (1999). Are women really the “fairer” sex? Corruption and women in government. Policy research report on gender and development working paper series, no.4. World Bank.



Zahra on of the member of political parties who have claimed the support of her family, but due to the great pressure that people have put on her, either through cyberspace, which has been accompanied by numerous warnings and slanders on social pages or through the street and telephone harassment, she live a life full of fear and apprehension and say that since she entered politics, she can hardly travelling around the city. But in addition to all this, most of the participants were very happy that they have been able to save their generation and the daughters of their family, and at least have changed the views of their families and relatives, by their struggle for women's rights, and their fight against the false culture of patriarchy.

Another positive effect on their lives has been financial independence, which is no longer dependent on men in the family and has made men less dominant and powerful. Working women can use their income to increase power and redistribute responsibilities in the home environment, and women's share in providing part of the family expenses has been able to moderate the authoritarian tradition of patriarchy in the family and help create a structure based on equal rights for men and women. And it also makes them feel more confident and work harder to achieve their goals.

#### **4. Do Women Act in the Proportion of Their Share in The Parliament and The Provincial Council? And Are They Influential in Decisions?**

Despite 27% quotas in the parliament and 20% quotas in the Herat Provincial Council, which is a positive change after years of deprivation, women are still not integrated, and this share is more symbolic. One of the interviewees said from personal experience in the provincial council that her views had been rejected several times by other female representatives and that she had even witnessed women rhetoric and throwing bottles at each other several times in parliament. And the media always shows them clearly. A prime example is the beating of a member of parliament by a woman in the 2020 emergency Loya Jirga who had risen to protest peace with the Taliban. Most interviewees say that women are not willing to stand up to another because of their greed for power. And most of them have been chosen symbolically, and their decisions are always in favor of the people behind them who advocate them. This has prevented them from sharing effectively. One clear example of how women have not acted in proportion to their share is the reduction of the 25 per cent share of the provincial council to 20 per cent, which is alleged to have not notified the representatives of the Herat provincial council before it was approved

Later, when the representatives of provincial council of Herat found out, despite any objections and efforts, they could not change this decision.

A member of parliament who represents Herat said: "Suppose all women are united in their decision-making, but in contrast to the 73% share of men is considered nothing because many male MPs in parliament are opposed to the presence of women in politics and governance". Another negative point that the participants claimed was that they are not involved in the decisions and are not allowed to participate, and often the big decisions that have been made are hidden from them. For example, the Moscow meeting on peace negotiation with the Taliban, which took place in March 2021, was attended by only one woman and no one was allowed to participate, especially the women of Herat, who are often has been opposed to entering politics.

Those who have been members of political parties also claim that there is a lot of gender discrimination among the parties and that the approach of the parties in favor of women is symbolic and is only for the sake of gaining many seats in the parliament and the provincial council, and women play little role in The leadership of the parties. And most party members have a despicable attitude toward women. However, being a member of a political party has made it easier for women to participate in political affairs, and they claim that they can play a greater and easier role in politics through these parties.

## **5. Achievements of Political Women Activists**

Despite the many challenges and problems that stand in the way of women in the city of Herat, fortunately, political activists, especially members of the provincial council and members of parliament, have had many achievements, which we will now describe:

One of the lawyers of the provincial council said about her experience that when she was able to gain the trust of the people to represent them in 2009, she set three work priorities in the provincial council. The first is to strive for the rights of women and their peers, those who have always been deprived in Afghanistan. Also, she suffered greatly from this deprivation as a woman herself. In this way, she has always participated in litigation for the realization of women's rights and has spared no effort to support them. And this goal led her to revive the Provincial Council

Family Support Committee and take a new approach to that committee. The committee focuses on providing financial assistance to vulnerable women in the community, such as distributing food to homeless families. She chaired the committee, and by consultation with women rights activists in Herat, was able to focus the committee's activities into three sections: advocacy, oversight, and coordination. The second priority was to strive for the best possible development of Herat province. She had striven to raise funds for development projects in Herat province. The Projects that were of great importance for the future of Herat, such as the construction of schools, roads, water supply system and municipal services, etc. Since she has been one of the advisors to the province to build the 20-year vision of Herat, which after being approved by the government of national unity is now the focus of Herat development programs. The third priority was to address the problems of the people in her constituency. Among the major problems of the people in these areas was the lack of land to build infrastructure for city services such as schools, clinics, and green space. Unfortunately, the people are so poor that they cannot buy land on their own to provide this infrastructure to the government, and the government only bears the costs of construction and maintenance, and service. Therefore, one of his most important achievements was the preservation of government plots of land in this regard, despite the existence of a lot of corruption and the existence of usurpers who always harassed him boldly and arrogantly, even in his house. Finally, by allocating these lands to the people, she was able to prove her ability as a woman to society and be a good representative for women.

Other achievements of the representatives of Herat Provincial Council and Parliament are the establishment of a special literacy center for disadvantaged and poor women. Also establish a vocational training center for women who can help their families financially by learning the sewing profession. They also helped society by informing about women's rights and addressing people's complaints, and they were mostly good role models for women to would not give up trying to realize their rights. Also, they continue to work hard to educate and encourage peaceful children to introduce them to society. Women also play an important role in resolving ethnic disputes in districts and handling their grievances.

It has been the efforts of these same political activists that women today play a major role, albeit a small one, in power and have been able to change the law in

favor of women. A clear example of this is the President's decree to implement the laws prohibiting violence against women without its approval in parliament.

## 6. Obstacles and Challenges for Women in Herat city

According to this research in Herat city, and analyzing the data that collected from interviews the following obstacles and challenges are the main obstacles:

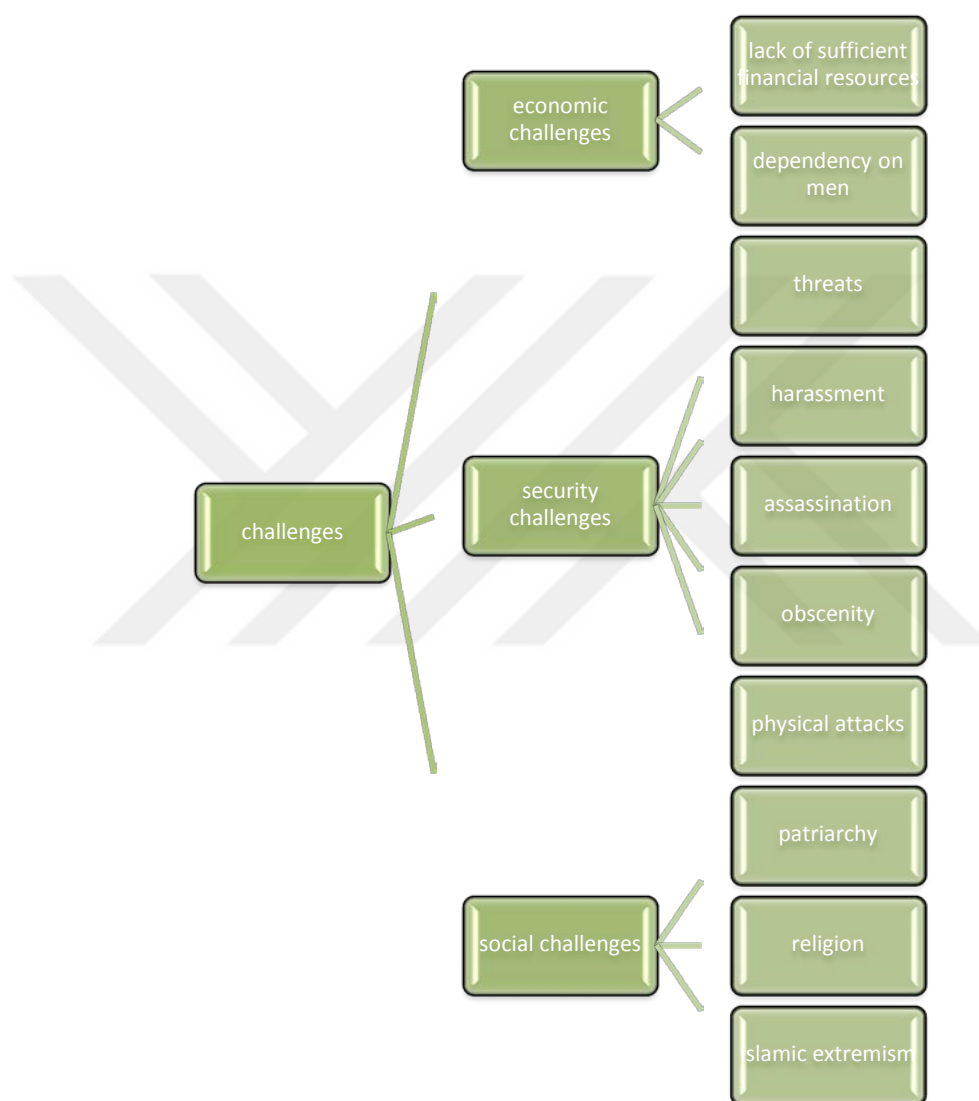


Figure 4 Challenges and Obstacles

Alongside a patriarchal society whose people is never willing to see a woman engaging in political activity. Other major obstacles mentioned by all participants were the expansion of religious schools and the influence of Islamic scholars and the promotion of Islamic extremism. Since then, the religion of Afghanistan is Islam and the people are religious. In recent decades, Islamic extremist groups have tried to

gain power by abusing Islam. There are many religious schools in Herat that have washed the minds of children from an early age. They raise them an extremist religious. In most of these schools, the women to be forbidden and restricting them is taught. These religious schools do not promote pure religion and Islam, but promote the extremist policies of their sponsoring countries to achieve political goals in this country. In fact, they have used religion as a tool to achieve the political goals of their countries, and in this regard, of course, they have taken a more violent and inhumane position on women's rights.

One of the representatives of the provincial council states that she recognizes the ability of female candidates who have a very high chance of winning the provincial and parliamentary elections, but due to pressure from extremist religious leaders and religious scholars on themselves and even their families, to withdraw their candidacy. In favor of the other man, they were forced to leave the election campaign. These religious leaders, by misusing and misinterpreting Islamic rules that have been discussed in the previous chapter, want to strengthen their power. As a person who has run in two provincial council elections, she has been repeatedly pressured to withdraw from the election for a male candidate, arguing that the provincial council is not for women. In the 2014 provincial council elections, one of Herat's most prominent religious scholars preached in all his speeches against female candidates. And in his speeches in mosques and circles, he said: "Do not vote for the cowards in the elections." And he added that I mean cowards are women. He not only described women as inappropriate for political participation, but also insulted their truth by calling them cowards. In this regard, many women candidates and capable women activists have renounced their rights to men under great pressure from religious groups.

Other problems mentioned by the participants were security problems, which included all kinds of violence (physical, psychological, and sexual). For example, during elections, women's election campaigned places were attacked and destroyed. They continued to make numerous threats to prevent them from running. These threats came from the Taliban, Islamic scholars, and some male candidates, and some from relatives. Also, during a period in the city of Herat, women could not easily get out because they were acid-sprayed and stabbed. They have also been insulted and slandered by psychological violence. One political activist said that in many cases,

her photos were edited and that they tried to cut her off from society by distributing immoral photos.

"In the second round of the presidential election in 2014, I worked closely with several political parties in Herat. Although women made up about half of the voters in Herat, the facilities provided to the women's campaign, it was much less than even one of the lesser-known men's committee in the campaign" Said one of the members of the provincial council. Therefore, it can be seen that the parties only use the votes of women and women's representatives as a tool, and there is still discrimination.

Another problem faced by women in Herat in their political activities is economic problems, which sometimes prevent them from engaging in political activities due to a lack of sufficient financial resources. For example, running as a representative in a provincial council or parliament entails huge costs for the campaign, which unfortunately, the lack of these resources has caused many capable women to withdraw their candidacy or become members of parties and prioritize party decisions. Also, sometimes dependency on men prevents them from participation. Because this dependency lead to women obey the men and do whatever the men decide.

Another representative of the provincial council considered religion as one of the challenges of Herat city. As there are religions such as Shiites and Sunnis in Herat, but most of the residents of Herat are followers of the Hanafi religion and have extremist views on religions, sometimes Shiites are prevented from running for office, which is a problem not only for women but also for men.

Despite all the challenges and obstacles, the women of Herat have not given up their efforts and are always fighting to eliminate these challenges in order to provide a better ground for participation for the next generations. But the current situation in Afghanistan and the peace negotiation have once again raised concerns about women and their situation, and women have always expressed their demands through mass protests and do not want to go back to the dark days of the Taliban.



Figure 5 Challenges and Obstacles





## **V. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION**

### **A. Conclusion**

Democracy is a regime that supports the participation of both men and women in social, economic, political, and cultural affairs. In Afghanistan, with a democratic system since 2001, participation special women's political participation is fragile and not equal to men despite having the equal right to participate.

This study showed that various laws of Afghanistan, especially the constitution, support women's political participation and international assistance have always been provided to achieve this goal. However, the findings of this study show that the presence of women in political institutions, especially at the decision-making levels, is not effective and in many cases there are many problems and challenges ahead of their presence. This in itself has limited the scope for women's inclusive participation and created barriers for them. Although 20 years have passed since Taliban's regime, the study shows that women in the parliament and provincial councils, especially the Herat Provincial Council, still failed to occupy more seats than their 27% and 20% share, and their participation is lesser than past. But this participation led the society to development, for example in Herat city, the participation of women in local governmental institutions such as provincial and district councils and more political activities, has led to the development of this city, and the patriarchy culture of the traditional society of Herat, has diminished. And the level of literacy in society has risen. These developments are not only in the cultural and social sector of society but also show that families have grown better financially and have raised the city's economy. Also by participation of women, violence is better known, and women have become more aware of issues such as the right to work for women, abortion, leave for women who have given birth, gender discrimination. Also, by doing this research it has cleared that women have reduced corruption in government agencies, and in proportion of their share, it can be said that corruption has decreased.

Statistics and surveys show that women's political participation has been declining, for example, women in civil service positions in 2006 were about 30%, while this rate decreased to 16% in 2018 and has remained so until now. Or the turnout of women in Afghanistan's elections, both as voters and as candidates, has decreased instead of increasing; For example, the female voter turnout in the 2004 presidential election was 39%, according to the Afghan Electoral Commission, which dropped to 31% in the 2019 election. The number of candidates has also gradually decreased. At the same time, women's education and women's awareness of their rights have improved significantly, but due to security and social problems, women prevent from participation. Also, the level of women's participation in political parties, which today play an important role in politics, is symbolic and is merely the use of tools to gain a share in parliament and the provincial council.

One of the most important findings of this study conducted in Herat province is to identify the most important deterrents that cause women to be deliberately deprived of their rights. These include security challenges such as threats and violence (physical, physical, sexual), religious barriers, social barriers such as a culture of patriarchy, the expansion of extremist religious schools, women's disunity, and economic barriers that include women's dependence on Men, as well as the lack of sufficient barriers to enter the political race.

With all these problems and challenges, women do not stop, and always try to achieve equal rights with men in all areas. They have also made great strides, such as building training centers for women, resolving conflicts, preventing violence, fighting corruption, and so on.

With the intensification of peace negotiation and the Taliban's pressure on the Afghan government, the stage for women's political participation has become narrower, and Afghan women are still afraid that they will return to the dark times of the Taliban. Therefore, many efforts are being made by the Government of Afghanistan and Afghan women so that history will not repeat itself and Afghan women, like men, will play an active role in the government and political spheres, far from any problems.

## **B. Recommendations for Increasing Women's Political Participation**

By conducting this research and identifying the challenges and problems facing women's political participation, I offer the following suggestions for increasing women's political participation and eliminating the challenges.

- The share of women as high-ranking government officials is very small, and their presence in the political arena should be considered in proportion to their population by high-ranking government officials. It is suggested that the leadership of the Government of Afghanistan, when appointing individuals as government officials, consider the gender composition of women as a key issue to effectively eliminate the deprivation of women and restore their political rights. The leaders of the national unity government must fulfill their obligations in this regard, because superficial and symbolic attention affects the active role of women in the political future and elections.
- According to research, the security of the country is deteriorating. This unsettled security situation can have serious negative consequences, including affecting women's political participation in the political process. Also, participants called the issue of security one of the factors reducing women's participation in elections and other democratic and political processes. Although the issue of security is a pervasive phenomenon, women are the most vulnerable segment of society. As the Ministry of Interior, as the highest authority, is responsible for protecting the citizens of the country. Therefore, it is suggested that special security measures be taken for those women who run in the elections or engage in civil-political activities.
- The issue of awareness is one of the basic components for comprehensive political participation by the citizens of the country. Therefore, it is suggested that large-scale awareness programs be launched by the Election Commission through the Ministry of Hajj and Endowments with the help of mullahs of mosques, newspapers, and media to women who are deprived of these programs in remote areas.
- The international community should not leave women alone. The United Nations and other donors should continue to work together to develop and ensure the fundamental rights of women, especially their active participation

in politics, governance, and participation in democratic processes. They work in this field to help with the effectiveness and transparency of programs.

- Since one of the main problems of women candidates in the election period is the economic issue. Therefore, for women to participate as candidates, facilities should be provided in the context of candidacy, such as their sponsorship card and guarantee money. These facilities, like quotas for women in parliament, can encourage more women to run for office.
- The government should have control over religious schools and review their curriculum.
- Because the media play an active role in influencing society, they should cover issues that encourage greater participation of women in various fields, especially politics.
- The government should support the development of the capacities and skills of the candidates as well as the elected women leaders. This support includes skills training (parliamentary debate and advocacy skills, litigation) as well as enhancing the knowledge of these leaders about international commitments and strategies for gender equality. These protections also include litigation for mechanisms such as women's parliamentary committees or women's networks within civil service institutions. There should also be support for the establishment of governance mechanisms that have the capacity, commitment, and position within the government to advocate for women's interests.
- Make national and local elections fair and free for women. Thus, the government should provide temporary special criteria such as allocating quotas for women, imposing penalties on political parties that do not provide quotas for women, exempting women from paying election registration fees, facilitating access to mass media, and access to public resources. And promote women's participation in selective and appointment-making decision-making positions in government institutions.
- Because it is a democratic system and the law gives equal rights for men and women. The government must ensure that the law is fully implemented in all areas.

- In addition, Afghan women must have the confidence, motivation, courage, and effort to improve their situation. Because change must begin in Afghan society, and especially in the minds of Afghan women. Afghan women must strive for a better life and sacrifice in this way. They must fight false cultural traditions, fight for influence over men and their environment, and put pressure on the government to improve their situation.





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## **APPENDIX**

**Appendix A:** Survey

**Appendix B:** Ethical Approval Form





## **Appendix A: Survey**

### **The Examination of Women's Political Participation in Herat Province of Afghanistan in the Post Taliban Regime**

#### **1. Survey Questions**

2. What motivated you to get involved in politics?
3. What obstacles and challenges have you faced in participating in political affairs?
4. How has your activities affected your personal life?
5. What effects do you think women's political participation has on society?
6. Explain your achievements as a woman in Afghan society?
7. In general, how do you assess the role of women in politics in Afghanistan today?
8. Is the share allocated to women in the parliament and the provincial council sufficient?
9. Do women act in proportion to their share in the parliament and the provincial council and influence decisions?
10. How can women's participation in politics be increased?
11. How do you assess your position in the political party? Have you ever been sexually discriminated against?
12. Has the approach of political parties in favor of women facilitated the participation of more women in politics or not?
13. To what extent do women play a role in party leadership and decision-making?





## Appendix B: Ethical Approval Form

Evrak Tarih ve Sayısı: 18.01.2022-36767



T.C.  
İSTANBUL AYDIN ÜNİVERSİTESİ REKTÖRLÜĞÜ  
Lisansüstü Eğitim Enstitüsü Müdürlüğü

Sayı :E-88083623-020-36767  
Konu : Etik Onayı hk.

18.01.2022

Sayın MOZHDEH HAFED

Tez çalışmanızda kullanmak üzere yapmayı talep ettiğiniz anketiniz İstanbul Aydın Üniversitesi Etik Komisyonu'nun 05.01.2022 tarihli ve 2022/01 sayılı kararıyla uygun bulunmuştur.  
Bilgilerinize rica ederim.

Dr.Öğr.Üyesi Alper FİDAN  
Müdür Yardımcısı

Bu belge, güvenli elektronik imza ile imzalanmıştır.

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Languages	Reading	Writing	speaking
Dari	Excellent	Excellent	excellent
English	Excellent	Excellent	excellent
Pashto	Excellent	Good	normal
Turkish	Excellent	Normal	normal

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