

STATE BUILDING, POLITICAL PROGRESS, AND HUMAN SECURITY IN AFGHANISTAN



Reflections on a Survey of the Afghan People



The Asia Foundation

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State Building, Political Progress, and Human Security in Afghanistan: Reflections on a Survey of the Afghan People is the companion volume to The Asia Foundation's recently released public-opinion survey titled *Afghanistan in 2006: A Survey of the Afghan People*. The papers in this volume analyze survey data on the opinions and perceptions of Afghans towards government, public policy, democracy, and political and social change as interpreted by social scientists familiar with the region. The contributors comment on trends, patterns, and variations owing to Afghan geography, ethnicity, and other factors, and assess comparatively Afghanistan's situation vis-à-vis other countries in the region. By combining analysis of quantitative survey data with broader contextual interpretations, the papers together anchor a holistic appraisal of change in the underlying sociopolitical realities and history of Afghanistan.

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Project Design, Direction, and Editorial Management

George Varughese
The Asia Foundation
Kabul, Afghanistan

Report Design and Printing

Nancy Kelly
The Asia Foundation
San Francisco, USA

AINA
Kabul, Afghanistan

This publication was made possible by support provided by the U.S. Agency for International Development (Award No. 306-A-00-03-00504-00). The opinions expressed herein are those of the authors and do not reflect the views of the U.S. Agency for International Development or of The Asia Foundation.

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Acknowledgements

This publication was commissioned, developed, and managed by The Asia Foundation's Afghanistan office. The critical support of program officers Najibullah Amin and Sunil Pillai in managing the day-to-day activities of the publication project is gratefully acknowledged.

Comments among the five authors and with an anonymous editor were supplemented by thoughtful feedback from Jon Summers, Meloney Lindberg, Jane Williams-Grube, Najibullah Amin, Fazel Rabi Haqbeen, and Sunil Pillai. Manuscript reviews by Hari Sharma and Hemant Ojha were useful in putting the final touches to drafts. Nancy Kelly and Katherine Brown in The Asia Foundation's San Francisco office provided valuable design assistance and support. These colleagues are also gratefully acknowledged.

Financial support for this publication came from a cooperative agreement with the Afghanistan office of the U.S. Agency for International Development (Award No. 306-A-00-03-00504-00) that seeks to encourage capacity-building of policy-relevant data collection and analysis. We are grateful to Eric Kite, Bruce Etling, Jene Thomas, and Mohamed Zahar for their encouragement of this publication and of the survey volume that preceded it in 2006.

George Varughese
The Asia Foundation
Afghanistan

Spring 2007

Contributors

CAPS, the Centre for Conflict and Peace Studies is an independent research centre based in Kabul, Afghanistan. It conducts research that is intended to inform policy-makers. One of the first think-tanks in post-Taliban Afghanistan, it undertakes research, training, and knowledge exchanges on conflict, the people and cultures, and violent groups in the region.

Russell J. Dalton is Professor of Political Science and former director of the Center for the Study of Democracy at the University of California, Irvine. Dalton's research focuses on the role of the citizen in the democratic process. His recent publications include *The Good Citizen* (2007), *Democratic Challenges, Democratic Choices* (2004), *Citizen Politics* (2006); he is co-editor of the *Oxford Handbook of Political Behavior* (2007), and *Citizens, Democracy and Markets around the Pacific Rim* (2006).

Sanjay Kumar is a Fellow at the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies (CSDS), Delhi. His area of research is electoral politics and he specialises in survey research. He was the India coordinator of the project 'State of Democracy in South Asia'. He is a core team member of the Asian Barometer Survey group led by Prof. Takashi Inoguchi of Cho University, Japan.

Praveen Rai is Project Manager with Lokniti, a Research Programme of the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies (CSDS), Delhi. He has authored the book *Women in Press- Still Invisible*, and has contributed articles in newspaper and research journals. He has worked on various research projects, both at Lokniti and earlier with other organisations.

Sanjay Ruparelia is Assistant Professor of Political Science at the New School for Social Research in New York City. Much of his present research examines transformations in contemporary Indian democracy: economic liberalization, militant Hindu nationalism, and the rise of lower-caste, communist, and regional parties in India's federal democracy. In particular, it focuses on the origins, difficulties, and prospects of power-sharing, which also informs his more recent work on Afghanistan.

George Varughese is The Asia Foundation's Deputy Country Representative for Afghanistan, responsible for governance-related program development, research, and management. His publications include, among others, "The Contested Role of Heterogeneity in Collective Action: Some Evidence from Community Forestry in Nepal," *World Development* Vol. 29, no. 5, Elsevier Science Ltd. (May 2001), and "Population and Forest Dynamics in the Hills of Nepal: Institutional Remedies by Rural Communities" in *People and Forests: Communities, Institutions, and the Governance of Forests* (2000), Cambridge: MIT Press.

Chapter 1

Reflections on a Survey of the Afghan People: An Introduction

George Varughese

The Context of Afghanistan

Emerging from more than two decades of conflict, Afghanistan faces tremendous political, administrative, social, and economic challenges. Amidst these daunting challenges, it is important to underscore the achievements in recent years. The political and democratic infrastructure mandated by the Bonn Agreement on Afghanistan in December 2001 is now in place. The country has a new, progressive constitution. An interim government became an elected central government through a highly competitive presidential election on October 9, 2004. The public elected the 249 representatives of the *Wolesi Jirga* (the lower house of National Assembly) and 34 Provincial Councils on 18 September 2005. Subsequently, internal elections and nominations by President Karzai selected 102 senators of the *Meshrano Jirga* (the upper house of National Assembly). The inauguration of the National Assembly took place on 19 December 2005, and it has women membership of 26 percent. So far, the struggle to assert power and define roles within the new political system has been energetic but peaceful. These are huge achievements for a country that has been through the tragedy of war, profound suffering, and prolonged chaos.

The living conditions of the average Afghan citizen are also dramatically changing. More than 1.9 million refugees from the civil war and Taliban rule have returned home in the five years since 2001. The population of Kabul, for example, has increased from approximately 1.5 million in 1997 to more than 3.1 million today. While living standards are still extremely low, they have risen substantially in the last five years. International donors have invested funds to rebuild schools, immunize children, and improve economic infrastructure. And, of course, the status of women has changed markedly since the fall of the Taliban.

Nonetheless, these achievements may prove short-lived if donor, government, and public support for continued progress falter during the next several critical years of transition. The initial stages of transition have been difficult, with both donors and Afghan government struggling to define their roles and responsibilities for a longer-term development process, while coping with huge gaps in physical and human resources. Most importantly, as Afghan institutions fully assume governance functions, major efforts must continue to strengthen the core institutions and practices of democratic governance while overcoming challenges to economic and social progress.

The Need for Informed Understanding of the Challenges

The policy process in Afghanistan, from discourse and deliberation to formulation and implementation, has almost entirely relied on information cobbled together on ad hoc

basis. Comprehensive and accurate demographic information to guide policy making does not exist: the Afghan government often uses information developed from the 1979 census. Donors are barely steps ahead, stitching together results of each others' issue and needs-based assessments to craft their programs of assistance. The Afghan media is now a main avenue of expression and information. However, the media does not utilize rigorous research methods in covering policy-relevant issues. Neither are policy arguments crafted on the basis of larger nation-wide samples of public opinion or analysis of demographics or economic statistics.

Strengthening the legitimacy and credibility of the democratically-elected government is linked to the broadening and deepening of political participation by non-state actors. The viability of the new Afghan state depends on the capacity of Afghan civil society and other non-state actors to participate in and assist the processes of democratization and governance reform through better understanding and practice of their and citizens' roles. A democratic process involving both state and non-state actors assumes some level of an accurate, common understanding of social and political conditions. In the absence of that understanding, information asymmetries between the two can be exacerbated, producing costly political battles.

Public perceptions of national conditions are, therefore, of great interest to a wide range of individuals and institutions. It is urgently important to continuously gauge public views on subjects such as social, political, and economic development, democratic governance and values, the role of political parties, civil responsibilities and rights, the place of religion in the evolving polity, and other issues.

Despite this need for an accurate barometer for Afghan public opinion, the absence of functional local government bodies (at the sub-provincial level) and capable research organizations makes it difficult to collect this information. Normally, local elected officials provide a modicum of feedback from grassroots constituencies, which in conjunction with good social science research can become credible, policy-relevant information. The dearth of Afghan organizations capable of rigorous survey research requires substantial investments in capacity building to support research-based policy reform.

In 2006, The Asia Foundation with support from the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) began a three-year research program. The program both addresses the lack of national and sub-national policy-relevant data and builds the capacity to conduct policy-relevant research in partnership with Afghan research organizations. It is difficult to design and conduct survey research to international standards where, in addition to ever-present security worries, widespread illiteracy, hostility to research, severe cultural restrictions on access to households and especially to women, and difficult physiographic conditions. However, through creative means and exceptional efforts, we believe we have overcome these research challenges.¹

¹ See Matthew Warshaw, R. Kakar, T. Habibzei, and Z. Mohseni (2006), "Starting from Scratch: Building Social Science Research in Afghanistan," Proceedings of ESOMAR Congress, London; George Varughese, (April 2007), "From the Field: Conducting Survey Research in Afghanistan," *Public Opinion Pros* (www.PublicOpinionPros.com)

In November 2006, The Asia Foundation released findings from the first of its three annual, nationally representative sample surveys. The survey conducted 6226 in-person interviews with men and women resident in 32 of 34 provinces in Afghanistan. The survey built on prior Asia Foundation research conducted in Afghanistan in 2003 and 2004,² as well as in Bangladesh (2006), Cambodia (2000), and Indonesia (2003).³

This volume on *State Building, Political Progress, and Human Security in Afghanistan: Reflections on a Survey of the Afghan People* is intended to be a companion piece to the above survey report. The five substantive chapters in the volume contain analytical commentaries written by outside contributors who specialize in researching a variety of important issues. As such, they are minimally edited to preserve their originality. Their views do not reflect those of The Asia Foundation or the funder of this activity, USAID.

Based on the data from the Asia Foundation's 2006 survey, the authors describe how Afghans view their personal situation, their perceptions of government, the policy priorities, and the role of women in Afghan society. One of the achievements of contemporary Afghanistan is to have given voice to its citizens, and this volume seeks to initiate a public discourse on public opinion in Afghanistan by providing a citizen perspective on the changes that are transforming Afghan society and politics.

Reflections

The Asia Foundation's survey opens by describing the overall national mood in Afghanistan in 2006. A plurality is positive about the nation's course. Forty-four percent think the country is headed in the right direction, 21 percent feel it is moving in the wrong direction, 29 percent have mixed feelings, and four percent are unsure. These and the findings of other recent public opinion polls suggest that Afghanistan is slowly but surely emerging from its wretched past. While progress is less than dramatic in some areas and definitely imperceptible in other areas, most Afghans agree that the only way is forward. To lose hope is to return to the chaos and tragedy of past decades.

Is there more that we can glean from this survey in light of the experiences of state building elsewhere? One of the valuable contributions of this volume is the comparative aspect of the reflections. The chapters examine five areas of intense, current interest in Afghanistan—democratic values, trust in formal and informal institutions, political progress, human security, and women's advancement—in cross-national context to add an important perspective to contemporary thinking on Afghanistan. By combining analysis of Afghan opinions with broader contextual interpretations, these chapters provide a holistic appraisal of change in the underlying sociopolitical realities and history of Afghanistan.

²See *Afghanistan in 2006: A Survey of the Afghan People*, Kabul: The Asia Foundation. A copy of the survey can be accessed at www.asiafoundation.org. Full details on the methodology of the survey are also available in Appendices 1 and 2 of [this](#) volume; the survey questionnaire can be found in Appendix 3. The contributors to this volume also analyze data from The Asia Foundation's smaller survey *Democracy in Afghanistan 2004*.

³To enable cross-national comparisons, the survey also used some questions from the East Asia and South Asia Barometers, as well as the 1999-2002 World Values Survey and public opinion survey conducted in 2004 on political culture of democracy in Mexico, Central America, and Colombia (<http://www.lapopsurveys.org/>).

Afghanistan's tumultuous and non-democratic history raises initial questions about the democratic attitudes of the Afghan public and the potential growth of these attitudes. Russell Dalton's essay describes many positive elements of the contemporary political culture, but also areas where challenges remain. For example, he finds that while the vast majority of Afghans express support for democracy as the best form of government, there are also tensions between support for democratic values in the abstract and a willingness to apply these values in specific instances. Similarly, while democratic aspirations seem widely dispersed, Dalton notes that support for democracy co-exists with social and political norms derived from Afghanistan's traditional and Islamic heritage. Importantly, Dalton argues that because belief in a political role for Islam erodes support for a democratic form of government, one of the major questions for democratization in Afghanistan is whether these contrasting norms of democracy and Islam can be reconciled.

At the sub-national level, Sanjay Ruparelia uses the 2006 survey data to fashion a 'view from below'. He underscores the varying levels of trust citizens have in formal state institutions vis-à-vis traditional social authorities, and the some of the reasons that underlie these variations. He finds that public support for members of parliament, provincial councils and community development councils is strong (in contrast to political parties, government courts, and local militias). However, perceptions of corruption by these same institutions (and their impunity from action) threaten to erode public confidence. He also finds that most citizens express great confidence in traditional local institutions to address their grievances, with the most important institution being the local shura and its elders.

Ruparelia finds that differences according to region and ethnicity constitute the most salient cleavages in Afghanistan. Dalton also finds that there are sharp regional differences in the belief that one can freely express political opinions. While these cleavages surely reflect aspects of longstanding and continuing political conflict within Afghanistan, they have implications for the role of the state in providing a fertile context for democracy to take root and flourish. His focus on the origins, difficulties, and prospects of power-sharing are quite useful in appreciating the difficulties of state building in Afghanistan. He argues that the prospects of constructing an effective, legitimate, and responsive state in Afghanistan depends on a demonstrated respect for local community institutions, an understanding and reconciliation of regional and ethnic cleavages, and the deployment of a comprehensive strategy of effective reform to tackle corruption and the ambiguity in the status of political institutions.

Sanjay Kumar considers whether Afghans are on the right track in terms of achieving a representative, pluralistic system of governance. The Bonn process succeeded in achieving a new constitution, an elected president, and elected representatives to national assembly and provincial councils. Both were declared to be free and fair. However, the turnout for the 2004 presidential elections was quite high, but the turnout for the 2005 national assembly and provincial council elections was significantly lower. While both turnout numbers were higher than those usually seen in established democracies, many in the donor community and some in Afghan circles were disappointed that the turnout was not higher. Is this disappointment misplaced?

Kumar provides some balance in his discussion of where Afghanistan stands in terms of its electoral development. He finds that the vast majority feel satisfied with the right to vote guaranteed to them by the new constitution. Although some have reservations about the process of elections held in 2005 and some did not vote, there is general trust in the political system. Most Afghans express a feeling of freedom to participate in any kind of organisation. There is general satisfaction with the right to gather and demonstrate, freedom of speech, and the right to criticise government.

However, like Dalton, Kumar finds a gap between Afghan endorsement of democracy and individual expressions of democratic citizenship. He finds that when it comes to more active participation in politics, such as contesting for elections, the enthusiasm among the people is somewhat low. Few Afghans want to run for election or participate in other political activities like peaceful demonstrations. Still, he concludes that while there are some practical constraints in fully realizing these freedoms, the very fact that the majority feel satisfied with such freedoms adds to the stability of the new political system. For emphasis, he points out that people in other countries also enjoy a sense of freedom, but such a feeling among people of Afghanistan has greater meaning because of the severe constraints they have endured in the past. Looking ahead, both Ruparelia and Kumar urge the development of political parties. They find that Afghans have faith in political parties. This is surely one element of the democratic context that can nurture citizenship and produce the benefits of the Afghans' democratic aspirations.

In its chapter, the Center for Conflict and Peace Studies (CAPS) argues that a discussion of freedoms requires some treatment of human security. From analyses of survey data and other assessments, CAPS finds that success in dealing with the challenge of human security must confront four issues. First, it must solve the security problem that stems from the Taliban and anti-government elements. Second, it must curb the narcotics problem and help provide alternative livelihoods where appropriate. Third, it must train its security apparatus, the police, army, and intelligence to deal with the long-term threat. Finally, and most importantly, it must provide basic services to its populace with minimum bias and corruption.

CAPS's caution is consistent with Dalton's warning that the Afghan public still looks to the government to provide basic needs, and will be judged by its success in providing for those needs. Satisfaction with the democratic process is linked to the economic performance of the system in an atmosphere free from fear. This is a positive factor now because of the improvements since the ouster of the Taliban have increased support for the democratic process. However, economic and security reversals can erode these same sentiments. CAPS's advocacy for capacity building of the police and army similarly resonates with Ruparelia's advice to devise strategies appropriate to each to bolster their ranks, capacity, and discipline in order to maintain public support for these institutions. They also recommend that this strategy be combined with engaging traditional leadership such as the Shura leaders and tribal leaders, which the survey shows that Afghans perceive as more influential than mullahs in decision making.

In the last chapter, Sanjay Kumar and Praveen Rai assess the status of Afghan women. Various indices reveal positive gains in areas like political participation and rights guaranteed by the constitution. However, there are fewer gains in the areas of education and health care. They find that about half of Afghan women are ready to shed some of the conservatism associated with their circumscribed role in society, including style of dress and participation in public life. The status of women, which had dipped very low in the decades of civil strife and war, is showing perceptible signs of improvement.

Kumar and Rai paint a mixed picture in comparing the status of Afghan women to those in countries of the region. For example, they find that Afghan women have reasonable social and political freedom, more than some other countries of this region. While it is true that during the recent elections many women could not vote due to security concerns and social values, this is also true of many countries in the region. The representation of women in the National Assembly (27% of total seats) is the highest in percentage terms among the Islamic countries of the region. In this respect, Afghanistan is also far ahead of India, the largest democracy in the world, where the representation of women in parliament has barely crossed 10 percent.

However, Kumar and Rai caution against complacency while noting these positive trends. Though women are well represented in the Afghan National Assembly, they urge efforts to induct women into key executive decision-making positions in order to restore the confidence in and among Afghan women. They also urge further state and civil society initiatives to support the fledgling women's movement that has added gender to the national political agenda.

Conclusion

The findings of The Asia Foundation's survey indicate broad support for democracy as the best form of government in Afghanistan, even higher than many other nations in the region. Afghan understanding of the meaning of democracy has increased since 2004 as experience with democracy has grown. Afghans also express general support for key democratic values, such as equality for women and minority rights. At the same time, a substantial minority sees potential challenges between democratic and Islamic values, and these sentiments have increased over time. Some are also hesitant to accept opposition parties that are a key element of electoral democracy. While the public broadly endorses democratic attitudes, the research finds that the political conflicts within Afghanistan can limit the willingness to express and act on these opinions.

Compared to what we might imagine the Afghan political culture to have been in 2001, the findings from the 2006 survey show dramatic signs of progress. Yet, it is clear that these democratic aspirations are too new to be deeply rooted in the Afghan political culture, and tensions exist with the Islamic values and traditions of Afghanistan. Poor security and deteriorating law and order are major impediments to reconstruction, development, and economic growth, as is dependence on the illegal opium industry.

Continued insecurity and the slow advance of the reconstruction process could lead to renewed radicalization of forces within the country and reverse the progress that has been made.

The loss of Afghanistan's brightest sons and daughters through decades of war, flight, and famine creates severe challenges in the near term. This adds to the economic, political, and social challenges that confront the country. The majority of Afghans who have survived or have returned now struggle to reconcile age-old tribal custom and practices, Islam, and modernity in the creation of a new nation state where women have equal opportunity, Islamic values are preserved, and government is effective and responsive. The Afghan people, for a number of reasons, do not yet perceive their individual agency in realizing the benefits of democracy. This will take time, and must be nurtured in deliberate, relevant, and culturally appropriate ways.

Chapter 2

Afghans and Democracy

Russell J. Dalton

This essay reports on how Afghans view democracy today, and how attitudes are evolving over time. We find broad support for democracy as the best form of government, even higher than many other nations in the region. Moreover, these sentiments are relatively equal across major ethnic or religious groupings, and the regions within the country. Understanding of the meaning of democracy has increased since 2004 as experience with democracy has grown. Afghans also express general support for key democratic values, such as equality for women and minority rights. At the same time, a substantial minority sees potential challenges between democratic and Islamic values, and these sentiments have increased over time. Some are also hesitant to accept opposition parties that are a key element of electoral democracy. While the public broadly endorses democratic attitudes, the survey finds that the political conflicts within Afghanistan can limit the willingness to express and act on these opinions. The impact of the public's democratic aspirations will be limited in the absence of a secure, democratic context.

Introduction

In 2001, virtually any nation in the world seemed a better candidate for democratization than Afghanistan. Over the previous three decades, Afghanistan had suffered through a series of autocratic governments: the Zahir Shah monarchy, the Daoud autocracy, a communist vassal state of the Soviet Union, and the Mujahideen regime. Then the Taliban came to power, and made things much worse. The Taliban used the guise of religion to justify a brutal totalitarian state, which lacked moral or religious values.

Afghanistan was a very poor nation to begin with. But the resistance to the Soviet Union resulted in massive destruction of the nation's economic and social infrastructure. Then years of civil war between Mujahideen factions plunged the nation into economic collapse. More than a million people died in the conflicts, in a nation of twenty-five million. Afghanistan probably had more land mines than any other nation in the world, restricting its land use and killing and maiming the innocent. Millions more fled the nation as refugees to Pakistan, Iran, Tajikistan or other nations in the region.

Democratization is often linked to economic modernization and its consequences. However, Afghanistan was a humanitarian tragedy in 2001. Barely a quarter of the public was literate; the rate fell to 14.1 percent among women. The majority of the adult population had never attended school. Life expectancy had dropped to approximately 44 years. Income per capita ranked among the poorest nations in the world, and substantially below Iran, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Pakistan and the other nations in the region. Human impoverishment spread throughout the nation, and then the Taliban excluded international aid agencies. Basic human rights and liberties were severely restricted by the Taliban. When the United Nations Development Program was able to collect the statistics to estimate the Human Development Index for Afghanistan in 2002, it was 173 among the 176 nations that the UNDP ranked.¹

¹ *Afghanistan: National Human Development Report 2004*. New York: UNDP, 2004.

Life and politics in Afghanistan have changed dramatically after the Taliban were forced from power in late 2001. Schools have been reopened, foreign aid is improving the quality of life, and elections for president in 2004 and parliament in 2005 charted the nation on a new political course. However, many severe social, economic and security problems remain. Based on past social science research, Afghanistan lacks many of the socio-economic factors identified with democratization, such as literacy, economic development, stability, and an active civil society. Thus, progress toward developing democracy will be long and challenging, and it has just begun.

This essay reports on how Afghans view democracy today, and how attitudes are evolving over time based on a 2006 national survey of the Afghan public conducted by The Asia Foundation. The objective is to assess the progress that has been made, the challenges that remain, and to give voice to the Afghan public and their views of democracy.

Democracy as a Form of Government

Successful democratic reform must be built upon public support for the democratic ideal that will sustain new political institutions. To assess public support for democracy, the 2006 survey asked Afghans whether they agreed with the Churchillian statement "Democracy may have its problems, but it is better than any other form of government." A full 84 percent of Afghans agree with this statement, which is a positive sign of their democratic aspirations (see Figure 1). This breadth of support was evident in the 2004 and 2005 elections according to an analyst of Afghanistan elections:

[Afghanistan's] two elections have proven that the yearning to choose leaders freely and hold them accountable is the human condition. Indeed, the 'ordinary citizen'-the man on the Kabul bus, the woman in the Herat library, the nomad shepherd in the mountains-will vote with confidence when given the chance.²

Indeed, Afghans know what the alternatives to democracy are like. Since the 1970s, they have lived successively under a series of autocratic governments starting with the Zahir Shah monarchy and ending with the Taliban. In the words of one rural Pashtun, "I have heard that democracy gives freedom, it is very different in our own country, where all depends on guns".³ Thus, Afghans have a special expertise in comparing the present system to its autocratic alternatives.

At the same time, 11 percent of the public do not favor democracy. Some doubts are inevitable, especially as the new system is being established. These feelings are illustrated by the comments of a Pashtun man in Mazar-e-Sharif: "We saw democracy at the time of the Khalq and Parcham [parties]. The name 'democracy' has bad implications in the minds of people. People have suffered a lot. The 'democratic' people have punished us a lot. If it's like the Khalq and Parcham 'democracy,' we won't like it".⁴

² Andrew Reynolds, "The curious case of Afghanistan", *Journal of Democracy* (April 2006) 17: 104.

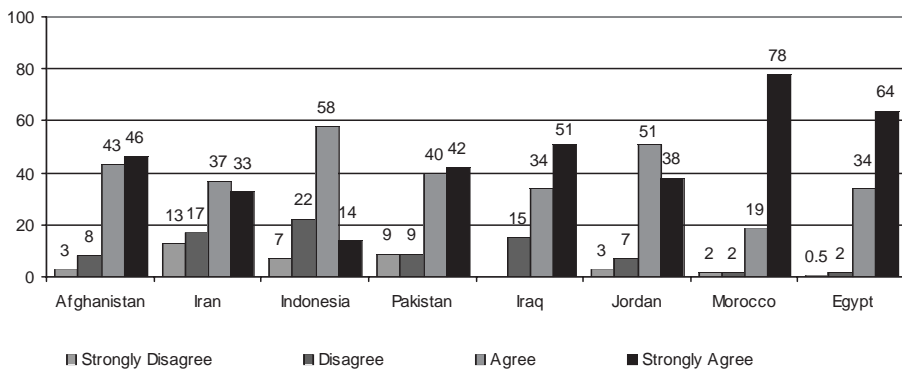
³ The 2004 quotations in this report are from *Democracy in Afghanistan 2004*: The Asia Foundation

⁴ *ibid*

This same question on democracy as a form of government has been asked in public opinion surveys in a range of other nations in the region. Afghans are supportive of democracy more than Iranians, Iraqis and Indonesians, at a level comparable to Jordanians, but less than Egyptians or Moroccans (Figure 1).⁵ This widespread support for democracy suggests that democratic aspirations are part of the human condition, even in poor nations without a democratic history.

Within the Afghan public, these sentiments are fairly uniform across social groups. For instance, 87 percent of the Pashtuns, 91 percent of the Tajiks, 85 percent of the Uzbeks, and 89 percent of the Hazaras share these opinions. Regional differences are also quite modest, ranging from 81 percent in the South Central region from Ghazni south to 95 percent in the West around Herat. This pattern is markedly different from Iraq, where regional and religious differences in democratic values are substantial.⁶

Fig 1: Democracy is Better Than Other Forms of Government



Source: *Afghanistan in 2006: The Asia Foundation and 1999-2003 World Values Survey*

Democracy is an elastic term, however, with many potentially different meanings. After all, the Soviet vassal state was called "The Democratic Republic of Afghanistan." Therefore, the 2006 survey asked what democracy means to the individual, repeating a question asked in the 2004 Voter Education Survey (Table 1). In the lead-up to the 2004 elections, there was frequent evidence that many Afghans were still uncertain about democracy and the electoral process. For instance, many were unfamiliar with the process of free and fair elections-because these were unknown to them. Yet, already in 2004, almost half of Afghans defined democracy in terms of some variant of liberal political rights, which is fairly high by the standards of other newly democratizing nations.⁷ This shows democratic awareness has grown substantially by 2006.

Now, as experience with democracy and public education programs have increased the proportion expressing an opinion, 84 percent of the public defines democracy in terms of liberal political rights-freedom, rights and law, elections and government by the people-a positive sign that citizen education efforts and experience are deepening

⁵ Ronald Inglehart et al. *Human Values and Beliefs: A Cross-Cultural Sourcebook*. Siglo XXI Editores, 2004; Mark Tessler, Mansoor Moaddel and Ronald Inglehart, What do Iraqis want? *Journal of Democracy* (January 2006) 17: 39-50.

⁶ Tessler, Moaddel and Inglehart, What do Iraqis want?, pp. 46-48.

⁷ See *Democracy in Indonesia: The Asia Foundation*, 2003, p. 113; *Democracy in Cambodia 2003: The Asia Foundation*, p. 69; *East Timor Survey of Voting Knowledge: The Asia Foundation*, 2004, p. 30.

public understanding of democracy. Moreover, as the number of political rights cited by an individual increases, so too does his/her belief that democracy is better than other forms of government. Among those who do not cite any political rights in defining democracy, only 39 percent strongly approve of democracy, but this increases to 62 percent among those who cite three or more political rights.

Table 1: *The Meaning and Personal Benefits of Democracy*⁸

	Meaning of Democracy		Benefits of Democracy	
	2004	2006	2004	2006
	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)
Don't Know/No response	36	4	37	3
Political Rights	54	84	50	85
– Freedom	39	55	30	37
– Rights and law	21	31	24	33
– Government by the people	20	33	14	29
– Women's rights	11	20	16	23
– Elections	4	14	5	14
Peace, Stability, Security	20	38	27	42
Economic Gains, Prosperity	8	17	16	22
Other Political Options	9	25	12	32
-- Islamic democracy	8	23	11	31
-- Communism	1	2	1	1

Although, the identification of democracy with peace and stability (38%) and economic prosperity (17%) has increased over time, these remain secondary meanings of democracy. This is actually a positive sign, because it suggests that Afghans do not think of democracy primarily in terms of improving their immediate economic situation, but in terms of broader rights and liberties. However, because of Afghanistan's recent history, both of these responses are much more frequent in Afghanistan than in Indonesia and Cambodia in recent surveys that asked the same question.⁹ References to "Islamic democracy" have grown to nearly a quarter of the Afghan public.

The next survey question asked what people thought was the most important thing they would gain personally from democracy. The belief that democracy will benefit the individual has also grown over time. In 2004, 37 percent did not cite any personal benefit from democracy. This statistic drops to only four percent in 2006. The perceived benefits of democracy largely mirror their definitions of the meaning of democracy. Most Afghans cite political rights as a personal benefit, especially freedom and the rule of law. A male Turkmen in rural Kunduz province believed that "Democracy will bring justice and law in the country",¹⁰ and others cited the value of freedom and civil liberties. In addition, an increased percentage in 2006 cites peace, stability and prosperity as important benefits of democracy—more than those who cited these themes as definitions of democracy.

⁸Based on the following questions asked in *Afghanistan in 2006 & Democracy in Afghanistan 2004*: The Asia Foundation: Q1 - A lot of people in Afghanistan today are talking about democracy. If a country is called a democracy, what does that mean to you? Q2- What, if anything, is the most important thing that democracy in Afghanistan will bring you personally? Note: Percentages total to more than 100% because multiple responses were possible.

⁹ See *Democracy in Indonesia* (p. 114): The Asia Foundation; *Democracy in Cambodia 2003* (p. 70): The Asia Foundation.

¹⁰*Democracy in Afghanistan 2004* : The Asia Foundation

A third of Afghans think that the development of an Islamic democracy will be a personal benefit. This is a term with many possible interpretations depending on whether one puts the accent on "Islamic" or "democracy". It appears to have both interpretations to different individuals. Islamic democracy is more commonly mentioned by those who did not subscribe to traditional social norms about women wearing a burkha. At the same time, those who favor a larger role for mullahs in the political process are also likely to see Islamic democracy as a benefit of democratization.

The understanding of democracy as political rights varies only modestly within the population, and tends to be slightly higher among minority groups. For instance, 80 percent of Pashtuns define democracy in terms of political rights, but 86 percent of the Tajiks and 91 percent of the Hazaras think of democracy in these terms. Similarly, 83 percent of Sunnis define democracy in reference to political rights, but 90 percent of Shias share these opinions. The clearest example of this pattern involves the rights of women. Citing women's rights in the definition of democracy is more common among women (27%) than men (12%), and women's rights are similarly cited as a benefit of democracy more often by women (30%) than among men (15%). This pattern suggests that minorities see democracy as providing political rights that protect or benefit them.

Digging Deeper: Democratic Values

Support for democracy as an ideal is an important factor in building a democratic political culture, but such a culture should also include a set of other values that underlie the democratic process. Both the 2004 and 2006 Afghanistan surveys of The Asia Foundation asked about basic democratic values (Table 2). Already in 2004 there was nearly universal support for the principle of equal rights and these sentiments strengthen a bit further in 2006. Another question in 2006 asked specifically about provisions for gender equality in the constitution, and this also receives broad support (89%). Similarly, there is widespread support for peaceful political opposition in 2004, which increases to 84 percent in 2006.

Table 2: Support for Democratic Values (those who agree)¹¹

	2004 (%)	2006 (%)
Everyone should have equal rights under the law, regardless of their gender, ethnicity or religion.	89	90
The new constitution says men and women have equal rights, including the right to vote.	--	89
It is a good thing that the government should allow peaceful opposition.	78	84

Social science research repeatedly demonstrates that such abstract expressions of democratic values do not always predict actual behavior. People can be 'questionnaire democrats' and the democratic reality typically falls short of the democratic ideal. This happens in every nation. However, support for democratic values does increase the predisposition for democratic behavior, so the high degree of expressed support for equality and a peaceful opposition are positive features of the contemporary Afghan

¹¹ *Democracy in Afghanistan 2004 & Afghanistan in 2006*: The Asia Foundation
Question on degree of agreement with the statements - response covers 'strongly agree' and 'somewhat agree'

political culture. And as we might expect, those who support these democratic values are significantly more likely to believe that democracy is the best form of government.

With such broad support for these two democratic values, there is little room for sizeable variations within the population. Much as with belief in democracy as a form of government (Figure 1) there are slight tendencies for the Tajiks and Hazaras to express more approval of these two democratic values than the Pashtuns, and for the Shias to express more approval than the Sunnis. But these and other demographic differences are typically quite small (within a few percentage points).

Perhaps the most distinct change since 2004 is in the breadth of opinion holding. The 2004 survey found that a significant proportion of the population (16%) had no opinion on the question of a peaceful opposition, for instance. This was especially common among women, rural populations, and the less educated. By 2006, less than five percent of the overall population lack an opinion on either of these questions, which is a further indication of the spread of these norms.

Certainly, one must be cautious in interpreting these findings. The average person is still learning about the democratic process and is unlikely to understand the full benefits and limitations of a democratic system. The development of a deeply felt democratic political culture is a process that takes decades, not just a few years. Society must also change to reflect democratic values. Similarly, it is not realistic to think that when the average Afghan supports democracy that this carries the same meaning as when citizens are surveyed in established democracies.

Recent political history and the traditional Afghan political culture would seemingly not provide a fertile basis for developing democratic values. But this expressed support for democracy exists, and with experience these opinions can develop into stronger democratic values. However, these newly formed aspirations can also erode if the democratic process does not successfully address the nation's problems. A similar situation existed in Eastern European's enthusiasm for democracy after the fall of Communism, which in some cases was eroded by negative experiences. But Afghans have seen the autocratic alternatives to democracy, and believe democracy is better than these other forms of government. To begin with these widespread aspirations for democracy—and abstract support for democratic values—creates a positive potential for Afghanistan's future. The challenge is to transform these aspirations into a deeper understanding of democracy, and a pattern of political behavior consistent with these ideals.

The Nexus of Democracy and Religion

Throughout its modern history, long before the Taliban rule, Afghanistan has been a deeply religious nation linked to Islamic traditions and values. Islam is embedded in the social and political life, and is a basis of national identity. Eighty-eight percent of our survey respondents say they are Sunnis, and an additional 10 percent are Shias. Thus, one of the major issues facing contemporary Afghanistan is the nature of the relationship between religion and politics. This is a complex relationship.

We repeated a question from 2004 that inquired about the separation between religion and politics: "Religious authorities should lead people in obeying the obligations of their faith while political leaders should make decisions about how the government is run". In 2004, a full 78 percent agreed with the separation of religious and political leadership, and this increases slightly to 82 percent in 2006.

However, other questions in the survey yield less sanguine results. One question asked whether there should be a separation of religion and politics at the local level.¹² Now the pattern is reversed. Sixty-one percent say that local religious leaders should be consulted on matters that affect the community, while only 37 percent say that politics and religion should not mix. As one might expect, support for local religious leaders is greater among the more traditional sectors of society: rural residents, older Afghans, the less educated, and residents in Eastern Afghanistan and the central Hazarajat. This support for local religious leaders may simply be a sign of respect for the village mullahs so that they deserve to be consulted, but this may also reflect acceptance of the traditional role of mullahs and their values in the politics of the community.

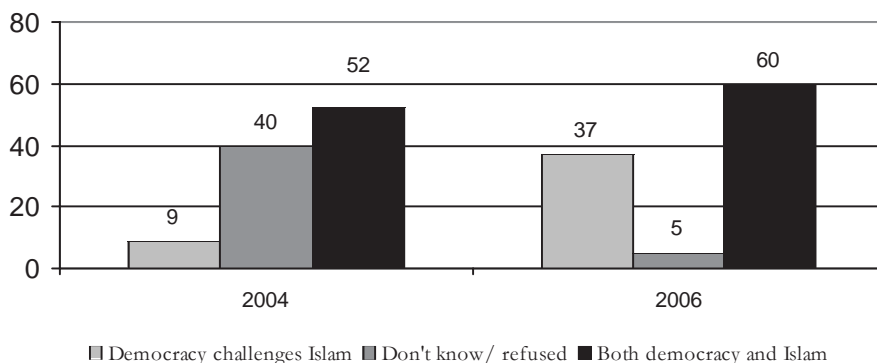
Additional questions asked about the appropriate use of the burkha by women.¹³ A majority of Afghans (56%) said women should usually wear a burkha outside the home. In addition, when asked whether the burkha was a social/cultural tradition, or more of a requirement of Islam, 43 percent said it was a duty of Islam. These sentiments are even stronger among the rural, poorer and older parts of Afghan society.

Therefore, the survey asked about the potential tensions between democracy and Islam. On the one side, respondents could say that a country can become democratic without sacrificing its Islamic values. For instance, in the 2004 study a Pashtun man in Herat said: "We should be democratic and keep Islamic values. A democratic country should take the best from both East and West". On the other side, they could say that democracy will bring too much Westernization and challenge Islamic values. For example, in 2004 a young Uzbek woman in Kunduz said: "We want democracy in an Islamic frame that respects national and religious traditions. We don't want Western democracy".

In 2004, a bare majority (52%) viewed democracy and Islam as compatible, and a full 40 percent were uncertain and did not express an opinion (Figure 2). By 2006 there is a slight increase in the percentage seeing democracy and Islam as compatible (60%). But the most striking change is the decrease in 'no-opinions', which seems to have contributed to an increase in those who feel that democracy is a challenge to Islam. In 2004, 9 percent of the population saw democracy as a challenge to Islam, and this increases to 37 percent by 2006.

¹² Q71: "Some people say that local religious leaders should be regularly consulted on the problems facing an area while others think that politics and religion should not mix. Which is closer to your view?" *Afghanistan in 2006*: The Asia Foundation.

¹³ Q69 and Q70. Now I would like to ask you about women in your community. Some people say that to respect Afghan traditions and Islam, women should usually wear a burkha outside the home, while others say that times are changing, and women should be able to move freely outside the home without a burkha. Do you think that the use of the burkha in Afghanistan is more related to Afghan tradition and culture, or is it more related to the requirements of Islam? *Afghanistan in 2006*: The Asia Foundation

Fig.2: Does Democracy Challenge Islamic Values?¹⁴

It is unclear whether the increase in perceptions of tensions between democracy and Islam represents a real shift in opinions, or just a willingness to express sceptical opinions among those who were hesitant to state their views in 2004. In either case, a substantial proportion of the population now feel democracy and Islam are potentially in conflict.

The belief that democracy challenges Islamic values may arise from many sources. However, the evidence from the survey indicates that most people who hold these sentiments are reflecting their commitment to Islamic values. For instance, among those who believe women should wear a burkha and this is an Islamic duty, 47 percent believe that democracy challenges Islamic values. Among those who do not believe the burkha should be worn as a duty, only 29 percent see a tension between democracy and Islamic values.

Indeed, in Afghanistan as in many other nations in the region, there is an implicit tension between the public's simultaneous endorsement of democracy and Islam. We can see this if we combine responses to two questions: support for democracy (Figure 1) and the tension between democracy and Islam (Figure 3). The majority of Afghans (57%) believe democracy is the best form of government and it is compatible with Islamic values. An additional 31 percent support democracy, but believe it challenges Islamic values. Only 12 percent do not support democracy, and these are divided equally in terms of whether democracy challenges Islamic values or not.

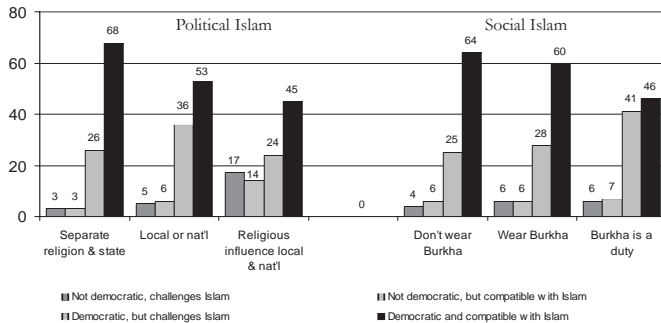
This nexus of democracy and Islam tends to divide Afghans along traditional-modern lines. 'Political Islam' taps the support for religious leaders in local or national politics. Figure 3 indicates that those who favor a separation of religion and politics broadly favor democracy and believe it is compatible with Islam (68%), but this opinion shrinks to 45 percent among those who want religious leaders to play a role in both national and local politics.¹⁵ Political Islam also increases rejection of democracy as the best form of government; from six percent among the former group to 31 percent among the latter.

¹⁴ Q68- Some people say: "Democracy will bring Westernization and too much freedom and challenge Islamic values." Other people say: "An Islamic country can be democratic without becoming too Western. It can still keep its Islamic values". Which is closer to your view? *Afghanistan in 2006*: The Asia Foundation.

¹⁵This index combines the questions on the role of religious leaders in national (C67c) and local politics (Q71).

If the belief that women should wear a burkha is considered a measure of 'social Islam', then these norms also affect democratic support, albeit more weakly.¹⁶ A large majority of those who say that women should not be expected to wear a burkha believe democracy is the best form of government and it is compatible with Islamic values (64%). This same opinion is expressed by only 46 percent of those who believe that women should wear a burkha as an Islamic duty. Among this second group, an almost equal number (41%) believe that democracy is the best form of government, but that it challenges Islamic values.

Fig. 3: *Islamic Norms and Democratic Support*¹⁷



There are also clear differences in these opinions across social groups. For instance, in Eastern and Western Afghanistan, supporters of democracy are almost evenly split between those who see it as compatible with Islamic values and those who see it as challenging these values. In Central Afghanistan (including Kabul and Hazarajat), the supporters of democracy broadly see it as compatible with Islam by roughly a two-to-one ratio. Residents in rural areas are generally less favorable toward democracy, and they often think it conflicts with Islamic values. Support for democracy and the belief that it is compatible with Islamic values also rises steadily with educational level.

In summary, there are two major sources of contention in Afghan orientations toward democracy. First, there is a contrast between expressed support for democracy and democratic values as principles, and the application of these principles in specific instances. For instance, abstract support for the principle of gender equality co-exists with a common belief that Afghan women should continue to wear a burkha. Other questions in the survey display a juxtaposition between acceptance of a peaceful opposition (Table 2) and intolerance toward political parties that the respondent dislikes (Table 3 below). This tension between ideal and reality is common in democratizing nations, it is seen in Eastern Europe and the new democracies of East Asia. Experience and positive examples help to make this connection more direct, but a continuing gap is inevitable.

Second, Afghans approve of democracy as a form of government and support core democratic values—at the same time many also endorse political and social aspects of

¹⁶ This index combines two questions about whether women should wear a burkha; see footnote 13.

¹⁷ *Afghanistan in 2006*: The Asia Foundation

Islam. Many people recognize this tension, while still favoring democracy. Young, secular and better-educated Afghans lean in this direction. But those who favor a political role for religious leaders—older, rural and poorer Afghans—are substantially less likely to support a democratic political system. When these two value sets are kept distinct, they can exist together, but the lack of a national consensus is likely to be a continuing source of political division. Moreover, further political reforms will likely increase tensions between these values.

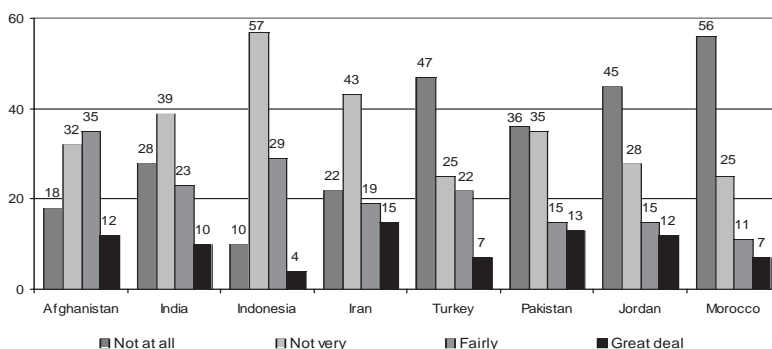
Political Parties as Agents of Democracy

Political parties are one of the pillars of a democratic political order. However, political parties have had a difficult existence in modern Afghanistan's history. Zahir Shah's reformist government and the Daoud regime both restricted parties, the communist party's role in the 1970-80s stigmatized party politics, the Mujahideen resistance created ethnically fragmented and extreme parties, and the Taliban banned parties. Even the Karzai government has displayed an ambivalence to outright scepticism of party politics.¹⁸

Although parties are central to democracy, people are seldom positive about political parties, even in established democracies. Political parties are often seen as self-interested and a source of political division. Concerns that parties would renew the ethnic divisions of the Mujahideen parties are one reason for the Karzai government's scepticism of party politics.

The Afghan public shares these doubts. The 2006 survey asked whether individuals trusted political parties, and an almost identical question was asked in the World Values Survey.¹⁹ Less than half of the Afghan public (47%) expresses great or fair trust in parties, and most say they do not trust parties at all or not very much. But Afghans are actually more positive toward political parties than citizen in democratic India, Turkey and Indonesia (Figure 4). Ironically, Afghans express greater trust in political parties than did Americans in the World Values Survey (23%). In short, the Afghan scepticism of political parties should not be treated as an unusual aspect of the political culture.

Fig.4: Trust in Political Parties



Source: *Afghanistan in 2006: The Asia Foundation and 1999-2003 World Values Survey*

¹⁸ Reynolds, "The curious case of Afghanistan".

¹⁹ Q62c. I would like to ask you about some officials, institutions and organizations in our country. I will read these out to you. As I read out each, please tell me how much trust you have in each of the domestic institutions and organizations and officials. Do you have a great deal of trust, a fair amount of trust, not very much trust, or no trust at all in political parties. *Afghanistan in 2006: The Asia Foundation*

To probe party orientations in more detail, the 2006 survey asked about allowing party activities in the community and tolerance toward parties with which the individual disagreed (Table 3). Between 2004 and 2006 the percentage who believe that party activity should be allowed in their community has increased to 57 percent. This may reflect experiences with the 2004 and 2005 elections. Before the 2004 presidential election a full quarter had no opinion on this question, and as this group drops to nine percent in 2006, the percentage expressing approval increases.

Two other items tapped tolerance toward parties that individuals disagree with. Only a third of Afghans agree that all parties should be allowed to hold meetings in the community. This might be interpreted as a sign of political intolerance, except that the recent experience with the Taliban, Mujahideen parties, and communist party (PDPA) might be conditioning these responses. Even democrats find it difficult to be tolerant of undemocratic, extremist parties. Indeed, the Democracy in Afghanistan 2004 study found that the main reasons given for opposing such meetings were anger at the parties' past offenses, fear that their meetings would turn violent, and belief that parties with little support had no reason to meet in their localities.

Another question tapped political tolerance in an indirect manner, asking if they would keep their friendship if a friend supported a party they did not like. Half the public say they would continue their friendship (54%), a bit higher percentage than in 2004.

Table 3: Attitudes toward Political Parties (those who are positive)

	Afghanistan ²⁰		Indonesia		Cambodia	
	2004	2006	1999	2003	2000	2003
	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)
Do you think that political parties should be allowed to hold meetings in your area? (yes)	--	57	--	--	--	--
Do you think that all political parties, even the ones most people do not like, should be allowed to hold meetings in your area? (yes)	30	32	70	57	80	64
Suppose a friend of yours supported a party you don't like. Would you accept that, or would it end your friendship? (accept)	49	54	--	--	28	81

Some of these questions were also asked in surveys conducted in Indonesia and Cambodia.²¹ Certainly the national contexts are quite different in these three nations. Yet, it appears that Afghans are more skeptical of political parties than either Indonesians or Cambodians. For instance, while only 34 percent of Afghans think that parties they disagree with should be allowed to hold meetings, 57 percent of the Indonesians and 65 percent of Cambodians express these same views.

Even in Western democracies, there is a common sentiment that political parties are necessary to democracy, but this does not make them liked by the public. The Afghan public shares these sentiments. In 2004, most Afghans agreed that it is good for

²⁰ *Democracy in Afghanistan 2004 & Afghanistan in 2006*: The Asia Foundation

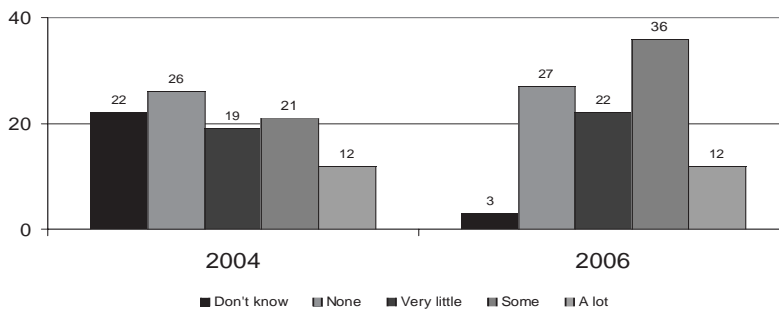
²¹ *Democracy in Indonesia* (p. 122); *Democracy in Cambodia - 2003*, pp 75-76: The Asia Foundation

political parties to be peacefully involved in politics (80%). Yet even if parties are generally seen as essential to democracy, there is skepticism about their role in the process based on pre-2001 experiences. For instance, in the 2004 study a Pashtun man in Mazar-e-Sharif concluded: "Political parties are good in the world, but they have not had good results in Afghanistan. They destroyed Afghanistan". The divisive, potentially conflictual nature of party politics also contrasts with the consensual traditions of Afghan politics and society. Thus, two elections have not substantially altered opinions toward political parties and assuaged public doubts.

Democratic Citizenship

Democracy is not a passive activity, but expects that citizens will be involved in the process and believe that the government is responsive to their interests. This is a substantial challenge in Afghanistan where generations of conflict have sowed doubts about government and politics. One part of this relationship is the citizen's feeling that they can influence the government (Figure 5). In 2004, only a third of Afghans felt that they could exert some influence on the government. This has increased to nearly half the public today (48%). Moreover, while a substantial percentage were uncertain in 2004, the percentage of "don't knows" has decreased, and presumably these individuals have become more positive based on the experience of the last two years. In addition, a separate question asked whether "voting can lead to improvement in the future or do you believe that no matter how one votes, things never change? (Q28)" A full three-quarters say that voting can lead to future improvements. In broad cross-national terms, Afghans display levels of efficacy comparable to other nations in the region.²²

Fig.5: Political Efficacy ²³



Feelings of political efficacy are typically mixed, even in established democracies. In addition, there are often claims that those who feel efficacious are overestimating the ability of the individual to actually influence politics. Still, these feelings can shape impressions of the democratic nature of the political system, and they influence actual participation. For instance, among those who felt they had a lot of influence, 76 percent said they had voted in the 2005 elections. This drops off to 63 percent among those who feel they have no influence.

²²As a reference standard, Afghans feel more efficacious than Indonesians, and comparable to the level in a 2003 Cambodian survey. The Asia Foundation, *Democracy in Indonesia* (p. 122); *Democracy in Cambodia - 2003*, pp 75-76. A similar question in the East Asia Barometer found that less than half the public felt efficacious in Japan, Taiwan, South Korea, or Thailand.

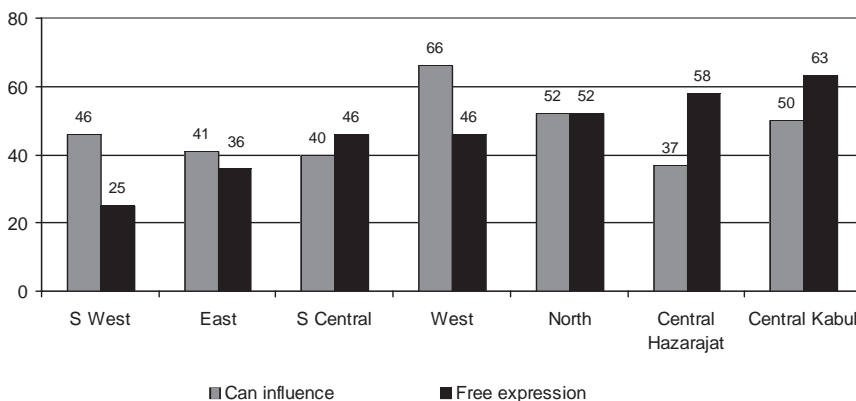
²³Q- How much influence do you think someone like you can have over government decisions - a lot, some, very little, or none at all? *Democracy in Afghanistan 2004 & Afghanistan in 2006*: The Asia Foundation

Equally important, we must also recognize that the conditions to foster democratic involvement are not fully assured or encouraged across the nation. One question in the survey dealt with this explicitly, asking if most people felt free to express their political opinion in the area where the respondent lived (Q28). Only half of the respondents (49%) reported they felt free to express their opinions; 36 percent said they were not, and 15 percent were unsure.

It is insightful to compare perceptions of the freedom of expression to feelings of political efficacy across Afghanistan's major regions (Figure 6). Belief that one can freely express opinions is lowest in the Southwest (the Kandahar region) and in the Eastern provinces near the Pakistan border. However, the citizens in these regions display levels of political efficacy that are close to the Afghan average. Conversely, the Kabul and Central regions are perceived as more supportive of free expression, and it is in such environments that democratic discourse can expand and develop. Other questions asked about whether one would fear to vote in national elections, participate in peaceful demonstrations, or run for public office—these items followed similar regional patterns.²⁴ Unless the public feels that they can freely state their views, this may create a 'spiral of silence' in which even efficacious and democratic citizens will hesitate to become politically engaged or express their democratic values.

Figure 6 also illustrates a general pattern found in other aspects of Afghan public opinion: democratic norms and values vary relatively modestly across the regions, but the political and social context—and perceptions of these differences—display greater variation. The residents of the Southwest and Kabul are more similar in their feelings of political efficacy (and their democratic values) than in their perceptions of the freedom of expression in each region.

Fig.6: Efficacy and Free Expression by Region²⁵



Satisfaction with the Democratic Process

Satisfaction with the working of the democratic process reflects a mix of two factors: orientations toward democracy as an ideal and evaluations of the current government.

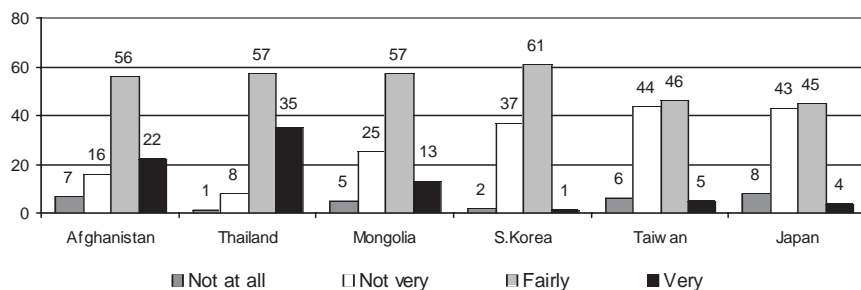
²⁴ For instance, only 10% in Kabul say they would feel a lot of fear to vote in a national election, while 26% express such fears in Southwest Afghanistan and another 21% are unsure.

²⁵ The figures present the percentage who feel they can influence the government at least somewhat and the percentage who feel free to express their opinions. *Afghanistan in 2006*: The Asia Foundation

When asked to make this judgment, most Afghans are broadly positive. Twenty-one percent are very satisfied, and an additional 55 percent are fairly satisfied.²⁶ To put these sentiments in context, Afghans are more positive toward their political system than five of the six democracies included in the East Asian Barometer project (Figure 7). For instance, barely half of the Taiwanese or Japanese are satisfied with the workings of their government, compared to three-quarters in Afghanistan.

We suspect that these high satisfaction levels still reflect a honeymoon period for the new government, and enthusiasm for the future as well as the progress since the expulsion of the Taliban. These opinions also do not mean that people are uncritical of the Karzai government and its policies. Satisfaction with the functioning of the democracy taps broader feelings of the general political process.

Fig.7: Satisfaction With the Way Democracy Works



Source: *Afghanistan in 2006: The Asia Foundation and 2001-02 East Asian Barometer*

A more extensive analysis of the correlates of satisfaction with the democratic process identified three major influences. First, satisfaction is a function of democratic orientations; it is higher among those who believe democracy is the best form of government and those who espouse democratic values. These are the individuals who will be the core supporters of a new democracy process in Afghanistan. Second, satisfaction is also strongly linked to perceptions of the family's current economic situation compared to life under the Taliban or Soviet regime. Since Afghans by roughly two-to-one feel they are better off today, this promotes satisfaction with the democratic process. However, this also means that economic failures in the future can quickly reduce satisfaction levels. Third, satisfaction with the democratic process, much like support for democracy as an ideal, is also linked to support for political Islam (See Figure 1). Among those who want religious leaders involved in both local and national politics, 61 percent are satisfied with the democratic process, but this increases to 83 percent among those who want to keep politics and religion separate.

These patterns again suggest that the current political system taps a clash of values between those who express democratic aspirations and favor a secular political system versus those who harbor doubts about democracy and favor a political role for religious leaders.

²⁶ Q75 - On the whole, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the way democracy works in Afghanistan. Are you very satisfied, fairly satisfied, not very satisfied, or not at all satisfied? *Afghanistan in 2006: The Asia Foundation*

Implications

As we noted in the introduction, Afghanistan's recent tumultuous and non-democratic history must raise initial questions about the democratic attitudes of the Afghan public. The evidence from this 2006 survey describes many positive elements of the contemporary political culture, but also areas where challenges remain:

- The vast majority of Afghans express support for democracy as the best form of government, and they understand democracy primarily in terms of liberal political rights. *Experience and public education programs are apparently improving support for democracy in Afghanistan.*
- Democratic aspirations are also widely dispersed throughout the public. Differences in support for democracy by region or ethnic group, for example, are very modest. This pattern contrasts to other multicultural nations, such as Iraq, where surveys indicate sharp differences in opinion between groups. *The general uniformity of opinions is a positive indicator for further democratization.*
- Support for democracy co-exists with social and political norms derived from Afghanistan's traditional and Islamic heritage. Although the majority of Afghans see democracy and Islam as compatible, a sizeable and growing minority do not. *One of the major questions for democratization in Afghanistan is whether these contrasting norms of democracy and Islam can be reconciled,* because belief in the political role of Islam erodes support for a democratic form of government.
- There are also tensions between Afghans' support for democratic values in the abstract, and their willingness to apply these values in specific instances. For instance, expressed support for a peaceful opposition falters when asked to apply this to political parties that are disliked by the individual. Expressed equality for women conflicts with other survey evidence of the traditional orientations toward women. *Public education efforts, and positive political experiences, can deepen Afghan understanding of the application of democratic values.*
- Democratic values and behavior do not exist in a vacuum. Although most attitudes toward democracy are fairly evenly distributed across social groups and regions, perceptions of political freedoms are not. There are sharp regional differences in the belief that one can freely express political opinions, which reflect aspects of continuing political conflict within Afghanistan. *The benefits of democratic aspirations by the public will be limited in the absence of a democratic context.*
- Satisfaction with the democratic process is linked to the economic performance of the system. This is a positive factor now because of the improvements since the ouster of the Taliban increased support for the democratic process. However, economic reversals can erode these same sentiments. *The public still looks to the government to provide basic needs, and will be judged by its success.*

Compared to what we might imagine the Afghan political culture to have been in 2001, the findings from our 2006 survey find dramatic signs of progress. Yet, we know that

these democratic aspirations are too new to be deeply rooted in the Afghan political culture, and tensions exist with the Islamic values and traditions of Afghanistan. Escalating conflict, political insecurity, or poor government performance can also reverse the progress that has been made. For the present, the sentiments of a Tajik man in Jalalabad provides an apt summary for how Afghans view their future: "We want democracy to bring peace in our country and to rebuild the country."

Chapter 3

Local Perceptions of the State in Afghanistan

Sanjay Ruparelia

This essay analyzes local perceptions of the state in Afghanistan based on findings of Afghanistan in 2006: A Survey of the Afghan People. It examines levels of trust in various formal institutions of state vis-à-vis traditional social authorities. The paper also investigates the concerns of ordinary Afghan citizens regarding corruption, security and violence. It presents the national-level results of the survey as well as variations along lines of region, ethnicity, occupation, education and gender. Three main findings emerge from the analysis. First, levels of trust in the army and police are relatively high, despite their widely reported failings. Public support for members of parliament, provincial councils and community development councils is also strong, in contrast to political parties, government courts and local militias. Yet perceptions of levels of corruption are high. Second, most Afghan citizens express great confidence in traditional local institutions to address their grievances, disputes and conflicts. The most important are local shura elders. Consequently, buttressing the capacity, authority and legitimacy of the state depends on its relations with these traditional social authorities and implementing the rule of law. Finally, differences according to region and ethnicity constitute the most salient cleavages in Afghanistan. The essay explores these findings in detail, identifies policy implications and suggests areas of further inquiry.

Introduction

A great deal of recent political commentary on Afghanistan focuses on the task of state-building: how to construct a constitutional democratic republic that possesses effective control over its demarcated territory, sufficient administrative capacity to implement coherent policies, and wide political legitimacy in the eyes of its citizens. Given its historic weakness, the task of building a viable Afghan state involves expanding the authority, capacity, and accountability of formal institutional structures -- some newly fashioned -- vis-à-vis the multiple centers of power, wealth, and status that have historically existed in its highly decentralized society.¹

By and large, most commentators examine the high politics of the state-building process. In brief, they have focused on the rationale underlying the highly centralized, unitary, and presidential system promulgated by the Constitutional Loya Jirga in December 2003; the negotiations, bargaining, and compromises that influenced its proceedings; and the capacity of the state to create political stability, implement effective policies, and bolster democratic legitimacy at the centre and in the peripheries. Indeed, given the conflict and violence that engulfs many provinces today -- particularly in the south where the resurgence of the Taliban threatens to defeat US and NATO military forces as well as their Afghan counterparts -- the imperative of building an effective, legitimate, and responsive state apparatus acquires particular urgency. The prospects of strengthening democratic politics and promoting inclusive development presume such a state.

¹See in particular Barnett R. Rubin, *The Fragmentation of Afghanistan: State Formation and Collapse in the International System*, Second edition (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002).

Despite its significance, however, assessment of the state-building project to date has disproportionately involved elite actors, perceptions, and concerns. Apart from insightful journalistic accounts and partial surveys, there has been little systematic analysis of how ordinary citizens perceive the state. To what extent do ordinary citizens trust formal state institutions such as the Afghan National Army (ANA), Afghan National Police (ANP), Parliament, Provincial Councils (PCs), and the judicial system? Which of these various bodies do they approach to address, judge, and resolve their concerns, needs, and conflicts? Or do Afghans continue to seek assistance from traditional social authorities or de facto centers of power, such as local militia leaders, elders of the local shura, or tribal chiefs? To what extent do ordinary citizens believe that formal state institutions function in an impartial and effective manner and represent their interests? In short, what is the 'view from below' of the state-building project?

This essay explores these general questions. In particular, it focuses on three areas. First, the essay examines the level of trust Afghan citizens display toward each other in general and vis-à-vis particular institutional structures (section 1). Second, it analyses the extent to which ordinary Afghans suffer from fear, corruption and violence, and the various governance structures to which they turn for assistance (section 2). Third, the essay examines the attitudes of the citizenry towards selected democratic institutions: in particular, Members of Parliament (MPs), Provincial Councils (PCs), and Community Development Councils (CDCs) (section 3). Given the importance of various social cleavages in any society, divisions which assume even greater salience in societies experiencing protracted violent conflict, the essay analyses both national-level trends as well as variations generated by differences of gender, education, occupation, ethnicity, locality, and region. In order to gauge change over time and control for variations in interpretation, where possible it also compares the national-level findings of the survey with the previous study of popular attitudes commissioned by The Asia Foundation, *Democracy in Afghanistan 2004: A Survey of the Afghanistan Electorate*.² The essay concludes by highlighting the main findings, assessing their significance for various policy actors, and suggesting lines of further inquiry.

Levels of Trust In and Identification With Various Public Institutions

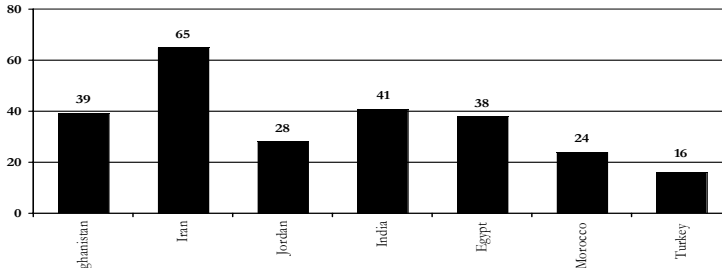
A variety of questions in the survey ask respondents to appraise their level of trust in general towards compatriots as well as different social and political institutions. Measuring levels of generalized trust and popular expectations of social cooperation provides a baseline from which to examine more particular dispositions. A majority of Afghans (59%) counseled prudence in dealing with others, while 63 percent believed most were more interested in helping themselves rather than others (63%).³ Their views are generally in line with many countries (see Figure 1).⁴

² See *Democracy in Afghanistan 2004*: The Asia Foundation. Significant differences in how regions are coded in the two surveys make it impossible strictly to compare findings on this variable. This is unfortunate given that produces the most significant cleavages. Moreover, many of the questions analyzed below were not asked in 2004. Several were, however. Differences in the findings are noted below.

³ Q60: 'Generally speaking, would you say that most people can be trusted or that you need to be careful in dealing with people?' Q61: 'Do you think that in most instances people are only thinking about themselves or do you think that in most instances people are trying to help others?' *Afghanistan in 2006*: The Asia Foundation.

⁴ I would like to thank Russ Dalton for providing me with this data.

Fig.1: Levels of General Social Trust



Source: *Afghanistan in 2006: The Asia Foundation and 1999-2003 World Values Survey*

The most important differences on this issue arose between regions and, to a lesser extent, ethnic and occupational groups. Wariness of others was particularly strong in the East (73%), and amongst Pashtuns (64%), and small business owners (70%). By and large, in comparison to other social groups members of these social categories also believed that self-interest governed individual behavior.⁵ In contrast, the most positive assessments on questions of trust and altruism came from Uzbeks (45%) and residents in the North (48%)—most likely a coterminous grouping.

However, despite the widely held perception that self-interest governed social relations, a larger proportion of Afghans (71%) declared that they had approached local communities to solve their collective problems.⁶ This was particularly true amongst residents of Central Kabul (81%) and the South-West (80%), and self-employed professionals (78%). Indeed, approximately 80 percent of individuals surveyed either 'strongly' or 'somewhat' held the belief that 'government doesn't care about what they think'.⁷ Again, residents of Kabul (86%), Tajiks (85%), and the self-employed (90%) expressed this sentiment in stronger terms. Analysts generally find comparable attitudes in other countries.⁸ Yet the figure in 2006 remains disconcerting, given that 58 percent of respondents in 2004 saw the government as apathetic towards citizens, while 30 percent did not know.⁹ In other words, many amongst the latter have formed a negative opinion. This represents a significant deterioration within Afghanistan itself.

The preceding data yields several insights. First, despite the belief that self-interest governs most human relations, the level of confidence in collective self-reliance within local communities is very strong. Second, a majority of Afghans see 'government' as unresponsive to their needs, views and concerns. The relationship between these two findings is ambiguous, however. The belief amongst many citizens that government is insensitive may bolster their faith in collective self-sufficiency at the local level. Conversely, the latter may be independent of perceptions of government. Third, we do

⁵ The corresponding figures were: East (77 percent); Pashtuns (65 percent); and small business owners (71 percent). Interestingly, smaller ethnic groups displayed relatively greater faith in others (46 percent) yet disproportionately believed that others acted in a self-interested manner (72 percent).

⁶ Q55: 'Sometimes people and communities have problems, related to an issue that concerns everyone in their area, that they can't resolve on their own and so they have to ask for the help of a government official or a government agency. Have you ever had such a problem in your area that you needed to ask for help or cooperation to resolve it?' *Afghanistan in 2006: The Asia Foundation*

⁷ Q15: 'Some people say, "I don't think that the government cares much about what people like me think." Do you agree or disagree with this statement? Strongly, or somewhat?' *Afghanistan in 2006: The Asia Foundation*

⁸ I would like to thank Anuhita Mojudmar for pointing this out to me.

⁹ *Democracy in Afghanistan 2004: The Asia Foundation*

not know whether levels of interpersonal trust vary across different social communities: for example, whether Pashtuns distrust non-Pashtuns, or farm laborers distrust office workers, to a greater degree than members of their own community or class; and if so, to what degree. Given the complex historical relations between various ethnic groups and regions in Afghanistan, and the relatively strong salience of these fissures in the survey, it would be useful to probe this issue more systematically. Indeed, respondents in the 2004 survey were as likely to support compromise between different social groups (44%) as majority rule (43%), underscoring its importance.¹⁰ Finally, whether all or some 'government' institutions are seen as unresponsive is unclear. All these issues, therefore, require further investigation.

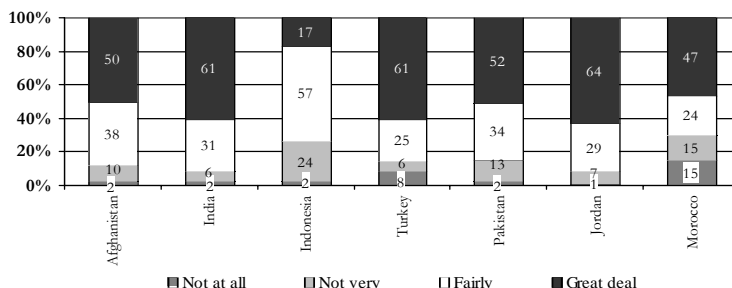
The survey probes the latter by examining levels of trust in different political and social institutions. The data reveals sharp and telling differences (see Table 1).¹¹

Table 1: Levels of Trust in Various Public Institutions

Institution	Great deal	Fair amount	Not very much trust	No trust at all
	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)
ANA	50	38	10	2
ANP	45	42	10	3
Electronic media	38	48	9	5
Print media	34	48	12	6
NGOs	16	42	25	17
Political parties	11	34	33	22
Justice system	11	28	23	29
Local militias	10	21	26	42

The majority of citizens express their greatest confidence in the ANA and ANP; electronic and print media also receive high levels of support. On the one hand, this is consistent with general international trends (see Figures 2-4).¹²

Fig 2: Trust in the Armed Forces



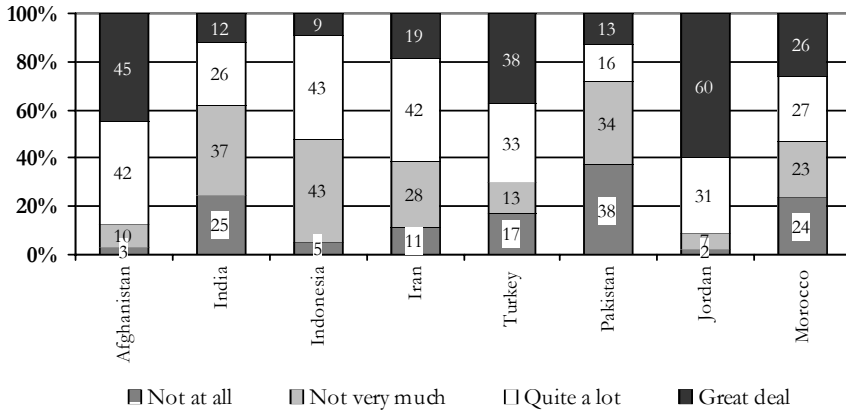
Source: *Afghanistan in 2006: The Asia Foundation and 1999-2003 World Values Survey*

¹⁰Q83: 'Some people say that decisions should be made based on what the majority wants, even if the minority disagrees. Others say it is more important to get as much agreement as possible between the minority and majority, even if the majority must compromise. Which is closer to your view?' *Democracy in Afghanistan 2004: The Asia Foundation.*

¹¹ Q62: 'Do you have a great deal of trust, a fair amount of trust, not very much trust or no trust at all in [the following institutions]?' *Afghanistan in 2006: The Asia Foundation*

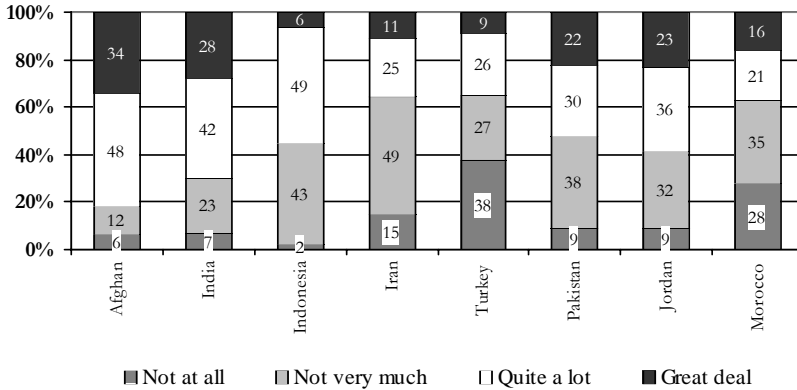
¹² I would like to thank Russ Dalton for providing me with this data.

Fig.3: Trust in the Police



Source: *Afghanistan in 2006: The Asia Foundation and 1999-2003 World Values Survey*

Fig.4: Trust in the Press



Source: *Afghanistan in 2006: The Asia Foundation and 1999-2003 World Values Survey*

However, it is surprising given reports by noted scholars, independent organizations and the media regarding the impunity of action of, and level of corruption in, the coercive institutions of state.¹³ The findings demonstrate some variation according to differences in region, gender and occupation as well. Confidence in the ANA is comparatively low in Hazarajat (63%) whereas faith in the ANP (94%) and the media (93%) is relatively high in this region. Although similar on other issues, women trust the ANA (88%) to a greater extent than men (78%). Confidence in the ANA and ANP is particularly high amongst managers/executives (95 and 91 percent, respectively) and Uzbeks (94 and 93 percent, respectively). In general, high public support for the national army corresponds to the generally favorable assessment given to this fledgling institution by many observers, who note the performance of its mostly new recruits

¹³ For the most recent analyses, see Barnett R. Rubin, *Afghanistan's Uncertain Transition from Turmoil to Normalcy*, Council Special Report No. 12, March 2006, Council of Foreign Relations; *Countering Afghanistan's Insurgency: No Quick Fixes*, Asia Report No. 123, 2 November 1996, International Crisis Group; Barnett R. Rubin, "Saving Afghanistan," *Foreign Affairs*, Volume 86, Number 1, January/February 2007.

despite low pay, poor equipment, and dangerous operations. Public confidence in the ANA bodes well for the state-building process. In contrast, the expressed support for the ANP, seen by most commentators as the refuge of demobilized, corrupt and ill-disciplined private militias, is very puzzling. The findings of the survey cannot explain the discrepancy. Yet they demand close scrutiny.

The level of trust towards NGOs is more evenly divided: 58 percent of respondents expressed 'great' or 'considerable' faith in these organizations versus 42 percent who expressed similar levels of distrust. Yet significant group-level variations exist. Regionally, NGOs receive their highest endorsement in the South¹⁴ of the country (72%), compared to Hazarajat and the East, the only two regions where levels of distrust outweigh faith in these organizations. Amongst occupational groups, members of the military and police express relatively greater distrust (53%) – a potentially disconcerting finding given the importance of the latter for the day-to-day operations of NGOs. Minority ethnic groups (58%), individuals from villages (56%), and those without literacy (55%) also display relatively greater distrust than residents of Kabul (65%) and university graduates (69%).

Two possible explanations arise for these findings. On the one hand, it may reveal genuine suspicion amongst many individuals towards the status and activities of this sector, which vary tremendously. Anti-NGO rhetoric by influential politicians in the last year may have affected the image of NGOs in the public sphere. However, the possibility of confusion regarding what constitutes an 'NGO' – sometimes erroneously thought to include organizations such as the UN, donor government agencies, and private business groupings – must be considered.¹⁵ Nevertheless, given their centrality in the ongoing reconstruction process, these general findings provide an impetus for NGOs to address the reasons for relative public ambivalence by re-examining their goals, operations, and public communication strategies.

Finally, the public reserves its greatest level of distrust for political parties, formal government courts, and local militias. The relative lack of support for local militias (32%) is an encouraging sign. It suggests that most citizens hold them responsible for the instability and violence that has afflicted the country for many years. There are important exceptions, however. Support for local militia groups is quite high in the South-West (50%); it is also relatively greater amongst small business owners (36%), managers/executives (37%), Pashtuns (36%), villagers (33%), and illiterate groups (35%). Moreover, the fact that more than one-third of respondents in these communities, and exactly half in the South-West, trust these institutions remains a concern. In general, the low level of support for local militias is inversely mirrored by the confidence expressed in the ANA and ANP. Yet it also enjoins further efforts by the government to buttress the capacity and legitimacy of the latter.

The comparably high level of distrust towards political society and the judiciary augurs less well. The level of suspicion towards political parties (55%) may well reflect deeper historical sentiments caused by restrictions on parties under the Zahir Shah and Daoud

¹⁴For the sake of convenience, 'South' refers to South-Central throughout this paper.

¹⁵Interview with leading ACBAR official, Kabul, 20 July 2006.

regimes, the polarization of partisanship under the Communists in the 1980s and the banning of parties by the Taliban in the 1990s.¹⁶ To some extent the newly created single-non-transferable-vote (SNTV) electoral system arguably reinforces these longer-term trends.¹⁷ Again, there are marginal exceptions. Distrust in parties is somewhat lower in the South-West (48%), amongst managerial classes (47%) and military/police personnel (43%), and residents of Kabul (50%) and university graduates (49%). Yet the generally low esteem in which parties are held suggests a pressing need to reconsider their status and functioning given the importance of parties in representing and aggregating collective interests between state and society, and structuring government-opposition relations in parliament, in most democratic political systems. Similarly, the lack of trust in formal government courts (61%) to administer justice, particularly in the East (72%) and amongst military/police personnel (71%), engenders an environment that encourages illegal activities and creates a vacuum in which other regulative institutions may seek to fill the gap. The following analysis of levels of crime, violence, and corruption partly substantiates this inference and indicates some of its underlying reasons.

Corruption, Insecurity, and Violence

Measuring levels of trust in society in general and towards particular institutions provides a topography of confidence in the state. We can gain a more robust understanding of these patterns, however, by further analyzing conceptions of community self-reliance, everyday interactions between local communities and the state, and the institutions to which citizens turn to address personal disputes, feelings of insecurity, and incidents of crime and violence.

A major finding of the survey is the very high level of self-confidence in local community structures to resolve outstanding disputes. As stated earlier, a solid majority of respondents held that local communities could better address their collective problems. Interestingly, those who sought help predominantly turned to elders of the local shura (12%) or ANP (11%). Some elicited the support of a religious leader (4%); a tiny number contacted a Member of Parliament (MP) or a government agent.¹⁸ There were exceptions. Residents of Central Kabul (24%) and Hazarajat (17%) turned to government officials instead of mullahs in greater numbers, while the mullahs (24%) and the ANA (15%) displaced the relative influence of local shura elders in the South-West. The ANA also held greater sway in the East.¹⁹ For the most part, however, the national pattern held across most social cleavages.

Similar findings emerge amongst those few individuals (12%) who reported being involved in personal disputes.²⁰ The incidence of conflict was higher amongst farmers (19%), members of the military and police (24%), and inhabitants of the South-West (19%) – all unsurprising results given the disproportionality of conflict and violence in that region, and that disputes over land (63%) and, to a lesser extent, disagreements

¹⁶ For further analysis see the accompanying essay by Russ Dalton, *Afghans and Democracy*.

¹⁷ See Andrew Reynolds, "The curious case of Afghanistan," *Journal of Democracy*, 17 (2) 2006: 104-117.

¹⁸ Q56: 'If yes [to Q55], whom did you ask?' The percentage of individuals who had had general contact with their MPs was higher, however. See Section 3. *Afghanistan in 2006*: The Asia Foundation

¹⁹ Differences also existed across occupational groups. However, the data revealed no determinate pattern.

²⁰ Q86: 'Have you been involved in any dispute in the last two years over something serious, like land ownership or something similar?' Q87: 'If yes [to Q86], what kind of problem was it?' Q88: 'Who did you approach that eventually helped you to settle the dispute?' *Afghanistan in 2006*: The Asia Foundation

regarding house ownership (13%) and internal family matters (10%),²¹ are the reported cause of most conflicts. In the main, individuals consulted elders of the local shura²² (49 percent) and tribal leaders (23%), as opposed to government courts (20%), in these conflicts as well. While the strength of preferences for these institutions varies at the subnational level, virtually all categories mention these three institutions in rank order. Indeed, when asked whom they most trusted to resolve any dispute, exactly one-half of the respondents cited local shura elders (50%), followed by tribal leaders (19%), and formal government courts (17%).²³ The South-West was the only region - indeed the only social grouping - where tribal leaders held greater sway (31%) in relative and absolute terms. Hence these findings powerfully underscore the high regard in which ordinary Afghan citizens hold the shura and turn to them to resolve their most pressing dilemmas. The political implication seems clear. The ability of the state to extend its reach, bolster its authority, and help resolve disputes will likely depend on its relations with local elders. Circumventing or opposing a role for shura in conflict resolution will either waste scarce political capital and social trust, or stoke resistance to the state. Facilitating greater cooperation between local shura elders and formal government authorities could improve the authority, capacity, and reach of the state in domains that matter the most to its citizens.

For obvious reasons, local security and physical safety are principal concerns for many Afghan citizens. Yet assessments of levels of security reveal wide disparities (see Table 2). Sixty-eight percent of respondents characterized the level of security in their area as 'excellent' or 'good'; indeed, only eight percent perceived it to be 'poor'.²⁴ This marks a noteworthy improvement since 2004 when 58 percent of respondents described their local security as positive and 20 percent as poor.²⁵ Yet these figures conceal significant variation at lower levels. The most persistent and important variation is regional. A majority of inhabitants in the South (54%), South-West (53%), and West (42%) felt their situation to be 'fair' or 'poor', mirroring the violence reported daily in these areas by the media. In contrast, residents of Central Kabul (84%) and the North (76%) felt that security was 'excellent' or 'good', reflecting far better conditions on the ground.

Table 2: Perceptions of Security by Region

Region	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)
Central-Kabul	31	54	12	3
East	24	37	29	9
South Central	7	39	39	15
South West	7	40	29	24
West	8	50	33	9
North	20	56	21	3
Central-Hazarajat	15	52	28	5

²¹ Some variation occurs with respect to occupational categories: agricultural laborers mentioned difficulties regarding irrigation; domestic laborers disproportionately suffered theft; informal salespeople, small business owners and self-employed professionals cited shop disputes - differences that confirm natural expectations. Nevertheless, conflicts over land were the overwhelming problem for all groups.

²² In order to maintain consistency, I have combined 'local elders' and 'local shura' for both Q88 and Q89, as generally done in the questionnaire as a whole.

²³ Q89: 'Who do you trust the most to resolve any dispute that you may have?' *Afghanistan in 2006*: The Asia Foundation

²⁴ Q16: 'How would you rate the security situation in your area?' *Afghanistan in 2006*: The Asia Foundation

²⁵ *Democracy in Afghanistan 2004*: The Asia Foundation

Less systematic differences existed across other social cleavages. Members of the military and police rated levels of security in their areas higher (78%) than other occupational groups – a positive appraisal of their own performance. Pashtuns and Uzbeks were less and more optimistic, respectively, than other ethnic groups: 46 percent of the former described their level of security as 'fair' or 'poor', whereas 79 percent of the latter saw theirs as 'excellent' or good'. Suffice to say, assessments of Pashtuns and residents of the South probably overlap to a significant extent.

A similar picture emerges from the survey regarding how ordinary Afghans rate their personal safety. The data reveals a resilient population: 60 percent vouched to 'never' or 'rarely' fear for their safety or that of their families.²⁶ The fact that 40 percent of citizens 'often' or 'sometimes' worried for their personal or familial security, however, depicted a justifiably anxious society. Moreover, the result indicates a marginal deterioration since 2004, when 64 percent reported never or rarely worrying about their personal safety.²⁷ It remains striking that ordinary Afghan citizens do not feel even greater apprehension given the present state of affairs.

However, significant variation exists at the subnational level, mirroring to some extent assessments regarding security (see Table 3).

Table 3: Level of Fear by Region

Region	Often	Sometimes	'Yes'	Rarely	Never	'No'
	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)
Central-Kabul	6	22	28	12	60	72
East	18	28	46	39	16	55
South Central	9	35	44	26	30	56
South West	18	39	57	31	12	43
West	7	43	50	24	26	50
North	8	29	37	16	47	53
Central-Hazarajat	2	22	24	20	56	76

Again, the most important disparity lies at the regional level. Residents of Central Kabul (72%) and Hazarajat (76%) are most confident about their personal safety; inhabitants of the South-West (43%) and West (50%) the least. However, in comparison to their assessments of local security, residents of the West (50%) also express considerable anxiety on this score, as do town-dwellers (54%). Military/police personnel voice concern for their personal safety (41%) in higher numbers than other occupational groups. And amongst ethnic groups, Pashtuns again fear for their personal safety the most (47%). Most of the preceding observations lend themselves to straightforward interpretations. At first glance it is unclear why inhabitants of the West express anxiety regarding their personal safety, however, despite their relative

²⁶Q17: 'How often do you feel for your own personal safety or security or for that of your family these days?' *Afghanistan in 2006*: The Asia Foundation

²⁷*Democracy in Afghanistan 2004*: The Asia Foundation

confidence in the level of security in their region. It may reflect the reportedly high level of impunity under which local security forces operate. The issue requires further inquiry.

Data regarding the incidence of crime and violence may partly explain the relatively positive general assessments of local security and personal safety. Thirteen percent of survey respondents reported that they or a member of their family had fallen victim to such an offence in the last year.²⁸ This was almost the same ratio as in 2004 (12%) – more than twice the rate of crime reported in Indonesia (5%), and similar to East Timor (12%).²⁹ The figure was somewhat higher in the East (21%) and West (19%) and amongst Pashtuns (18%). However, with the exception of residents of the South (63%), Uzbeks (57%), and self-employed professionals (53%), approximately 70 percent of these individuals reported the violation to an authority. Significantly, the vast majority of ordinary Afghans contacted the ANP, followed in roughly equal terms by their malik or elders of the local shura. Few notified the local police, mullah or commander, or governor, public prosecutor or the courts; virtually none contacted a Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT), the UN, or the media. Of equal importance, the vast majority ranked these same institutions – ANP, malik, shura – in similar order when asked to whom they would report a crime.³⁰ Differences at the subnational level were insignificant.

We need to treat these figures with caution, however. Victims of violence who failed to inform the authorities – of any kind – either cited 'fear of retaliation' or downplayed the incident in equal numbers; some also claimed that it would 'make no difference'. The number of individuals in this pool is small in absolute terms. Nonetheless, due to the well-known effects that fear of reprisal can exert on the openness of respondents, and given that women, inhabitants of the South, and Pashtuns and Hazaras cited the preceding reasons with greater frequency, the issue demands greater investigation. The fact that 47 percent of interviewees expressed 'little' or 'no' faith that law enforcement agencies or judicial authorities would punish criminal acts that might occur against them provides further impetus.³¹ Indeed, a lower but similar number of respondents (41%) – particularly amongst inhabitants of the South (58%), East (55%), and Hazarajat (52%), military/police officials (51%), and Pashtuns (54%) – felt that formal government courts administered justice either 'not very well' or 'not at all'.³² Their grievances included corruption (29%), delays (7%), and discrimination (7%).³³ The issue of excessive legal fees was an issue for certain regions (in the South, South–West, and East) and occupational groups (amongst agricultural laborers, informal workers, and managerial classes). Yet corruption was perceived to be the most important obstacle to the administration of justice across all social cleavages. In short, we need

²⁸ Q18: 'Have you or has anyone in your family been victim of violence or of some criminal act in your home or community in the past year?' Q19: 'Did you report it to any authority?' Q20: 'To what agency or institution did you report the crime?' Q21: 'Why didn't you report the crime?' *Afghanistan in 2006*: The Asia Foundation.

²⁹ *Democracy in Afghanistan 2004*: The Asia Foundation

³⁰ Q22: 'If you were witness to a crime, to whom would you report?' The ANA received greater support than local maliks in the South–West and West, amongst residents in towns and Kabul, and amongst those with university education. Yet the difference is slight. *Afghanistan in 2006*: The Asia Foundation

³¹ Q23: 'If you were a victim of violence or robbery, how much faith would you have that the law-enforcing and judicial systems would punish the guilty party?' *Afghanistan in 2006*: The Asia Foundation

³² Q90: 'The formal courts are responsible for administering justice fairly and impartially throughout Afghanistan. In general, in this area, how well do you think the courts perform this role?' *Afghanistan in 2006*: The Asia Foundation.

³³ Q91: 'You say that the formal courts are not administering justice well. Why do you say that?' *Afghanistan in 2006*: The Asia Foundation

to investigate further if an association exists between low reported levels of crime and violence and the widespread lack of faith in formal judicial institutions, and whether perceptions of corruption have any effect.

In fact, concern over corruption is extensive (see Table 4).³⁴ Forty-three percent of respondents perceive it to be a 'major problem' in their daily life; a comparable number (40%) see it in similar terms in their neighborhood. Moreover, perceptions of levels of corruption increase drastically at higher scales. Sixty-seven percent of respondents felt it was a serious issue in their provincial government; the figure for Afghanistan as a whole was 80 percent.

Table 4: Perceptions of Corruption in Afghanistan

Sphere	Major	Minor	Not a problem
	(%)	(%)	(%)
Daily life	43	32	25
Neighborhood	40	45	15
Provincial government	67	28	5
Nationally	80	17	3

Subnational data reflect the general trend. Some distinct patterns emerge, however. Certain social groupings perceive corruption to be worse at all levels vis-à-vis their counterparts: inhabitants of the West;³⁵ members of the military and police; town-dwellers; and high school graduates. It is also unclear whether the citizenry imputes high levels of corruption to the government or state, or society, given the generality of the survey question. Overall, however, these differences fail to alter the underlying message: ordinary Afghan citizens believe corruption is a major problem in general and particularly acute in provincial and national affairs. To put it more starkly: the percentage of respondents who believe corruption is a problem in various domains ranges between 75 and 98 percent - an astonishing figure.

A similar trend emerges with respect to perceived changes in levels of corruption (see Table 5). Over 75 percent of respondents declared that corruption at various levels either 'increased' or 'remained the same' over the past year. These perceptions worsen at higher levels, too. The subnational data yields few distinct patterns. The only stable trend to re-emerge concerns the West, whose inhabitants sense an even greater increase in corruption at all levels. Yet the general finding persists: people feel corruption is rising everywhere.

³⁴ Q24: 'Please tell me if you think that corruption is a major problem, a minor problem, or no problem at all in the following areas: in your daily life; in your neighborhood; in your provincial government; in Afghanistan as a whole.' Q25: 'Compared to a year ago, do you think the amount of corruption overall as increased, stayed the same or decreased in the following areas: in your daily life; in your neighborhood; in your provincial government; in Afghanistan as a whole?' *Afghanistan in 2006*: The Asia Foundation.

³⁵ The one exception concerns daily life, where 64 percent of respondents from the East saw corruption as a major problem, the highest rate amongst regions. Otherwise the latter usually ranks lowest in perception of corruption. The disproportionate increase in Hazarajat in perceptions of corruption in provincial and national affairs bears notice as well.

Table 5: Perceptions of Change in Level of Corruption in Afghanistan

Sphere	Increased	Constant	Decreased
	(%)	(%)	(%)
Daily life	24	52	24
Neighborhood	28	53	19
Provincial government	51	36	13
Nationally	62	27	11

Given its gravity, it is important to examine whether perceptions of corruption reflect actual practices. Significantly, a substantially lower number of respondents acknowledged participating in bribery: between 21 and 37 percent reported offering an inducement to a public official in the past year (see Table 6). The level of corruption is comparably higher in the public health system, police and the courts, and vis-à-vis prospective employers or employment agencies. The subnational data reveal consistent trends. Again, the West is the worst in terms of regions;³⁶ men reportedly pay bribes almost as twice as much as women;³⁷ Uzbeks and minority ethnic groups, town-dwellers, and university graduates reportedly suffer more than their counterparts. Thus at first glance it would seem that perceptions of levels of corruption exaggerate its actual prevalence.

Table 6: Incidence of Corruption in Various Public Institutions

Institution	In all cases	In most cases	In isolated cases	'Yes' 'Yes'	'Yes' (those with contact)	No Cases	No contact
	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)
Municipality	6	8	12	26	46	30	44
Customs office	5	9	7	21	32	29	50
Police	5	12	19	36	53	32	32
Courts	10	12	13	35	55	28	37
State electricity board	5	8	11	24	44	31	45
Public Healthcare	5	13	19	37	51	36	27
Applying for work	11	12	11	34	60	23	43

However, the rate of bribery increases considerably – to between 32 and 60 percent – if we consider only individuals who had contact with these institutions (see Table 6). Moreover, this more nuanced measure indicates that 60 percent of respondents claimed to having paid a bribe in order to secure employment - a particularly distressing fact given that unemployment is cited as the most important problem facing the country in the survey.

³⁶ Conversely, Kabul and Hazarajat are usually better, except for bribery in the state electricity board, which is highest in Kabul. The low frequency count in Hazarajat also makes it hard to interpret the data.

³⁷ With the exception of accessing public healthcare, however, the rate of non-contact for women is much higher than for men. Restrictions on women in the public sphere also affect these seeming gender disparities.

In short, corruption is an outstanding problem in Afghanistan, damaging the authority of many parts of the state apparatus. However, there does not appear to be a systematic relationship between corruption and trust at the institutional level. The most striking illustration of this phenomenon concerns the police, where the high reported prevalence of corruption and impunity fails to undermine expressed public confidence in the ANP. Thus, understanding the reasons and effects of corruption—whether general causal mechanisms or more contextual factors explain its frequency in different spheres—requires greater inquiry.

Trust in Selected Democratic Institutions

The establishment of representative democratic institutions, which many proponents of state-building identify as crucial to its success, provides a unique opportunity to gauge popular attitudes towards these new agencies vis-à-vis other political institutions. Indeed, for many commentators the critical question is whether these newly formed institutions can quickly earn the loyalty, respect, and trust of ordinary Afghan citizens in order to represent their interests and meet their needs.

The findings of the survey are promising on several fronts. First, a vast majority of respondents (80%) either 'strongly' or 'somewhat' saw their MPs addressing the major problems of their constituency.³⁸ This is striking given the very limited contact individuals reportedly had with their national representatives (12%)—although the rate is relatively higher amongst residents in the East (20%), executives/managers (25%), university graduates (22%), and minority ethnic groups (24%)—and the relatively low opinion in which the general population holds political parties. Government publicity, word-of-mouth, and an inclination to trust individual politicians as opposed to larger political groups may partly explain the divergence. The subnational data reveals a mixed picture and contains a few surprising results. On the one hand, regional dissimilarities are the most salient, followed by ethnic and occupational cleavages. Residents of the West (90%), Uzbeks (86%), and members of the managerial classes (86%) articulated greatest satisfaction with their MPs; inhabitants of the East (67%), military/police personnel (75%) and Pashtuns (77%) expressed the least. However, the extremely positive endorsement of MPs in the West and amongst Uzbeks seems to clash with the reported incidence of corruption amongst these cleavages, as previously noted.

The minority of respondents who contacted their MPs commonly requested better public services in the following order of importance: the provision of water and electricity, reconstruction of roads, building of schools and clinics, and creation of employment. Interestingly, fewer contacted them to improve physical security, reflecting greater confidence in law enforcement agencies and traditional social authorities to address such issues (see Table 7).

³⁸ This figure does not undermine the comparatively greater level of trust in local shura elders, however, as the previous sections demonstrated.

Q77: 'Please tell me if you agree or disagree with the following statement: "My Member of Parliament addresses the major problems of my constituency in Parliament". Strongly or somewhat?' Q78: 'Have you contacted your MP for help in solving any of your personal or local problems?' Q79: 'For what kind of a [sic] problem did you contact the MP?' *Afghanistan in 2006*: The Asia Foundation

Table 7: Reasons for Contacting Elected Officials

Issue Area	MP	PC
	(%)	(%)
Water and electricity	24	21
Roads	19	29
Schools	16	9
Healthcare	16	10
Employment	6	3
Security	6	8

The first three issues were important across the country. There were some notable, if explicable, sub-national variations. Inhabitants of the East (55%), who suffer from one of the highest rates of infant, child and maternal mortality in the world, as well as minority ethnic groups (58%), overwhelmingly contacted their MPs to request better healthcare; the uneducated did in relatively greater numbers as well (26%). In contrast, residents of the South-West approached their national representatives to mediate ethnic disputes (19%), given the significance of such conflicts in the region. Women voiced greater concern than men for improved healthcare (23%) compared to men (12 percent) and schools (22%) compared to men (13%) than electricity (21%) compared to men (33%) and roads (16 %), compared to men (20%), as much existing scholarship would suggest. And the reconstruction of roads was a greater concern to residents of villages (20%) and towns (17 %) than to inhabitants of Kabul (11%), who expressed more interest in the creation of work (14%).

Unfortunately, the survey fails to ask how ordinary Afghan citizens viewed the representatives of their newly established Provincial Councils (PCs).³⁹ Moreover, few individuals contacted these bodies (12%).⁴⁰ Yet the minority who did so did for very similar reasons: the reconstruction of roads, provision of water and electricity, and building of clinics and schools. Requests for assistance with family problems (9%), particularly from residents of Hazarajat (31%) and amongst Hazaras (18%), were the minor difference. These findings suggest that Afghans expect their representative democratic institutions at the national and provincial level to provide basic public services, as opposed to mediating and resolving disputes and conflicts, which are seen as under the purview of elders of the local shura, maliks, or the police. That said, concerns over security motivate certain groups – particularly inhabitants of the South-West (35%) – to contact their PCs as well.

³⁹In other words, the survey does not re-pose Q77 with regard to the PCs. However, it does ask the following two questions: Q80: 'Have you ever contacted a representative on the Provincial Council for help in solving any of your personal or local problems?' Q81 [if yes to Q80]: 'What kind of problem was it?' *Afghanistan in 2006*: The Asia Foundation

⁴⁰However, the rate was higher amongst residents in the East and South (18 percent each), men (16 percent, twice as likely as women, 8 percent), executives/managers and the police/military (22 percent each), minority ethnic groups (22 percent) and university graduates (24 percent).

Third, approximately 40 percent of respondents nationally conveyed awareness that Community Development Councils (CDCs) had been formed in their area.⁴¹ They identified a similar, if more precise, list of projects undertaken by their CDCs: in particular, the reconstruction of roads (38%), provision of electricity (14%) and water for drinking (12%), and building of schools (11%) and agricultural irrigation systems (6%). Perhaps most importantly, a vast majority (89%) of those who professed awareness reported being either 'very' or 'somewhat' satisfied with the performance of their CDCs. In fact, a similarly high percentage of respondents felt their CDCs were capable of representing their interests before their respective PCs (91%) and government of Afghanistan (84%).

Nonetheless, prominent subnational differences exist that deserve further scrutiny. Unsurprisingly, most concern regional cleavages. First, residents of the West (23%) – as well as town-dwellers (12%) and Tajiks (8%) – reported the use of CDC funds to build mosques, despite the official ban by the National Solidarity Programme (NSP) on the construction of religious structures. Officials at the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development (MRRD) have conceded permitting such constructions in particular circumstances in order to win over local communities. Yet the level of construction reported in the West exceeds their estimates.⁴² Second, the establishment of mine-clearing projects accounts for some CDC activities in the South-West (15 percent). Finally, inhabitants of Hazarajat express considerably less confidence in their CDCs across various fronts. Twenty-seven percent report no projects were implemented by their CDCs; 37 percent express 'little' or 'no' confidence in their general performance;⁴³ and approximately half feel their CDCs are 'not very capable', or 'not at all', of representing their interests to the provincial authorities (46%) or the Government of Afghanistan (52%). These particular findings, which are in line with the sense of grievance and abandonment in Hazarajat as depicted by the survey in general, represent a serious concern.

In short, the preceding findings yield different interpretations. On the one hand, they demonstrate the importance given by many ordinary Afghan citizens to their CDCs, notwithstanding residents of Hazarajat. Proponents of the NSP, which oversees these local development committees, consistently praise their comparative advantages. These include the local, democratic, and representative nature of these institutions and, consequently, the relevance and relatively direct impact of their chosen initiatives. These findings provide some evidence for such views.

However, several anomalies emerge that require further scrutiny. First, the data suggests a low level of knowledge of these institutions, given the fact that CDCs have

⁴¹Q82: 'Tell me, are you aware of such institution [sic] called Community Development Council formed in your neighborhood/settlement? Such Councils have been established as part of the National Solidarity Program and the members of the Council are representatives of various groups in your community.' Q83 [if yes to Q82]: 'Which two major initiatives, projects in your neighborhood settlement has this Council been tasked with to implement' Q84 [if yes to Q82]: 'How satisfied are you with the job this Community Development Council is doing? Are you very satisfied, somewhat satisfied, somewhat dissatisfied or very dissatisfied?' Q85 [if yes to Q82]: 'To what extent do you think this Council is capable to represent your interests before the Provincial authorities? And how capable is the Council to represent your interests before the Government of Afghanistan?'

Afghanistan in 2006: The Asia Foundation

⁴²Interview with senior NSP official, Kabul, 26 July 2006.

⁴³Tajiks also expressed lower levels of satisfaction with CDCs in general (78 percent), and were relatively less confident in their ability to represent their personal interests (71 percent) to the Government of Afghanistan.

⁴⁴These figures are calculated from official government data. See http://www.nspafghanistan.org/content/the_nsp_results/index_eng.html.

been established by the NSP in many districts (69%) in Afghanistan to date.⁴⁴ It may be that respondents focused on the rate of completion of projects (36 percent) as opposed to the ratio approved by the government (98%) or the establishment of CDCs per se. Thus, the extremely low awareness of the constitution of CDCs in the South-West (13%) and Kabul (17%) may simply reflect their absence on the ground, either due to level of instability in the former or projected lower number in the latter. Second, the respondents' list of which projects their CDCs initiated vary to some extent from the official register of the NSP: reconstruction of roads (21%), provision of electricity (15%) and water for drinking (26%), and building of schools (7%) and agricultural irrigation systems (19%). Suffice to say, these differentials are minimal on the whole. Yet the construction of mosques reported by respondents encourages further examination. Third, although the survey data cannot substantiate the extent to which the CDCs established to date have enabled the participation of women and various minority groups, let alone represented their interests, the issue deserves more attention. The fact that popular awareness of CDCs was relatively lower amongst women (36%) compared to men (42%),⁴⁵ agricultural laborers (34%) compared to executives/managers (54), and those with primary school level education (35%) compared to their university trained counterparts (49%), raises some concern given the mandate of the NSP to empower historically subordinate groups. Moreover, detailed ethnographic reports that many villages 'elect' local malik or shura elders to function as their CDC representatives provides yet another reason to conduct further research.⁴⁶

Nevertheless, the resounding approval given by many Afghan citizens to the activities of CDCs, and the perceived capacity of these local bodies to represent their interests to higher elected authorities, warrants considerable attention. It gives further impetus to resolve the future of the NSP both in terms of its financial sustainability as well as its legal status, and consider the relationship between such bodies and other elected institutions such as PCs, MPs, and political parties.

Conclusions, Implications, and Suggestions for Future Research

The preceding analysis suggests a number of important conclusions and implications regarding the state-building process in Afghanistan. It also raises several questions that require further research. First, levels of trust in formal state institutions vary considerably. High public support for the coercive institutions of state – principally the ANA and ANP – testifies to the immense desire of ordinary Afghan citizens for greater physical security. The relatively low regard given to local militia groups strengthens this view. However, the growing intensity and reach of the Taliban-led insurgency in various parts of the country, most notably in the south, poses a tremendous challenge to the capacity, authority, and morale of these institutions. Moreover, perceptions and reports of corruption in, and impunity of action by these same institutions threaten to erode public confidence. In short, the ANA as well as ANP, despite its many reported failings, presently enjoy strong public approval according to the survey. The government needs to devise strategies appropriate to each to bolster their ranks, capacity, and discipline in order to maintain such backing.

⁴⁵However, women (87 percent) expressed greater faith in CDCs to represent their interests to the Government of Afghanistan than men (71 percent).

⁴⁶In particular, see the work of Ahmad Idrees Rahmani under the auspices of the Open Society Institute. The fact that Pashtuns report lower awareness of CDCs (32 percent) than other ethnic groups is harder to explain.

Similarly, a vast majority of Afghans express confidence in their representatives at the parliamentary, provincial, and local levels. By and large, ordinary citizens contact their MPs, PCs, and CDCs to secure better public services: in particular, water, electricity, roads, clinics, and schools. Hence it would be prudent for the government to allocate greater resources through these institutions to provide these basic goods, and address any disputes or anomalies regarding their status. In addition, improving the level of cooperation between these institutions in ways that could mutually enhance their respective capacities deserves particular attention.

In contrast, the relatively low regard in which ordinary Afghan citizens hold both political parties and the judicial apparatus engenders serious concern. The faith placed in local government structures to represent the interests of individuals and communities to higher political authorities is an important state-building asset - one that proponents of the NSP correctly foresaw. Yet even the most capable, representative and empowered CDCs cannot supplant the role of parties in representing and aggregating larger collective interests between state and society, and structuring the relations between government and opposition in parliament, which are crucial tasks in any modern representative democracy. Hence it would be advisable for the government to address the disincentives generated by the current electoral regime regarding party formation, and consider ways of lessening public distrust towards parties and reforming how they actually function.

Likewise, notwithstanding the importance of traditional social authorities in addressing local conflicts, the lack of trust in formal government courts to adjudicate misdemeanors, crimes, and acts of violence encourages perpetrators to commit further misdeeds and victims to seek retribution outside of the law. Both severely damage the authority of the state. Indeed, the vast majority of individuals believe corruption is an outstanding problem in Afghanistan. Thus it is critical for the government to devise and pursue a comprehensive strategy of effective legal and political reform.

Second, formal state institutions can strengthen their legitimacy only by respecting local community structures. Most Afghan citizens put a premium on collective self-reliance in their local communities. Whether this sentiment turns on the perceived lack of responsiveness of formal government institutions or not requires further investigation. Yet the need to establish better relations with traditional social authorities is clear. The most important are local shura elders. Most Afghans put great faith in these agents to help resolve various local disputes; fewer turn to maliks for such assistance; hardly any mention local religious authorities. Thus facilitating greater cooperation between local shura elders and formal government authorities could improve the authority, capacity, and reach of the state in domains that matter the most to its citizens. The findings of the survey strongly support such a strategy. Lastly, region and ethnicity are the most significant cleavages that divide the citizenry regarding its perceptions of the state. Occupational differences, which display an irregular effect, matter far less. Differences based on gender and education rarely produced significant distinctions. On the one hand, the salience of ethnic and regional differences, which mirrors the 2004 survey results,⁴⁷ is not surprising. The complexity,

⁴⁷*Democracy in Afghanistan 2004*: The Asia Foundation

scope, and intensity of conflict between various ethnic groups and regions in Afghanistan over the last three decades – indeed much longer – drives these findings. Nonetheless, despite their salience, we need to conduct further research to assess whether levels of interpersonal trust vary across different regions or ethnically defined groups: for example, whether Pashtuns distrust non-Pashtuns more than members of their own community, and if so, to what degree. Furthermore, we need to examine whether ordinary Afghan citizens believe that regional or ethnic loyalties are exclusive of larger national solidarities or constitutive of them: for example, whether individuals feel more Tajik than Afghan, less Tajik than Afghan, or identify with both identities on equal terms. Such questions would enable us to determine the impact of such cleavages for national unity and the coherence of the state. Finally, understanding why occupational, educational and gender differences – distinctions that structure relations of power, wealth and state in every society – matter far less requires greater investigation.

Indeed, the findings examined above suggest various avenues of further research into the widely held belief in collective self-sufficiency at the local level; the public conception of NGOs; and the relationship between corruption and trust in different institutional settings, to name just a few. Nevertheless, the survey powerfully underscores the varying level of trust ordinary citizens have in formal state institutions vis-à-vis traditional social authorities, and the some of the reasons that underlie these variations. The prospects of constructing an effective, legitimate, and responsive state in Afghanistan depends on fully taking into account this 'view from below'.

Chapter 4

Elections in Afghanistan: Progress Towards Democracy

Sanjay Kumar

Parliamentary elections have marked a new beginning in Afghanistan, a historic achievement since popular elections were held in this country after a gap of 36 years. There was great enthusiasm among the people reflected in the turnout of voters. People in Afghanistan, both in villages as well as in cities came out to vote in sizeable numbers. Sizeable numbers among them also participated in election campaign activities. Large numbers among them did not feel any threat or insecurity during elections and they also believed that elections were more or less fair. There was also a shared belief among Afghans that democracy is a good political system. The positive belief about democracy is much stronger among Afghans compared to people in India, a much more established democracy.

While there have been mixed opinions about elections in Afghanistan, on balance there are positive signs for restoration of democracy in Afghanistan. There is a dominant feeling that the Afghanistan government is capable of conducting free elections in future and also a dominant belief that local elections would also be free. Political parties are important for the success of any democracy and it is good to note that Afghans have faith in political parties. These are positive signs for the success of democracy in Afghanistan.

Introduction

Whenever we talk of politics, democracy, or elections in Afghanistan, 2001 will be an important date. The Taliban were ousted following a US-led invasion in November that year. Hamid Karzai was chosen to head the interim government and continued in that position till 2004, when he became the first democratically elected President of Afghanistan, winning 55 percent of the votes in the Presidential elections held in October 2004.

In 2005, Afghanistan had its first parliamentary elections after more than three decades. There was great enthusiasm among people for the parliamentary elections. A total of 2707 candidates including 328 women contested the parliamentary elections for 249 seats in Wolesi Jirga "the house of the people". Despite enormous threats, people came out in large numbers to exercise their franchise.

The parliamentary elections in Afghanistan held in 2005 witnessed a 52 percent turnout.¹ This is fairly high considering that even in the first National Elections in India held in the year 1952, after Independence, the turnout was only 45.6 percent.

¹Joint Electoral Management Board.

Apart from a high turnout, elections in Afghanistan were also remarkable for the number of women who got elected in a society otherwise considered to be traditional and conservative. Most of the credit for representation of women in Afghanistan's parliament goes to the constitutional provision of reserving 25 percent of the seats for women. However it should also be noted that three percent more women got elected, taking the total number of women in parliament to 28 percent. This is remarkable compared to the representation of women in parliaments in other South Asian countries. The representation of women in the Indian Parliament has hardly managed to cross 10 percent in fifty years.

The turnout during parliamentary elections in Afghanistan helps us in understanding the level of political participation but this is only one of several barometers. Others include interest in elections and in the electoral campaign, and participation in the campaign. Voting is a right exercised periodically, but the failure to vote cannot be synonymous with a lack of interest since it could arise from several reasons. The issues that need examination include how the different communities voted, the level of political participation in the election campaigns, the political atmosphere and whether it is conducive to participation, factors preventing people from voting, reasons for dissatisfaction with the current political system and their analysis of the elections in 2005. This essay seeks to provide some explanation to these issues with the help of The Asia Foundation's *Afghanistan in 2006: A Survey of the Afghan People*.

Level of Political Participation

Just above 62 percent of those surveyed confirmed they had voted. The discrepancy from actual polling figures is not unusual. Like all surveys around the world,² there are chances of some over-reporting on the question of voting in the Afghanistan survey as well. The turnout in elections could also have been much higher, if the process of electoral registration had been more accurate. For example, women, who constitute 60 percent of the country's population, represented only 41 percent of the registered voters in Afghanistan,³ clearly pointing to some lapses in voters' registration. Those surveyed also mentioned non-registration and lack of voter ID cards as reasons for not voting. Women faced additional hindrances like the absence of separate polling booths.

The turnout of women voters was consequently lower than that of men. This is a matter of concern but not of alarm. One should note that the turnout among women has been low compared to men even in established democracies. In India, during all the 14 national elections, the turnout among women has been substantially low compared to turnout among men.

In view of the difficulties, it can be assumed that without these problems the polling percentages would have been a few points higher. However, even the existing figures should be considered reasonable. In the region, polling percentages have varied

²In India while the turnout as reported by the Election Commission of India, officially in-charge of conducting elections has been between 50-60 percent in various elections. When surveys were conducted during those elections, between 85-90 percent people reported that they have voted during the elections.

³Reported in newspaper. [http:// www.greenleft.org.au/back/2004/602/602p14.htm](http://www.greenleft.org.au/back/2004/602/602p14.htm)

between 32 percent in Tajikistan to 66 percent in Bangladesh. Polling was 40 percent in Kazakhstan, 56 percent in Kyrgyzstan, 43 percent in Pakistan, 33 percent in Turkmenistan and 45 percent in Uzbekistan.⁴

Afghanistan is predominantly a rural society with 78 percent of the population in villages and 22 percent in towns and cities.⁵ People in small towns came out in much greater numbers to vote during the 2005 Parliamentary elections, compared to those in villages and in the capital city of Kabul. The pattern of turnout in Afghanistan is quite in contrast to what we see in India, where people living in villages come out in much larger numbers.

The survey established a direct link between education and political participation. Eighty-two percent of graduates voted, while the figure was 63 percent among the illiterate. Since the illiterate constitute a numerical majority, it is important for political parties to make efforts to mobilise the illiterate voters in Afghanistan as well. This is again in contrast to India, the largest democracy in the world, where the participation in the electoral process is higher among people with a lower level of education.

There are four major ethnic communities in Afghanistan. Two major communities, the Pashtun and Tajik, constitute more than two-thirds of the population of Afghanistan. The two other communities, Hazara and Uzbek, constitute about 10 percent each of the total population in Afghanistan. Besides these, there are several other smaller communities (Turkmen, Baloch, Nuristani, Aimak, Arab, Pashaye etc.), which constitute about four percent of the total population of Afghanistan. The survey showed that the numerically-dominant ethnic communities had lower participation in the elections. The percentage of voters was higher amongst the Uzbek and Hazara communities than the numerically-dominant Pashtuns and Tajiks.

Table 1: Men and urban voters voted in greater proportions⁶

Categories	Voted during parliamentary elections (%)
All	62
Men	72
Women	52
Village	68
Town	80
Kabul	67

⁴*Asian Barometer Survey 2005* (Takashi Inoguchi, Institute of Oriental Culture, University of Tokyo, Japan)

⁵The rural urban classification in this paper treats Kabul as the urban centre and the rest of Afghanistan as rural

⁶Note: For all tables in this paper, figures have been calculated only among those who gave a response to this question. Source of data appearing in all tables: *Afghanistan in 2006*: The Asia Foundation.

Table 2: Political participation more among educated compared to illiterates

Level of Education	Voted during parliamentary elections
	%
Illiterate	63
Primary School	71
Middle School	74
High School	78
College Educated	82

Table 3: Political participation more among numerically smaller communities

Ethnic Communities	Voted during parliamentary elections
	%
Pashtun	54
Tajik	66
Uzbek	72
Hazara	71

In a democracy nothing is more satisfying than the people themselves certifying their political acts. Not only did Afghans come out to vote in large numbers, the majority of them also believed that the parliamentary elections of 2005 were free and fair. The opinion cuts across the rural-urban divide. This is no mean achievement for the people of Afghanistan.

Table 4: Elections considered fair more among urban voters

Locality	Those who believed parliamentary elections were free and fair
	%
All	54
Rural	53
Urban	58
Village	58
Town	61
Kabul	66

Political participation does not only mean voting during the elections but also participation in other activities related to elections. Campaign activity for example is a much more robust indicator of participation. Nearly 13 percent participated in campaigning during the elections. The number is quite high compared to democracies like India, where only 10 percent participated in the electoral campaign.

The link between education and political participation was also seen in campaign activity. Twenty-three percent of those who had schooling or college education participated compared to 10 percent of illiterates. As with voting, minorities also participated in greater numbers in campaign activities. This may be because people from numerically small communities want to make their presence felt in the political arena.

Table 5: Men and people from villages participated more in campaign activities

Categories	Participated in the election campaign
	%
All	13
Men	19
Women	8
Urban	13
Rural	13

Table 6: Level of educational attainment and participation in election campaign

Level of Education	Participated in the election campaign
	%
Illiterate	10
Primary School	15
Middle School	16
High School	23
College Educated	23

Table 7: Ethnic communities and participation in the election campaigns

Ethnic Communities	Participated in the election campaign
	%
Pashtun	14
Tajik	12
Uzbek	10
Hazara	11
Other communities	26

What Encouraged Political Participation Among Afghans?

What might have encouraged people to participate in the political process may be the sense of freedom enjoyed by people of Afghanistan after the end of Taliban rule. This is clear from the fact that 57 percent mentioned having no sense of fear while voting for the national elections, while only eight percent mentioned that they felt a lot of fear. Thirty-three percent mentioned that they had some sense of fear while voting

during parliamentary elections. Women voters seem to be more vulnerable compared to men and 10 percent of women said they had a lot of fear while voting. The educated had less fear with only four percent of graduates saying they had fear compared to 10 percent of illiterates.

There were also regional differences in the sense of fear. While people of the Central Kabul and the Central Hazarajat regions seemed to have the least sense of fear, people living in the South Western, Eastern and South Central regions had a greater sense of fear. People belonging to the Pashtun community, the largest community, felt a greater sense of fear compared to the minority communities.

Table 8: Majority do not fear while voting for national elections

Categories	No Fear	Some Fear	Lot of Fear
	%	%	%
All	57	33	8
Men	60	33	6
Women	54	33	10

Table 9: Sense of fear while voting for national elections is lesser among educated

Level of Education	No Fear	Some Fear	Lot of Fear
	%	%	%
Illiterate	55	35	10
Primary School	53	38	9
Middle School	59	35	5
High School	63	32	5
College Educated	76	21	4

Table 10: Sense of fear while voting for national elections is least in Central Hazarajat and Central Kabul regions

Regions	No Fear	Some Fear	Lot of Fear
	%	%	%
All	57	33	8
Central Kabul	73.6	23	2.7
Eastern	40	39	15
South Central	45	40.7	13.6
South Western	33.1	38.1	18.2
Western	57	36	5
Northern	62	32	5.6
Central/ Hazarajat	69	29.5	1

Table 11: Sense of fear while voting for national elections most among Pashtuns

Categories	No Fear	Some Fear	Lot of Fear
	%	%	%
Pashtun	66	36	13
Tajik	67	28	4
Uzbek	56	36	7
Hazara	55	33	2

Contesting for Public Office as a Form of Political Participation

Contesting elections is a more direct and active form of political participation and more people were fearful while contesting for the elections. Eighteen percent expressed great fear about contesting while 42 percent expressed no fear. More women expressed fear about contesting. Fear of contesting was greater among illiterates. Fear was highest among the largest ethnic group, the Pashtuns, whereas only 14 percent of the Hazaras expressed fear.

The geographical trends were replicated, with only around 10 percent of people living in the Central Hazarajat and Central Kabul regions expressing fear compared to 26.3 percent in the South Western and 26.6 percent in the South Central regions.

Table 12: Women fear more than men regarding running for public office

Gender	No Fear	Some Fear	Lot of Fear
	%	%	%
All	42	32	18
Men	66	34	14
Women	38	30	22

Table 13: Higher the level of educational attainment, the lower the fear of running for public office

Level of Education	No Fear	Some Fear	Lot of Fear
	%	%	%
Illiterate	42	36	22
Primary School	43	35	21
Middle School	49	35	17
High School	50	35	15
College Educated	53	37	11

Table 14: Sense of fear in running for public office least among Uzbeks

Ethnic Communities	No Fear	Some Fear	Lot of Fear
	%	%	%
Pashtun	35	32	23
Tajik	48	31	13
Uzbek	45	31	21
Hazara	43	38	14

Table 15: Sense of fear in running for public office is least in Central Hazarajat and Central Kabul

Regions	No Fear	Some Fear	Lot of Fear
	%	%	%
All	57	33	8
Central Kabul	73.6	23	2.7
Eastern	40	39	15
South Central	45	40.7	13.6
South Western	33.1	38.1	18.2
Western	57	36	5
Northern	62	32	5.6
Central/ Hazarajat	69	29.5	1

Participation in Political Demonstration

Nearly 25 percent of the people expressed fear of participation in even peaceful political demonstrations with more women than men expressing fear. Illiterates were also more fearful of participating in political demonstrations (28%) compared to graduates (14%). The ethnic and regional trends were replicated here as well.

Table 16: Women fear more while participating in peaceful demonstrations

Gender	No Fear	Some Fear	Lot of Fear
	%	%	%
All	35	37	24
Men	37	40	20
Women	32	33	28

Table 17: Illiterates fear more while participating in peaceful demonstrations

Level of Education	No Fear	Some Fear	Lot of Fear
	%	%	%
Illiterate	34	39	27
Primary School	35	40	25
Middle School	39	37	24
High School	40	39	21
College Educated	42	45	14

Table 18: Pashtuns fear most while participating in peaceful demonstrations

Ethnic Communities	No Fear	Some Fear	Lot of Fear
	%	%	%
Pashtun	28	32	23
Tajik	42	31	13
Uzbek	31	31	21
Hazara	39	38	14

Table 19: Majority in Central Hazarajat and Central Kabul regions do not fear participating in peaceful demonstrations

Regions	No Fear	Some Fear	Lot of Fear
	%	%	%
All	35	37	24
Central Kabul	49	34.2	12
Eastern	29.3	32.2	34.8
South Central	24	36	35.5
South Western	22.2	39.5	22.3
Western	35.4	40.8	18
Northern	31	40	27.9
Central/ Hazarajat	58.2	28.2	11

Feeling Among People that they can Express Opinions Freely

It is true that there is some sense of fear among people living in Afghanistan regarding participation in political activities, but what is satisfying to note is that a majority feel they can express their political opinions freely, a change that has certainly come during the post-Taliban regime. Women are slightly more fearful in expressing their political opinions freely compared to men. Similarly, people living in Kabul enjoy a greater sense of political freedom compare to those who live in villages or in smaller towns.

The educated in Afghanistan seem to be enjoy a greater sense of political freedom. Among those who had completed their college education, 67 percent said they could express their political opinions freely, while only 51 percent of the illiterate believed they could.

While it is true that people belonging to all ethnic communities feel free in expressing political opinions, it is surprising to note that Pashtuns, people from the largest community, feel more constrained compared to people from other communities, when it comes to expressing their political opinions. The Hazaras, numerically a smaller community, feel much more free when it comes to expressing their political opinions. The pattern of linkage of greater sense of freedom to literacy, gender, ethnicity and region was repeated.

Table 20: Majority believe they can express political opinions freely

Categories	Those who believe they can express political opinion freely
	%
All	56
Men	60
Women	53
Village	45
Town	56
Kabul	75

Table 21: Educated feel greater degree of freedom in expressing political opinions

Level of Education	Those who believe they can express political opinions freely
	%
Illiterate	51
Primary School	61
Middle School	59
High School	64
College Educated	67

Table 22: Pashtuns feel slightly constrained in expressing political opinions

Ethnic Communities	Those who believe they can express political opinions freely
	%
Pashtun	23
Tajik	13
Uzbek	21
Hazara	14

Table 23: Reasons for expressing political opinions freely

Reasons	%
Freedom of speech is guaranteed	35
Improvement in security conditions	23
Onset of peace and democracy	22
Presence of parliament & local shura	4
Disarmament of local warlords	4

Dissatisfied People

While the majority felt satisfied with the new political system in Afghanistan, there were some who had reservations about the new political system. Nearly a quarter questioned the fairness of parliamentary elections held in Afghanistan and the same number believe that though elections may be fair, there was cheating during the counting of votes. Another 19 percent believed that money played an important role during elections and that votes were purchased. The voters were intimidated, not only by political parties, but women voters faced intimidation from their husbands; and there were instances, when the women voters were not allowed to vote.

Among those who did not vote, nearly 20 percent mentioned that they did not vote since they had no interest in elections, 15 percent did not vote due to fear of intimidation, while 15 percent mentioned they did not vote since they did not have identity proof. There were others (6%) who did not vote since they were unwilling to support any candidate or party, while another nine percent mentioned they could not vote due to illness. A sizeable 15 percent mentioned that women were not allowed to vote.

There were also people who mentioned that they were unable to express their political opinions freely. Among those who said that they were unable to express their political opinions freely, 24 percent blamed security conditions, while another 18 percent mentioned fear of safety as the main reason. There were also people who feared the local warlords and presence of Taliban in their locality. While there are reasons to celebrate the beginning of an important phase in democracy, some hurdles remain.

Table 25: Electoral malpractices during parliamentary elections 2005

Malpractices	%
Cheating in counting votes	43
Buying of voters	34
Husbands not allowing their wives to vote	28
Intimidation of voters/party activists	23
Finding out whom people voted for	20

Table 26: Reasons for not voting in parliamentary elections 2005

Reasons	%
Not interested in elections	20
Did not have an identity document	14
Not allowed to vote	15
Fear of intimidation	6
Due to Personal reasons like old age, illness, etc.	9
Did not support any party/candidate	6
Not an eligible voter	5
Do not understand politics	5
Name missing in electoral register	3
Disillusioned with elections	3

Table 27: Reasons for not expressing their political opinions freely

Reasons	%
Poor security conditions	24
Presence of local warlords	19
Fear of safety to Life	18
Government does not allow	9
Presence of Taliban in their locality	8
Real democracy does not exist	6
Disarmament of local warlords not complete	4
People do not understand politics	4

People believe the Afghanistan Government can Conduct Free and Fair Elections

One of the positive aspects of post-Taliban Afghanistan is the increasing trust of people in government and the political system at large. A large number of people expressed confidence in the government's ability to hold free and fair elections in Afghanistan in the future. It is important to note that this trust and confidence in government is shared among people cutting across different sections. The educated and uneducated had similar levels of trust in the government.

The younger generation plays an important role in any country, especially in one where the political system is in a state of transition. The burden of transferring the values and ethics of from one generation to the other lies with the youth. The youth also have a tendency of being more critical of the system, and one would have expected this trend to be reflected in Afghanistan as well. However, the younger generation here has shown a great degree of trust in the new political system and they firmly believed that the Afghan government is capable of conducting free and fair elections. Large numbers among them also believed that local elections would be free. The trust

of the younger generation indicates that the new political system would get greater strength in the future since they would be the ones who would carry this forward.

Similarly, unlike in most multi-ethnic societies, where the majority community is blamed for cornering the benefits, in Afghanistan the minorities expressed greater faith in the government's ability to conduct elections, a healthy sign for the political system in the country.

Table 28: Majority believes government capable of conducting free and fair elections

Gender	Those who believe Afghan government can conduct free and fair elections	Those who believe local elections will be free and fair
	%	%
All	65	50
Men	63	50
Women	66	50

Table 29: Educated or illiterate, all have faith in fairness of elections in Afghanistan

Level of Education	Those who believe Afghan government can conduct free and fair elections	Those who believe local elections will be free and fair
	%	%
Illiterate	68	59
Primary School	69	60
Middle School	70	60
High School	70	53
College Educated	66	54

Table 30: People of all age groups expressed equal confidence in fairness of elections

Age Group	Those who believe Afghan government can conduct free and fair elections	Those who believe local elections will be free and fair
	%	%
Between 18-25 years	64	50
26-35 years	64	52
36-45 years	64	50
46-55 years	66	51
56 years or more	62	48

Table 31: People from different ethnic communities share equal confidence in fairness of elections

Ethnic Communities	Those who believe Afghan government can conduct free and fair elections	Those who believe local elections will be free and fair
	%	%
Pashtun	58	42
Tajik	66	54
Uzbek	78	62
Hazara	64	54
Other communities	79	67

Political Parties and Democratic Reconstruction

Political parties are essential for the working of any democracy. This would be true of Afghanistan as well. Though the 2005 parliamentary elections in Afghanistan were held on non-party lines—since all candidates were required to contest as independents—there is a need for strengthening the role of political parties supported by active cooperation from the people of Afghanistan.

The survey shows people consider political parties as important. A little over 10 percent considered political parties as important. These numbers may look small, but these are sizeable numbers compared to the proportion of people who consider political parties as important in other countries. The number of people who considered political parties as important is five percent in Bangladesh and less than one percent in countries like Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan. It is only in Pakistan that a sizeable number of people (23%) considered political parties as important. Even in India, where political parties play such an important role in the democratic system, only eight percent people considered political parties as important.⁷

Nearly 45 percent among Afghans indicated having either a great deal or fair amount of trust in political parties. Twenty-two percent expressed their distrust for political parties while another 33 percent expressed trust with some reservations. This is important since the trust for political parties has been considerably low in most of the Asian countries. The number of people who mentioned having trust in political parties is 35 percent in Kazakhstan, 29 percent in Kyrgyzstan, 37 percent in Pakistan, 24 percent in Tajikistan, 21 percent in Uzbekistan and 10 percent in Turkmenistan. Even in India, only 30 percent people mentioned having trust in political parties.⁸

The level of trust for political parties suggests reasonable political space for political parties in Afghanistan. Also, 32 percent of Afghans are ready to allow parties they dislike to hold meetings in their locality. People in South Central regions are more open to allowing a greater role of political parties in democratic consolidation, since 71 percent among them are ready to allow political parties to hold meetings. In the South

⁷Asian Barometer Survey 2005 (Takashi Inoguchi, Institute of Oriental Culture, University of Tokyo, Japan)

⁸Asian Barometer Survey 2005 (Takashi Inoguchi, Institute of Oriental Culture, University of Tokyo, Japan)

Central region, 42.5 percent were also ready to allow those parties that they dislike most to hold meetings in their locality.

Table 32: Men hold more liberal attitudes towards political parties

Gender	Those who would allow all political parties to hold meetings in their locality	Those who would allow even the most disliked parties to hold meetings in their locality
	%	%
All	57	32
Men	62	36
Women	51	28

Table 33: Educated people hold more liberal attitude towards political parties

Level of Education	Those who would allow all political parties to hold meetings in their locality	Those who would allow even the most disliked parties to hold meetings in their locality
	%	%
Illiterate	54	29
Primary School	64	35
Middle School	61	35
High School	67	41
College Educated	67	40

Table 34: Those who believe political parties should be allowed to hold meetings in their locality

Regions	Those who would allow all political parties to hold meetings in their locality	Those who would allow even the most disliked parties to hold meetings in their locality
	%	%
All	57	32
Central Kabul	57.6	27
Eastern	52.9	25.1
South Central	70.8	42.5
South Western	42.9	38.4
Western	63.8	40.2
Northern	49.7	25.3
Central/ Hazarajat	61.6	35.1

Conclusion

Elections for the National Assembly and the provincial councils were held in 2005. A democratically elected government with a democratically elected President have been installed in Afghanistan, but the real question is will this democratic system survive? The democratic political system can succeed in Afghanistan only when what has been written about democracy "a government of the people, by the people and for the people" does not remain on paper but becomes a reality.

From the findings of the survey it is clear that people from various sections have shown a lot of enthusiasm in political participation, though the educated and those living in towns have shown greater participation. Political participation needs to be much more broad-based if democracy has to take firm roots in Afghanistan. Since an entire generation might have forgotten the meaning of politics and elections, because those were last held some 36 years back these first elections witnessed some lopsided political participation. Over the years, and after a few more elections, political participation will become much more broad-based, which would provide greater strength to the new political system in Afghanistan.

There are signs of widening of democracy. The vast majority (96%) felt satisfied with the right to vote guaranteed to them by the new constitution. Among them 71 percent were highly satisfied while another 25 percent were reasonably satisfied with their right to vote during elections.⁹ Though some people have reservations about freeness and fairness of parliamentary elections held last year, and some of them did not vote, there is general trust in the political system.

The success of the new political system can be assessed from the fact that the majority of Afghans enjoy a sense of freedom in all spheres of life, whether social or political, after the fall of the Taliban. While some people feared participating in public demonstrations, the general feeling among Afghans is that of a sense of freedom for participation in any kind of organisation. While 37 percent felt very satisfied with their right to participate in any organisation, another 46 percent felt somewhat satisfied with their right to participate in organisations. A majority expressed a feeling of satisfaction with the right to gather and demonstrate, though some of them also had reservations.¹⁰ Nearly 80 percent among Afghans felt satisfied with the freedom of speech in the new political regime, while another 70 percent also felt satisfied with the right to criticise the government. While there may be some practical constraints in implementing these freedoms, the very fact that the majority feel satisfied with such freedoms will definitely add to the stability of the new political system. People in other countries also enjoy such sense of freedom, but such a feeling among people of Afghanistan has greater meaning since people here have suffered immensely, and where only a few years back, freedom was at the mercy of the Taliban.

⁹ *Asian Barometer Survey 2005* (Takashi Inoguchi, Institute of Oriental Culture, University of Tokyo, Japan)

¹⁰ *Asian Barometer Survey 2005* (Takashi Inoguchi, Institute of Oriental Culture, University of Tokyo, Japan)

Chapter 5

Human Security in Afghanistan Through The Eyes of Afghans

Centre for Conflict and Peace Studies

This paper examines how securing a peaceful and prosperous future depends on meeting the human security needs of Afghans. Human security shifts traditional notions of state-oriented security to encompass protection and empowerment of common citizens. To achieve human security, people must be free from both need and fear. Findings of recent research carried out by The Asia Foundation and CAPS indicate that Afghans are experiencing prosperity and trust traditional power structures, but are very concerned about corruption and distrust the government. In Afghanistan, four issues currently serve as barriers to human security. These are insecurity, the narcotics problem, poorly trained and inadequately resourced law enforcement and military capacity and, finally and most importantly, corruption. Each of these issues requires a well-defined strategy and a long-term commitment with a more coherent approach designed to improve human security in the areas of livelihoods, counter-corruption, and counter-insurgency.

Introduction

Despite nearly five years of reconstruction and relative stability, Afghans continue to face the twin plagues of a lack of development and a renewal of violence. The impact of development has not spread equitably throughout the country. Unemployment remains high and vulnerability has yet to be adequately addressed. In many parts of Afghanistan, governance is weak and lacks the people's confidence. Complex external politics continue to negatively affect events inside the country. Since the beginning of the year, the anti-government insurgency has rapidly spread and grown in intensity. Unfortunately, rather than military or security personnel, the overwhelming number of casualties have been civilian. Many areas of the country are considered too dangerous for development and economic activities. Violence, coupled with the continuing slow efforts to bring about reconstruction and development, highlights concerns about human security.

The concept of human security is well suited to analysing the current situation in Afghanistan because it examines both security and development phenomena. In so doing, it brings together notions of protection and empowerment of common citizens. It looks to the state and its role to protect its citizens, as well as it looks to the individual, developing and empowering this person with decisions to improve his or her own security. To achieve human security, people must be free from both need and fear. The failure to secure human security is affecting the credibility of the current government as well as the international presence in the country, and may have a profound impact on the future.

From this perspective, this study approaches the lack of security by addressing weak governance and inequitable access to development. This essay is based on the assumption that the deteriorating security in Afghanistan is a product of poor governance, outside interference, lack of confidence in government, and a weak economy. Survey results indicate that Afghans feel more prosperous than in the past. However, Afghans are very concerned about the level of corruption and are more trusting of traditional power structures. Findings also reveal that common perceptions regarding violence are often at odds with the actual level of insecurity. This also varies with geographic location and the ethnic background of respondents. These findings indicate that the importance of securing and protecting the people of Afghanistan is intimately linked to securing public confidence in the government.

The objective of this essay is to map out the state of security as perceived by Afghans. It examines the causes of insecurity, and proposes opportunities to improve human security in Afghanistan. This essay offers a unique perspective because it offers an Afghan perception of human security.

This study employed both qualitative and quantitative research methods. The quantitative data on which this essay is based was collected through a nationwide survey by The Asia Foundation. Some parts of the reports will also refer to quantitative data on the Afghan insurgency collected by the Centre of Conflict and Peace Studies (CAPS). The analysis of quantitative data is supported with a qualitative element. For example, a focus group discussion is one of the qualitative methods employed.¹ The remaining data is reported with secondary sources.

The Human Security Perspective

According to UNOCHA, human security protection is a comprehensive concept encompassing protection and empowerment. Both are mutually reinforcing. This study gauges the current indigenous perception of human security. Specifically, this study provides a means for the international community to assess its effectiveness and standing with the Afghans in its efforts to rebuild Afghanistan. According to the *Human Security Report 2005*, human security can be defined as:

The complex of interrelated threats associated with civil war, genocide and the displacement of populations. Human security is about protecting individuals and communities from any form of political violence. Proponents of the 'narrow' concept of human security, focus on violent threats to individuals, while recognizing that these threats are strongly associated with poverty, lack of state capacity and various forms of socio-economic and political inequity. Proponents of the 'broad' concept of human security argue that the threat agenda should be broadened to include hunger, disease and natural disasters because these kill far more people than war, genocide and terrorism combined.²

¹The focus group, from here on will be referred as (FG). It consists of Afghans employed at the Centre for Conflict and Peace Studies (CAPS), consisting of 4 Pashtun, 2 Tajik and 1 Hazara.

²Abridged version based on Human Security Centre, The University of British Columbia, *Human Security Report: War and Peace in the 21st Century*, Oxford University Press, June 2005, p. VIII.

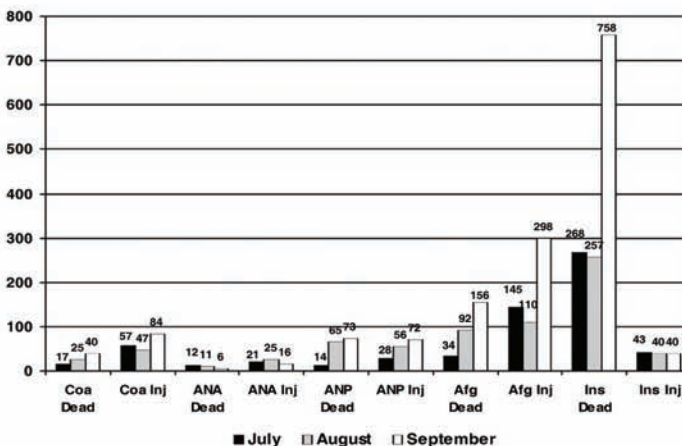
In this study, a 'middle' concept of human security is adopted, which can be roughly described as Afghan and Afghan. *Freedom from fear* is a concern in several provinces, since attacks and intimidation from insurgents caused many to leave their homes. In this study, this relates to personal or individual safety. *Freedom from want* is linked to economic security, livelihood security, and similar threats. These conditions give rise to unemployment and rural-urban migration, which leads to urban poverty or external migration.

Security in Afghanistan and Freedom From Fear

The fiercely intensified insurgency causes harm to the lives, livelihood, and daily affairs of the average Afghan. Fear is widespread in many areas within the country. Human security proposes that people should be "free from fear" just as they are "free from want". However, intimidation by insurgents is having a serious impact. For example, in Kandahar province, government officials, medical doctors and nurses, teachers feel so threatened that they fear going to work.

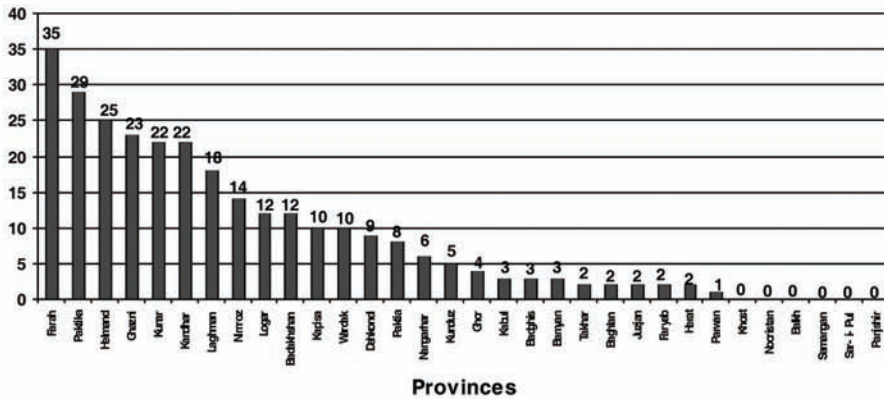
Personal security or fear for one's life has been a core concern for those living in insurgency-affected zones. Since the beginning of 2006, the insurgency has claimed more lives of Afghan civilians than coalition soldiers, national soldiers, and policemen combined (see Figure 1) As many as 55 percent of those injured and dead are Afghan civilians. There is also a growing concern among human rights groups, who are worried about increasing attacks by insurgents that target individuals and who are vocal about human rights issues and are effective in spreading the message of peace and development. see for example, the assassination of the former governor of Paktia, Hakim Taniwal who was an outspoken critic of the Taliban; and the more recent murder of Sofia Hama Jan, a women's rights activist and director of women's affairs, outside her home in Kandahar.³

Fig.1: Monthly Casualty Figures for 3rd Quarter 2006 (in numbers)⁴

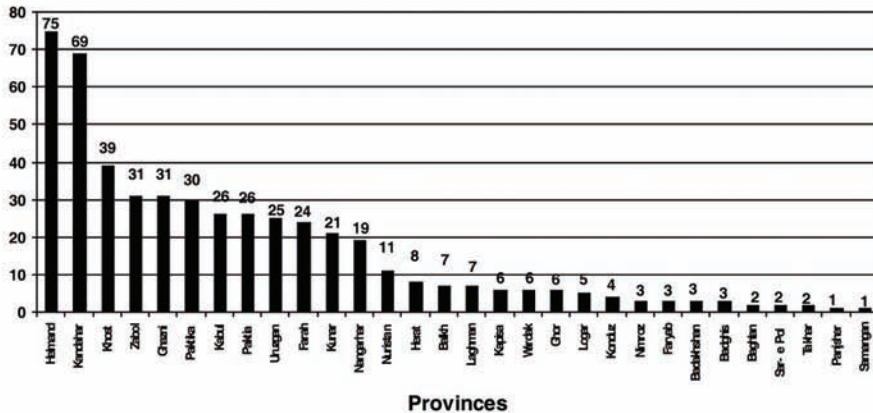


³Women's affairs chief shot dead in Afghanistan." *AFP*, 25 September 2006 and "Afghan women's advocate killed: Caller credits assassination to Taliban, raising the fear of violence," *New York Times*, 26 Sep 2006.

⁴Centre for Conflict and Peace Studies

Fig.2: Perception of Insecurity⁵

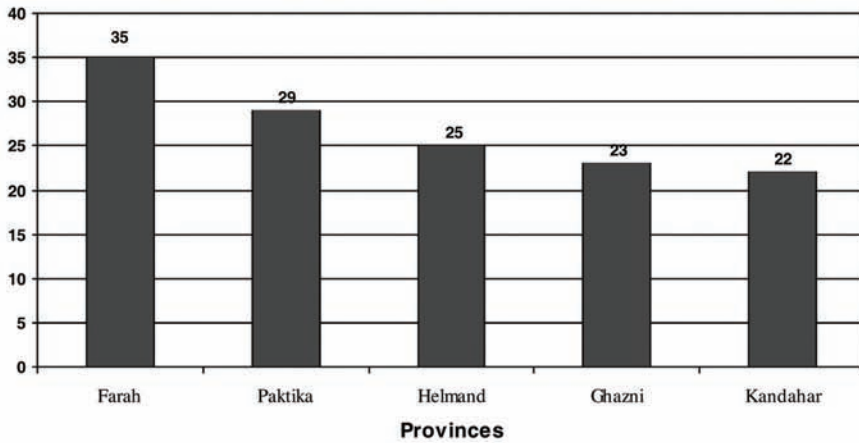
When asked for their perception of security in their provinces, respondents from the southern and eastern provinces felt more insecure than their countrymen in the northern / north-western provinces.⁶ When compared to the actual number of security incidents, this data indicates that the perception does not correspond to reality. (see Figure 3). In Khost, zero percent of the respondents rated the security as "poor", even though there have been 39 attacks (third-ranked in terms of overall attacks) in the last four months. Kabul has witnessed 26 attacks (7th rank) with only three percent describing the security situation as poor.

Fig.3: Number of Attacks (July to October 2006)⁷

⁵Q16: How would you rate the security situation in your area: excellent, good, fair, or poor? *Afghanistan in 2006*: The Asia Foundation.

⁶ibid.

⁷Data from CAPS Violent Actors Project

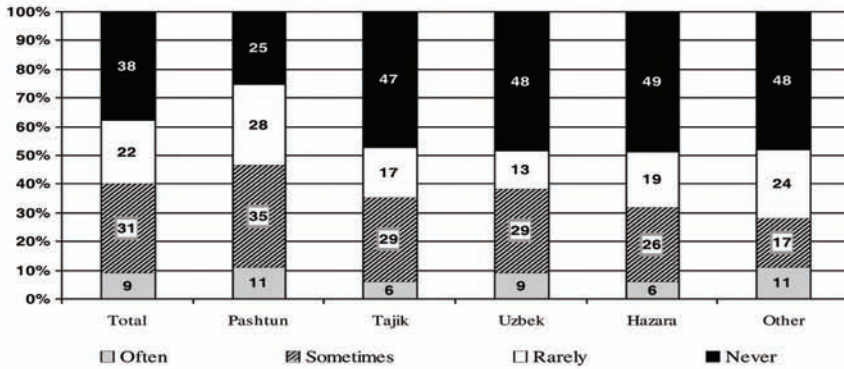
Fig.4: Top 5 Provinces that Rate Security as Poor⁸

Although Farah province is not next to the Pakistan border, governors and government officials have increasingly voiced concerns about instability spreading from Helmand, which has been long insecure. International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) operations in Helmand and Kandahar have driven some of the Taliban toward the south-western provinces of Farah and Nimroz. The reason for more attacks occurring in Farah as opposed to Nimroz is that the latter is very sparsely populated. The media coverage of Farah probably made their residents aware of the security situation, and thus a high number of respondents identified it as unsafe. Statistically speaking, Farah is safer than its population perceives. While it ranks first in terms of perception, Farah actually ranks 10th on the list of attacks. Contrasting this data with the number of casualties for the month of July from the CAPS database, Farah witnessed fewer attacks and casualties than provinces bordering Pakistan. In July, Farah suffered seven attacks, while Helmand had more than double the number (18 attacks). Farah also has a strong solidarity amongst its people. This was illustrated when they demonstrated against unwarranted coalition raids in their province.⁹ The strong sense of solidarity could be another unifying factor convincing residents that their province is highly insecure.

Data from the survey also revealed that perceptions of security differ according to ethnic groups. Pashtuns feared most for their security and safety (only 25% said they never fear for their security). In contrast, the Tajiks, Uzbeks, and Hazaras were doubly assured of security (47-49% said they never fear for their security). The reason why Pashtuns feel most at risk is logical: most of the severe fighting has been in the Pashtun belt.

⁸Q16 - *Afghanistan in 2006* : The Asia Foundation

⁹People in western Afghan province protest against coalition forces," *Pajhwok News Agency (Afghanistan)*, 24 September 2006.

Fig.5: Fear for Personal or Family Safety¹⁰

Insurgent attacks occur in select parts of the country. It appears that in the incidence of "issues/attacks", the presence of "warlords" and "Taliban" are related. The top five provinces that ranked security as a big problem also ranked the presence of warlord and Taliban as high.¹¹ Again, the provinces lie within the south and south-eastern regions. Deducing from the data, warlords and the Taliban have forged a strategic relationship that contributes to insecurity. The provinces that appeared to be most insecure based on the survey data are Farah, Paktia, and Helmand. However, in reality, Kandahar, Helmand, and Khost have the most number of attacks.

In summary, there are several indicators which contribute to declining personal security. The first indicator is strategic location: the most insecure areas are Pashtun dominated areas bordering Pakistan. Many security experts confirm that insurgent attacks are planned and prepared over the Pakistan border, and that they are implemented by local operatives or Pakistanis in Afghanistan.¹² Over a few months in 2006, the insurgency rapidly spread westwards as far as Farah and Nimroz.¹³ A second indicator is unemployment. In Farah, high insecurity coincides with high unemployment suggesting the unemployed are joining organized crime groups or militant groups. The third indicator is the presence of substitute authority in peripheral provinces and in pockets of society that recognize such groups or individuals as legitimate rulers. The Taliban have won some sympathy in certain districts, enough to actually have some local residents join their ranks. Warlords who have become stronger since they were co-opted into government have also exercised their influence to gain more personal resources.

¹⁰Q17-How often do you fear for your own personal safety or security or for that of your family these days? *Afghanistan in 2006* The Asia Foundation

¹¹Q13a - What is the biggest problem in your local area? *Afghanistan in 2006* : The Asia Foundation

¹²Pamela Constable, "Afghanistan Rocked As 105 Die in Violence", *Washington Post*, 19 May 2006; AP and AFP, "Taliban hiding in Pakistan: Afghanistan", *Taipei Times*, 22 May 2006; "Afghanistan Arrests 17 Would-Be Bombers", *The Associated Press*, 4 October 2006; Security Forces Kill 40 Taleban in 2 Encounters", *Agence France Presse*, 18 October 2006; "3 Afghans killed in suicide attack on NATO convoy", *The Associated Press*, 16 October 2006;

¹³Western Afghanistan calls for help against Taliban "increase", *The Nation (Pakistan)*, 16 September 2006; "Afghan Officials call for help against rebel attacks", *Gulf Times (Qatar)*, 17 September 2006; and "Coalition launches new Afghan offensive", *ABC News (Australia)*, 17 September 2006

The actors involved in insurgency are certainly more than one. While there are the Taliban on one hand, there are other groups plotting and staging incidents, some with a common objective of overthrowing the current government. Several bomb incidents and rioting, such as those in Kabul, were likely to have been planned by rival political gangs rather than the Taliban. Meanwhile, serial bank robberies and nightly attacks at archeological digs point to criminal gangs with a profit motive.

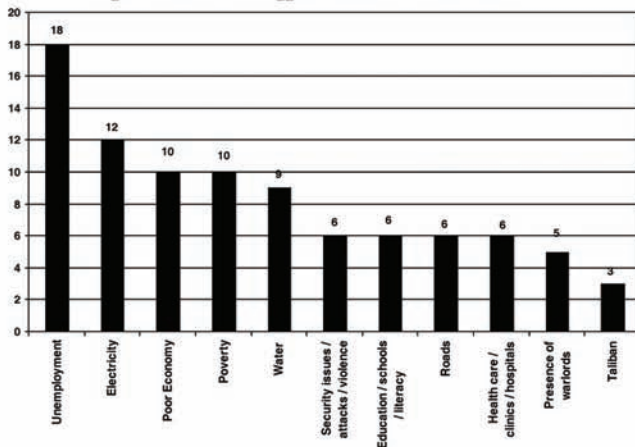
Identifying threats to human security is only one part of the human security approach. The other is to demand the provision of government intervention to increase human protection for its civilians. For this purpose the country's security apparatus plays a crucial role.

Distribution of Resources and Justice and Freedom From Want

Human protection is the role of the state and is one of the two components of human security. The other component is human empowerment which is essentially empowering individuals and communities to improve their human security using a bottom-up approach. However, the case of Afghanistan is one that postulates that human underdevelopment could lead to human insecurity. Inequitable distribution of resources and justice have led to widespread poverty, corrupted elite, fearlessness of the law, increased criminality, and illegitimate economic activities. Governance failure in ensuring an equitable system has caused many grievances at the grassroots level.

Although many may consider the security situation as the most urgent matter, the data collected suggests that "freedom from want" is far more important than "freedom from fear". That is to say large parts of the country consider their human developmental needs more important than their safety needs. A total of 38 percent identified poor economy (10%), poverty (10%) and unemployment (18%) as the biggest problem in their area.¹⁴ In contrast, only 15 percent consider security (6%), Taliban (4%), and warlords (5%) as problematic.¹⁵

Fig.6: What is The Biggest Problem in Their Area? ¹⁶



¹⁴ Q13a -What is the biggest problem in your local area? *Afghanistan in 2006*: The Asia Foundation

¹⁵ *ibid.*

¹⁶ Q13a- *Afghanistan in 2006* : The Asia Foundation

It is not a surprise that most concerns are centred around livelihood security (unemployment or underemployment) and economic security (scarce resources to create their own income-generating activities minimising, dependence on creditors). Needs for food and shelter are basic and must be met first.¹⁷ Both livelihood and economic insecurities create an atmosphere that push people towards corruption and illegal economic activities such as the drug economy or smuggling .

Poppy cultivation provides a profitable income to farmers who, from the start, have limited choices for income generation. The 15 percent who said that poppy cultivation was acceptable claimed that poppy cultivation not only produces more income but also requires less water than other crops.¹⁸ With regard to prices, research indicates that in areas of Afghanistan where cultivation has increased, prices for dry opium remained low at USD 112 per kilogram, while in areas where eradication efforts have almost ceased production, stocks fetched up to USD 235 per kilogram.¹⁹ The suppliers of cultivated poppy included 309,000 rural families reaping, from poppy alone, an average gross income of USD 1,800, equivalent to a mid-level government official's salary in Kabul.²⁰ Hence, to uneducated farmers, working on poppy farms is definitely more profitable than other jobs.

While profit is one motive for poppy cultivation, the other is lack of water, making it an attractive option given the water scarcity in this country. Water represents a concern for at least nine percent of the country. Poor agricultural planning and reforms have caused the creation of a farming population dependent on poppy as the easiest and most profitable way to earn a living. Further, poppy cultivation benefits the drug mafia more than the farmers, and the poor government presence and influence in the provinces means that they have a free hand to conduct their business.

Unemployment, the other key concern of many Afghans signals the state's failure to develop human capital and revitalize the economy. Unemployment causes restlessness and unhappiness with the central government, which groups like Taliban use as political oxygen. Unemployment not only poses a danger in insurgency-affected areas, it also contributes to increased criminality in other areas. The unemployment trend in Afghanistan has reached alarming proportions in Herat and Farah. Many refugees who returned to Herat from Iran have since gone back to Iran where it is easier to find a job.

There is also a lack of access to public services like electricity, water, and medical services. Large parts of Afghanistan do not have state electricity, even in the capital. If the state cannot provide basic needs to people they are governing, the lay person cannot see the government as legitimate rulers.

Finally, the most important aspect of an equitable system is one that has an effective system of law and order. If a state fails to create and maintain an equitable sense of justice, people will take justice into their own hands. This will only lead to more

¹⁷For a more detailed explanation of the Maslow hierarchy of needs please refer to <http://www.netmba.com/mgmt/ob/motivation/maslow/>

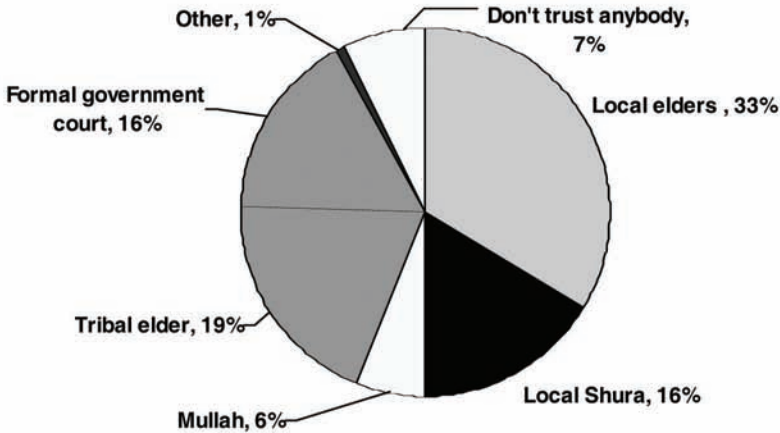
¹⁸Q43 - *Afghanistan in 2006*: The Asia Foundation

¹⁹UNODC, *World Drug Report 2006* - Volume 2: Statistics, p. 211.

²⁰ibid.

lawlessness. Afghans prefer to seek the advice of local shuras or tribal elders rather than government personnel, particularly on matters concerning land or family disputes.

Fig.7: Response to "Who do you trust the most to resolve any dispute that you may have?" (National)²¹



The lack of trust in government is evident, in that 65 percent of all respondents believed that their provincial government is corrupt.²² Although there is greater faith in the police force, the lack of trust in the government seldom receives attention from authorities as a cause for concern. In the eyes of the average Afghan, the elite is a group that benefits from international aid money. If the provincial government is corrupt, it is not surprising if Afghans think the same of the central government, which has even larger amount of resources at its disposal.

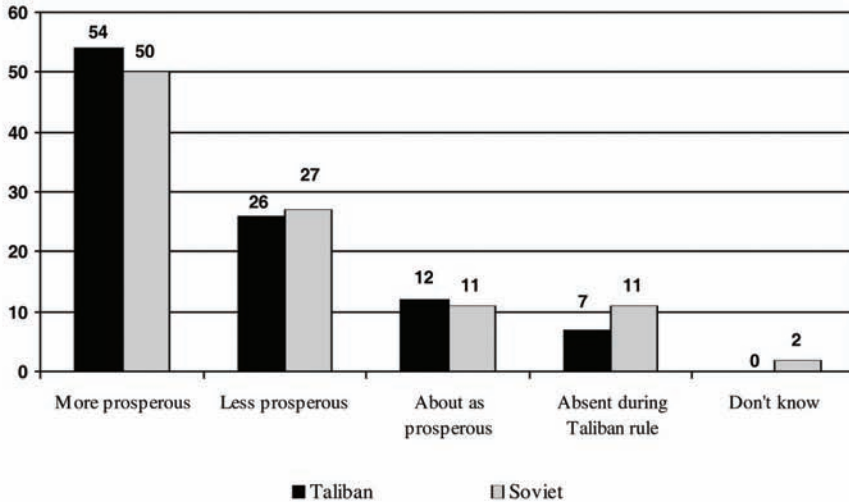
Underdevelopment in the provinces, worsening confidence in both provincial and national government, increasing corruption, and unemployment all paint a very grim picture of how Afghans see their world around them. It may seem that the rich are benefiting from a system that benefits them exclusively, with much less benefits flowing to the poor. This can be a cause of grievance that goes unnoticed. The only way to win confidence is to start focusing on the populace who are the supposed beneficiaries of international aid.

Despite the challenges facing the government in providing security, there are positive developments. One positive trend is that despite the worries over livelihood security, the majority of Afghans noted that they are more prosperous today compared to during the periods of Soviet or Taliban rule. This is an encouraging development, and indicates that reconstruction efforts have improved the lives of Afghans.

²¹ Q89 - *Afghanistan in 2006*: The Asia Foundation

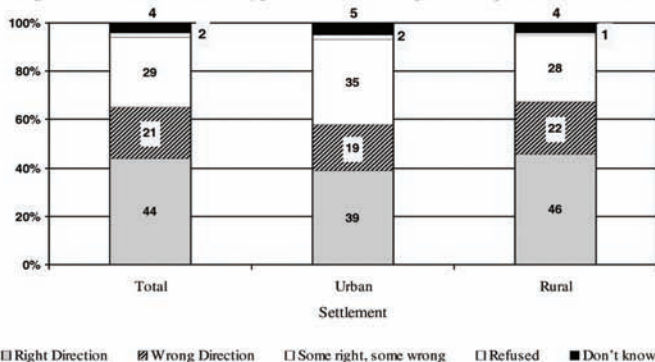
²² Q24c - *Afghanistan in 2006*: The Asia Foundation

Fig.8: Response to "Would you say that today your family is more prosperous, less prosperous, or about as prosperous as under the Taliban/ Soviet?" (National)²³



Another positive development is the view that almost half of the population think that Afghanistan is moving in the right direction. The overall perception of Afghans towards Afghanistan's general direction is mixed. Although 44 percent of respondents said that the country is heading in the right direction, 21 percent provided negative feedback, with three in ten reflecting mixed feelings (see Figure 9). However, to assume that this trend filters uniformly downwards to the provinces would be erroneous. Upon closer inspection of provincial-level responses, one observes different responses: 47 percent of those in Wardak thought the country was moving in the 'Wrong Direction' compared to one percent in Khost ($\sigma = 10.8\%$); 55 percent in Samangan said the country's heading was mixed, while five percent of residents in Loghar felt the same ($\sigma = 12.0\%$). Variations in responses between major ethnic groups were negligible ($\sigma = 1.2\%$ Right Direction; $\sigma = 2.1\%$ Wrong Direction; $\sigma = 3.9\%$ Some Right, Some Wrong; $\sigma = 0.0\%$ Refused; $\sigma = 1.5\%$ Don't Know) as were the responses between rural and urban settlements.

Fig.9: Response to "Do you think Afghanistan is heading in the right direction?" (National)²⁴



²³Q33-34 - Afghanistan in 2006: The Asia Foundation

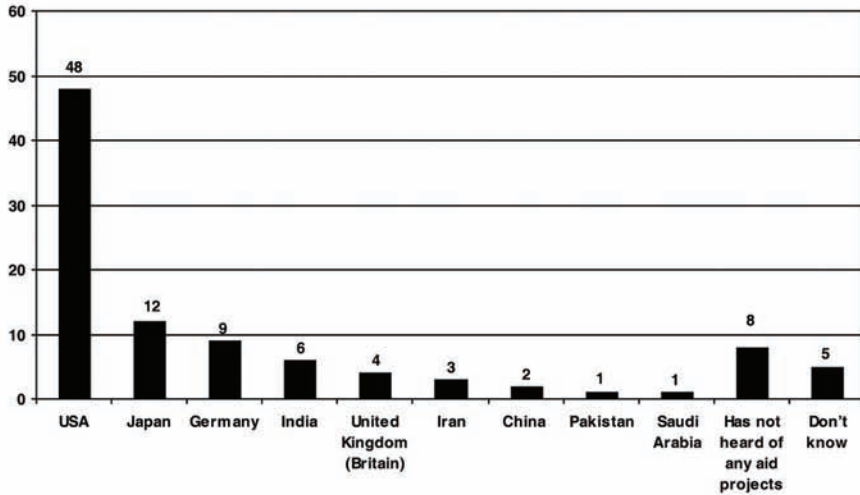
²⁴Q9 - Afghanistan in 2006: The Asia Foundation

Of the respondents who felt that Afghanistan was moving in the 'Right Direction', the reasons provided for this perception included 'Peace / End of War', 'Good Security', 'Disarmament', 'Reconstruction / Rebuilding' and 'Schools for girls have opened'. The data was consistent with the opinion of qualitative feedback obtained by CAPS, which agreed that the last five years have provided renewed hope for the people of Afghanistan – a far cry from Soviet occupation, Communist rule, the violence of rival warlords, and the draconian rule of the Taliban. The latter were initially welcomed because of the stability instilled by the regime. However, any hope was soon overtaken by the strict interpretation of the Sharia law. Executions and amputations were common; women could not work, and when in public, risked beatings by the Ministry of Virtue and Vice; men were detained and tortured for having beards that were not up to 'standard'; education was only open to boys; laughter, music, cigarettes and television were considered *haram* (forbidden); while businesses were opened, profit was frowned upon and the economy was stagnant. Essentially, the Afghan people were tired of being caught up in a perpetual poverty trap, where meagre resources only allowed subsistence and not improvement in lifestyles.

Of the 21 percent of respondents who felt Afghanistan was heading in the 'Wrong Direction', the reasons provided were 'No reconstruction has happened', 'Bad economy', 'Bad government', 'There is no progress' and 'Too many foreigners are getting involved'. FG members noted that the majority of those who attributed Afghanistan's 'Wrong Direction' to 'No reconstruction has happened' were domiciled in the provinces where the security situation was calmer. Hence, the primary expectation of the locals would be for reconstruction to be the most pressing priority of government. In the restive south, the main concern is security. This is not surprising since the security situation has gradually deteriorated. In correlation with the security environment, the economy has also deteriorated with a strong link between the unemployment, narcotics, and insurgency.

At the same time, the people of Afghanistan are positive about the international community's presence. Almost half the respondents (48%) are highly aware of the United States' contribution in rebuilding Afghanistan. Japan ranks second in this list (13%), and its positive influence is strongly felt in provinces such as Nooristan (95%), Bamiyan (29%), and Kandahar (20%).

Fig.10: Response to "Which country do you think has provided the most aid for the projects you mentioned to have been implemented in this area, district?"²⁵



Summary of Findings

- Economic development:* More people claim they are more prosperous today than in the past, which is a good indicator that human development and empowerment has improved lives. More people identify a combination of weak economy, poverty and unemployment as a more important cause of concern than security. This implies that more resources and efforts are needed in restructuring economy to improve the material well-being of Afghans.
- Corruption:* Increasingly more Afghans are concerned with the spread of corruption across the country and in their provincial government.
- Justice and Rule of Law:* People of Afghanistan have more faith in traditional leadership in solving disputes. One of the reasons could be lack of development of the justice system outside the capital. Most people report crimes to the police, a good indicator that at least the police is recognised as the institution responsible for solving crimes.
- Insurgency:* The areas that have a perception that they are safe lie in the north, while those in the south feel the opposite. Pashtuns feel that their lives are most at risk compared to other ethnic groups. The areas that face the highest security threat are the Pashtun-dominated provinces and districts. Residents of these areas identified Taliban and warlords as a major problem. Kabul residents are relatively happy with security in the capital; however, this may soon change. Soon after the data was collected, Kabul experienced serious bombing incidents in the second half of 2006, suggesting that the violence previously contained in the eastern and southern provinces had penetrated to

²⁵ Q32a - Afghanistan in 2006: The Asia Foundation

the capital. The data confirmed that insurgent activities outside the eastern and southern areas, such as Wardak, Farah and Herat deserve more attention than they are currently receiving. Unlike the provinces along the Pashtun belt, causes behind security incidents in the western provinces are economic, such as poverty and unemployment, and are criminal in nature.

Conclusion

Securing a peaceful and prosperous future depends on meeting the human security needs of Afghans. The current situation in Afghanistan is one where the glass can be seen as both half empty and half full - important strides have been made yet many obstacles remain. Many key development indicators have improved and Afghans are proving as resilient as ever. Nonetheless, an increase in insecurity has cast doubts on these achievements and renewed calls for further attention to the insurgency.

If Afghanistan is going to succeed in dealing with the challenge of human security, it must confront four issues. First, it must solve the security problem that stems from the Taliban and anti-government elements. Second, it must curb the narcotics problem and help provide alternative livelihoods where appropriate. Third, it must train its security apparatus, the police, army, and intelligence to deal with the long-term threat. Finally, and most importantly, it must provide basic service to its populace without any form of bias or corruption. Each of the challenges requires a well defined strategy and a long-term commitment. With a more coherent approach designed to improve human security in the areas of livelihoods, counter-corruption and counter-insurgency, Afghanistan will be able overcome all the challenges that have long kept it from further development. Specific recommendations include:

- *Livelihoods:* Reducing unemployment and obtaining sustainable livelihoods will have a significant impact on Afghans human security. Creating a system that ensures all Afghans benefit from international aid will make the government a more trusty partner for the people of Afghanistan. Because the majority of Afghans identified in the survey that they are comfortable with a paternalistic style of government, they expect the government to act in the best manner for their interest by pursuing measures to support the economy.
- *Counter-Corruption:* Corruption has been a major obstacle to building faith in government. A serious effort at weeding out corruption would win back the support of the people. Offering civil servants competitive wages and benefits complemented with tough laws for corruption will attract individuals with integrity to positions of responsibility. Another opportunity to develop trust between the -people and the government is for the government to offer protection in the provinces that face security incidents. In addition, weeding out corruption and appointing capable individuals based on their merits rather than connections, will form a cadre of capable and trustworthy government officials. This will improve governance and core-periphery relations. It will also be a wise investment for the government to position their best talents not in the capital but in the provinces, which require skills and vision.

- *Counter-Insurgency:* Providing a secure environment, free from fear, is critical to the future. Drawing attention to the importance of securing and protecting the people of Afghanistan is an important realization in securing public confidence in the government. The role of police is crucial in securing peace. They can be better trained in counter-terrorism and counter-insurgency. Also by refraining from engaging in corrupt activities they can win social trust. By projecting their neutral position, the public will feel that the police and justice system is fair, and not biased along clan or tribal lines. A better trained army too can conduct successful counter-insurgency in order to protect human lives. The data from the survey confirmed that social solidarity lies within traditional leadership such as the shura leaders and tribal leaders, who are more influential than mullahs. Effectively reaching out to the masses means empowering and engaging them in decision making. Participation in decision-making that are usually contained within higher levels of government will greatly empower these leaders in their communities. Also they can be utilised to help spread the word of peace to counter the insurgents' message.

Chapter 6

Changes in the Status of Women in Afghanistan

Sanjay Kumar

Praveen Rai

This essay examines the findings of the survey, which presents a mixed picture about the status of women in Afghanistan. Contrary to common perceptions, women in Afghanistan enjoy reasonable social and political freedom, much more than other many other countries of this region. While it is true that during the 2005 elections, many of them could not vote due to security concerns and social values, this is not confined to Afghanistan, but true of most of the Asian countries. Women are adequately represented in Afghanistan's parliament, thanks to the policy of reserving seats for women. In this respect, Afghanistan is far ahead of India, the largest democracy in the world, where the representation of women in parliament has hardly crossed over 10 percent, But this does not suggest that everything is fine about the status of women in Afghanistan. Large numbers of Afghan women still remain illiterate and are neglected in terms of health care. Though things have changed during the last few years, there is still a long way to go. Along with the government, greater involvement of civil society may help in uplifting the social and economic status of women in Afghanistan.

Introduction

An assessment of women's status in Afghanistan reveals that they are one of the most depressed and discriminated sections of Afghan society. The status of women in Afghanistan has been ranked in recent years in various gender and developmental discourses as one of the lowest compared with their counterparts in other countries, oppressed within both the private and public spheres in the country. In the mind of people across the globe the horrific images of their brutalization and victimization during the Taliban regime still remains fresh and vivid. However, recent reports suggest that the status of women has started showing perceptible signs of improvement in recent years. Before assessing this, however, it is crucial to define what 'Status of Women' means and the yardstick by which it can be assessed.

The term 'status of women' has been used in various developmental and gender discourses to determine the position of women in society by using both quantitative and qualitative indicators, either together or separately. In assessing the status of women, gender-disaggregated data and gender-specific indicators present a more realistic reflection making visible the socio-economic and cultural disparities existing within society. For the purpose of this essay, status of women is used in a wider sense to include the personal rights, proprietary rights, duties, liabilities and disabilities of women in Afghanistan. It also includes protection of law for women.

What is the overall status of women in Afghanistan? How do they fare in comparison to women in other countries of the region? What are the rights and duties granted to women and actually enjoyed by women in the country? What are the levels of parity

and equality achieved by women vis-à-vis men? An overview of literature and data available on the status of women in Afghanistan reveals that in terms of health care, literacy levels, and early marriage, they figure at the bottom of the list among the Islamic countries in the region. The estimated maternal mortality rate in Afghanistan is the second highest in the world with almost eight out of ten such deaths being preventable, but occurring due to poor access and availability to pre-natal health care and services. The literacy rate of Afghan women is as low as 14 percent compared to 43 percent for men. Around six out of ten girls in the country get married even before reaching the age of 16.

The situation is even grimmer in the southern provinces of the country, which have more conservative social values and the presence of the Taliban forces. The main reasons for the abysmal status of women in this region can be attributed to the existing tribal patriarchal social structure and the long period of conflict. The two decades of war and civil strife in Afghanistan has impacted more on women. As non-combatant victims, women were subject to assault, humiliation, rape and murder. Though peace and democracy have returned, violence against women and forced marriages still continue.

A brief assessment of women's situation in Afghan society based on secondary sources indicates that due to inherent gender biases and the patriarchal form of Afghan society, girls are discriminated against from the early years of their lives, whether it is for education, healthcare or being subjected to early and forced marriages. Though rights to equality and freedom have been guaranteed to women under the new constitution, these remain largely on paper, as the patriarchal male mindset and attitude have yet to change. However, there has been a positive change in the status of women in the last few years, as women have gained tangentially and benefited in crucial areas like education and political participation since the advent of democracy in the country. Though the new government in Afghanistan has not been so keen and pro active at the ground level in women's advancement and upliftment, still it has played a key role in improvement of their overall status.

This essay analyses the findings of The Asia Foundation survey *Afghanistan in 2006*, supplementing the findings with data collected by NGOs and UN bodies working in Afghanistan; data from the 'Asian Barometer Survey 2005' (Takashi Inoguchi, Institute of Oriental Culture, University of Tokyo, Japan), the 1979 official census in Afghanistan, World Bank Report (2006) titled *National Reconstruction and Poverty Reduction (NPPR): The Role of Women in Afghanistan's Future*; and the U.S. Census Bureau, 2005.

Socio-Economic Status of Women is Not so Low in Afghanistan

Women constitute 49 percent of the population in Afghanistan. (U.S.Census Bureau, 2005). The gender ratio is almost at par with other countries in the region. The gender ratio is considered a sensitive and significant demographic indicator of the status of the women in any country. In the first official census of Afghanistan in 1979, the estimated gender ratio (number of males per 100 females in the population) was about 106 males in the total population, which moved down to 104 in year 2005. Thus the ratio of women has improved significantly in the last two decades in the country though in terms of actual numbers they still continue to be less than men. Infant mortality could be one of the main causes of the low female ratio in Afghanistan.

Discrimination results in girls getting unequal access to life supporting inputs like food, nutrition and health care, leading to higher female mortality especially in the juvenile age group. The 'neglect of daughters' is referred to as 'expanded infanticide' in popular demographic parlance.

What does the sex-disaggregated data in the country reveal about the socio-economic status of women in Afghanistan? The 'World Bank Report (2006)' estimates that the maternal mortality rate in Afghanistan is the second highest in the world with 1600 deaths per 100,000 live births. The report further says that 75 percent of the maternal deaths are preventable, but occur due to poor access and availability of pre-natal health care services in the country. The life expectancy of women in the country is 43 years, which is among the lowest in the world. A study conducted by the Ministry of Women's Affairs and Afghan women NGOs confirmed that women are subjected to forced and early marriages. It brought to light that 57 percent of girls get married before reaching the age of 16 years.

On the economic participation of women in Afghanistan, the same report says that around 36 percent of women participate in the labour force and contribute in large measure to the economic development of the country. The report further says that the traditional role of women in Afghanistan is a constraint to more equitable participation in economic activities. The wage rates of women who work are normally half of those paid to men. Their involvement in the formal sector is mainly in the health and education sectors, with one third of all the teachers in Afghanistan being women.

Education is one of the major stimuli in the development and empowerment of women in any society. The level of educational attainment among women not only helps them in greater economic participation and employment in the society, but also in becoming better homemakers. The literacy rates of women in Afghanistan have been reported to be very low. An assessment of literacy levels of women in the country in 2003 showed that only 14% of girls and women over the age of fifteen were literate (UNICEF 2003). The highest women's literacy levels among Islamic countries in the region are in Iran (82%) followed by Iraq (53%), Pakistan (25%) and Bangladesh (20%).

Illiteracy

A recent report released by the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC) reveals that women are still facing a number of specific problems. They face violence both within and outside their homes. Women trying to assert the rights guaranteed to them by the new constitution are subject to constant threats and humiliation by men. Assertiveness among women is not tolerated and seen as questioning the pre-existing male authority and superiority in society. The main cause of discrimination against women was cited as early and forced marriages. As a result of this, women are becoming soft targets of violence.

Women in the developing countries around the world face a host of problems some of which are gender specific. A combined analysis of the two topmost problems faced by women shows that the main problem women face is lack of education (41%), followed by unequal rights (24%), early and forced marriages compounded by the practice of dowry (24%), domestic violence against women (23%), and poor health care services (18%). This vindicates to a large extent the findings of the other studies that illiteracy among women is one of the biggest problems afflicting women in Afghanistan, and is one of the major challenges facing their advancement.

There are differences in the opinions of men and women on the nature of problems faced by women. The difference is most glaring on domestic violence against women as there is a six percentage gap between what women (26%) feel about this gender discrimination from what men say (20%). This is perhaps because women are the victims of this violence and men are the perpetrators.

Similarly 18 percent of women felt subordination by men was a big problem, compared to 14 percent of Afghan men. The subordination of women by men is a problem from time immemorial arising out of the patriarchal tribal mindset and practices.

Table 1¹: Security is at the bottom in the list of problems facing women²

Problems faced by Afghan women	All	Female	Male
	(%)	(%)	(%)
Illiteracy	41	38	43
Lack of rights	24	24	24
Forced marriages and dowry	24	25	23
Domestic violence	23	26	20
Poor health care	18	17	20
Subordination by men	16	18	14
Poverty	16	16	16
Freedom of movement	14	16	13
Security problems	7	8	7

¹ For all tables unless otherwise mentioned: Figures are calculated from those who gave a response to this question and no response is treated as missing data.

² Note: All figures are aggregate of multiple responses. *Afghanistan in 2006*: The Asia Foundation

The prevailing security situation in Afghanistan came under serious criticism from all quarters and the scenario has been painted as unsafe for the people, and very unsafe for the women living there in public discourses. But surprisingly, people of Afghanistan feel that security of life (7%) is one of the least serious problems facing women in the country. Afghan women have also corroborated this as only 8 percent feel that the prevailing security situation is a problem for women in the country.

A large section of those living in Kabul city (44%) feel that illiteracy and lack of education are the biggest problems plaguing women. In comparison, a lesser number of people residing in rural areas (40%) feel that they are the biggest problem. Since urban people are more educated they understand the importance of education among women and feel that it is a big problem.

Table 2: Residents of Kabul city feel that illiteracy is the biggest problem facing women³

Categories	Lack of Education	Poor Health Care
	(%)	(%)
All	41	18
Illiterate women	37	18
Educated women*	39	17
Village	40	19
Poor health care	44	16

** Women who have completed their college education*

Health

The access of women to basic health care services during and after childbirth is an important indicator of the status of women in society. Women in developing countries lack proper health care services leading to problems like high maternal mortality rates and female mortality ratios. On the question of problems faced by Afghan women, poor health care services were also cited as a big problem (18%) by those interviewed during the survey. More men (20%) felt it was a problem for women compared to 17 percent of women. The table shows that more people living in the rural areas (19%) think that it is a major handicap for women in the country compared to those residing in Kabul, the capital of the country.

It is because of poor health care facilities and discrimination against women that the maternal mortality rates among women in Afghanistan is the second highest in the world, next only to Sierra Leone in Africa. Though the situation has started improving in the recent years primarily due to the focus of the government and donor agencies, it will take time before Afghan women can avail better health care in the country and achieve health standards at par with their counterparts in other countries of the region.

³ Note: All figures are aggregate of multiple responses. *Afghanistan in 2006*: The Asia Foundation

Rights and freedom

During the survey, one fourth of the respondents said gender equality exists only on paper as women in Afghanistan are not able to enjoy the rights and freedom granted to them.

The curtailment of the right to equality of women is felt more among illiterate women (26%) than educated women (23%). The difference of opinion is also seen in the rural-urban divide. Those residing in Kabul city (23%) feel that the restraints on women on exercising their rights is slightly less in the capital city than in villages (26%).

Table 3: Most women in the villages do not enjoy the rights & freedom given to them⁴

Categories	Lack of Rights	Freedom to Move
	(%)	(%)
All	25	14
Illiterate women	26	17
Educated women	23	15
Village	26	15
Kabul city	23	8

On the question of restrictions in the movement of women outside their homes, only 14 percent respondents said that such restrictions existed and the rest felt that it was not a big problem. It was considered a bigger obstacle among the uneducated women (17 %), than among those living in Kabul (8%). This is not specific to Afghanistan but similar to other countries of the region.

Forced Marriages and Domestic Violence

The term 'Violence against Women' as defined in the UN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women, is "any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life.

Forced and early marriages of women have been an endemic problem and a long-standing form of discrimination against them. Though early and forced marriages have been historically prevalent amongst the poor families in most of the rural areas and intractable regions of the country, it has now become a common phenomenon in urban areas also. The reasons for this can be ascribed to the existing security threats, widespread poverty, family debts and the presence of armed men and groups in neighborhoods. To find an easy escape route from these problems Afghan people find

⁴ Note: All figures are aggregate of multiple responses. *Afghanistan in 2006*: The Asia Foundation

it convenient and safe to marry off their daughters at an early age against their wishes. One fourth of the respondents felt that forced marriages of women is a considerably big problem in the country. More people felt this was a problem in rural areas (27%) as compared to those residing in Kabul city (19%). More illiterate women (26%) than university women (2 %) found it to be a problem.

Table 4: Illiterate women are subjected more to forced marriage, educated women suffer more from domestic violence⁵

Categories	Forced Marriages	Domestic Violence
	(%)	(%)
All	25	23
Illiterate women	26	25
Educated women	20	31
Village	25	22
Kabul city	25	24

In Afghanistan violence against women is prevalent both within their households and outside. The reasons for this high level of violence against women stems from an interplay of factors like compartmentalized gender roles, illiteracy, women's weak economic status, community acceptance of violence and lack of laws and redressal systems to control and curb them.

On the question of domestic violence, 23 percent of the people surveyed said it is a major problem afflicting women in the country. More women (26%) felt domestic violence was a problem compared to 20 percent of men. It is the educated women (31%) who perceive it as a bigger problem facing women in the country than the uneducated women (25%), though it is illiterate women who are more vulnerable.

Liberal and Conservative Attitudes

Wearing the burkha by Afghan women in public has been a long-standing tradition in Afghanistan. However, during the Taliban regime any reported contravention of this diktat invited strict punishment and fines. It was termed as an Islamic practice to be strictly adhered to by women, drawing severe protests around the world as a repressive move forced on them.

⁵Q-92a: "Now let's talk specifically about women related issues. What are the biggest problem facing women in this area today?"
Note: All figures are aggregate of multiple responses. *Afghanistan in 2006*: The Asia Foundation

Women should wear burkha...		
Categories	...Yes	...No
	(%)	(%)
All	56	44
Gender		
Male	62	38
Female	51	49
Education		
Illiterate women	62	38
University women	38	62
Religion		
Sunni	58	42
Shia	46	54
Ethnicity		
Uzbeks	70	30
Hazara	45	55
Region		
Eastern Region	70	30
Central Kabul	45	55

Table 5: Opinion is equally divided on the use of the burkha⁶

On the opinion about women wearing the burkha, more than 56 percent are in favour of women wearing the burkha outside their homes. But there is a considerable degree of difference in opinion among men and women in the country. While 62 percent of men wanted Afghan women to wear burkhas, only 51 percent of the women were in favour of its use in the public domain. Thus, we see that the difference of opinion among the male and female respondents on use of the burkha is as wide as 11 percentage points. The opinion of Afghan women on the use of the veil is equally divided.

Is there any difference of opinion among people based on their educational attainments, religion and region on the wearing of a burkha? While 62 percent of uneducated women support the idea of wearing the burkha in public places, almost the same percentage of educated women are opposed to wearing burkha. Thus it seems that educated Afghan women see its use as an impediment in women's development, as it restricts women's freedom and the quest for achieving parity with men.

Similarly the difference of opinion on use of burkhas by women is also diametrically opposite among people of different Islamic sects. While the followers of the Sunni

⁶Q69. "Now I would like to ask you about women in your community. Some people say that to respect Afghan traditions and Islam, women should usually wear a burkha outside the home, while others say that times are changing, and women should be able to move freely outside the home without a burkha. Which is closer to your view?" *Afghanistan in 2006*: The Asia Foundation

sect of Islam are more in favour of Afghan women wearing burkhas, among those who follow the Shia sect, the majority is opposed to its use. The regional variation of people on the use of burkhas also reflects a sharp division of opinion. Among the seven regional divisions of the country, the highest proportion of people who support the practice of wearing burkhas came from the Eastern region of the country (70%). In contrast to it, 55 percent of the people inhabiting in the Central region are not in favour of Afghan women wearing the burkha.

On the origin of burkhas, the majority of the Afghan people (56%) interviewed during the survey said that it has its original roots in Afghan tradition and culture. However, disaggregated data on the basis of gender, educational attainments, ethnicity and locality reveals that there is divergence of views on this. Thus, more than six out of ten women in Afghanistan feel that the use of burkhas is a part of Afghan tradition and culture. Fewer Afghan men (53%) endorse the opinion. However, people belonging to the Uzbek tribes differ from this opinion, as 49 percent said wearing burkhas is an Islamic practice and has its roots in Islam. Similarly among those residing in the Eastern region, 45 percent said that wearing burkhas has the sanction of Islam and is an Islamic practice.

Wearing of burkhas is an...		
Categories	...An Afghan Tradition	...An Islamic Practice
	(%)	(%)
All	56	44
Gender		
Male	53	47
Female	62	38
Education		
Illiterate women	53	47
University women	66	34
Religion		
Sunni	56	44
Shia	66	34
Ethnicity		
Uzbeks	49	51
Hazara	69	31
Region		
Eastern Region	45	55
Central Kabul	69	31

Table 6: Wearing of burkhas is an Afghan tradition⁷

Equal Opportunities

The new Constitution of Afghanistan (2004) provides for equality between men and

⁷Q70. Do you think that the use of the burkha in Afghanistan is more related to Afghan tradition and culture, or is it more related to the requirements of Islam? 'Afghanistan in 2006': The Asia Foundation

women in all walks of life. The constitution guarantees women's equal rights and duties before the law and reserves seats for women in Afghanistan's bicameral National Assembly. It also mandates the government "to protect human rights" and expressly requires the state to "abide by the U.N. charter, international treaties, international conventions that Afghanistan has signed, and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights." Afghanistan is a signatory to The UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), which sets out in detail the obligations of the signatory state to secure equality between men and women and to prohibit torture and discrimination against women. It expressly states in Article 2, that member countries should "take all appropriate measures to eliminate discriminating against women by any person, organization or enterprise.

Women should be given equal access to education...		
Categories	...Strongly Agree	...Somewhat Agree
	(%)	(%)
All	59	33
Female	66	29
Male	53	37
Illiterate Women	61	33
Educated Women	81	19
Village	58	34
Kabul city	69	29

Table 7: Men fully support equal opportunities for women in education⁸

On the question of providing equal educational opportunities to Afghan women, 59 percent strongly agree that women should be given equal access to education with men. Another 33 percent also somewhat agreed with this proposition. Afghan men are willing to provide equal opportunities to women in the educational sector, as a huge majority (90%) endorsed this idea. Thus the popular perception that men in Afghan society are against the women's education is not true to a large extent. Though arising out of threat perceptions and other social restrictions, men may not agree to girls attending formal schools for education, but they are not against the education of women. The need for education of Afghan women is high on the priority list of Afghan people cutting across all regions, religion and ethnic groups as can be seen in Table 7. The strongest support for providing equal access and opportunities of women in education was voiced by educated Afghan women.

⁸ Q93. Some people say that women should have equal opportunities like men in education. Do you agree or disagree with this opinion? Note: Rest is no opinion. *Afghanistan in 2006*: The Asia Foundation

During the last few years in Afghanistan there has been an increasing awareness among the policy makers, the society and women themselves about the need for enhancing women's economic participation as a means of improving their overall status. According to 'World Bank Report 2006', women comprise around 36 percent of agricultural workers and are engaged in livestock, micro enterprises and home-based manufacturing, but have limited access to capital, information, technology and markets.

Women should be allowed to take up employment...	
Categories	Strongly Agree
	(%)
All	71
Male	79
Female	62
Illiterate women	78
Eastern Region	95
Village	70
Central Kabul	86

Table 8: People are strongly in favour of women's employment⁹

The survey shows there is strong support for women taking up employment across the board. Seventy-one percent were in favour of women taking up employment outside their homes. If we see the gender-based opinion on women's economic participation, we find that the majority of men in the country (62%) also come out openly in support of it. However, more women (82%) are in favour of women taking up outside employment. Among women, the highest support for women taking up work outside their households came from educated women (95%). There is a big rural-urban divide on women's employment, as people residing in Kabul city (86%) are more favourable towards it than those living in the rural areas and countryside (70%).

Thus, people in Afghanistan are very receptive to women working outside their homes and this bodes well for the future of women in the country. It is a very positive indication of the changing mindset, which will go a long way in improving the status of women and the empowerment of women in the coming years.

Political Participation

The political status of women in any society can be judged by the degree of equality and freedom enjoyed by women in sharing political power along with men. In Afghanistan, though women are quite fairly represented in parliament, they continue to remain politically marginalized both at the stage of voicing their views freely and forcefully in the National Assembly and in terms of ministerial representation in the government of Afghanistan.

The political status and empowerment of women in Afghanistan and the efficacy of

⁹ Q94. Some people say that women should be allowed to work outside the home. What is your opinion about this? Note: Rest is those who either disagree or hold no opinion. *Afghanistan in 2006*: The Asia Foundation

their political rights in achieving general equality of status is evaluated and assessed on the following parameters:

- *Participation in the Political Process:* The turnout of women voters, the number of women candidates who were in the fray in National Assembly and Provincial Councils 2005, and the winning candidates.
- *Political Attitudes and Behaviour:* The level of political awareness, commitment and involvement of women in politics, their autonomy and independence in political behaviour and preferences.
- *Impact of Women on Political Process:* The assessment of women's views of their own roles and efficiency in political process and society's attitude to these new roles of women. This is indicated by the success of women candidates at elections, the efficiency of women pressure groups, the nature of leadership and women elected in government and the effectiveness of campaigns for women mobilization particularly on issues that directly concern them.

The fall of the Taliban regime in Afghanistan not only brought to end one of the nation's darkest periods of repressive and regressive rule, but also marked the beginning of democratic governance of the country. The new constitution enacted in 2004 and the Electoral Law in 2005 includes provisions guaranteeing certain political rights and representation for women. The new constitution guarantees women equal rights and duties before the law and reserves seats for them in Afghanistan's National Assembly. Sixty-eight out of the 249 seats in the Wolesi Jirga (House of the People) and half of the seats appointed by the president to the Meshrano Jirga (House of the Elders) are reserved for women. It also guarantees 25 percent seats for women in every provincial council of the country.

What then was the level of political participation of women in the National Assembly election held in 2005? It is considered an important milestone as a large number of women participated in the electoral process, as candidates, voters, electoral officials, and as staff of the UN-Afghan Joint Electoral Management Body (JEMB). Out of the 2,835 people who filed their nominations as candidates for the Wolesi Jirga, 344 were women. On polling day there was a large turnout of women to exercise their right to vote: 40 percent out of the 41 percent registered women voters cast their votes. This is significant since women received threats from different sections to stay away from the ballot box and there were other logistical difficulties. The results were even more surprising, as women won more seats than those reserved for them in the Lower House on the strength of their individual seats.

Table 9: The number of women in Lower House of the Afghan National Assembly is highest in the region

Country	Total Seats	Won by Women	In %
Afghanistan	249	68	27.31
Iraq	275	70	25.54
Pakistan	342	37	21.35
Bangladesh	345	51	4.14
Iran	290	12	1.45
Kuwait	65	1	1.54
Saudi Arabia	150	0	0.00

What is the level of representation of women in the current House of the People (Wolesi Jirga) in Afghanistan? How do they fare in representation to the National Assembly as compared to women in other Islamic countries of the region? The result of National Assembly Elections 2005 saw women securing 68 out of 249 seats in the Wolesi Jirga. The representation of women the National Assembly in Afghanistan is the highest in percentage terms (27%) among the Islamic countries of the region. Apart from Afghanistan, Iraq (25.45 %) and Pakistan (21.35 %) are the only two Islamic countries in the region where women representatives occupy more than 20 percent seats in the lower house of the National Assembly.

Thus, in terms of representation of women in parliament, Afghanistan is well ahead of other democratic countries of the region and the reservation of seats for women is a very positive step towards empowering the women in the society. It is ahead of India, the largest functioning democracy in the world, which is yet to bring a legislation to reserve seats for women in the parliament and state legislatures even after more than a half-century since its independence.

Though women have entered parliament in large numbers, their representation in the present Hamid Karzai ministry is almost marginal and insignificant. There is just one minister in his present cabinet as compared to three during the provisional government. The under representation of women in the cabinet can be due to the following:

- The lack of knowledge and experience about politics and governance of country among the Afghan women running for public office.
- The absence of women pressure groups and lack of political bargaining skills and tactics among women parliamentarians.
- The absence of provisions in the constitution reserving seats for women in public offices and ministries.

The participation of women in the recently held parliamentary elections and the number of seats won by them clearly reveals that women are ready to share power with men and actively participate in the legislative decisions of the country. However the

road map for women's participation in parliament is full of obstacles. Though women have entered the parliament in large numbers, but they are not allowed to participate freely in discussions and raise questions concerning the people of their region and issues of national interest. Their voices are gagged in parliament by threats and abuses from former military commanders and their conservative male companions. There have been reported threats to women parliamentarians from different sources and sporadic acts of violence against them. But women are fighting for their political rights and time will see them creating their own political space to participate more freely and equally in the national assembly and other provincial assembly.

Voting Rights

Of those surveyed, 58 percent fully supported the equal voting rights given to both women and men in the country. Another 31 percent respondents also supported this to some extent. However, there is a large difference among men and women on giving equal voting rights to both women and men by the new Afghan constitution. While 66 percent women fully support this constitutional provision, it gets full support only from 51 percent men. Similarly the difference on degree of agreement in giving equal voting rights to women is sharp among women with different educational attainments in the country. While 62 percent of illiterate women support equal voting rights, 79 percent support this among educated Afghan women.

Table 10: People strongly support the voting rights given to women¹⁰

Men and women should have equal right to vote...		
Categories	...Strongly Agree	...Somewhat Agree
	(%)	(%)
All	58	31
Female	66	29
Male	51	35
Illiterate Women	62	31
Educated Women	79	21
Village	57	32
Kabul	65	30

There is also a rural-urban divide in giving equal voting rights to women. While six out of ten people in villages fully support the equal voting rights given to women, those living in Kabul support it even more strongly (79%).

In the National Assembly election held last year in Afghanistan, there were stray reports that men voted not only for themselves but also for the registered women voters in their families.

¹⁰ Q95-The new constitution says men and women have equal rights, including the right to vote. What do you think about this statement? Do you agree or disagree? Note: Rest is those who either disagree or hold No opinion. *Afghanistan in 2006*: The Asia Foundation

Table 11: People strongly feel that women should vote themselves¹¹

Men and women should have equal right to vote...		
Categories	...Strongly Agree	...Somewhat Agree
	(%)	(%)
All	65	26
Female	67	25
Male	63	25
Illiterate Women	65	28
Educated Women	83	16
Village	64	26
Kabul	79	17

The survey showed 91 percent feel that women should vote themselves in the elections and men should not do proxy voting for them. The strong support for women exercising their voting rights themselves is more among women (67%) than men (63%). Among the women, it the college-educated women (89%) who strongly feel that men should not vote for women, as compared to uneducated women (65%). Thus there is a strong consensus among people from different socio-economic backgrounds that during the elections, woman should themselves exercise their voting rights given to them and go to the polling booths in person to cast their votes. A majority (57%) feel that women should take their own decision on who to vote for.

Though the majority of men are in favour of women deciding for themselves, a significant number (47%) say that women should take advice from men. Similarly, 44 percent of rural women say that while voting in elections, women should take advice from their men.

Table 12: Men also think that women should themselves decide their vote¹²

The decision to vote by women should be...		
Categories	...Own Decision	...On advice from Men
	(%)	(%)
All	57	43
Female	63	37
Male	53	47
Illiterate Women	59	41
Educated Women	77	23
Village	56	44
Kabul	69	31

¹¹Q95-The new constitution says men and women have equal rights, including the right to vote. What do you think about this statement? Do you agree or disagree? Note: Rest is those who either disagree or hold No opinion. *Afghanistan in 2006*: The Asia Foundation

¹²Q96 - If women vote, do you think that women should decide for themselves or should they receive advice from men? *Afghanistan in 2006*: The Asia Foundation

The reasons for this are:

- In the patriarchal structure of Afghan society, it is men who are the decision makers in the family. The male dominance in decision making for family also translates into the political realm.
- Lack of awareness and education among women about their voting rights, elections and candidates in the fray during elections also contributes to men taking decisions about whom to vote for.
- Since voting in elections is a new phenomenon in Afghanistan, women are indecisive in voting and do not have very clear political preferences and choices.

What are the views of people about women's participation in political leadership in Afghanistan? Should it stay exclusively in the hands of either men or women or should it be shared equally between them? The current political leadership in the country is completely dominated by men, as there are very few women who are sitting in key policy-making and decision-making seats. A reflection of their marginalization in key decision-making posts can be seen in the lack of women in the cabinet of the present government.

However the views of the people in Afghanistan on sharing of political leadership position is quite contrary to what the present government thinks. Around 50 percent feel that men and women should have equal share in political leadership. The university-attending women in Afghanistan (74 %) are the strongest lobbyist for equal representation of men and women in political leadership positions. Similarly those residing in the capital city of Kabul (66 %) are also strongly in favour of women being given an equal share in the political leadership of the country on par with men. Thus the Afghan people are more open to the idea that women be given a fair representation in political positions, though sadly the male political elites are not ready to endorse this view.

Table 13: People are in favour of men and women equally sharing the political leadership in the country¹³

Political leadership should be with...			
Categories	...Men	...Women	...Shared Equally
	(%)	(%)	(%)
All	37	13	50
Female	37	13	25
Male	49	10	41
Illiterate Women	28	16	56
Educated Women	8	18	74
Village	40	13	47
Kabul	24	10	66

The reservation of seats for women in the parliament is a policy pursued by almost all the governments in developing countries to bring them on par with men and empower them. The Afghan Constitution and electoral law also reserves 25 percent seats in the

¹³Q98 - Do you think that political leadership positions should be mostly for men, mostly or women, or do you think that both men and women should have equal representation in the political leadership? 'Afghanistan in 2006': The Asia Foundation

lower house of the National Assembly. The survey shows the number of people who want more women to be elected to the Afghan parliament is equal to those who do not want it (43%). Fifty-five percent of women and 84 percent of educated Afghan women are not satisfied with the number of women in the parliament, and want more women to contest elections and enter the parliament. Thus, women are keen to play an active role as policy makers in the country and feel that women members should occupy more seats in the National Assembly of Afghanistan.

More women should be elected to the parliament...		
Categories	Yes	No
	(%)	(%)
All	43	43
Female	55	30
Male	32	55
Illiterate Women	59	41
Educated Women	84	16
Village	51	51
Kabul	58	42

Table 14: Men are satisfied with the number of women in National Assembly ¹⁴

However, men and people living in the rural areas in Afghanistan do not feel the need for more women to be elected to the parliament and are satisfied with their current representation in the National Assembly. Fifty-five percent of men feel that there is no need for more women to be elected to the national parliament as do 51 percent of the people who are residing in villages. Therefore, while men are receptive to reserving seats for women in parliament they are not willing to give them more political space than what has been already provided.

Categories	Progress of women	Parity with men	Development of country	Empower women	Less aggressive
	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)
All	53	48	40	29	19
Female	56	47	42	30	17
Male	50	51	36	26	24
Illiterate Women	58	46	42	29	16
Educated Women	50	53	50	19	23
Village	55	47	40	29	20
Kabul	50	53	40	26	21

¹⁴ Q99 - Would you like to see more women as elected or reserve seat members of the National Parliament? *Afghanistan in 2006*: The Asia Foundation

¹⁵ Q100a&b - Why do you say there should be more women elected (to the National Parliament)? Note: All figures are aggregate of multiple responses. *Afghanistan in 2006*: The Asia Foundation

Table 15: More women parliamentarians elected will lead to progress of women¹⁵

Those who felt there should be more women in Parliament cited the following reasons:

- This will help in the progress of women (53%) in the country. Since women parliamentarians will be more sensitized towards women's issues, they can play a more pro-active role in the advancement of women in the country. Men feel that more women in parliament will help them achieve parity with men (51%).
- Educated women feel that more women getting elected to the national Assembly will mean more development of the country (50%). Though there may be a gender bias in this opinion, but experience in different countries have shown that women have played a crucial role in the better development of their countries than men.
- It will lead to empowerment of women in the country (29%). Since women understand the concerns of women and connect better with them, they can play a key role in empowering women in Afghanistan.
- Men in Afghanistan feel that women are less aggressive in comparison to men (24%) and can play a far more constructive role in formulating laws for the country in general, and for the interest of women in particular.

The reasons cited for giving more representation to women are varied but all of them point towards the recognition of the important role women can play in parliament as policy makers. They are perceived to not only help in the development of Afghanistan

Categories	Do not know politics	Men are more educated	Neglect of their families	Should not work
	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)
All	72	47	35	24
Female	70	48	38	23
Male	73	47	33	24
Illiterate Women	70	49	37	25
Educated Women	90	46	27	9
Village	72	47	34	25
Kabul	72	43	44	21

but also help women in achieving parity with men.

Table 16: More women should not be elected as they do not know politics¹⁶

Though the majority want the number of women elected to parliament to increase further, a significant number (42%) are satisfied with their current representation in the parliament. They feel there is no need for more women to occupy seats in the parliament. The reasons are as follows:

- The largest reason (72%) for not electing more women to parliament is that they do not understand politics. This is true to some extent as politics has been the

¹⁶ Q101a&b- Why do you not agree there should be more women elected (into the National Parliament)? Note: All figures are aggregate of multiple responses. *Afghanistan in 2006*: The Asia Foundation

bastion of men in Afghanistan till now, the knowledge of women about politics is low due to inexperience and the lack of exposure to it.

- Men are more educated in Afghan society (47%). It is true that the literacy level of Afghan men is high in comparison to women, but this is not a valid reason as no educational qualification is required for being a good parliamentarian.
- Politics takes women away from their homes and families (35%). This is a misconception as women all over the world have proved that they can participate in politics without neglecting their families.
- Women should not be allowed to work outside their homes (24%). This reason comes from the traditional patriarchal set up of Afghan society where women who take up work outside their homes are usually looked down upon.

The reason for not supporting the idea of having more women in the parliament stems from multiple causes, some partly valid and some arising out of misconceptions.

Categories	Men	Women
	(%)	(%)
All	40	20
Gender		
Male	57	8
Female	22	32
Religion		
Sunni	40	20
Shia	34	23
Ethnicity		
Pashtun	41	22
Hazara	35	22
Region		
Eastern Region	51	19
Central Kabul	35	13

Table 17: People prefer men to represent them in parliament¹⁷

What are the preferences of the Afghan people about being represented in the parliament - whether they would like to have a male or a female representative from their area? Are the gender-based preferences of their parliamentarians the same for the whole country or are there variations based on religion, ethnicity and region? Asked about their choice of gender for representation in parliament, 40 percent wanted male representatives. 41 percent of Pashtuns wanted men compared to 35 percent of the Hazaras.

But the sharpest difference in the preference for men was regional. The Eastern region

¹⁷ Q102 - Would you prefer to be represented by a man or a woman in the National Parliament? Note: Rest is No opinion. *Afghanistan in 2006*: The Asia Foundation

had a greater preference for men(51%) compared to the central Hazarajat region(35%).

Policy Implications

The key finding of the paper clearly show that the status of Afghan women has seen improvements in recent years because of state and civil society's initiatives that have brought their concerns on to the national agenda. Based on the emerging trends and findings we suggest policy measures below that may further arrest the advancement of women.

- The government of Afghanistan should make a concerted effort in partnership with civil society for empowerment and progress of Afghan women in providing basic healthcare, education and rights to them.
- Gender-specific plans and programmes should be formulated and implemented by the government to bring Afghan women on par with men in all walks of life. Stricter laws should be enacted to end the violence and discrimination faced by women in Afghanistan.
- Though women are adequately represented in Afghan parliament, there should be efforts to induct women into key decision-making positions. This will also help increase confidence among Afghan women.
- The government may design policies for professional training of women so that they are more equipped in taking up important positions in government and decision making bodies.
- An all-out awareness and education campaign should be launched by the government using media and other forms of communication tools on a sustained basis to break the gender stereotypes and negative perceptions of women in Afghan society.
- Gender perspective and sensitization should be introduced in school and college curricula to remove the covert and overt biases that exist against women in Afghanistan as a first step towards gender equality. This would help in integrating women in mainstream society and establishing their own identity.
- Media can play an important role in upliftment of Afghan women. Media should be sensitized regarding their social responsibility to educate, inform and stimulate debate on critical issues concerning women in Afghanistan. Media should regularly and analytically highlight the needs and concerns of rural, backward, and disadvantaged sections of women in the country and allot more news-space for them.

Conclusion

A balance sheet assessment of the status of women in Afghanistan based on various indices reveals that they continue to remain oppressed and discriminated against in crucial areas like healthcare and education. But the silver lining is that in areas like political participation and rights guaranteed by constitution, there have been positive gains. In the areas of education and health care, the status of Afghan women remains low, although significant improvements have taken place in the last few years.

The survey findings show that around five out ten Afghan women are not in favour of

wearing burkha and are ready to shed the conservativeness associated with its use. Similarly more and more Afghan women are enjoying the rights to equity guaranteed by the Constitution and only one-fourth of the respondents said that gender equity exists only on paper. People living in towns and urban areas feel that the denial of rights to women is a lesser problem than those residing in the countryside.

The level of representation of Afghan women in the current House of the People (Wolesi Jirga) in Afghanistan is the highest compared to women in other Islamic countries of the region. The elections result of Parliamentary Elections 2005 saw women winning 68 (27%) out of the 249 seats in the Wolesi Jirga. Apart from Afghanistan, only Iraq (25%) and Pakistan (21%) are the two Islamic countries in the region where women representatives occupy more than 20 percent seats in the lower house of parliament.

Thus, overall we can say that the status of women, which had dipped so low in the last two decades arising out of civil strife and war, is showing perceptible signs of improvement in the sector of health care, education, economic participation or representation in country's politics. Nascent women's movements and germinating gender politics have an important role to play in improving the status of women in Afghanistan. They are fighting for the fundamental rights of women in the country and trying to bring gender as an issue in to the public realm, which is crucial for their overall upliftment and advancement. Though the women's movement is currently tentative and yet to take firm roots, the fight to restore and strengthen womenfolk in different regions of the country taken together indicates a positive step in the long march towards improving the status of women in Afghanistan as a whole. But still there are miles to walk before women in Afghanistan can achieve equality!

Appendix 1: Target Demographics

A total of 6226 respondents were surveyed in the study, out of which 4888 (78.5%) were from the rural areas and 1338 (22%) were from the urban areas. Almost equal percentages of male and females were interviewed. The following tables provide demographic and socioeconomic details of the respondents with gender classification. They also provide the educational status, religion, and ethnicity of the respondents.

Gender and Region

Characteristics	All	Rural	Urban
N	6226	4888	1338
Gender			
Male	49.9	49.9	50.1
Female	50.1	50.1	49.9
Region			
Central-Kabul	19.2	8.9	55.0
Eastern	10.1	11.1	6.6
South Central	14.9	18.7	1.5
South Western	8.2	8.3	7.8
Western	11.8	12.5	9.3
Northern	29.5	32.3	19.8
Central-Hazarajat	6.3	8.1	-

Employment Status and Age

Characteristics	All	Rural	Urban
N	6226	4888	1338
Employment			
Working	41.0	40.8	41.6
Retired	1.8	1.5	2.8
Housewife	40.1	41.7	34.3
Student	8.6	7.5	12.4
Unemployed	8.1	8.2	8.1
Age			
18-24	29.3	29.4	28.8
25-34	25.7	25.2	27.8
35-49	30.3	30.5	29.7
50+	14.7	14.9	13.8

Main Occupation

Characteristics	All*	Rural	Urban
N	2659	2068	591
Farmer (own land / tenant farmer)	28.5	34.8	7.3
Farm laborer (other's land)	8.7	10.4	3.1
Laborer, domestic, or unskilled worker	5.8	5.3	7.5
Informal sales/ business	21.1	11.2	15.1
Skilled worker/artisan	10.7	9.5	14.6
Office worker/ Clerical worker	13	9.5	24.8
Self employed Professional	6.1	5.6	7.7
Small business owner	4.5	4.2	5.7
Executive or managerial	6.1	5.7	7.4
Military/ Police	3.1	2.3	5.9
Other	1.3	1.4	1

Base: Currently working and retired respondents

Farming Land

	All*	Rural	Urban
N	716	719	42
Farmer (own land / tenant farmer)	14.6	14.5	16.2
Farm laborer (other's land)	22.1	22.5	16.6
Laborer, domestic, or unskilled worker	22.9	23.2	18.2
Informal sales/ business	39.5	39	48.5

** Base: Farmers who have own land or tenant farmers*

**Jerib: One Jerib is equal to one fifth of a hectare*

Average Household Income

	All	Rural	Urban
N	6226	4888	1338
Less than 2,000 Afs	13.7	14.1	12.6
2,001 - 3,000 Afs	26	26,5	24.5
3,001 - 5,000 Afs	29.8	29.9	29.7
15,001 - 10,000 Afs	18.6	17.9	21
10,000 - 15,000 Afs	6.8	6.7	6.9
15,001 - 20,000 Afs	2.2	2	3.1
20,001 - 25,000 Afs	0.7	0.7	0.7
More than 25,000 Afs	0.3	0.3	0.4

Marital Status

	All*	Rural	Urban
N	6226	4888	1338
Single	21.2	20.9	22.5
Married	75.7	76	75
Widower/ Widow	2.9	3.1	2.4

Academic Qualifications

	All	Rural	Urban
N	6226	4888	1338
Never went to school	51.7	57.3	32.2
Primary School, incomplete	10.2	10.3	9.9
Primary School, complete	7.9	7.8	8.2
Secondary education (Middle school)	8.8	7.8	12.1
High school	16.2	13.1	26.8
University or academy	4.6	3	10.3

Religion

Characteristics	All	Rural	Urban
N	6226	4888	1338
Sunni	76.9	88.7	84.9
Shia	10.4	9.2	14.4
Ismaeli	1.2	1.4	0.3
Hindu	0.1	0.1	0.1
Buddhist	0.1	0.1	0
Sikh	0.1	0.1	0.1

Ethnicity

	All	Rural	Urban
N	6226	4888	1338
Pashtun	40.9	44.3	29
Tajik	37.1	32.8	51.9
Uzbek	9.2	10.1	6
Hazara	9.2	8.7	10.9
Turkmen	1.7	1.9	0.8
Baloch	0.5	0.6	0.1
Nuristani	0.4	0.4	0.2
Aimaq	0.1	0	0.2
Arab	0.7	0.7	0.7
Pashayi	0.3	0.3	0.1

Appendix 2: Methodology

1. Distribution of Sampling Points by Region and Urban/Rural Strata

The survey was the first survey conducted in Afghanistan with a target of more than 6000 respondents in a single wave. Fieldwork for the survey was conducted by the Afghan Center for Socio-economic and Opinion Research (ACSOR), Kabul, between June 14 and June 29, 2006 by a team of 409 trained interviewers (196 women and 213 men). The survey consisted of a random, representative sample of 6226 in-person interviews with Afghan citizens 18 years of age and above resident in Afghanistan. The survey sample was divided first according to urban and rural characteristics of Afghanistan. The Sheharwali (municipal administration in Afghanistan) defines the urban population as those living within municipal limits. By default, the rural population comprises those who are living outside the municipal limits. The margin of sampling error is 2.5 percent.

The universe is divided into seven geographical regions consisting of 34 provinces, out of which 32 provinces were covered during fieldwork. The seven regions are:

Central / Kabul (Kabul, Kapisa, Parwan, Panjshir); **Eastern** (Nangarhar, Kunar, Laghman, Nuristan); **South Central** (Wardak, Logar, Ghazni, Paktika, Paktia, Khost); **South Western** (Helmand, Kandahar, Zabul); **Western** (Badghis, Herat, Farah, Nimroz); **Northern** (Badakhshan, Takhar, Baghlan, Kunduz, Samangan, Balkh, Jawzjan, Sar-i-Pul, Faryab); **Central/Hazarajat** (Uruzgan, Ghor, Bamyan, Day Kundi).

Uruzgan, representing 1.1 percent of the population of Afghanistan, and Zabul, representing 1.2 percent, were excluded from the sampling plan due to extreme security conditions during the fieldwork period of the survey.

2. Selection/Replacement of Sampling Points

A stratified multi-stage sampling procedure was followed to select the sample. The sampling design followed to select the sampling points, households and finally the respondent is presented in the following sections. The sample was allocated to urban and rural areas of each province in proportion to the urban rural population of the province.

Within each province the districts were selected by the PPS systematic random sampling procedure. The districts were first listed in the descending order of population and then the required number of districts was selected from this list of districts in each province based on population size intervals.

Consistent with local cultural traditions, the universe at the outset was divided into male and female sub-samples. Each region, province and further strata was allocated an equal number of male and female respondents per sampling points. The settlements within districts were selected randomly by the field director based on the lists of the existing settlements within each district.

The interviews among the male and female respondents were conducted by investigators of the same sex. The instability and frequent fighting in some provinces caused a few sampling points to be adjusted or replaced to keep interviewers out of areas with active violence, as follows:

- Helmand (Disho district changed to Lashkargah due to security reasons.)
- Ghazni (Ab Band changed to Gailan due to security reasons.)
- Ghazni (Rasheedan changed to Nawa.)
- Kapisa (Alasai changed to Kohband)
- Kandahar (Shawali Kot changed to Khakriz and Zhali)
- Logar (Kherwar changed to Arza)

3. Selection of Starting Points within Each Sampling Point

Each sampling point was assigned a starting point and given direction. The starting points were recognizable locations - such as mosques, schools, bazaars etc., within each of the selected settlements for the survey. The locations were verified by supervisors during the back-checking procedures

4. Household Selection

In urban areas, from the given starting point, the interviewer headed in the assigned direction and stopped at the first street/lane on the right hand side of his/her route. From there on, the first contacted household was the fourth house on the right from the beginning of the street. Further on, the selected household was each third inhabitable house on the right side of the interviewer route. In blocks of flats, the selection routine was each fifth apartment

In rural areas, the interviewer started from the center of the village or the bazaar, mosque, etc and went to the right selecting each third inhabited house on his/her route. Compounds containing two or more houses behind a common wall were treated like detached houses counting them counter-clock-wise from the gate to the compound.

5. Respondent Selection and Substitution

In the selected household first the information about all the household members was collected. From the list, all the members aged 18 years and above were arranged in the descending order of age. One respondent was randomly selected using KISH grid. In case the selected respondent refused to be interviewed or was not available after call backs, no replacement in the household was done. Instead the interviewer moved on to the next household according to the random walk procedures.

6. Callbacks (rate, method, and results)

Typically interviewers were required to make two call-backs before replacing the designated respondent. Due to security-related fears in previous projects the field force has had difficulty meeting the requirement of two call-backs prior to substitution in rural areas. In this survey, while the field force was able to complete some call-backs, the majority of the interviews were completed on the first attempt (94%), five percent of the interviews were completed on the second attempt, and one percent were completed on the third attempt. Due to the high rate of unemployment, and correct choice of the appropriate time of day for interviewing, completion on the first attempt is not unusual in Afghanistan. Many people are also close to their homes and families are willing to help summon a needed respondent to complete an interview.

7. Training of Interviewers

While the fieldwork supervisors were given briefing/training in Kabul, the training for interviewers was conducted by fieldwork supervisors in their respective provinces. The briefing on the main questions was conducted by ACSOR Project Managers and the Field Managers with Asia Foundation oversight. Issues emphasized during briefing(s):

- Proper household and respondent selection.
- Review of the questionnaire content.
- Appropriate interviewing techniques.
- Conducting pilot interviews to get a better understanding of the logic and concept of the questions.

8. Quality Assurance Mechanism

After the delivery of the questionnaires from field, most of the completed questionnaires were subject to logical control for proper administration.

Actual interviewing was monitored directly by a supervisor in 28 percent of the sample. Another 17 percent of the completed interviews were back-checked by a supervisor in person. One percent of the completed interviews were back-checked from the central office. The issues verified during in-person backchecks were proper household and respondent selection, as well as correct recording of answers to five randomly selected questions from the main body of the questionnaire. A total of 12 interviews in the survey were rejected and were not entered in the final data.

9. Weighting

In order to assist this study, The Asia Foundation over sampled populations in some provinces during the fieldwork for the survey. The data used for the survey report was therefore provided a weight according to the ratio of provincial population to national population. All the data provided in this report is weighted data, except for the bases mentioned in figures and tables, which are un-weighted i.e., they represent the actual number of respondents who were asked the particular question. The weighting was done to avoid results from the over-sampled provinces to distort national findings in any particular direction.

Appendix 3: Interview Discussion Guide

Region

- | | | | |
|------------------|------------------|-------------|---------------------|
| 1. Central/Kabul | 3. South Central | 5. Western | 7. Central/Hazarjat |
| 2. Eastern | 4. South Western | 6. Northern | |

Geographic Code

- | | | | |
|-------------|----------|---------|------------------|
| 1. Villages | 2. Towns | 3. City | 4. Metro (Kabul) |
|-------------|----------|---------|------------------|

Province

- | | | | |
|------------|----------------|---------------|--------------|
| 1. Kabul | 10. Ningarhar | 19. Samangan | 28. Kandhar |
| 2. Kapisa | 11. Laghman | 20. Juzjan | 29. Zabul |
| 3. Parwan | 12. Kunar | 21. Sar-i-Pul | 30. Uruzghan |
| 4. Wardak | 13. Nooristan | 22. Faryab | 31. Ghor |
| 5. Logar | 14. Badakhshan | 23. Badghis | 32. Bamyan |
| 6. Ghazni | 15. Takhar | 24. Herat | 33. Panjshir |
| 7. Paktia | 16. Baghlan | 25. Farah | 34. Dehkondi |
| 8. Paktika | 17. Kunduz | 26. Nimroz | |
| 9. Khost | 18. Balkh | 27. Helmand | |

NOTE TO INTERVIEWERS:

REMEMBER THAT THIS IS A CONVERSATION. MAKE THE RESPONDENT COMFORTABLE. MAKE EYE CONTACT.

DO NOT TRY TO LEAD THE RESPONDENT DURING THE INTERVIEW OR GET THE "DESIRED" ANSWERS FROM THEM. MAKE SURE YOU TELL THEM THAT THERE ARE NO RIGHT OR WRONG ANSWERS, YOU JUST WANT THEIR OPINIONS.

DURING THE INTERVIEW, BE POLITE BUT INQUISITIVE. DO NOT ACCEPT ONE-WORD ANSWERS. DRAW OUT RESPONDENTS TO GIVE DETAILED RESPONSES BY FURTHER PROBING - SAY: "WHY DO YOU SAY THAT?" "ANYTHING ELSE?" "ELL ME MORE."

Introduction

Asalaam Valeikum, I am from ACSOR-Surveys, an independent research organization. We regularly conduct surveys among people like you to find out what you feel about issues of public interest. ACSOR-Surveys has no relation to the government. I just want to ask you some questions about "matters of interest to Afghans". I am interested in your opinion. Your answers will be kept confidential and your name will not be given to anyone and your views will be analyzed along with those of thousands of others.

Q-1.* I'll ask you some questions about your listenership of the radio. How many days a week do you listen to the radio, if any?

- | | |
|----------------------------------|--------------------|
| 1. Every day or almost every day | Go to Q-2a |
| 2. Three or four days a week | Go to Q-2a |
| 3. One or two days a week | Go to Q-2a |
| 4. Less than once a week | Skip to Q-4 |
| 5. Never | Skip to Q-4 |
| 8. Refused (volunteered only) | Skip to Q-4 |
| 9. Don't know (volunteered only) | Skip to Q-4 |

Q-2a.* (Filtered. Ask if answered '1' or '2' or '3' in Q-1 i.e. if answered 'every day or almost every day', 'three or four days a week' or 'one or two days a week' in Q-1) To which radio station do you listen most often? (Single response. Code in the first column of the table below) [Do Not Read Out Answers]

Q-2b.* And then which other radio station do you next most often listen to? (Single response. Code in the second column of the table below) [Do Not Read Out Answers]

Q-2a. Most Often	Q-2b. Next	Radio Stations	Q-2a. Most Often	Q-2b. Next	Radio Stations
1	1	BBC-Farsi	27	27	Radio Herat
2	2	BBC-Pashto	28	28	Sahar Radio
3	3	VOA-Dari	29	29	Radio Sada-I-Solh
4	4	VOA-Pashto	30	30	Radio Sharq
5	5	Radio Azadi - Dari	31	31	Radio Nangarhar
6	6	Radio Azadi - Pashto	32	32	Voice of Afghan Women
7	7	All India Radio-Pashto	33	33	Kabul University Radio
8	8	All India Radio-Dari	34	34	Radio Afghanistan
9	9	Radio Pakistan-Pashto	35	35	Radio Azad Afghan
10	10	Radio VIR Iran-Farsi	36	36	Peace Radio
11	11	Radio Information-Dari	37	37	Radio Kandahar
12	12	Radio VIR Iran-Pashto	38	38	Radio Khost
13	13	Radio Information-Pashto	39	39	Radio Helmand
14	14	Deutsche Welle-Dari	40	40	Radio Faryab
15	15	Deutsche Welle-Pashto	41	41	Riarabia Balkh Women's Radio
16	16	Radio Pakistan-Dari	42	42	Radio Balkh
17	17	Radio China International-Pashto	43	43	Radio Laghman
18	18	Arman FM	44	44	Millie-Paygham Radio Station
19	19	Killid FM	45	45	Taraj-Mir Radio Station
20	20	Radio Paktia	46	46	Radio Takhar
21	21	Radio Kunar	47	47	Radio Nimroz
22	22	Radio Samangan			
23	23	Radio Bamiyan	96	96	Other (specify)
24	24	Radio Ghore	97	97	Other (specify)
25	25	Radio Farah	98	98	Refused (volunteered only)
26	26	Radio Ghazni	99	99	Don't know (volunteered only)

Q-3.* What time of day do you most often listen to the radio? **(Single response)**

1. 05:01 hrs - 08:00 hrs
2. 08:01 hrs - 12:00 hrs
3. 12:01 hrs - 17:00 hrs
4. 17:01 hrs - 21:00 hrs
5. 21:01 hrs - 23:00 hrs
6. 23:01 hrs - 05:00 hrs

8. Refused (volunteered only)
9. Don't know (volunteered only)

Q-4.* **(ASK ALL)** Now I'll ask you some questions about your viewership of the television. How many days a week do you watch TV, if any?

- | | |
|----------------------------------|--------------------|
| 1. Every day or almost every day | Go to Q-5a |
| 2. Three or four days a week | Go to Q-5a |
| 3. One or two days a week | Go to Q-5a |
| 4. Less than once a week | Skip to Q-7 |
| 5. Never | Skip to Q-7 |
| 8. Refused (volunteered only) | Skip to Q-7 |
| 9. Don't know (volunteered only) | Skip to Q-7 |

Q-5a.* **(Filtered. Ask if answered '1' or '2' or '3' in Q-4 i.e. if answered 'every day or almost every day', 'three or four days a week' or 'one or two days a week' in Q-4)** Which TV station do you watch most often? **(Single response. Code in the first column of the table below)**

Q-5b.* Which TV station do you watch next most often? **(Single response. Code in the second column of the table below) [Do Not Read Out Answers]**

Q-5a. Most Often	Q-5b. Next	TV Stations
1	1	Badakhshan TV
2	2	TV Herat
3	3	Ghoryan TV- Herat
4	4	Aecna TV - Jawazjan
5	5	TV Afghanistan - Kabul
6	6	TV Kandahar
7	7	TV Konduz
8	8	TV Balkh - Mazar-e-Sharif
9	9	Baghlan TV -Pulkhomri
10	10	Jawazjan TV- Shebrghan
11	11	Takhar TV - Taloqan
12	12	TV Nimroz
13	13	Al Jazeera TV
14	14	Pakistan TV
15	15	Uzbekistan TV
16	16	Zee TV
17	17	Star TV
18	18	CNN
19	19	BBC
20	20	Iran TV
21	21	TV Tajikistan
96	96	Other (specify)
97	97	Other (specify)
98	98	Refused (volunteered only)
99	99	Don't know (volunteered only)

Q-6.* What time of day do you most often watch TV? (Single response)

1. 05:01 hrs - 08:00 hrs
2. 08:01 hrs - 12:00 hrs
3. 12:01 hrs - 17:00 hrs
4. 17:01 hrs - 21:00 hrs
5. 21:01 hrs - 23:00 hrs
6. 23:01 hrs - 05:00 hrs
8. Refused (volunteered only)
9. Don't know (volunteered only)

Q-7.* (ASK ALL) Which is the main source from where you normally get information about what is happening in the country? **[Do Not Read Out Answers]**

1. TV
2. Radio
3. Newspapers
4. Village chief/community leaders
5. Religious leader
6. Friends and family and neighbors
7. Other (specify) _____
8. Refused (volunteered only)
9. Don't know (volunteered only)

Q-8.* If you wanted to find out about something important happening in your community, who, outside your family, would you want to tell you? **[Do Not Read Out Answers]**

1. Mullah
2. Village chief/ Community leader
3. Worker at community centers (school, health center, etc.)
4. Friend
5. Co-workers
6. Shopkeepers
7. Neighbors/ villagers
97. Other (specify) _____
98. Refused (volunteered only)
99. Don't know (volunteered only)

Q-9.* Generally speaking, do you think things in Afghanistan today are going in the right direction, or do you think they are going in the wrong direction?

- | | |
|--|----------------------|
| 1. Right direction | Go to Q-10a |
| 2. Wrong direction | Skip to Q-11a |
| <i>[Do not read categories below]</i> | |
| 3. Some in right, some in wrong direction (vol.) | Skip to Q-12 |
| 8. Refused (volunteered only) | Skip to Q-12 |
| 9. Don't know (volunteered only) | Skip to Q-12 |

Q-10a.* (Filtered. If answered '1' i.e. answered 'Right direction' in Q-9): Why do you say that things are moving in the right direction? **(Do NOT read codes. Write down answer and then code in the first column below)**

Q-10b.* (Filtered. If answered '1' i.e. answered 'Right direction' in Q-9): Why else? **(Do NOT read codes. Write down answer and then code in the second column below)**

	Q-10a. 1 st mentioned	Q-10b. 2 nd mentioned
Peace / end of the war	1	1
Disarmament	2	2
Good security	3	3
Reconstruction / rebuilding	4	4
Free movement / travel possible	5	5
Economic revival	6	6
Freedom / free speech	7	7
Democracy / elections	8	8
Schools for girls have opened	9	9
Women can now work	10	10
Women have more freedom	11	11
Refugees return	12	12
Good government	13	13
International assistance	14	14
Other (specify) _____	95	95
Other (specify) _____		
Refused (volunteered only)	98	98
Don't know (volunteered only)	99	99

Q-11a.* (Filtered. If answered '2' i.e. answered 'Wrong direction' in Q-9):
Why do you say that things are moving in the wrong direction? **(Do NOT read codes. Write down answer and then code in the first column below)**

Q-11b.* (Filtered. If answered '2' i.e. answered 'Wrong direction' in Q-9):
Why else? **(Do NOT read codes. Write down answer/code below)**

	Q-11a. 1 st mentioned	Q-11b. 2 nd mentioned
No reconstruction has happened	1	1
There is no progress	2	2
Lack of aid / no development assistance	3	3
Bad economy	4	4
Poor education system	5	5
Too many foreigners are getting involved	6	6
Foreign aid causes problems	7	7
Western influence is too great	8	8
There is danger to Islam	9	9
Neighboring countries cause problems	10	10
Bad government	11	11
There is unemployment	12	12
Other (specify) _____	95	95
Other (specify) _____		
Refused (volunteered only)	98	98
Don't know (volunteered only)	99	99

Q-12a.* (ASK ALL) In your view, what is the biggest problem facing Afghanistan as a whole? (**Do NOT read codes. Write down answer and then code in the first column below**)

Q-12b.* And after that, what is the next biggest problem? (**Do NOT read codes. Write down answer and then code in the second column below**)

	Q-12a. First Problem	Q-12b. Next Problem
Security issues / attacks / violence	1	1
Presence of warlords	2	2
Presence of Taliban	3	3
Poor Economy	4	4
Poverty	5	5
Unemployment	6	6
Reconstruction / rebuilding	7	7
Education / schools / literacy	8	8
Government / weak government / central authority	9	9
Corruption	10	10
Scarcity of electricity	11	11
Roads	12	12
Health care / clinics / hospitals	13	13
Water	14	14
Other (specify) _____	95	95
Other (specify) _____		96
Refused (volunteered only)	98	98
Don't know (volunteered only)	99	99

Q-13a.* What is the biggest problem in your local area? (**Do NOT Read codes. Write down answer and then code in the first column below**)

Q-13b.* And what is the next biggest problem in your local area? (**Do NOT Read codes. Write down answer and then code in the second column below**)

	Q-13a. Biggest Problem	Q-13b. Next Biggest problem
Security issues / attacks / violence	1	1
Presence of warlords	2	2
Taliban	3	3
Poor Economy	4	4
Poverty	5	5
Unemployment	6	6
Reconstruction / rebuilding	7	7
Education / schools / literacy	8	8
Government / weak government / central authority	9	9
Corruption	10	10
Electricity	11	11
Roads	12	12
Health care / clinics / hospitals	13	13
Water	14	14
Other (specify) _____	95	95
Other (specify) _____		96
Refused (volunteered only)	98	98
Don't know (volunteered only)	99	99

Q-14. Which one of following issues is more critical or important to your needs at present? Please, rank in order of priority, whereby the most important rank as '1' the next important rank as '2' and so on, up to the least important as '7'. (**Show Card and read responses**)

	<u>RANK</u>
a) Roads	
b) Power	
c) Water	
d) Sanitation	
e) Health care	
f) Education	
g) Employment	
Refused (volunteered only)	8
Don't know (volunteered only)	9

Q-15.* Some people say, “I don’t think that the government cares much about what people like me think.” Do you agree or disagree with this statement? **(WAIT FOR RESPONSE AND THEN ASK):** Strongly, or somewhat?

1. Agree strongly
2. Agree somewhat
3. Disagree somewhat
4. Disagree strongly
8. Refused (volunteered only)
9. Don't know (volunteered only)

Q-16.* How would you rate the security situation in your area: excellent, good, fair, or poor?

1. Excellent
2. Good
3. Fair
4. Poor
8. Refused (volunteered only)
9. Don't know (volunteered only)

Q-17.* How often do you fear for your own personal safety or security or for that of your family these days? Often, sometimes, rarely, or never?

1. Often
2. Sometimes
3. Rarely
4. Never
8. Refused (volunteered only)
9. Don't know (volunteered only)

Q-18.* Have you or has anyone in your family been a victim of violence or of some criminal act in your home or community in the past year?

- | | |
|----------------------------------|---------------------|
| 1. Yes | Go to Q-19 |
| 2. No | Skip to Q-22 |
| 8. Refused (volunteered only) | Skip to Q-22 |
| 9. Don't know (volunteered only) | Skip to Q-22 |

Q-19. (Filtered. Ask if answered ‘1’ i.e. ‘Yes’ in Q-18) You said that you've been a victim of violence or some criminal act in the past year. Did you report it to any authority?

- | | |
|----------------------------------|---------------------|
| 1. Yes | Go to Q-20 |
| 2. No | Skip to Q-21 |
| 8. Refused (volunteered only) | Skip to Q-22 |
| 9. Don't know (volunteered only) | Skip to Q-22 |

Q-20. (Filtered. Ask if answered '1' i.e. 'Yes' in Q-19) To what agency or institution did you report the crime? (Multiple Response) [Do Not Read Responses, Record All That Respondent Mentions, Specify If Other Mentioned]

1. Afghan National Army
2. Afghan National Police
3. Shura/ Elders
4. Local militia (police)
5. Tribal leader / Malik
6. Local Commander or Warlord
7. Mullah Saheb
8. Local PRT
9. Office of UN organization(s)
10. Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission
11. Governor or Local Government
12. Central Government
13. Public prosecutor
14. Courts
15. Press or other media

96. Other (specify) _____
98. Refused (volunteered only)
99. Don't know (volunteered only)

Q-21. (Ask if answered '2' i.e. 'No' in Q-19) Why didn't you report the crime? (Multiple Response) [Do Not Read Responses, Record All That Respondent Mentions, Specify If Other Mentioned]

1. It makes no difference
2. Danger or fear of retaliation
3. Lack of evidence
4. It wasn't serious
5. Didn't know where to report it

7. Other (specify) _____
8. Refused (volunteered only)
9. Don't know (volunteered only)

Q-22. (ASK ALL) If you were a witness to a crime, to whom would you report it? (Multiple Response) [Do Not Read Responses, Record All That Respondent Mentions, Specify If Other Mentioned]

1. Afghan National Army
2. Afghan National Police
3. Shura/ Elders
4. Local militia (police)
5. Tribal leader / Malik
6. Local Commander or Warlord
7. Mullah Saheb
8. Local PRT
9. Office of UN organization(s)

- 10. Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission
- 11. Governor or Local Government
- 12. Central Government
- 13. Public prosecutor
- 14. Courts
- 15. Press or other media

- 96. Other (specify) _____
- 97. No one (vol)
- 98. Refused (volunteered only)
- 99. Don't know (volunteered only)

Q-23. If you were a victim of violence or robbery, how much faith would you have that the law-enforcing and judicial systems would punish the guilty party?
 [Read Out Answers]

- 1. A lot of faith
- 2. Some faith
- 3. A little faith
- 4. No faith at all

- 8. Refused (volunteered only)
- 9. Don't know (volunteered only)

Q-24. Please tell me whether you think that corruption is a major problem, a minor problem, or no problem at all in the following areas. **(Circle '8' for 'Refused' or '9' for 'Don't know' if volunteered)**

	Major Problem	Minor Problem	Not a Problem	Refused (Vol. only)	Don't know (Vol. only)
a. In your daily life	1	2	3	8	9
b. In your neighborhood	1	2	3	8	9
c. In your provincial government	1	2	3	8	9
d. In Afghanistan as a whole	1	2	3	8	9

- Q-25.** Compared to a year ago, do you think the amount of corruption overall in
(Read out options below one by one) has increased, stayed the same or decreased in the following areas?

	Increased	Stayed the same	Decreased	Refused (Vol . only)	Don't know (Vol . only)
a. In your daily life	1	2	3	8	9
b. In your neighborhood	1	2	3	8	9
c. In your provincial government	1	2	3	8	9
d. In Afghanistan as a whole	1	2	3	8	9

- Q-26.** Whenever you have contacted government officials, how often in the past year have you had to give cash, a gift or perform a favor to an official? If you had contacts with such officials in the past year. Was it in all cases, most of the cases, in isolated or in no cases? And how about.... **(Show Card. Rotate items on the list)**

	In all cases	Most cases	Isolated cases	No cases	Ref.	DK	Had no contacts
a) Officials in the Municipality	1	2	3	4	8	9	5
b) Customs office	1	2	3	4	8	9	5
c) Police	1	2	3	4	8	9	5
d) Judiciary / courts	1	2	3	4	8	9	5
e) State electricity supply	1	2	3	4	8	9	5
f) Public healthcare service	1	2	3	4	8	9	5
g) When applying for a job	1	2	3	4	8	9	5

Q-27. Now I will read you four different activities that you could participate in. Please, tell me, whether you would participate in the following activities with 'no fear', 'some fear' or a 'lot of fear'?

	No fear	Some fear	A lot of fear	Refused (Vol. only)	Don't know (Vol. only)
a) When participating resolving problems in your community	1	2	3	8	9
b) Voting in a national election	1	2	3	8	9
c) Participating in a peaceful demonstration	1	2	3	8	9
d) To run for a public office	1	2	3	8	9

Q-28.* Do most people feel free to express their political opinions in the area where you live?

- 1. Yes **Go to Q-29**
- 2. No **Skip to Q-30**

- 8. Refused (volunteered only) **Skip to Q-31**
- 9. Don't know (volunteered only) **Skip to Q-31**

Q-29. (Filtered. Ask if answered '1' i.e. 'Yes' in Q-28) What changes compared with the past, or reasons, do you think have made most people to feel free to express their political opinions in the area where you live? **Open ended. Write down up to two answers**

- a) _____
98. Refused (volunteered only) 99. Don't know (volunteered only)
- b) _____
98. Refused (volunteered only) 99. Don't know (volunteered only)

Q-30. (If answered '2' i.e. 'No' in Q-28) Why don't people in your area have the freedom to express their political opinions? **Open ended. Write down up to two answers**

- a) _____
98. Refused (volunteered only) 99. Don't know (volunteered only)
- b) _____
98. Refused (volunteered only) 99. Don't know (volunteered only)

Q-31. (ASK ALL) Speaking of the past 12 months, do you know of, heard of any project or program, implemented with the foreign aid in this area, district, in the following fields?

	Yes	No	Ref.	DK
a) Reconstruction/ building of roads, bridges	1	2	8	9
b) Water supply	1	2	8	9
c) Electricity supply	1	2	8	9
d) Healthcare (primary health center, regular visits of doctors, etc.)	1	2	8	9
e) Education (reconstruction/opening of school, more teachers etc.)	1	2	8	9
f) De-mining	1	2	8	9
g) Demilitarization / disarmament	1	2	8	9
h) Reconstruction/programs in agriculture	1	2	8	9
i) Reconstruction/programs in industry	1	2	8	9
j) Building new mosques	1	2	8	9
k) Humanitarian programs - help in food, medicines, shelter, production materials etc.	1	2	8	9
l) Other (specify) _____	1	2	8	9

Q-32a. Which country do you think has provided the most aid for the projects you mentioned to have been implemented in this area, district? **(Single response) [Do Not Read List]**

	Q-32b Single response
USA	1
United Kingdom (Britain)	2
Germany	3
Japan	4
India	5
Pakistan	6
China	7
Iran	8
Saudi Arabia	9
Other (specify) _____	96
Has not heard of any aid projects	97
Refused (volunteered only)	98
Don't know (volunteered only)	99

- 32b.** Which other countries have provided aid for the projects in your area, district?
PROBE: Any other? **(Multiple response) [Do Not Read List]**

	Q-32a Single response
USA	1
United Kingdom (Britain)	2
Germany	3
Japan	4
India	5
Pakistan	6
China	7
Iran	8
Saudi Arabia	9
Other (specify) _____	95
Other (specify) _____	96
Has not heard of any aid projects	97
Refused (volunteered only)	98
Don't know (volunteered only)	99

- Q-33.*** Now I would like to ask you a few questions about the economy of Afghanistan. If you think about your family, would you say that today your family is more prosperous, less prosperous, or about as prosperous as under the Taliban government?

1. More prosperous
2. Less prosperous
3. About as prosperous
7. Absent during Taliban rule (vol.)
8. Refused (volunteered only)
9. Don't know (volunteered only)

- Q-34.** Now, going even farther back to the period of the Soviet occupation, if you think about your family then and now, would you say that today your family is more prosperous, less prosperous, or about as prosperous as under the Soviet occupation government?

1. More prosperous
2. Less prosperous
3. About as prosperous
7. Absent during Soviet rule/ occupation (vol.)
8. Refused (volunteered only)
9. Don't know (volunteered only)

Q-35. At this house where you live, which of the following kinds of electricity supply do you have? (**Read out options. Code each that apply. Multiple response**)

1. Personal Generator
2. Public / Shared Use Generator
3. State electricity provider

7. No electricity (vol.)
8. Refused (volunteered only)
9. Don't know (volunteered only)

Q-36. Have you ever made a phone call, talked on the phone with someone else?

1. Yes
2. No

8. Refused (volunteered only)
9. Don't know (volunteered only)

Q-37. At this house where you live, which of the following means for communication do you have?

- | | |
|------------------------------------|---------------------|
| 1. A mobile phone | Skip to Q-39 |
| 2. A fixed phone line | Skip to Q-39 |
| 7. Neither fixed, nor mobile phone | Go to Q-38 |
| 8. Refused (volunteered only) | Skip to Q-39 |
| 9. Don't know (volunteered only) | Skip to Q-39 |

Q-38. (**Filtered. Ask if don't have any kind of phone, i.e. answer '7' in Q-37**) How long does it take you from your home (in minutes or hours) to get to the nearest telephone? It could be a public telephone or telephone at a neighbor place.

1. Less than 10 minutes
2. From 10 to 30 minutes
3. From 31 minutes to 1 hour
4. From 1.01 hour to 2 hours
5. From 2.01 hours to 4 hours
6. From 4.01 hours to 8 hours
7. More than 8 hours

8. Refused (volunteered only)
9. Don't know (volunteered only)

Q-39a. (**ASK ALL**) Have you ever heard of the process called "privatization"?

1. Yes
2. No

8. Refused (volunteered only)
9. Don't know (volunteered only)

Q-39b. Privatization means the selling of state owned businesses to private individuals. Do you think privatization is a good idea or is a bad idea for Afghanistan?

- | | |
|----------------------------------|---------------------|
| 1. Good idea for Afghanistan | Go to Q-40 |
| 2. Bad idea for Afghanistan | Skip to Q-41 |
| 8. Refused (volunteered only) | Skip to Q-42 |
| 9. Don't know (volunteered only) | Skip to Q-42 |

Q-40. (Filtered. Ask if answered '1' i.e. 'good idea' in Q-39b): Why do you say that privatization is a good idea? (Open ended. Write down up to two responses)

- a) _____
 98. Refused (volunteered only) 99. Don't know (volunteered only)
- b) _____
 98. Refused (volunteered only) 99. Don't know (volunteered only)

Q-41. (Filtered. Ask if answered '2' i.e. 'bad idea' in Q-39b): Why do you say that privatization is a bad idea? (Open ended. Write down up to two responses)

- a) _____
 98. Refused (volunteered only) 99. Don't know (volunteered only)
- b) _____
 98. Refused (volunteered only) 99. Don't know (volunteered only)

Q-42. Some people say that poppy cultivation is okay, and that the government should not worry too much about it, while others say that it is wrong, and that the government should do more to stop it. Which is closer to your view?

- | | |
|----------------------------------|---------------------|
| 1. Poppy cultivation is okay | Go to Q-43 |
| 2. Poppy cultivation is wrong | Skip to Q-44 |
| 8. Refused (volunteered only) | Skip to Q-45 |
| 9. Don't know (volunteered only) | Skip to Q-45 |

Q-43. (Filtered. Ask if answered '1' i.e. 'poppy cultivation is okay' in Q-42): Why do you say that poppy cultivation is okay? (Open ended. Write down up to two responses)

- a) _____
 98. Refused (volunteered only) 99. Don't know (volunteered only)
- b) _____
 98. Refused (volunteered only) 99. Don't know (volunteered only)

Q-44. (Filtered. Ask if answered '2' i.e. 'poppy cultivation is wrong' in Q-42): Why do you say that poppy cultivation is wrong? (Open ended. Write down up to two responses)

- a) _____
 98. Refused (volunteered only) 99. Don't know (volunteered only)
- b) _____
 98. Refused (volunteered only) 99. Don't know (volunteered only)

Q-45.* (ASK ALL) Turning to another subject, tell me, in which language did you learn to speak, first? (Single response)

1. Pashto
 2. Dari
 3. Uzbeki
 4. Turkmeni
 5. Urdu
 6. Hindi
 7. English
 8. Arabic
 9. Russian
97. Other (specify) _____
 98. Refused (volunteered only)
 99. Don't know (volunteered only)

Q-46.* Which other languages do you speak, if any? (Multiple response. Code each mentioned)

1. Pashto
 2. Dari
 3. Uzbeki
 4. Turki
 5. Urdu
 6. Hindi
 7. English
 8. Arabic
 9. Russian
97. Other (specify) _____
 98. Refused (volunteered only)
 99. Don't know (volunteered only)

Q-47.* Which languages can you read? (Multiple response. Code each mentioned)

1. Pashto
2. Dari
3. Uzbeki
4. Turki
5. Urdu
6. Hindi
7. English

- 8. Arabic
- 9. Russian

- 97. Other (specify) _____
- 98. Refused (volunteered only)
- 99. Don't know (volunteered only)

Q-48. Now I would like to ask you some questions about the Parliamentary election in 2005. Did you vote in the Parliament elections in 2005?

- 1. Yes **Skip to Q-50**
- 2. No **Go to Q-49**
- 8. Refused (volunteered only) **Skip to Q-50**
- 9. Don't know (volunteered only) **Skip to Q-50**

Q-49. (Filtered. Ask if answered '2' i.e. 'No' in Q-48) You did not vote in the Parliament Elections in 2005. Why didn't you vote? (SINGLE CODE ONLY. ASK FOR MOST IMPORTANT REASON) (DO NOT READ CODES) RECORD ANSWER: CODE POST FIELDWORK) _____

- 1. Didn't support any candidate / party
- 2. Not interested
- 3. Personal reasons: too old, sick, etc.
- 4. Ballot too long / confusing
- 5. Elections wouldn't make difference / disillusioned
- 6. Lack of ID document
- 7. Name was missing in the register
- 8. Did not fulfill the age criteria
- 9. Fear of intimidation / insecurity
- 10. Didn't understand politics
- 11. Was scared of voting
- 12. Was not permitted to vote / women not allowed to vote
- 97. Other (specify): _____
- 98. Refused (volunteered only)
- 99. Don't know (volunteered only)

Q-50. (ASK ALL) Do you think that the elections for the National Parliament last year were free and fair or do you think they were not free and fair?

- 1. Free and fair
- 2. Not free and fair
- 8. Refused (volunteered only)
- 9. Don't know (volunteered only)

Q-51. In the past, elections were managed jointly by International donors and the Afghanistan Government, but future elections will be managed entirely by the Afghanistan Government. How confident are you that the Afghan Government on its own will be able to conduct free and fair elections? Are you...

1. Very confident
2. Somewhat confident
3. Somewhat not confident, or
4. Not confident at all

8. Refused (volunteered only)
9. Don't know (volunteered only)

Q-52.* Do you think the local elections will be free and fair or do you think they will not be free and fair?

1. Will be free and fair
2. Will not be free and fair
8. Refused (volunteered only)
9. Don't know (volunteered only)

Q-53.* I'm going to mention some problems that can happen during elections. For each one, tell me if to your knowledge it had happened in the last elections. **(Read out items from '1' to '5' and code each mentioned in the first column of the table below)**

Q-54.* Now, for each one, tell me if you think it can happen in future elections. **(Read out items from '1' to '5' and code each mentioned in the second column)**

	Q-53 Last elections	Q-54 Future elections
Intimidation against voters or party activists	1	1
Cheating in the vote count	2	2
Buying of votes	3	3
Finding out for whom people voted without their saying	4	4
Husbands not letting wives vote	5	5
None of these happened/ none of these possible (vol.)	7	7
Refused (volunteered only)	8	8
Don't know (volunteered only)	9	9

Q-55. Now, to change the subject. Sometimes people and communities have problems, related to an issue that concerns everybody in their area, that they can't resolve on their own and so they have to ask for the help of a government official or a government agency. Have you ever had such a problem in your area that you needed to ask for help or cooperation to resolve it?

1. Yes
2. No

Go to Q-56
Skip to Q-57

8. Refused (volunteered only) **Skip to Q-57**
 9. Don't know (volunteered only) **Skip to Q-57**

Q-56. (Filtered. Ask if answered '1' i.e. 'Yes' in Q-55): Who did you ask? (Multiple response. Code each mentioned) [Do Not Read List, Write Answer Then Code Response]

1. A local militia leader.
2. Elders of the local shura
3. A member of Parliament
4. A ministry, public office or government agency
5. A religious leader
6. Afghan National Army
7. Afghan National Police

97. Other (specify):
 98. Refused (volunteered only)
 99. Don't know (volunteered only)

Q-57. (ASK ALL) During elections, some people try to convince others to vote for one candidate that they think will be the best. How often have you tried to convince others to vote for the candidate you think best? (READ OUT OPTIONS)

1. Frequently
 2. Once in a while
 3. Rarely
 4. Never
8. Refused (volunteered only)
 9. Don't know (volunteered only)

Q-58. There are people who work for a party or candidate during electoral campaigns. Did you work for any candidate or party in the last presidential or parliamentary elections?

1. Yes
 2. No
8. Refused (volunteered only)
 9. Don't know (volunteered only)

Q-59. Now I will read out a list of organizations or associations. As I mention each, please tell me if you belong to it. **(Multiple response. Code each mentioned)**

1. Youth association
2. Student association
3. NGO (only micro-credit)
4. NGO (advocacy, awareness)
5. NGO (micro-credit, others)

6. Women association
7. Sports and recreational club
8. Social club
9. Religious association (non-political)
10. Trade union
11. Farmer samity
12. Non-religious charity group
13. Trade association
14. Teacher association
15. Writer / journalist association

96. Others (Specify: _____)
97. None
98. Refused (volunteered only)
99. Don't know (volunteered only)

Q-60. Generally speaking, would you say that most people can be trusted or that you need to be very careful in dealing with people?

1. Most people can be trusted
2. With most people you need to be very careful

8. Refused (volunteered only)
9. Don't know (volunteered only)

Q-61. Do you believe that in most instances people are only thinking about themselves or do you believe that in the most instances people try to help others?

1. They think about themselves
2. They try to help others

8. Refused (volunteered only)
9. Don't know (volunteered only)

Q-62. I would like to ask you about some officials, institutions and organizations in our country. I will read these out to you. As I read out each, please tell me how much trust you have in each of the domestic institutions and organizations and officials. Do you have a great deal of trust, a fair amount of trust, not very much trust, or no trust at all in...

	A great deal of trust	A fair amount of trust	Not very much trust	No trust at all	Refused (Vol. only)	Don't Know (Vol.)
a) Afghan National Army	1	2	3	4	8	9
b) Afghan National Police	1	2	3	4	8	9
c) Political parties	1	2	3	4	8	9
d) Justice system	1	2	3	4	8	9
e) Local militias	1	2	3	4	8	9
f) NGOs	1	2	3	4	8	9
g) Electronic media such as radio, TV	1	2	3	4	8	9
h) Newspapers, print media	1	2	3	4	8	9

Q-63.* Now I'd like to ask about something else. A lot of people in Afghanistan today are talking about democracy. If a country is called a democracy, what does that mean to you? **(Probe):** Anything else? **(Open ended. Multiple response. Do Not Read Code List. Write down and then code each mentioned)**

-
1. Freedom
 2. Rights and law
 3. Government of the people
 4. Peace
 5. Prosperity
 6. Elections
 7. Women's rights
 8. Communism
 9. Islamic democracy

 96. Others (Specify) _____
 98. Refused (volunteered only)
 99. Don't know (volunteered only)

Q-64.* What, if anything, is the most important thing that democracy in Afghanistan will bring you personally? **(Probe):** Anything else? **(Open ended. Multiple response. Do Not Read Code List Write down and then code each mentioned)**

1. Freedom
2. Rights and law
3. Government of the people
4. Peace
5. Prosperity
6. Elections
7. Women's rights
8. Communism
9. Islamic democracy

96. Others (Specify) _____
98. Refused (volunteered only)
99. Don't know (volunteered only)

Q-65a.* Do you think that political parties should be allowed to hold meetings in your area?

1. Yes
2. No
8. Refused (volunteered only)
9. Don't know (volunteered only)

Q-65b.* Do you think that all political parties, even the ones most people do not like, should be allowed to hold meetings in your area?

1. Yes
2. No
8. Refused (volunteered only)
9. Don't know (volunteered only)

Q-66.* Suppose a friend of yours supported a party you don't like. Would you accept that, or would it end your friendship?

1. Would accept it
2. Would end friendship
8. Refused (volunteered only)
9. Don't know (volunteered only)

Q-67.* I'm going to read some ideas. Please tell me if you agree with each.
(Read out statement, wait for response and then ask): Strongly or somewhat?

	Strongly agree	Agree somewhat	Disagree somewhat	Strongly disagree	Refused (Vol. only)	DK (Vol.)
a) It is a good thing that the government should allow peaceful opposition	1	2	3	4	8	9
b) Everyone should have equal rights under the law, regardless of their gender, ethnicity or religion	1	2	3	4	8	9
c) Religious authorities should lead people in obeying the obligations of their faith while political leaders should make decisions about how the government is run	1	2	3	4	8	9

Q-68.* Some people say: "Democracy will bring Westernization and too much freedom and challenge Islamic values." Other people say: "An Islamic country can be democratic without becoming too Western. It can still keep its Islamic values". Which is closer to your view?

- 1. Democracy challenges Islamic values
- 2. Islam can be democratic also
- 8. Refused (volunteered only)
- 9. Don't know (volunteered only)

Q-69. Now I would like to ask you about women in your community. Some people say that to respect Afghan traditions and Islam, women should usually wear a burkha outside the home, while others say that times are changing, and women should be able to move freely outside the home without a burkha. Which is closer to your view?

- 1. Women should usually wear a burkha
- 2. Wearing a burkha is not necessary
- 8. Refused (volunteered only)
- 9. Don't know (volunteered only)

Q-70. Do you think that the use of the burkha in Afghanistan is more related to Afghan tradition and culture, or is it more related to the requirements of Islam?

1. Tradition and culture
2. Duty of Islam

8. Refused (volunteered only)
9. Don't know (volunteered only)

Q-71. Now switching to local government, some people say that local religious leaders should be regularly consulted on the problems facing an area while others think that politics and religion should not mix. Which is closer to your view?

1. Religious leaders should be consulted
2. Politics and religion should not mix

8. Refused (volunteered only)
9. Don't know (volunteered only)

Q-72.* How much influence do you think someone like you can have over government decisions - a lot, some, very little, or none at all?

1. A lot
2. Some
3. Very little
4. None at all

8. Refused (volunteered only)
9. Don't know (volunteered only)

Q-73. Do you think that voting can lead to improvement in the future or do you believe that no matter how one votes, things never change?

1. Vote can change things
2. Things are not going to get better

8. Refused (volunteered only)
9. Don't know (volunteered only)

Q-74. Now I will read a series of statements about democracy. For each statement, tell me if you strongly agree, agree somewhat, disagree somewhat, or strongly disagree. **(Read out statement, wait for response and then ask):** Strongly or somewhat?

	Strongly agree	Agree somewhat	Disagree somewhat	Strongly disagree	Refused (Vol. only)	DK (Vol.)
a) Democracy may have its problems, but it is better than any other form of government.	1	2	3	4	8	9
b) Despite our differences, as Afghans we have many values that unite us.	1	2	3	4	8	9
c) Politicians seek power for their own benefit and don't worry about helping people.	1	2	3	4	8	9

Q-75. On the whole, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the way democracy works in Afghanistan. Are you ...

1. Very satisfied,
2. Fairly Satisfied,
3. Not very satisfied, or
4. Not at all satisfied?

8. Refused (volunteered only)
9. Don't know (volunteered only)

Q-76. Here are some different ways people think about the government. The first is that the people and government should be equals, and government should listen to the criticisms voiced by people. The second is that government should be like a father and the people like a child who he must look after. The third is that the government is like a boss and the people are like workers who must obey. Which of these is closest to your view of what the government should be?

1. Government and people are equals
2. Government is the father, the people are children
3. Government is the boss, the people are workers

8. Refused (volunteered only)
9. Don't know (volunteered only)

- Q-77.** Please tell me if you agree or disagree with the following statement: "My Member of Parliament addresses the major problems of my constituency in Parliament". **(Wait for response and ask):** Strongly or somewhat?
1. Agree strongly
 2. Agree somewhat
 3. Disagree somewhat
 4. Disagree strongly
8. Refused (volunteered only)
 9. Don't know (volunteered only)
- Q-78.** Have you ever contacted your MP for help in solving any of your personal or local problems?
1. Yes **Go to Q-79**
 2. No **Skip to Q-80**
8. Refused (volunteered only) **Skip to Q-80**
 9. Don't know (volunteered only) **Skip to Q-80**
- Q-79.** **(Filtered. Ask if answered '1' i.e. 'Yes' in Q-78):** For what kind of a problem did you contact the MP? **(Open ended. Write down answer)**
-
98. Refused (volunteered only)
 99. Don't know (volunteered only)
- Q-80.** **(ASK ALL)** Now let's talk about Provincial Councils. Have you ever contacted a representative on the Provincial Council for help in solving any of your personal or local problems?
1. Yes **Go to Q-81**
 2. No **Skip to Q-82**
8. Refused (volunteered only) **Skip to Q-82**
 9. Don't know (volunteered only) **Skip to Q-82**
- Q-81.** **(Filtered. Ask if answered '1' i.e. 'Yes' in Q-80):** What kind of problem was it? **(Open ended. Write down answer)**
-
98. Refused (volunteered only)
 99. Don't know (volunteered only)
- Q-82.** **(ASK ALL)** Tell me, are you aware of such institution called Community Development Council formed in your neighborhood/settlement? Such Councils have been established as part of the National Solidarity Program and members of the Council are representatives of various groups in your community.

- 1. Yes, aware of CDC in the neighborhood/settlement **Go to Q-83**
- 2. No, not aware of CDC in the neighborhood/settlement **Skip to Q-86**

- 8. Refused (volunteered only) **Skip to Q-86**
- 9. Don't know (volunteered only) **Skip to Q-86**

Q-83. (Filtered. Ask if answered '1' i.e. 'Yes' aware of CDC' in Q-82) Which two major initiatives, projects in your neighborhood/settlement has this Council been tasked with to implement? (Open ended. Write down up to 2 such big projects, initiatives)

- a) _____
98. Refused (volunteered only) 99. Don't know (volunteered only)
- b) _____
98. Refused (volunteered only) 99. Don't know (volunteered only)

Q-84. How satisfied are you with the job this Community Development Council is doing? Are you...

- 1. Very satisfied
- 2. Somewhat satisfied
- 3. Somewhat dissatisfied, or
- 4. Very dissatisfied?

- 8. Refused (volunteered only)
- 9. Don't know (volunteered only)

Q-85. Still speaking of the same Community Development Council, to what extent do you think this Council is capable to represent your interests before the Provincial authorities. Do you think that it is capable a lot, somewhat, not so capable or not capable at all to represent your interests before the Provincial authorities? **(Code in the first row below and ask)** And how capable is this Council to represent your interests before the Government of Afghanistan? **(Code in the second row below)**

	Capable a lot	Somewh-at capable	Not much capable	Not capable at all	Refused (Vol. only)	DK (Vol.)
a) Before Provincial authorities	1	2	3	4	8	9
b) Before the Government of Afghanistan	1	2	3	4	8	9

Q-86. (ASK ALL) Have you been involved in any dispute in the last 2 years over some thing serious, like land ownership or something similar?

- | | |
|----------------------------------|---------------------|
| 1. Yes | Go to Q-87 |
| 2. No | Skip to Q-89 |
| 8. Refused (volunteered only) | Skip to Q-89 |
| 9. Don't know (volunteered only) | Skip to Q-89 |

Q-87. (Filtered. Ask if answered 'Yes' in Q-86): What kind of problem was it?
(Open ended. Write down answer)

-
98. Refused (volunteered only)
99. Don't know (volunteered only)

Q-88. Who did you approach that eventually helped you to settle the dispute?
(Single response)

[Do Not Read Code List] Write Answer: _____

1. Local elders (Rishtafidan/ Mohasen safidan)
 2. Local Shura
 3. Mullah
 4. Tribal elder
 5. Formal government court
96. Other (specify) _____
97. Did not approach anybody
98. Refused (volunteered only)
99. Don't know (volunteered only)

Q-89. (ASK ALL) Who do you trust the most to resolve any dispute that you mayhave?

[Do Not Read Code List] Write Answer: _____

1. Local elders (Rishtafidan/ Mohasen safidan)
 2. Local Shura
 3. Mullah
 4. Tribal elder
 5. Formal government court
96. Other (specify) _____
97. Don't trust anybody
98. Refused (volunteered only)
99. Don't know (volunteered only)

Q-90. The formal courts are responsible for administering justice fairly and impartially throughout Afghanistan. In general, in this area, how well do you think the courts perform this role:

- 1. Very well **Skip to Q-92**
- 2. Okay **Skip to Q-92**
- 3. Not very well **Go to Q-91**
- 4. Not well at all **Go to Q-91**

- 8. Refused (volunteered only) **Skip to Q-92**
- 9. Don't know (volunteered only) **Skip to Q-92**

Q-91. (Filtered. Ask if answered '3' or '4' i.e. 'Not very well' or 'Not well at all' in Q-90): You said that the formal courts are not administering justice well. Why do you say that? **(Multiple response)**

[Do Not Read Code List] Write Answer: _____

- 1. There is discrimination
- 2. There is a lot of delay/ it takes a lot of time
- 3. There is a lot of corruption/ bribery
- 4. The fees charged are high

- 96. Others (specify) _____
- 98. Refused (volunteered only)
- 99. Don't know (volunteered only)

Q-92a.* (ASK ALL) Now let's talk specifically about women related issues. What is the biggest problem facing women in this area today? **(Code in the first column of the table below) [Do Not Read Code List]**

(a) Write Answer: _____

Q-92b. And the next biggest? **(Code in the second column below) [Do Not Read Code List]**

(b) Write Answer: _____

	Q-92a. Biggest	Q-92b. Next
Lack of rights / women's rights	1	1
Can't leave homes	2	2
Under control of men / men have power	3	3
Education / illiteracy	4	4
Health care	5	5
Forced marriages/ dowry	6	6
Domestic violence	7	7
Poverty	8	8
Security	9	9
Other (specify) _____	95	95
Other (specify) _____		
Women have no problems	97	97
Refused (volunteered only)	98	98
Don't know (volunteered only)	99	99

- Q-93.*** Some people say that women should have equal opportunities like men in education. Do you agree or disagree with this opinion? (**Wait for response and then ask**): Strongly or somewhat?
1. Agree strongly
 2. Agree somewhat
 3. Disagree somewhat
 4. Disagree strongly
8. Refused (volunteered only)
 9. Don't know (volunteered only)
- Q-94.*** Some people say that women should be allowed to work outside the home. What is your opinion about this?
1. Women should be allowed to work outside the home
 2. Women should not be allowed to work outside the home
8. Refused (volunteered only)
 9. Don't know (volunteered only)
- Q-95.*** The new constitution says men and women have equal rights, including the right to vote. What do you think about this statement? Do you agree or disagree? (**Wait for response and then ask**): Strongly or somewhat?
1. Agree strongly
 2. Agree somewhat
 3. Disagree somewhat
 4. Disagree strongly
8. Refused (volunteered only)
 9. Don't know (volunteered only)
- Q-96.*** If women vote, do you think that women should decide for themselves or should they receive advice from men?
1. Women should decide for themselves
 2. Men should advise them
3. Women should decide for themselves but in consultation with men (**vol.**)
 8. Refused (**volunteered only**)
 9. Don't know (**volunteered only**)
- Q-97.*** In the election, everyone must vote for themselves. Men cannot vote in place of women. Women must vote for themselves. What do you think about this statement? Do you agree or disagree? (**Wait for response and then ask**): Strongly or somewhat?
1. Agree strongly
 2. Agree somewhat
 3. Disagree somewhat
 4. Disagree strongly

- 8. Refused (volunteered only)
- 9. Don't know (volunteered only)

Q-98. Do you think that political leadership positions should be mostly for men, mostly for women, or do you think that both men and women should have equal representation in the political leadership?

- 1. Mostly for men
- 2. Mostly for women
- 3. Equal for both men and women

- 7. Other (specify) _____
- 8. Refused (volunteered only)
- 9. Don't know (volunteered only)

Q-99. Would you like to see more women as elected or reserve seat members of the National Parliament?

- 1. Yes **Go to Q-100a**
- 2. No **Skip to Q-101a**

- 8. Refused (volunteered only) **Skip to Q-102**
- 9. Don't know (volunteered only) **Skip to Q-102**

Q-100a. (Filtered. Ask if answered '1' i.e. 'Yes' in Q-99): Why do you say there should be more women elected? (Code answer in the first column below)

Q-100b. Any other reason? (Code answer in the second column below)

	Q-100a First	Q-100b Second
To help women / help women progress	1	1
Promote equality with men	2	2
Give women confidence / power	3	3
Women are less aggressive / angry	4	4
Promoting development	5	5
Other (specify) _____	95	
Other (specify) _____		95
Refused (volunteered only)	98	98
Don't know (volunteered only)	99	99

Q-101a. (Filtered. Ask if answered '2' i.e. 'No' in Q-97): Why do you not agree there should be more women elected? (Code answer in the first column below)

Q-101b. Any other reason? (Code answer in the second column below)

	Q-100a First	Q-100b Second
Women Don't know (volunteered only) enough about politics	1	1
Men are more educated in general	2	2
Politics takes women from their families	3	3
Women should not be allowed to work out of home	4	4
Other (specify) _____	95	
Other (specify) _____		95
Refused (volunteered only)	98	98
Don't know (volunteered only)	99	99

Q-102. (ASK ALL) Would you prefer to be represented by a man or a woman in the National Parliament?

1. A man
2. A woman
3. No difference (vol.)
8. Refused (volunteered only)
9. Don't know (volunteered only)

DEMOGRAPHICS

D-1. Gender

1. Male
2. Female

D-2.* Are you now working, a housewife (ask only women), retired, a student, or looking for work?

1 Working	Go to D-3
2 Retired	Go to D-3
3 Housewife	Skip to D-5
4 Student	Skip to D-5
5 Unemployed	Skip to D-5
7. Other (specify) _____	Skip to D-5
8. Refused (volunteered only)	Skip to D-5
9. Don't know (volunteered only)	Skip to D-5

D-3.* (Filtered. Ask if working or retired): What is your main occupation?
(Write down and then code. If retired, ask for previous occupation and then code)

Occupation: _____

1 Farmer (own land / tenant farmer)
2 Farm laborer (other's land)
3 Laborer, domestic, or unskilled worker
4 Informal sales/ business
5 Skilled worker/artisan
6 Office worker/ Clerical worker
7 Self employed Professional
8 Small business owner
9 Executive or managerial
10 Military/ Police
97. Other (specify)_____
98. Refused (volunteered only)
99. Don't know (volunteered only)

D-4. (Filtered. Ask if "Farming", code '1' in D-3) How much land do you farm?

1. Less than 1 Jerib
2. 1 - 2 Jerib
3. 2.1- 3 Jerib
4. More than 3 Jerib

8. Refused (volunteered only)
9. Don't know (volunteered only)

D-5. (ASK ALL) *What is the highest level of school you completed? **(Write down response and code)**

Education : _____

1. Never went to school
2. Primary School, incomplete
3. Primary School, complete
4. Secondary education (Middle school)
5. High school
6. University or academy

8. Refused (volunteered only)
9. Don't know (volunteered only)

D-6.* What religion do you practice?

- 1 Sunni
- 2 Shia
- 3 Ismaeli
- 4 Hindu
- 5 Buddhist
- 6 Sikh
7. Other (specify) _____
- 0 None/ Atheist
8. Refused (volunteered only)
- 9 Don't know (volunteered only)

D-7* Are you married or single?

1. Single
2. Married
- 3.. Widower/ Widow
8. Refused (volunteered only)
- 9 Don't know (volunteered only)

D-8.* Which ethnic group do you belong to? **SINGLE RESPONSE ONLY**

1. Pashtun
2. Tajik
3. Uzbek
4. Hazara
5. Turkmen
6. Baloch
7. Kirghiz
8. Nuristani
9. Aimak
10. Arab
96. Other (vol.)
98. Refused (volunteered only)
99. Don't know (volunteered only)

D-9.* For statistical purposes only, we need to know your average monthly household income. Will you please tell me which of the following categories best represents your average total family monthly income? (Show Card and read out)

1. Less than 2,000 Afs
2. 2,001 - 3,000 Afs
3. 3,001 - 5,000 Afs
4. 5,001 - 10,000 Afs
5. 10,000 - 15,000 Afs
6. 15,001 - 20,000 Afs
7. 20,001 - 25,000 Afs

8. More than 25,000 Afs

98. Refused (volunteered only)

99. Don't know (volunteered only)

D-16.* Age of the respondents

1. 18 - 24 years

2. 25 - 34 years

3. 35 - 44 years

4. 45 - 54 years

5. 55+ years

6. 65+ years

AFGHANISTAN

P.O. Box 175

House No. 55, Street 1

Jawzjan Wat, Shahr-e-Naw

Kabul, Afghanistan

www.asiafoundation.org



STATE BUILDING, POLITICAL PROGRESS, AND HUMAN SECURITY IN AFGHANISTAN:

Reflections on a Survey of the Afghan People is the companion volume to The Asia Foundation's recently released public-opinion survey, "Afghanistan in 2006: A Survey of the Afghan People." The papers in this volume analyze survey data on the opinions and perceptions of Afghans toward democratic governance and values, civic engagement and trust in institutions, development progress, and political and social change as interpreted by social scientists familiar with the region. The contributors comment on trends, patterns, and variations owing to Afghan geography, ethnicity, and other factors, and assess comparatively Afghanistan's situation vis-à-vis other countries in the region. By combining analysis of quantitative survey data with broader contextual interpretations, the papers together anchor a holistic appraisal of change in the underlying sociopolitical realities and history of Afghanistan.