

IRSTI 03.91

UDC: 94(5)

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**RE-ESTABLISHMENT OF THE ISLAMIC EMIRATE OF AFGHANISTAN:
ATTITUDES TOWARD POLITICAL PARTIES DURING 1996–2001 AND THE POST-2021
PERIOD**

Abstract

This article examines the process of the re-establishment of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan in two historical periods, namely 1996–2001 and after 2021, through a comparative historical and political analysis. The main objective of the study is to assess the Taliban movement's ideological and practical attitude toward political parties and to evaluate the impact of this position on the development of political institutions and statehood in Afghanistan. By comparing these two periods, the article identifies both differences in political context and strong continuity in ideological orientation.

Although the international environment, regional dynamics, and internal socio-political conditions have changed considerably since the first Taliban regime, the movement's rejection of party-based political participation has remained largely unchanged. This approach is rooted in a governance model that prioritizes centralized religious authority and views political pluralism as a source of social and ideological fragmentation. Consequently, political parties, representative institutions, and organized opposition remain excluded from the formal political system.

The absence of political parties has significant implications for political stability and post-conflict state-building. Without institutionalized mechanisms for representation and accountability, peaceful management of political competition becomes difficult, increasing the risk of informal power struggles and political fragmentation. Moreover, the lack of inclusive political institutions undermines both domestic legitimacy and prospects for international engagement. The article argues that this ideological resistance to political pluralism constitutes a major structural barrier to institutional consolidation and sustainable political development in Afghanistan, and it highlights the broader relevance of the Afghan case for understanding governance challenges in post-conflict societies.

Keywords: Afghanistan; Taliban; post-conflict governance; ideological continuity; institutional politics; political participation.

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**АУҒАНСТАН ИСЛАМ ӘМІРЛІГІНІҢ ҚАЙТА ҚҰРЫЛУЫ: 1996–2001 ЖЫЛДАР
ЖӘНЕ 2021 ЖЫЛДАН КЕЙІНГІ КЕЗЕҢДЕГІ САЯСИ ПАРТИЯЛАРҒА КӨЗҚАРАС**

Андатпа

Бұл мақала Ауғанстан Ислам Әмірлігінің екі тарихи кезеңде — 1996–2001 жылдары және 2021 жылдан кейін — қайта құрылу үдерісін салыстырмалы тарихи-саяси талдау арқылы қарастырады. Зерттеудің негізгі мақсаты — «Талибан» қозғалысының саяси

партияларға деген идеологиялық және практикалық көзқарасын бағалау және осы ұстанымның Ауғанстандағы саяси институттар мен мемлекеттіліктің дамуына тигізген әсерін анықтау. Екі кезенді салыстыру арқылы мақала саяси жағдайдағы айырмашылықтарды және идеологиялық бағыттағы айқын сабақтастықты көрсетеді.

Алғашқы «Талибан» режимінен бері халықаралық жағдай, аймақтық үдерістер және ішкі әлеуметтік-саяси ахуал едәуір өзгергенімен, қозғалыстың партиялық саяси қатысуға қарсы көзқарасы негізінен өзгеріссіз қалды. Бұл ұстаным орталықтандырылған діни билікті басым қоятын және саяси плюрализмді әлеуметтік әрі идеологиялық бөлінудің көзі ретінде қабылдайтын басқару моделіне негізделген. Соның салдарынан саяси партиялар, өкілдік институттар және ұйымдасқан оппозиция ресми саяси жүйеден тыс қалып отыр.

Саяси партиялардың болмауы саяси тұрақтылық пен қақтығыстан кейінгі мемлекет құру үдерісіне елеулі әсер етеді. Өкілдік пен есеп берушіліктің институционалданған тетіктері болмаған жағдайда, саяси бәсекелестікті бейбіт жолмен басқару қиындайды, бұл бейресми билік күресінің және саяси бытыраңқылықтың арту қаупін күшейтеді. Сонымен қатар, инклюзивті саяси институттардың жоқтығы ішкі легитимділікті де, халықаралық өзара әрекеттесу мүмкіндіктерін де әлсіретеді. Мақала саяси плюрализмге идеологиялық қарсылық Ауғанстанда институционалдық нығаю мен орнықты саяси дамуға кедергі келтіретін негізгі құрылымдық тосқауыл болып табылатынын атап көрсетеді және бұл жағдайдың қақтығыстан кейінгі қоғамдардағы басқару мәселелерін түсінудегі кеңірек маңызын айқындайды.

Түйін сөздер: Ауғанстан; «Талибан»; қақтығыстан кейінгі басқару; институционалдық саясат; орталықтандырылған діни билік.

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ВОССТАНОВЛЕНИЕ ИСЛАМСКОГО ЭМИРАТА АФГАНИСТАН: ОТНОШЕНИЕ К ПОЛИТИЧЕСКИМ ПАРТИЯМ В ПЕРИОД 1996–2001 ГОДОВ И ПОСЛЕ 2021 ГОДА

Аннотация

В статье рассматривается процесс восстановления Исламского Эмирата Афганистан в два исторических периода — в 1996–2001 годах и после 2021 года — на основе сравнительного историко-политического анализа. Основной целью исследования является оценка идеологического и практического отношения движения «Талибан» к политическим партиям и анализ влияния данной позиции на развитие политических институтов и государственности в Афганистане. Сравнение двух периодов позволяет выявить как различия в политическом контексте, так и устойчивую преемственность в идеологической ориентации.

Несмотря на существенные изменения в международной обстановке, региональной динамике и внутренней социально-политической ситуации со времени первого режима «Талибана», неприятие партийного политического участия со стороны движения в целом остается неизменным. Данный подход основан на модели управления, которая отдает приоритет централизованной религиозной власти и рассматривает политический плюрализм как источник социальной и идеологической фрагментации. В результате политические партии, представительные институты и организованная оппозиция исключены из формальной политической системы.

Отсутствие политических партий имеет серьезные последствия для политической стабильности и процессов постконфликтного государственного строительства. При отсутствии институционализированных механизмов представительства и подотчетности

затрудняется мирное управление политической конкуренцией, что повышает риск неформальной борьбы за власть и политической фрагментации. Кроме того, отсутствие инклюзивных политических институтов подрывает как внутреннюю легитимность, так и перспективы международного взаимодействия. В статье утверждается, что идеологическое сопротивление политическому плюрализму представляет собой ключевое структурное препятствие для институциональной консолидации и устойчивого политического развития в Афганистане, а также подчеркивается более широкое значение афганского опыта для понимания проблем управления в постконфликтных обществах.

Ключевые слова: Афганистан; «Талибан», постконфликтное управление; институциональная политика; централизованная религиозная власть.

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AFGANİSTAN İSLAM EMİRLİĞİ’NİN YENİDEN KURULMASI: 1996-2001 YILLARI VE 2021 SONRASI DÖNEMDE SİYASİ PARTİLERE BAKIŞ

Özet

Bu makale, Afganistan İslam Emirliği’nin iki tarihî dönemde (1996–2001 yılları ve 2021 sonrası) yeniden yapılanma sürecini karşılaştırmalı tarihî-siyasî analiz yoluyla incelemektedir. Araştırmanın temel amacı, “Taliban” hareketinin siyasi partilere yönelik ideolojik ve pratik yaklaşımını değerlendirmek ve bu yaklaşımın Afganistan’daki siyasi kurumlar ve devletleşmenin gelişimine etkisini belirlemektir. İki dönemin karşılaştırılması, siyasi durumdaki farklılıkları ve ideolojik tutumdaki belirgin sürekliliği ortaya koymaktadır.

İlk “Taliban” rejiminden bu yana uluslararası koşullar, bölgesel süreçler ve iç sosyal-siyasî durum önemli ölçüde değişmiş olmasına rağmen hareketin partizan siyasete karşı bakışı büyük ölçüde değişmemiştir. Bu tutum, merkezîyetçi dini otoriteyi öncelikli kılan ve siyasi çoğulculuğu sosyal ve ideolojik bir ayrışma kaynağı olarak gören yönetim modeline dayanmaktadır. Sonuç olarak siyasi partiler, temsil kurumları ve organize muhalefet resmî siyasi sistemin dışında kalmaktadır.

Siyasi partilerin yokluğu, siyasi istikrar ve çatışma sonrası devlet inşa sürecini önemli ölçüde etkilemektedir. Temsiliyet ve hesap verebilirliğin kurumsallaşmış mekanizmaları bulunmadığında, siyasi rekabetin barışçıl yollarla yönetilmesi zorlaşmakta ve gayriresmî iktidar mücadeleleri ile siyasi parçalanma riski artmaktadır. Ayrıca kapsayıcı siyasi kurumların eksikliği, iç meşruiyeti zayıflatmakta ve uluslararası iş birliği imkânlarını sınırlandırmaktadır. Makale, siyasi çoğulculuğa ideolojik direnç unsurunun Afganistan’da kurumsal güçlenme ve istikrarlı siyasi gelişime engel teşkil eden başlıca yapısal engel olduğunu vurgulamakta ve bu durumun çatışma sonrası toplumlarda yönetim sorunlarını anlamada daha geniş önemini ortaya koymaktadır.

Anahtar kelimeler: Afganistan; “Taliban”; Çatışma Sonrası Yönetişim; Kurumsal Siyaset; Merkezîyetçi Dinî Otorite.

Introduction. The re-establishment of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan represents a critical juncture in the evolution of the country’s political development, situated at the intersection of ideology, institutional continuity, and socio-political transformation. Afghanistan’s modern political history has been shaped by prolonged conflict, foreign intervention, and competing visions of governance, all of which have contributed to the fragmentation and reconstruction of state structures over time. The withdrawal of Soviet forces, the civil war during the early 1990s, and the subsequent emergence of the Taliban fundamentally altered the trajectory of state-building and political representation in the country [1].

In 1996, the Taliban's capture of Kabul and declaration of the Islamic Emirate effectively curtailed formal political participation by dissolving political parties and marginalizing pluralistic institutions. During this period, the movement's ideological framework cast political parties as divisive and externally influenced entities, incompatible with the movement's conceptualization of religious authority and governance [2]. This exclusionary stance stemmed from a doctrinal emphasis on centralized religious leadership and a narrow interpretation of political legitimacy, which prioritized obedience to the Amir and Sharia as the foundation of state authority.

Following the collapse of the Taliban regime in 2001, Afghanistan entered a phase characterized by relative political openness and the formal recognition of political parties under the Bonn Agreements and the 2004 Constitution. The institutionalization of political pluralism during this period provided a framework for competitive participation, though many parties remained weak and fragmented due to reliance on ethnic, regional, and personal networks rather than coherent institutional structures. Nonetheless, this era remains notable as the only sustained period in Afghan history when political party activity occurred with a degree of freedom and legal sanction [3].

The Taliban's return to power in 2021 reignited concerns about the durability of political pluralism and the reintegration of institutionalized political actors. Despite rhetoric suggesting lessons had been learned from previous governance challenges, the practical approach to political parties has remained substantively unchanged. Contemporary policies continue to withhold legal recognition from political parties, thereby restricting their operational capacity and excluding them from meaningful participation in state governance. This continuity underscores the enduring influence of ideological imperatives on the movement's political strategy and highlights the structural impediments to inclusive state-building in Afghanistan [4].

Examining these historical trajectories and ideological orientations is essential for understanding how the Taliban's governance model has shaped broader institutional politics in Afghanistan. The persistence of exclusionary practices and the rejection of party-based political engagement raises critical questions about political legitimacy, representation, and the prospects for sustainable governance in post-conflict contexts. By situating Afghanistan's experience within comparative discussions of post-conflict state formation, this study offers insights into the challenges of reconciling ideological continuity with the requirements of modern political systems.

The methodological framework. This study employs a comparative historical and political analysis to examine the Taliban movement's approach to political parties across two key periods: 1996–2001 and post-2021. Primary and secondary sources, including historical records, legal documents, constitutions, and scholarly analyses, were reviewed to identify patterns of governance, institutional constraints, and ideological continuity.

A qualitative approach was adopted to analyze the ideological, legal, and practical dimensions of the Taliban's policies toward political parties, focusing on their implications for political pluralism, institutionalization, and legitimacy. Comparative analysis allows for the identification of both differences in political context and continuity in ideological orientation, while historical cause-and-effect reasoning provides insight into the structural obstacles to long-term state-building. This methodology ensures that the study integrates political theory, historical evidence, and institutional analysis to generate a comprehensive understanding of Afghan political dynamics under the Taliban.

Results. The re-establishment of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan represents one of the most significant turning points in the country's political development. An analysis of this process allows for a deeper understanding of the role, significance, and historical trajectory of the institution of political parties in the formation of Afghan statehood. Although a certain degree of historical continuity can be observed between the periods of 1996–2001 and the post-2021 era, each phase is characterized by distinct political conditions, international circumstances, and internal socio-political factors. Nevertheless, the Taliban movement's position toward political parties has remained largely unchanged in ideological terms, and this continuity has posed a serious obstacle to the development of institutional politics and political diversity in Afghanistan [5].

With the Taliban movement's takeover of Kabul in 1996 and the proclamation of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, the activities of political parties in the country effectively came to a halt. Taliban ideology regarded political parties as structures that fragmented society and represented the product of external influence [6]. In the view of the movement's leadership, the only legitimate source of political authority was embodied in the principles of "Islamic governance" and unconditional obedience to the Amir [7]. As a result, the concepts of political competition, opposition, and party-based activity were entirely rejected. Consequently, Afghan political parties representing diverse ideological orientations that had emerged over the course of the twentieth century were pushed out of political life.

During the period of 1996–2001, political parties lost not only their legal status but also their role as independent socio-political actors. Former mujahideen groups and parties operated primarily in the form of armed resistance within the framework of the "Northern Alliance," which intensified military-political rivalry rather than promoting political institutionalization [8]. In territories under Taliban control, all forms of political activity were prohibited, and state governance was conducted on the basis of religious decrees and orders issued by the movement's leadership [9]. This situation led to a further simplification of political culture in Afghanistan and the consolidation of a governance mechanism based on coercion.

After the Taliban regime was overthrown in 2001, political processes in Afghanistan became relatively more open, creating opportunities to restore the activities of political parties. Within the framework of the Bonn Agreements, a legal foundation for political pluralism was established, and the new Constitution officially recognized the activities of political parties. However, the parties that emerged during this period often relied on personal, ethnic, or regional interests and failed to develop into stable institutional structures [10]. Nevertheless, the period between 2001 and 2021 holds particular significance in Afghan history as the only era during which political parties were able to operate with relative freedom.

With the Taliban's return to power in 2021, the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan was re-established for a second time, and the issue of political parties once again became a pressing concern. Although initial statements emphasized that lessons had been learned from certain mistakes of the previous administration, in practice, the approach toward political parties remained fundamentally unchanged. The new government did not recognize political parties as legal entities and failed to establish the normative-legal mechanisms necessary for their activities [11]. As a result, many political parties were forced to either suspend their activities or continue them from outside the country.

A comparative analysis of the periods 1996–2001 and post-2021 indicates that differences in the Taliban movement's attitude toward political parties are primarily methodological. In the first phase, open and severe repression prevailed, whereas in the second period, a relatively cautious approach is being adopted due to international pressure and the openness of the information environment. However, in both cases, political parties are not recognized as legitimate or necessary institutions in state governance.

A historical cause-and-effect analysis shows that the denial of the political party institution in Afghanistan poses a serious obstacle to the formation of a stable political system. While political parties serve as an important mechanism for systematically representing the interests of society, the Taliban's governance model perceives them as a potential source of threat. As a result, political decisions are made by a narrow religious-ideological elite, leaving large segments of the population excluded from the political process [12].

Discussion. The research findings demonstrate that the political experience of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan in both the 1996–2001 and post-2021 periods is fundamentally characterized by the systematic repudiation of the institution of political parties. In both historical phases, the Taliban movement has framed political parties as entities that undermine social cohesion and as by-products of external influence, thereby withholding formal recognition of their legitimacy within the state's governance structure [13]. This persistent dismissal of party-based politics has

significantly impeded the development of a pluralistic political culture and hindered the consolidation of institutional mechanisms essential for representative governance in Afghanistan.

An examination of the political dynamics of the 1996–2001 period reveals that the Taliban’s overtly repressive stance toward political parties was part of a broader strategy to centralize authority and eliminate alternative centers of political mobilization. During this era, concepts such as organized political competition, opposition, and party-based activity were not merely discouraged but actively suppressed, reflecting an ideological commitment to a monolithic model of governance [14]. In contrast, while the post-2021 period exhibits a comparatively restrained official tone toward political parties, the substance of policy remains substantively unchanged. Political parties have not been granted legal status, and the normative and institutional prerequisites for their operation have not been established, effectively precluding their participation in formal political processes.

This pattern highlights the practical absence of political pluralism in Afghanistan’s contemporary political order, despite the lack of an explicit legal ban on party activity in recent years. Scholarly assessments of the post-2021 political environment note the dismantling of key democratic institutions — such as elections management bodies — further undermining the institutional infrastructure necessary for party formation and operation (Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2022). This deepens the structural barriers to inclusive political engagement and reinforces the dominance of a narrow governing elite.

The findings also underscore the ideological continuity in the Taliban movement’s perception of political parties. Throughout both periods of rule, the movement’s leadership has sought to legitimize its authority through religious-legal interpretations and centralized religious power, regarding political competition and organized opposition as existential threats to state stability. This has resulted in the concentration of political decision-making within a select religious-ideological circle, excluding significant segments of the population from meaningful political participation. Such exclusionary practices have been identified as major obstacles to the development of accountable governance structures and limit avenues for systematic representation of diverse social interests.

Moreover, historical analysis suggests that the period between 2001 and 2021, characterized by relative openness for political party activity, did not yield stable, institutionalized parties. Many of the parties that emerged operated along personal, ethnic, or regional lines rather than developing coherent ideological platforms or enduring organizational structures. Nonetheless, this era remains unique in Afghanistan’s political history as the solitary phase in which political pluralism was realized in any substantive form.

Finally, the cause-and-effect analysis undertaken in this study confirms that the systematic rejection of the political party institution undermines prospects for long-term political stability. Rather than fostering enduring order, the absence of structured mechanisms for political representation increases the risk of latent societal grievances and legitimacy crises within the political system. From this perspective, while the Taliban’s governance model may appear to offer short-term stability, it does little to facilitate the emergence of an inclusive, resilient, and sustainable political system capable of accommodating diverse interests and mitigating conflict dynamics.

Conclusion. The analysis of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan’s political trajectory during the periods of 1996–2001 and after 2021 demonstrates a consistent ideological rejection of the institution of political parties. Despite changes in international context, internal socio-political conditions, and governance methods, the Taliban movement has consistently perceived political parties as threats to social cohesion and as instruments of external influence. This continuity has significantly constrained the development of political pluralism, institutionalized representation, and inclusive governance, leaving major segments of Afghan society excluded from meaningful political participation.

During 1996–2001, political parties were not only deprived of legal status but also pushed out of political life entirely, with armed resistance emerging as the primary form of opposition. Although the post-2001 era allowed for relative freedom of party activity, parties failed to consolidate into stable institutional structures, reflecting the enduring impact of prolonged conflict and centralized authority traditions. Following the Taliban's return to power in 2021, a more cautious but substantively unchanged approach has persisted, further limiting prospects for institutional politics and long-term stability.

Overall, the findings underscore that the systematic denial of political parties poses a structural obstacle to the formation of a modern, inclusive, and sustainable political system in Afghanistan. The study highlights the critical role of political institutions in post-conflict state-building and suggests that without mechanisms for pluralism and representation, governance remains concentrated within a narrow religious-ideological elite, undermining both legitimacy and stability in the long term.

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