



Viewpoints Special Edition
**Afghanistan, 1979-2009:
In the Grip of Conflict**

*The Middle East Institute
Washington, DC*





Middle East Institute

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Introduction

This is the sixth and final volume in the 1979-2009 special series of *MEI Viewpoints*.

The 53 essays contained in this edition revisit the tortured path that Afghanistan has followed over the past three decades. The essays, which are grouped under five subject headings, paint a revealing picture of Afghanistan's complex social, political, and economic landscape and of the interplay between domestic and external forces. They also catalogue the missed opportunities and callous opportunism that have been partly responsible for Afghanistan's misfortunes during the past 30 years.

In late December 1979, Soviet airborne forces and ground troops invaded Afghanistan. Thirty years later, as then, the restoration of the country's sovereignty and the achievement of peace lie beyond the horizon. The successive conflicts that have occurred in the intervening time have killed or displaced millions of Afghans while reducing much of the country to rubble. Following the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks on New York and Washington, the United States launched a military operation that ousted the Taliban from power.

Yet, Afghanistan remains in the grip of conflict — its legal economy in a parlous state and its state institutions weak. Also weak are the legitimacy of the present Afghan government, the confidence of the Afghan people in the international donor community, and their tolerance of foreign forces on their soil. Meanwhile, the United States and its coalition partners, following lengthy internal deliberations, are poised to implement a revised strategy in the face of a mounting insurgency in Afghanistan and waning domestic political support for their continued engagement there. At the same time, Afghanistan's neighbors are eyeing these developments warily, girding themselves for the possible renewal of full-scale civil and proxy warfare.

Afghans deserve a future far better than their experiences of the past 30 years. One can only hope that they are supported in their efforts, sooner rather than later, to achieve it.

I. Nation and State: Identities Past and Present

Rethinking Afghanistan

Paul Fitzgerald and Elizabeth Gould

We are regularly bombarded by news reports and political analysis that reflect certain underlying assumptions about Afghanistan. These assumptions range from claims that Afghanistan was always a backward state ruled by warlords, to assertions that the country was never really a nation at all, and proclamations that Afghanistan is unfit for Western-style democracy and that it is dangerously naïve to think otherwise.

Those who knew Afghanistan prior to America's current military engagement understand that these assumptions are wrong, yet they form the basis of a mythology that underlies the growing US military commitment and the shape of American policy toward the Afghan government.

Afghanistan's fierce wars against colonial occupiers are well known, but the country's efforts to maintain its independence and to establish itself as a modern nation against the constraints and interests posed by these forces are not.

According to Vartan Gregorian in his landmark 1969 study, *The Emergence of Modern Afghanistan*, Afghan nationalist historians have faced resistance to their efforts at establishing the origins of an Afghan identity since the early 20th century. They welcomed the work of the French archaeological team in the 1930s "who had uncovered the richness of the country's Bactrian and Kushan heritage. The Afghan nationalists took great pride in the fact that Kushan rule had had a far-reaching impact on the destinies of the peoples of eastern Iran and India, especially in the fields of religion and art."¹

Gregorian's exhaustive study paints a vivid picture of a once vital country in the brutal throes of modernization and change — from the genesis of the modern Afghan state in the 1880s under Abdur Rahman Khan (Amir of Afghanistan from 1880 to 1901) until the end of World War II.

But the internal movement for progressive change came to be dated well before the rise of Abdur Rahman — to the 16th century and the rise of the Roshaniya movement.

Led by Sufi poet Bayezid Ansari and known as Pir (saint) Roshan, Ansari's movement is a major chapter in the region's ethnic Pashtun history as well as indicative of the broadly



Paul Fitzgerald and Elizabeth Gould are authors of Invisible History: Afghanistan's Untold Story, available from City Lights Books and <http://www.invisiblehistory.com>.

1. Vartan Gregorian, *The Emergence of Modern Afghanistan: Politics of Reform and Modernization, 1880-1946* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1969), p. 345.

progressive nature of Afghan Islam. Ansari fought against both the oppression of the Moghuls and the feudal practices of his own Pashtun nobles. His goal was said to be the achievement of equality between men and women. According to Gregorian, Ansari's "aim, among other things was to establish a national religion, the movement encouraged the Afghans in the tribal belt to struggle against Moghul rule. The Roshaniya movement thus promoted the first political formulation of the concept of Afghan nationality."²

Prior to the British military invasions of the mid-19th century, the Afghans were not hostile to the European powers. In 1809, Scottish statesman and historian Mountstuart Elphinstone and his "retinue of some 400 Anglo-Indian soldiers were well received by the Afghans."³ So too were others in 1810, 1815, and 1826, when Sunni Afghans were reported to have expressed an open tolerance toward Christians. Gregorian writes of British explorer Charles Masson, who "was well treated by Muslim religious men and Afghan tribesmen." Of his stay in Kabul in 1832, he reported that a Christian was respectfully referred to as a "Kitabi" or "one of the Book."⁴

Prior to the British military invasions of the mid-19th century, the Afghans were not hostile to the European powers.

Renowned adventurer and East India Company political officer Alexander Burnes wrote home in May of 1832, "The people of this country are kind hearted and hospitable. They have no prejudice against a Christian and none against our nation."⁵

Burnes argued correctly that the strong Afghan Amir, Dost Mohammed, "could keep the country together and resist Russian or Persian encroachment, but a country split into feudal principalities and tribes would invite Russian intrigue aimed at picking them off piecemeal with no great difficulty."⁶

Yet, his argument and the goodwill of the Afghan people were lost when London acquiesced to the conquest of Afghanistan through what is known as the "Forward Policy," setting the stage for three Anglo-Afghan wars, an endless low-intensity conflict, and a century and a half of political instability. Gregorian writes,

The Anglo-Afghan wars also contributed to the consolidation of Afghan feudalism and tribalism. The loss of Peshawar and the Punjab to the Sikhs on the eve of the First Afghan war deprived the Afghan monarchy of an important economic asset. That loss, together with the weakness of the urban sectors and the feudal character of the monarchy itself, forced the Afghan rulers to become increasingly dependent on the Durrani clans ... Tribalism was thus preserved at the expense of the Afghan monarchy and the growth of nationalist institutions.⁷

2. Gregorian, *The Emergence of Modern Afghanistan*, p. 43.

3. Gregorian, *The Emergence of Modern Afghanistan*, pp. 118-119.

4. Gregorian, *The Emergence of Modern Afghanistan*, p.119.

5. Gregorian, *The Emergence of Modern Afghanistan*, p. 119.

6. John H. Waller, *Beyond the Khyber Pass* (Austin: University of Texas Press), p. 123.

7. Gregorian, *The Emergence of Modern Afghanistan*, p. 127.

Constrained and embittered by British colonial policy, Amir Abdur Rahman began his rule determined to establish a modern nation-state. Backed by an effective intelligence apparatus, he established a system of provincial governors, suppressed dissent, and slowly implemented change. By the end of his 21-year rule, he had created a national army which reinforced his authority while establishing a government bureaucracy that paved the way for a small but well-educated middle-class.

The accession to the throne in 1919 of Abdur Rahman's grandson, Amanullah Kahn, brought on a period of rapid modernization and democratic change that makes today's Afghan government seem pitiable by comparison.

Declaring Afghanistan's independence from Britain, Amanullah's first Constitution in 1923 guaranteed universal suffrage, civil rights to all of Afghanistan's minorities, established a legislative assembly, courts, and penal, civil and commercial codes. He prohibited revenge killings and abolished subsidies for tribal chieftains as well as the royal family. His support for women's equality and the rapid modernization of Afghan society was an open and consistent theme.

Overthrown in 1929 by a Tajik warlord known as Habibullah Kalakani, Amanullah's embrace of modernism, equality, and democracy is often viewed as the cause of his political downfall. Yet, as Gregorian and others have observed, Amanullah's political undoing stemmed mostly from his inability to buttress his social reforms with solid economic measures, not from any underlying rejection of his educational and political programs.

The same could be said of King Zahir Shah's "experiment in democracy" from 1963 to 1973, where failure stemmed not from the Afghan people's rejection of democracy, but from the King's flawed administration of power and the emerging storm of external Cold War political forces that already were tearing at the fabric of Afghanistan's fragile political structure.

As summarized by Gerald J. Schmitz, Principal Analyst, International Affairs, at the Parliamentary Information and Research Service in Ottawa, Canada:

The historical record plainly shows that Afghan efforts to build a modern liberal democracy were resisted and later fatally undermined by great power and then Cold War political 'games,' *not* that these efforts never took place or only did so in an intrinsically inhospitable societal environment. Of course they were championed by urban elites ... But the key point is that for decades the principle external actors did more to hurt than to help secular democratic aspira-

The accession to the throne in 1919 of Abdur Rahman's grandson, Amanullah Kahn, brought on a period of rapid modernization and democratic change that makes today's Afghan government seem pitiable by comparison.

tions in Afghanistan. No wonder they never lasted. They were never given much of a chance.⁸

The international community has one last chance in Afghanistan. But without a better, a more complete, and honest set of assumptions about the secular democratic aspirations of Afghanistan's people, there is little chance that any policy acceptable to the Afghan people can be achieved.

8. Gerald J. Schmitz, *Ongoing Dilemmas of Democratization: The Case of Canada and Afghanistan*, Parliamentary Information and Research Service, Library of Parliament, Ottawa, Canada April 7, 2009.

Post-Buffer Afghanistan: A Nation-State Here to Stay?

Whitney Azoy

Nation-states, like their citizens, have life spans. Some are short. The bumptious Republic of Texas, for instance, lasted only nine years before being absorbed by a larger and even more energetic United States of America. Yugoslavia survived intact for two generations and then fragmented into six parts, seven including Kosovo.

Positive longevity, on the other hand, is epitomized by Iceland. Its nation-state DNA features single island topography, ethnic homogeneity, and distance from acquisitive neighbors. Thus blessed, Icelanders have maintained their united and independent state for more than a millennium.

What of Afghanistan? What can be said of its national DNA? A member of the United Nations since 1946, it boasts (at least in theory) the full panoply of government institutions at home and embassies abroad. There is a national currency (one of the few unequivocal post-Taliban successes), a national flag (the six or seventh since 1973, depending on who's counting), and a national airline (still flying after half a century ... and still considered too risky by most expatriate organizations). In view of this mixed reality, it is fair — indeed, vital — to ask whether Afghanistan, as currently configured, has the legs to keep going within the community of nation-states. How long is there likely to be an “Afghanistan?”

Afghanophiles, in whose number I count myself, typically claim the existence of a deep and real Afghan identity. They note that, whatever warts may appear on the face of the national body politic, Afghans continue to think of themselves as Afghans. The best evidence for that unified sentiment, they say, is the absence of separatist movements over the past three horrendous decades. No other country had a worse last quarter of the 20th century than Afghanistan, and yet virtually there were no calls for its dissolution. The anti-Marxist jihad (1978-1992) was waged — so Afghan leaders proclaimed and expatriate observers believed — in the name first of Islam but then, emphatically, of the country as a whole. Likewise both the Taliban regime (1996-2001) and that of Hamid Karzai (2002-present) have operated as if Afghanistan were unified, both spatially and socially.

And yet any sober examination of Afghanistan's essential DNA — its topography, its ethnicity, its political origins, and its subsequent history — suggests otherwise. And rather than become, like Texas, part of some grander enterprise, it risks going the dan-



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gerous way of quarrelsome post-Yugoslavia. Consider its strands of DNA in turn:

Topography: Unlike rivers whose populations tend to be the same on both sides, mountains truly divide. The Hindu Kush mountains, running northeast to southwest and reaching 20,000 feet, not only split Afghanistan in half but also serve as the natural division between Central Asia and the Indian sub-continent. Until 1964 no all-weather road linked south and north. Even in mild years, the Salang Pass is closed for days during winter. Kabul and Kandahar face south towards what is now Pakistan; Mazar-i Sharif and Kunduz north towards the Oxus River and the formerly Soviet “Stans.” And Herat, where the Hindu Kush finally dwindles to flatlands, is historically as much Persian as Afghan. Thus Afghanistan, rather than being a topographical unit, in fact represents three separate fringe areas of three distinct Asian landmass segments.

Ethnicity: Axiomatically a human crossroads, Afghanistan is left with the demographic legacy of many crossings. Pashtuns constitute a plurality — but not, as many Pashtuns claim, a majority — of the population, and have been politically dominant since the country’s supposed “birth” in 1747. *Pashtun* and *Afghan* were originally synonyms, and thus “Afghanistan” first meant “Land of the Pashtuns.” Their long-standing hegemony is deeply resented by other groups (Tajiks, Hazaras, Uzbeks, Turkomans, etc.) who have used the past three decades of central government weakness to reassert some degree of long-lost autonomy. Anti-Soviet resistance parties were ethnically based. So are the main political factions today. Kabul University has never been so ethnically tense. Whole sectors of local employees in embassies and ministries and the United Nations Assistance Mission to Afghanistan (UNAMA) are known to be the exclusive domain of this or that ethnic group. And the fact that the Taliban are overwhelmingly Pashtun makes them more acceptable to their co-ethnics ... and anathema to all others.

Political Origins: While not yet known as Afghanistan, the nation-state began as a Pashtun enterprise based in mid-18th century Kandahar. Pashtun forces under Ahmad Shah Durrani created a short-lived empire that reached north across the mountains, west beyond Herat, and east to Kabul, Peshawar, and even what now is northern India. The capital was moved to more cosmopolitan Kabul, but Ahmad Shah’s successors soon began losing territory during vicious dynastic struggles. What was left of “Afghanistan” — a term first used in early 19th century British accounts — would likely have disintegrated completely had it not been for super-power politics and the “Great Game.”

Afghanistan, rather than being a topographical unit, in fact represents three separate fringe areas of three distinct Asian landmass segments.

Subsequent History: As their 19th century imperial borders crept ominously closer, Victorian Britain and Czarist Russia tacitly recognized the value of a buffer between them. A weak Afghanistan — limited by topographical and ethnic divisions — filled that bill. Its current borders, finalized in the 1890s, thus reflect the concerns of London and Moscow more than those of Kabul. And Abdur Rahman Khan, the “Iron Amir,” who consolidated internal control between 1880 and 1901, could do so only by means of sizeable British subsidies.

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This pattern of buffer-state dependence continued, with variations, until 1978. Bolsheviks overthrew Czarists in 1917, and America replaced Britain as leader of the West after World War II. Still weak itself, Afghanistan continued to find itself interposed — both precariously and profitably — between the two giants of the age. Neither the USSR nor the US wanted hot war in Central Asia, and together their tacit agreements maintained Afghanistan's territorial integrity. Soviet Rubles and US Dollars paid for a modicum of internal security and economic development. Chronically unable to foot its own bills, Afghanistan as a buffer-state languished but also survived.

That era ended with the Marxist coup of April 1978. Suddenly Afghanistan went from accustomed buffer to Cold War front-line. Now only one side — the Soviet Union — provided the money and offered the guarantees. When those guarantees proved insufficient, Afghanistan descended into the maelstrom of conflict from which it has yet to recover.

National Purpose and the Lack Thereof: Some nation-states, fortunate in their DNA, have a natural, home-grown purpose. They need no reason for existence except as a viable instrument for the well-being of their own people. Iceland — admittedly an extreme example — exists for the sake of Icelanders, pure and simple. No contrived purpose is required.

Afghanistan, as currently configured, presents the other extreme: a nation-state with fragmented topography, mutually hostile ethnicity, international borders established by outsiders, and a continued existence — until 1978 — maintained by outsiders as a buffer-state. What happens to such a nation-state when the outsider need for it disappears? Yes, the international community has a stake in existing structures, and, yes, “stability” is always important to the US State Department. But the maintenance of structure and stability does not come cheap in Afghanistan. What, in the long-term, will hold it together? Who, long-term, will pay its bills?

Its Great Game/Cold War importance gone, Afghanistan is again in the news — and its nation-state apparatus is again supported by outsiders — because of the confrontation between militant Islamism and the West. What will happen once this conflict subsides? Does the current bloodshed and corruption represent merely growing pains of an Afghanistan on the way to eventual success? Or are we witnessing the gradual deterioration and ultimate disappearance of a nation-state that — except for the impulse of Pashtun expansionism — never truly had a rationale of its own?

Does the current bloodshed and corruption represent merely growing pains of an Afghanistan on the way to eventual success? Or are we witnessing the gradual deterioration and ultimate disappearance of a nation-state that — except for the impulse of Pashtun expansionism — never truly had a rationale of its own?

Forgotten Futures: History, Memoir, Afghanistan

Shafiq Shamel

In his book *From My Memories*, Khaled Sediq recounts the following incident from the mid-1960s regarding a visit by him and some other members of his family to Mohammad Zahir, King of Afghanistan from 1933 to 1973:

Finally, after uttering some conventional statements, such as, Afghanistan belongs to you and you belong to Afghanistan, he also added: ‘Even though unpleasant events have happened, yet, I have *forgotten* about them, you, too, try to *forget*.’¹

The “unpleasant events” that the late King (1914–2007) refers to involve the execution, imprisonment, and torture of numerous members of Khaled Sediq’s family, namely, the Charkhees (some of whom were high-ranking military generals and diplomats), at the order of Mohammad Nader, the King of Afghanistan (1929–1933), and King Zahir’s father, and the subsequent assassination of King Nader in 1933 by Abd ul-Khaleq, a servant to Charkhee’s family. On a personal level, the statement seems to be a gesture of reconciliation — an expression of the desire to put to rest the memory of the past’s horrible events. Yet, implied in the King’s statement is also a request from his audience not only to “forget” the events but to accept the official representation of the “unpleasant events” of the past.

Given the scale and intensity of atrocities and crimes committed against ordinary citizens as well as political opponents during both the reign of the Communist parties (Khalq and Parcham) and the *mujahidin* era as well as the iron rule of the Taliban, the sufferings that Khaled Sediq recounts in his memoir may indeed seem to the contemporary reader to belong not only to an almost forgotten but a forgettable period in Afghan history. As a matter of fact, the calamities endured by the people of Afghanistan in the last three decades — especially since the Soviet-backed *coup d’état* in 1978 until the fall of the Taliban in 2001 — overshadow almost all previous events of political and/or historical significance. Besides, the urgency of the current political situation in Afghanistan is such that it is not unlikely that anyone turning to the past may be charged (especially by Afghans) with *forgetting* about both the present and future. This charge may be efficient to silence one’s opponents during an election campaign, but it is of utmost importance to differentiate between the rhetoric of campaigns and principles of inquiry in various fields of knowledge.



Shafiq Shamel is a scholar and teacher of German and Comparative Literature with special interests in poetry and poetics, intellectual history, classical and modern Persian literature, and the intercultural exchange of ideas between the Middle East and the West. He is currently teaching in the departments of Comparative Literature and German Studies at Stanford University.

1. Khaled Sediq, *From My Memories*, 2nd ed. (Simi Valley, CA: Speedy Press Service, Inc., 2007), p. 384. Author’s translation and emphasis.

The inadequacy of non-historical thinking concerning the status of cultural and social structures is addressed in the title of one of the major works of modern historiography in the West by the German historian Reinhart Koselleck, *Futures Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time*.² Knowledge of the past, as Koselleck argues, is not only a determinant of the way the present is experienced and understood, but it is also the most significant constituent element of future expectations. It is within this context that King Zahir's statement above becomes paradigmatic for decades worth of the teaching and study of history in schools and universities in Afghanistan: not as much to "forget" the kind of events that are "unpleasant" for those in positions of political power as to accept to *know* the past as a particular group of people — the political elite in this case — *want it to be remembered*. "Forgetting," as the French philosopher Paul Ricoeur observes, "is the challenge *par excellence* put to memory's aim of reliability."³ But what is at stake for the King is not necessarily to question his audience's memory of the "unpleasant events" of the past — or his memories — but to demand their consent regarding the government's version of the events. In other words, it is not personal memories or accounts but history that is being addressed (and negotiated) here.

Clearly, "forgetting" in this context forecloses any possibility of a second account of the "unpleasant events" of the past, including the explanation of the events from the Charkhees' perspective. Retelling of the past is discouraged, as it may lead to alternative — or even contradictory — conclusions that could undermine the legitimacy of the current version of the past. It is important to note that what the King wants his audience to "forget" relates to nothing less than the foundation of a dynasty, including his 40-year reign. And it is at this juncture that an event relating to a particular family goes beyond personal memory and acquires particular significance from the perspective of the political history of Afghanistan. Ignoring the atrocities committed against the Charkhee family by King Nader would leave out a critical examination of the relationship between the arbitrary uses of power (if not terror) and the legitimacy of political institutions in Afghanistan.

Unfortunately, considering the socio-political situation in Afghanistan since the rule of the Communist parties until the terror regime of the Taliban, the same strategy of arbitrary uses of power has proven to be the best understood — if not the only — political concept employed by various actors on the political stage to consolidate their power and ensure their legitimacy. This practice has recurred in Afghanistan since the beginning of the 20th century. Although Afghan historians as well as other researchers specializing in Afghan history have provided some evidence to explain various events in the history of modern Afghanistan, the publication of autobiographies and/or memoirs both by ordinary Afghans and those who have been involved in Afghan politics contributes a great deal to our understanding of how and in what terms Afghans relate to the past *in and of their country*. The experiences of exile or forced migration have exposed many Afghans to various political,

[T]he same strategy of arbitrary uses of power has proven to be the best understood — if not the only — political concept employed by various actors on the political stage to consolidate their power and ensure their legitimacy.

2. Reinhart Koselleck, *Futures Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time*, trans., Keith Tribe (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004).

3. Paul Ricoeur, *Memory, History, Forgetting*, trans., Kathleen Blamey and David Pellauer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), p. 414.

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social, intellectual, and literary traditions. To Afghans who are familiar with classical Persian literature, writing, and/or forms of language-making as such, and memoirs or travelogues are not unknown. Indeed, Afghans living outside the country have published various memoirs, autobiographies, and travelogues. This mode of writing, which is steeped in remembering rather than forgetting, has introduced the republic of letters to many Afghans living in all corners of the world. The articulation of these memories — particularly in writing — has created a space where members of a scattered and fragmented people can collect (and re-collect) themselves and thereby resist the conceptual force of grand national and historical narratives, which threatens to reduce the individuality of their life experiences to negligible historical details.

The Intellectual Impact of Colonialism and the Urgency of Decolonizing Knowledge of Afghanistan

Shah Mahmoud Hanifi

The colonially constructed entity known as Afghanistan involves a number of intellectual contradictions that are contributing to its rapid decline as a sustainable unit of political economy. American and other international neo-colonial actors in and analysts of Afghanistan have inherited and adopted British colonial attitudes and actions toward the country. As a result, the people of Afghanistan have been subjected to colonially formulated understandings of themselves, and have yet to acquire the cultural and intellectual tools necessary to resist and reject the imposition of the Other's view of self.



THE DOMINANT COLONIAL NARRATIVE OF AFGHANISTAN

The intellectual construction of the Afghan social category and the political formation of Afghanistan are anchored in the policies and practices of British colonialism in India. British Indian colonial officials developed ideas about Afghans and executed policies that summarily formatted Afghanistan. Much to the country's long-term detriment, the hasty manner of Afghanistan's construction gave it a legacy of discursive ambiguities and contradictions that remain intellectually unresolved and politically problematic. The fundamental inconsistencies sustaining colonial visions of Afghans and their homeland were only partially camouflaged by *ad hoc* material subsidies that kept a fiscally crippled and highly dependent state structure on the margins of the global economy.

Colonialism's multiple forms of attempted domination and the many expressions of resistance to its power have spawned a great deal of literature across many genres among the colonizing and colonized populations. The bulk of Western writings on Afghanistan frame the colonial encounter in military terms. In general, these texts situate acts of military heroism and demonstrations of political incompetence by British authorities during the two Anglo-Afghan wars (1839-1842 and 1878-1880) against a highly generalized and ultimately successful Afghan resistance to colonial intrusions. The organizing frame of reference for this literature is the British geo-strategic policy of thwarting perceived Russian expansionism that is popularly known as the "Great Game." In these writings, there is little recognition and no sustained attention to the ideas produced in colonial India that undergirded the global imperial mindset and thus animated the British imagination of Afghans and Afghanistan.

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Through its cadres of translators and interlocutors, British colonialism grappled with and transformed understandings and usages of the term Afghan that arose during the Mughal period. Roughly a century of colonial discursive intervention ultimately resulted in the territorialization of a new Afghan identity. In other words, the dominant colonial narrative situated Afghans in a discrete political space. However, there are alternative colonial narratives. They captured the historical depth of Afghan migrations to India that resulted in kindred but alienated Pashtun and Rohilla communities throughout Hindustan. These alternative narratives also captured the linguistic asymmetry between written Persian and spoken Pashto that convoluted official renditions of the Afghan idea. British colonial knowledge about Afghans and Afghanistan is compromised by its own internal contradictions. The official knowledge used in support of the politically expedited Afghanistan is regimented, easy to parrot, and can stand on its own terms. Yet, readily accessible alternate forms of colonial knowledge about Afghans convincingly and regularly transgress official understanding and politically limited sensibilities. These alternate forms, for example, emphasize Afghans' mobility, multiple territorial attachments, multilingualism, and the cultural and historical conflation of Afghans with Pathans, Pashtuns, and Rohillas.

The result is that the majority of actors in and observers of Afghanistan are trapped in a colonially constructed intellectual black hole.

AFGHANS' APPROPRIATION OF THE COLONIAL NARRATIVE

The domestic intellectual consequences of British colonialism for Afghanistan are profound but largely unexplored. In the 20th century, there are a number of examples of how Afghan officials and intellectuals appropriated British colonial reckonings of their identity and country. Through government publications, including the *Salnama* annuals, the *Kabul* and *Aryana* periodicals, the *Anis* and *Islah* newspapers, and school textbooks, the state minds charged with the task of weaving a unified narrative of Afghanistan's history and cultural complexion transferred three colonial apparitions into a national identity-making project. The first involved views of an Aryan heritage to account for long periods of pre-Islamic glory. The second concerned a version of Islam that highlighted aggression toward and resistance to non-Muslims. And the third was an exclusively Kabul-centered view of country. In practice, for Afghans and Afghanistan, this Kabul-centrism has marginalized the remainder of the country, while the era of pre-Islamic prosperity has not been adequately reconciled with the historical episodes of Islamic conquest and resistance. During the 1900s, the Afghan state trained Afghan minds to perpetuate a colonially forged sense of the Afghan nation and, as such, failed to mine its own history, society and geography for the wealth of readily available information contained in this rich human library that was grievously not integrated into an autonomous and inspirational national narrative.

Today, through the agency of "authoritative" Afghans and international "experts" and "specialists" on Afghanistan, American and other international actors are reifying dominant forms of British Indian colonial knowledge about the country and its people. British colonial knowledge about Afghanistan that constitutes the architecture of Afghan national knowledge has become bureaucratized and regulated in national contexts and in international organizations. Thus, the gaps and inconsistencies characterizing the normative forms of colonial knowledge about Afghanistan have

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become intellectually standardized and globally institutionalized. The result is that the majority of actors in and observers of Afghanistan are trapped in a colonially constructed intellectual black hole. The most tangible expressions of the local and global knowledge deficits regarding Afghanistan are the intellectual incapacities to effectively reckon with basic geographic realities that give rise to the historic principle of migration throughout this setting. Afghans are subject to the historical necessity and reality of movement that sustains a cultural logic of maintaining multiple territorial associations. This results in Afghans having historically layered, culturally complex, and multi-local senses of self and Other. The historical, cultural, and geographic experiences and imaginings that Afghans share are therefore fundamentally cosmopolitan, not exclusivist.

TOWARDS DECOLONIZING KNOWLEDGE OF AFGHANISTAN

For an effective and lasting version of Afghan nationality to take hold, the Afghan state must be freed of incapacitating neo-colonial agendas that will open up the intellectual space necessary to politically embrace these defining characteristics of its social body. New ways of knowing and acting on Afghanistan by Afghans and non-Afghans alike need to be found if the object of national identity is to survive. Recognizing their colonial heritage and predicament are the necessary first steps for Afghans to surmount them and recover their own history and historical destiny.

Causes and Consequences of the Destabilization of Afghanistan

M. Jamil Hanifi

Over the last 30 years, the polity of Afghanistan has undergone several overlapping transformations. The structure of power at the center has collapsed, causing the center-periphery relationship to evaporate. The movement of economic and human resources from various regions of Afghanistan to locations across international borders, especially in Iran and Pakistan, has intensified. Ethnic, sectarian, and regional cleavages have deepened. The framework of political discourse and processes has become increasingly grounded in Islamist ideology, and the Afghan periphery has become heavily weaponized.



The colonially imposed state structure of modern Afghanistan emerged during the 1890s. From the onset, the state apparatus at the center was heavily subsidized by the British colonial government of India, enabling it to build a monopoly over physical force, institute an incipient Islamic judiciary, deal with organized internal political opposition, exert a modicum of political influence over the non-tribal population in the periphery, and maintain a strategic distance between the center and the Pashtun tribal groups straddling the eastern and southern borders. The British subsidies continued to the year 1919. During the 1920s, there were limited attempts at Westernization and rising opposition to the state by Islamist ethnic and tribal groups. This culminated in the collapse of the Afghan monarchy in 1929. The monarchy was restored in 1930 with the covert assistance of the British Government of India. During the next two decades, the Afghan government gradually implemented a limited amount of Western-style changes in the center, including the modernization and expansion of the armed forces.

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Throughout the history of the state apparatus of Afghanistan, its center and periphery remained essentially independent of each other. The Afghan state did not serve as the redistributive agency for locally produced surplus economic resources. The poverty of Afghanistan caused by its isolation, the absence of modern means of communication, and the lack of participatory political institutions accounted for the remoteness of the Afghan center from its periphery. Throughout the 20th century, the literacy rate in Afghanistan remained under 5%. Thus, despite attempts by the state-sponsored elite in official government publications and in the curriculum of the few newly instituted state-controlled elementary and secondary schools, a national collectivity and a nation-state were not successfully established in Afghanistan. Ethnic, linguistic, sectarian, and regional idioms of identity hindered prospects of nation, nationality, and nationalism. During the first three decades of the Cold War, the Afghan government received sub-

stantial amounts of economic and military aid from the USSR and economic assistance from the United States. These resources enabled the state to undertake a limited number of modernizing projects in education, communication, and industrialization that required a closer relationship between the center and periphery. The expansion of the coercive ability of the state safeguarded these undertakings. The overthrow of the Afghan monarchy in 1978, the subsequent Soviet invasion in 1979, and the substantial Soviet military presence during the 1980s resulted in the militarization of the Afghan periphery by the United States, facilitated by Saudi Arabia and Pakistan. The introduction of large quantities of weapons and funds exacerbated simmering historical ethno-linguistic, sectarian, and regional divisions in Afghanistan and encouraged alternative social and political structures and processes of local governance in the periphery.

The increasing and openly expressed ethnic and sectarian divisions were echoed in the organization and operations of the various American-sponsored *mujahidin* groups (dubbed “Freedom Fighters”) who vigorously competed for the material and political favors of their Western benefactors. These fault lines produced occasional armed confrontations in the field among the *mujahidin*, especially in the period between the withdrawal of Soviet forces in 1989 and the complete withdrawal of the United States from the region in 1992. The Taliban movement emerged after the withdrawal of the United States from the region and during the anarchy that followed the collapse of the Afghan central government in 1992.

The post-1978 social and political instability allowed millions of Afghan men to participate in various forms of opposition to the state as well as in the unrestrained and illegal movement of commodities, including drugs, across international borders. They experienced first-hand the fragility, indeed the absence, of the Afghan state and the viability of local rule as an adaptation to the waning and eventual disappearance of central power.

They experienced first-hand the fragility, indeed the absence, of the Afghan state and the viability of local rule as an adaptation to the waning and eventual disappearance of central power.

The neocolonial Euro-American presence in Afghanistan is guided by policies and strategies that are predicated on a culturally and historically invalid premise that is widely circulated in the Western media by “analysts,” “strategists,” “experts,” and academic “specialists” on Afghanistan. They argue that the collapse of the state structure of Afghanistan could have been prevented had the United States continued its support of the *mujahidin* after 1989, especially after 1992. But this argument is contradicted by the political and cultural realities on the ground. The decline of the state structure of Afghanistan and the radicalization of Afghan Islam started long before the armed forces of the Soviet Union left the country in 1989. The radicalization of Islam in Afghanistan started immediately after the United States assumed sponsorship of the *mujahidin* in early 1980. The Soviet withdrawal and the corresponding termination of the US subsidies for the *mujahidin* are events that, *ipso facto*, have little to do with the collapse of the state of Afghanistan, the emergence of the Taliban, and the penetration of the country by al-Qa‘ida. The ideological and material seeds for these transformations were sown during 1979-1980. In fact, had the United States continued funding the *mujahidin* after 1992, interethnic and sectarian tensions in Afghanistan would have become even more pronounced than they have become during

the post-9/11 years, and Wahhabi fundamentalist Islam would have established wider and deeper roots in the country. The gulf between the Afghan center and periphery continues to widen, producing increasing degrees of regional political and economic autonomy in Afghanistan. So far six such autonomous regions can be identified: the North-Northeast, predominated by Uzbek, Turkman, Tajik, and other Farsi-speaking groups; the Northwest, in which Farsi speakers predominate; the Central highlands, where Farsi-speaking Shi'a Hazaras predominate; the East-Southeast, where Ghalzi Pashtuns predominate; the Southwest, where Durani Pashtuns predominate; and the West, which is populated by a mix of Ghalzi and Durani Pashtuns and Farsi speakers. In each region, political leadership is provided by former members of the American-sponsored "Freedom Fighters," now labeled "Warlords." The economies of these regions interact directly and at increasing intensity with the economies across the nearest international borders.

Relations with Iran provide the best examples of these processes. Iranian capital is heavily invested in the central, northern, and northwestern regions of Afghanistan. Iran is subsidizing the construction of a railway from its border to Herat and Mazar-i Sharif. The third "Joint Exhibition of the Islamic Republic of Iran and 'Ancient Herat'" was held in Herat in September 2009. Iranian industrial products and handicrafts from the Herat region (mostly carpets and scarves) were displayed. The exhibition was co-sponsored by the Iranian city of Mashhad and the chamber of commerce of Herat. The report about this international exhibition by the BBC made no reference to the involvement of the central government of Afghanistan. In addition, Chinese and Pakistani capital is heavily invested in southern and eastern Afghanistan.

Currently, there is little centripetal social and economic movement in Afghanistan. Most production moves in a centrifugal format, away from the center. Given the current unstable conditions in the country, further political and economic fragmentation looms for Afghanistan. If this trend continues alternative territorial and political entities with new labels will soon replace what is known as "Afghanistan."

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The Death of the Buddhas of Bamiyan

Pierre Centlivres

The 2001 destruction of the two giant Buddhas in Bamiyan is, by far, the most spectacular attack against the historical and cultural heritage of Afghanistan committed during the country's recent period of turmoil.

On February 26, 2001, and after having consulted a college of 'ulama', Mullah Muhammad Omar, the leader of the Taliban, issued a decree ordering the elimination of all non-Islamic statues and sanctuaries in Afghanistan. A kind of *jihad* was launched against the two Buddhas — the one to the east 38 meters high, and the other to the west, 55 meters high — hewn into the cliff of Bamiyan. "Our soldiers are working hard; they are using all available arms against them," said the Taliban's spokesman.¹ Rockets and tank shells were brought in to help, and the destruction was completed with dynamite. On March 14, the Taliban issued a public announcement that the giant figures had been destroyed.

Mullah Omar's decree had prompted many attempts by Western countries and moderate Muslim clerics and heads of state from among Afghanistan's neighbors to convince the Taliban to call off their plans. The need to preserve a cultural heritage and to respect religious tolerance was at the core of this general protest. UNESCO emissaries pleaded in vain that a necessary distinction should be made between idolatry and exemplarity — between a secular admiration and an idolatrous veneration. Others insisted on the exemplarity of piety, the "lesson of faith," that these statues could offer to the believers of all religions. In fact, the Taliban's argument gave these ambassadors of culture no chance of success: "If the statues were objects of cult for an Afghan minority, we would have to respect their belief and its objects, but we don't have a single Buddhist in Afghanistan," said the Mullah, "so why preserve false [sic] idols? And if they have no religious character, why get so upset? It is just a question of breaking stones."² Besides the steps taken by UNESCO to save the statues, the MET (New York), as well as some Buddhist states, such as Thailand, Sri Lanka, and even Iran, offered to "buy" the Buddhas.

Yet, the victory over the Buddhas could only be won if there were witnesses. This is why journalists were flown to Bamiyan on March 26 to see with their own eyes the gaping openness of the niches, deep into the cliff, where the statues had stood. Prior to that, on March 19, the Taliban had agreed for this one occasion to let Al-Jazeera cameramen



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1. Quoted in the *Associated Press*, March 2, 2001.

2. Luke Harding, *Guardian Unlimited*, March 3, 2001.

witness the final phase of the demolition.

Such an extraordinary attack on religious and cultural emblems led many to speculate about the real intentions of the Mullah. Two kinds of explanation of the Mullah's astounding decision are possible. The first, based on his and his close collaborators' explicit argumentation, highlights the Taliban clerics' conception of Islamic law. The second, a more contextual explanation, takes into account the position of the Taliban regime on the international scene. This point of view is supported by the contradictory statements made by the Taliban since they came to power. In July 1999, three years after the entry of the Mullah's forces into Kabul, the Taliban Minister of Culture spoke about the respect due to pre-Islamic antiquities and also mentioned the risk of retaliation against mosques in Buddhist countries. He made clear that, though there were no Buddhist believers in Afghanistan, "Bamiyan would not be destroyed but, on the contrary, protected."³ The famous February 26 decree appears as a real *volte-face* since it maintains that "these statues were and are sanctuary for unbelievers" — hence the religious obligation to destroy them. The assault against the Buddhas seems thus to be an answer to a changing political context, a kind of reprisal against the sanctions imposed by the UN Security Council on the Taliban regime and the refusal of most UN members to recognize the Taliban Emirate.

Besides, the Taliban themselves expressed afterwards their indignation and anger at the protest coming from the "West," which they described as being exclusively concerned with saving "idols" but ignorant of the misery of the Afghans. According to this point of view, Afghan cultural heritage is an indirect victim of the Western countries' rejection of the Emirate and of their double standard — moved by the destruction of the statues but indifferent to the ordeal of the Afghan people. In the West, the destruction of the Buddhas of Bamiyan has been condemned as an intolerable attack against the whole of humanity's most precious treasures.

The Taliban's position precisely revealed their negation that a space for secular veneration could exist, wherein Art would have replaced the God of the monotheists.

The making of the Afghan national heritage with the Buddhas as its jewel is intimately related to the European venture. The first European travellers, who in the 19th century mentioned the gigantic figures in their travelogues, were for the most part secret agents, explorers, and traffickers. In 1832, Alexander Burnes, an agent of the Indian Political Service, described the "couple of idols" as relics of a past cult. He found them inelegant, even unsightly, and good only for savages and their primitive beliefs.⁴

Charles Masson, an Indian Army deserter, while visiting the site in 1833, was the first to recognize the effigy of the Buddha in the figures. He was also the first to admire them. He wrote: "The traveller surveying [...] the vast and mysterious idols and the multitude of caves around him will scarcely fail to be absorbed in deep reflection and wonder..."⁵

But what about the Afghans? What was their feeling about this "jewel" of their cultural heritage, this Western invention?

3. Luke Harding, *Guardian Unlimited*, March 3, 2001.

4. Alexander Burnes, *Travels into Bokhara*, Vol. II (London: John Murray, 1835), p. 157.

5. Charles Masson, *Narrative of Various Journeys in Balochistan, Afghanistan, and the Panjab*, Vol. II (London: Richard Bently, 1842), pp. 392-93.

For many Afghans, the two giant figures, for them a male and a female, were a reminder of the monstrous idols Lât and Manât mentioned in the Qur'an. This being said, the inhabitants of central Afghanistan looked at the Buddhas as a familiar presence, and, in their religious beliefs, as survivors of pre-Islamic times, whose pagan origins were occasionally recalled by the local mullahs.

For most Afghans and for the Taliban, the category "cultural heritage" hardly existed or was, at best, suspicious. More vehement was their protest and more convinced were they that it only reflected a belief — the cult of masterpieces of Art — as illegitimate as that of idol-worshippers. The Taliban's position precisely revealed their negation that a space for secular veneration could exist, wherein Art would have replaced the God of the monotheists.

The worldwide mobilization against the Buddhas' destruction did not cause the foreign military intervention in autumn of 2001 or the collapse of the Taliban regime. Nevertheless, the Taliban's iconoclasm surely contributed, in the West, to the de-legitimization of their regime.

What Went Wrong after Bonn

Francesc Vendrell

In many ways the first error began before the Bonn Conference with UN Headquarters delaying its convening to late November 2001, despite calls from my office to convene such a meeting in October before the Taliban's ouster. The delay allowed the Northern Alliance (NA) to take over two-thirds of the country, thus presenting the participants in Bonn with a *fait accompli*. This led to the NA's successful claim to the lion's share of the ministries in the Interim Administration, which in turn enabled the NA's warlords and commanders to retain or be appointed to many provincial and district governorships and to key positions in the Afghan National Army (ANA) and Afghan National police (ANP). The return to power of persons widely despised and dreaded by most Afghans for the atrocities and sleaze that had characterized their rule during the mid-1990s ensured that from the very beginning bad governance and corruption became the norm.

Another quiet controversy erupted both before and during the conference about the future UN role in the implementation of the Bonn Agreement. Some of us forcefully argued for a "heavy footprint" on the model of Cambodia, East Timor, Bosnia, or Kosovo, since we were convinced that its people were ready for some kind of international tutelage that would do away both with warlord and Taliban rule, reconstruct their country, and assist in building up rule of law institutions. In the end, the day was won by those favoring a "light footprint" and an "Afghan led" — process a politically correct slogan that in practice meant that the international community would be led not by genuine representatives of the Afghan people but a group of rapacious individuals.

At Bonn the participants (largely drawn from the NA and supporters of former King Zahir Shah) had requested the Security Council to dispatch an international force that would be deployed first to Kabul and then to other urban centers vacated by the Taliban. Though the United States was represented at the conference, we were surprised when at the Council's meeting the US opposed the eventual expansion of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) beyond Kabul, presumably to ensure that the US-led Enduring Freedom Coalition would have a free hand in the rest of the country. Thus the US deprived itself of a larger European contribution at a time when, with fresh memories of 9/11, many governments would have readily participated in ISAF. Two years later, when the US sought a larger involvement of its NATO partners, the momentum had slackened. In the meantime, Iraq had consumed the attention of both the United States and its allies.



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One important component of any nation-building exercise is to ensure that the central government enjoys the monopoly of the means of violence. Yet this task has never been taken seriously by the international community. The Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration (DDR) process was rendered a formality, with each of the allegedly 60,000 NA militia members going through the motions of surrendering their oldest weapons to the Afghan Ministry of Defense, at that time headed by Marshal Fahim, the NA's most powerful warlord, and Hamid Karzai's First Vice-President today. Nor has the successor process, the Disbandment of Illegal Armed Groups (DIAG) fared any better: Neither ISAF nor the Coalition, whose cooperation would be essential in case of any resulting security problems, have shown the slightest interest in becoming involved. Perhaps one reason for the US and NATO's indifference has been the continued ties some of them maintain with warlords and commanders whose cooperation they regard as useful in providing intelligence and who, in a bizarre reversal of roles, are remunerated for providing security to their military forces. It is little wonder, therefore, that verbal entreaties to President Karzai to improve governance fall upon deaf ears, either because of the President's genuine fear of antagonizing the strongmen, his newly developed ties to them, or because he is aware, as in the case of his brother in Kandahar, of the ties that he and others maintain with the CIA or other foreign intelligence services.

It has become common these days to bemoan our collective failure to place greater reliance on Afghanistan's tribal system. In reality, the system, which is largely a Pashtun phenomenon, has been severely weakened during the past 30 years of war at the hands of the Communists, the *mujahidin*, and the Taliban — nor do many educated Afghans call for its revival. An opportunity to do just that and to counter the Pashtun perception that they have been the losers in the Bonn process would have been the return of Zahir Shah as head of state in 2002. The old king, who passed away in 2007, enjoyed great popularity at the time — his reign (1933-1973) nostalgically remembered as Afghanistan's golden years. Having returned from exile in the spring of 2002, the King appeared set to be elected head of state by a large majority of the members of the Emergency *Loya Jirga* (ELJ) when it convened in June of that year. It was not to be. Citing the opposition of some NA warlords who, expecting to be removed from their posts, found themselves lionized instead and seated in the front row of the *Loya Jirga*, the US Special Representative prevailed on Zahir Shah to announce that he would not accept the position of Head of State even if it were offered to him by the ELJ. This deprived Afghanistan of a highly influential voice who might have balanced the influence of the mullahs or breathed new life into the tribal system. It also would have led to the establishment of a Prime Minister and a cabinet responsible to Parliament rather than the Islamic Republic (with its ingrained Islamic ideology) we have today. The 2004 Constitution, drafted by an unelected body appointed by Karzai and largely beholden to jihadists, created, very much with the then-US Ambassador's support, a presidential system concentrating power in one person who was irremovable during his five-year mandate, when what was needed in a multi-ethnic, bilingual society such as Afghanistan was a decentralized parliamentary system which would spread power among several categories of people.

One important component of any nation-building exercise is to ensure that the central government enjoys the monopoly of the means of violence. Yet this task has never been taken seriously by the international community.

Western governments, though, remained determinedly optimistic about Afghanistan. Afghanistan, unlike Iraq, which

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had absorbed so much of their attention in the meantime, was, they insisted, or would quickly become, a success story. President Pervez Musharraf's assurances that Pakistan had reversed its decades-old policy of supporting either the Taliban and/or Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, the most violent of the *mujahiddin* parties, were taken at face value, despite evidence that both had found refuge in Pakistan. Equally, the West seemed oblivious that the close ties being rapidly developed between India and Afghanistan were feeding Pakistan's decades-old paranoia of being sandwiched between two enemies which had been the main reason for Pakistan seeking to install a docile regime in Kabul.

There were other failures as well. Too little attention was paid to the need to rapidly train a professional Afghan police. The reform of the judiciary languished while attempts to establish an independent civil service have been unsuccessful. Nor was there an effort to support reformist and pluralistic Afghan civil society or political groups which would counter-balance the jihadist warlords and who would be there to follow up our work when we finally left Afghanistan. Economic reconstruction failed to focus on either agriculture or in job-creating projects, while huge quantities of money were wasted in overheads paid to private firms and corporations through which many donors, the US in particular, channeled their assistance.

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The struggle against narcotics always was going to be slow and hard. It was certainly not helped by the US emphasis, until recently, on eradication — an expensive and corruption-prone procedure, which alienated poor Afghan farmers without seriously hurting the big drug lords, when greater focus on interdiction and subsidies for legal crops would have led to more positive results.

The last three years, and particularly the past one, have opened the eyes of Western governments to the sad realities in Afghanistan. And yet, despite the arrival of a new administration in Washington, one wonders at the West's continued lack of foresight. The growing insurgency in the south and east of Afghanistan was bound to turn the presidential elections in 2009 and parliamentary ones in 2010 into nightmare scenarios. Some of us had warned that the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) was anything but independent, its members having all been appointed by the President through a twisted interpretation of the relevant provision in the Constitution, while security conditions would prevent genuine elections in half of the country's Pashtun districts, either leading to colossal fraud if they were included or to the disfranchisement of large sectors of the largest ethnic group if excluded. With conditions not existing for the holding of credible elections, it seemed desirable to convene in early 2009 a roundtable composed of key Afghan figures together with representatives from Parliament and of civil society to decide how to proceed. The fact that Karzai's term of office expired on May 22 facilitated such an initiative. It was not to happen. The international community ignored all the warning signals, went along with the extension of President Karzai's mandate, did not condition its \$300 million support for the electoral process upon changes in the composition of the IEC, and appeared to be genuinely shocked either by the scale of the fraud or by the coarseness of the methods used for its perpetration.

Will we ever learn? There is precious little time to turn things around. Discussion on increasing the number of inter-

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national military forces is irrelevant in the absence of a credible government in Kabul. Western governments for once appear determined this time to ensure that President Karzai carries out the major reforms and personnel changes that would rekindle hope in a wary and cynical Afghan public, simultaneously giving our public opinion reason to believe that we are not wasting the precious lives of our soldiers or the money of our taxpayers. Let us hope that on this occasion they will not be satisfied by promises and that they will link their assistance to performance by the new Afghan government and that it will not be too little too late.

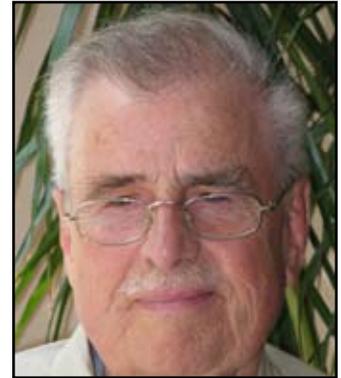
Afghanistan's "Treaty Bands"

Bruce G. Richardson

Exigencies confronting Soviet military strategists in Afghanistan were multi-faceted and ideologically tempered by historical precedent. As with the earliest conflicts in recorded history, Soviet military historians aver that the success of military operations in defeating resistance organizations are predicated on three-criteria: 1) the ability to maintain the integrity of lines of supply and communications, 2) the interdiction of arms transfers to guerrilla organizations originating from outside sources, and 3) the creation of militia forces, informants, treaty bands, and other subversives from among the local population.¹

For the Soviets and their Democratic Republic of Afghanistan (DRA) allies, notwithstanding that an air bridge had been established connecting the Soviet Union to major cities and population centers in Afghanistan via Kabul, Bagram, Shindand, and Kandahar Airports, a preponderance of food, medical, and war materiel was delivered via road transport. Shortly, as the conflict escalated and was cast as "Afghanistan's Road War," the preferred tactic for the resistance became the classic ambush, utilizing anti-tank mines, rocket propelled grenades (RPGs), sniping, and explosives to initiate landslides and therefore made roads impassable. To mitigate supply interdiction and provide security along extended supply lines presented a logistical nightmare for Soviet planners. The two major re-supply arteries in use traversed enormous distances: Highway 13, Kandahar to Herat, represented a 600-kilometer journey, while Highway 2, from Termez to Kabul, spanned an arduous 425 kilometers over difficult topography fraught with hazards (i.e., ill-maintained, precipitous mountain thoroughfares, blizzard conditions, landslides, flash floods, and guerrilla ambush). Of the two, Highway 2 presented more opportunity for resistance attack as it carried two strategic pipelines along its length, one for petrol and the other for kerosene and thus represented a low risk target for sabotage. An additional supply dilemma for the Soviets was the Salang Pass, Tunnel, and Highway portion of Highway 2, which due to its extremely precipitous nature represented the potential for a key choke point for supply convoys originating in Termez, Uzbekistan.²

Arms consigned to resistance organizations were obtained from numerous international sources, including the United States, China, Egypt, Israel, and Europe, and flowed



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1. See Vasily Mitrokhin, "The Offspring of the Cheka," *The KGB in Afghanistan*, Working Paper #40, Cold War International History Project, February 2002, pp. 138-48.

2. See Graham Turbiville, Jr., "Ambush! The Road War in Afghanistan," *Army*, Vol. 38, No. 1 (1988), pp. 32-42.

into Afghanistan from multiple weapons depots in Pakistan. Weapons were selected on the basis of origin, so as to allow for deniability on the part of the US as providers. Many of the SA-7 anti-aircraft missiles and other weapons systems were acquired during the Arab-Israeli Wars of 1967 and 1973 from captured stockpiles. Distribution of arms to the various resistance organizations was conducted by elements of Pakistan's Inter Services Intelligence Directorate, or ISI. Transport into Afghanistan utilized thousands of centuries-old smuggling trails that crisscrossed Afghanistan's eastern border with Pakistan. These were virtually impossible for the Soviets to monitor and/or seal due to rugged terrain and an extraordinary length of 2,250 kilometers.

In October 1987, I personally experienced the standard operating procedure employed for the re-supply of arms and other supplies to the resistance in a far, remote, and mountainous section of Paktia Province. Our group (MAHAZ/NIFA) requisitioned an assortment of ammunition to include RPG anti-tank rockets, 12.7mm "Dashika" ammunition, 14.5mm "Ziqriat" ammunition, and the ubiquitous 7.62 Kalashnikov ammunition from a staging area and weapons depot in Pakistan which were then packed into rope-panniers for transport by camel and donkey. Much of our travel was at nighttime to avoid the ever-present and dreaded MiL-24 helicopter gunships. As we neared the summit of Gomankai Mountain, our destination, we came under rocket and bomb attack from a MiG-23. The surrounding, boulder-strewn terrain, however, provided cover for our caravan, and the MiG's ordnance went wide of its intended mark.³

In addition to aerial attack, other risks were a daily fact of life for arms caravan escorts and requisite animal handlers, i.e., transit routes were littered with mines, the result of aerial and artillery disbursement of literally thousands of PMF-1 anti-personnel devices, unavoidable combat wounds that often resulted in infection and or death due to a lack of proximity to medical facilities, and the unsettling prospect of nighttime ambush from deployed Spetsnaz and KGB Cascade units equipped with night-vision technology along numerous trails.

Yet despite the Soviets' technological superiority and the presence of 150,000 troops, it was virtually impossible to seal the 2,250 km-long contiguous border with Pakistan, a problem of geography that demanded an alternate approach in order to stem the flow of weapons to the *mujahidin*. To surmount the insurmountable, Soviet strategists employed a time-tested strategy — the deployment of militia forces and the so-called "Treaty Bands."⁴

Guerrilla warfare is neither a product of Afghanistan nor peculiar to the Soviet/Afghan War. For centuries, it has been a feature of conflict fought by all classes of men against invader and oppressor alike. From the Soviet perspective, however, guerrilla or asymmetrical warfare demanded a resuscitation of the modality perfected in the Caucasus and Central Asia during the 19th century, a means for combating disruption along supply routes, curtailing arms smuggling, and building a cadre of informants and treaty bands sympathetic to Soviet interests.

3. See Sergey Vekhov, "Bagram Griffons," *Air Forces Monthly*, No. 62 (May 1993), pp. 43-48.

4. See Bruce G. Richardson, "Direct Hit on Nari," *Soldier of Fortune*, Vol. 13, No. 6 (1988), pp. 44-53, 72-73.

Guerrilla warfare is neither a product of Afghanistan nor peculiar to the Soviet/Afghan War.

During the war of occupation (1979-1989), the intelligence services of the Soviet Union (KGB Cascade Units and GRU military intelligence) and their client agency KhAD, possessed deep and varied experience in dealing with Muslim guerrilla insurgencies. In select examples, pre-Soviet involvement dates to the bloody Caucasian wars of the 19th century against the Naqshbandiya (Sufi) order, the Andizhan uprisings in the Ferghana Valley in 1896, and the Kazakh Revolt of 1916. The Soviets subsequently participated in extended conflicts against *Basmachi* movements in Central Asia and Muslim insurgents in the mountains of the North Caucasus during the 1920s, and Azeri and Kurdish independence movements of 1945-46. Thus, the Soviet organs were not without a collective know-how concerning the methodology, implementation, and conduct required to confront Afghan resistance.⁵

Soviet intelligence officers quickly became masters of deceit and subversion in Afghanistan. With virtually unlimited resources at their disposal, they easily recruited and persuaded villagers close to Soviet-DRA urban centers or military installation to enter into a truce through intimidation and or bribe. The male inhabitants would then be persuaded to form a highly-paid militia unit to maintain law and order in their respective village area and to deny weapons caravans and *mujahidin* reinforcements permission to transit areas under their control. In February 1988, in Nangarhar, a NIFA commander was offered large sums of money by KGB Cascade unit agents to interdict weapons consigned to the *mujahidin*.⁶

Despite herculean efforts, however, attempts to bribe guerrilla commanders had mixed success. When, in 1980, the DRA Minister of Tribal and Frontier Affairs personally carried a previously agreed-upon bribe of \$28,000 to a frontier tribe in exchange for monitoring border areas to deny the wounded access to Pakistan for medical attention, and to halt the flow of contraband, the tribesmen killed the minister and his two aides and kept the funds.⁷

Drawing on their lucidity and directness, the memoirs of retired Soviet generals provide invaluable insight for researchers into the workings of the Treaty Bands.

And among them, a consensus developed in their respective narratives regarding specific successes in intelligence operations. According to the generals, the most notable success for Soviet intelligence units was the recruitment of Ahmad Shah Massoud, the venerated commander and media-icon of the Panjshir. Beginning in 1980, Massoud signed a series of agreements that spanned the entire decade of war. Line-item details of the agreements reveal that Massoud and his IOAP detachments contracted to allow Soviet re-supply vehicles unhindered passage along the Salang thoroughfare and provide protection for them as they transited the highway,

Soviet intelligence officers quickly became masters of deceit and subversion in Afghanistan. With virtually unlimited resources at their disposal, they easily recruited and persuaded villagers ... to enter into a truce through intimidation and or bribe.

5. See Bruce G. Richardson, "Russian Policy in Central Asia and Transcaucasia, Precursor to Afghanistan," *Afghanistan, Ending the Reign of Soviet Terror, 1996-98*, pp. 1-9.

6. See Barnett R. Rubin, *The Fragmentation of Afghanistan* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1995), p. 159.

7. J. Bruce Amstutz, *Afghanistan: The First Five Years of Soviet Occupation*, (Washington, DC: National Defense University Press, 1986), p. 292.

thereby insulating them from attack by other *mujahidin* groups. According to General A.A. Liakhovskii, Massoud often resorted to violence to deter other *mujahiddin* groups from attacking Soviet targets. Though uncorroborated, but what could be construed as a reward for honoring his contractual obligations, Ahmad Shah Massoud was considered by Moscow as a possible replacement for Najibullah in 1989, prior to their withdrawal.⁸

In recognition of the difficulty presented with fighting in the precipitous Panjshir Gorge, General Boris Gromov, commander of the Soviet 40th Army, wrote that “Ahmad Shah could have turned the Salang into a Russian graveyard by just throwing rocks.”

The net effect of the Treaty Bands, therefore, was the prolongation of war, an unnecessary loss of life, the re-deployment of Soviet troops to prosecute their scorched-earth tactics in other areas and assuring the integrity of their supply requirements.

Elements of Afghan society (the Northern Alliance Treaty Bands) that had collaborated with the Soviet occupational forces from 1979 to 1989, aided the US invasion in 2001 as a proxy-militia and are currently collaborating with the US and ISAF occupation forces. In addition, many have attained high public office, while others busy themselves with narcotics-trafficking.

8. See Boris Gromov, *Ogranichennyy Kontingent [Limited Contingent]* (Moscow: Progress, 1994), pp. 180-88; Aleksandr Lyakhovskiy, *Tragediya i doblest' Afgana [The Tragedy and Valor of the Afghan Veterans]* (Moscow: Iskona, 1995), pp. 630-74; Bruce G. Richardson, *Afghanistan, A Search for Truth* (Toronto: Afghan Post, 2007), pp. 81-92, Bruce G. Richardson; *The Barefoot Coarse Cotton Wearers*; pp. 63-78, 'Memoirs of Dr. Muhammad Hassan Sharq, 1931-1991.

The Invention of the Afghan Nationalities, 1980-2004

Pierre Centlivres and Micheline Centlivres-Demont

Afghanistan is the “land of the Afghans.” But “Afghan” has, as one knows, a double meaning: citizen of Afghanistan, and member of the Pashtun ethnic group. As the Afghan anthropologist Nazif Shahrani has written, Afghanistan was, and somehow still is, a “Pashtun-dominated nation-state” whose founding hero was Amir Abdur Rahman Khan (r. 1880-1901).¹ During his reign, the Amir arrogated to himself the task of modernizing the Afghan state and building the nation, the unification and centralization of the first being, in his view, the precondition and the prerequisite for the second. To him, unification meant conquest of non-Pashtun as well as Pashtun people and territories. Hazaras, Kafirs, Ghilzais, inhabitants of northeast of Afghanistan, and other dissenters were deemed enemies of the state and crushed pitilessly.

Seventy years later, Daoud, the first President of the Afghan Republic (1973-1978) intensified the establishment of an Afghan (Pashtun) state, aiming at cultural and linguistic homogenization as the precondition for Afghan unity. Daoud thus made the learning of Pashto an obligation for all state employees and government officials; prohibited the use of ethnic surnames and ethnonyms, with the exception of those referring to Pashtun tribes; and put an end to a modest plurilinguism on the national radio instituted under his predecessor. In this way, Daoudian nationalism tended to fuse together Afghan citizenship and Pashtun identity. Yet, the population of Afghanistan is a complex entity of peoples of diverse origins, languages, religions, and cultures. It forms what has been referred to since the 1930s, and since the use of the word “ethnic group” by Western authors, as a multiethnic state.²

One of the first ethnographic maps of Afghanistan, published in 1955 in *Sovetskaya Etnografiya*, shows 16 ethnic groups. A more recent German publication on the subject lists 54 ethnic names.³ The linguistic diversity is also noticeable; linguists list no fewer than about 30 different languages, divided into Iranian, Indo-Aryan, Turkish, Mongol, Semitic, and Dravidian groups.⁴



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1. Nazif Shahrani, “Taliban and Talibanism in Historical Perspective,” in Robert D. Crews and Amin Tarzi, eds., *The Taliban and the Crisis of Afghanistan* (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 2008), p. 162.

2. René Dollot, *L’Afghanistan* (Paris: Payot, 1937), p. 47.

3. Erwin Orywal, *Die Ethnischen Gruppen Afghanistans* (Wiesbaden: Ludwig Reichert, 1986), pp. 18-19. See also Pierre Centlivres, “La nouvelle carte ethnique de l’Afghanistan,” *Les Nouvelles d’Afghanistan* 47 (1990), pp. 4-11.

4. Rawan Farhadi, “Die Sprachen von Afghanistan,” *Zentralasiatische Studien* (Wiesbaden) Vol. 3 (1969), pp. 414-416.

Up to the Marxist coup of Saur in 1978, as well as under the Monarchy and under the Daoud Republic, the multiethnic nature of the country and even the very existence of ethnic groups had always been a taboo question for the Afghan government. Up to 1978, official documents and reports, censuses, and constitutions overshadowed systematically the Afghan pluralistic reality and recognized only a linguistic duality in official use: Pashto and Dari. According to the 1964 (Articles 1 and 3) and 1977 (Articles 20 and 21) Constitutions, “Afghanistan is a unitary and indivisible state,” and “the word Afghan applies to each and every individual of the nation of Afghanistan.”

Indeed, the authorities had an obsessive fear of what could endanger the formation, or the myth, of a unified nation. This is why precise figures on ethnic groups and precise statistics on spoken languages are so difficult to find.

When the Marxist coup broke in 1978, as Crews and Tarzi write in their introduction, the non-Pashtun populations had “grown more assertive in expressing their group identities and in demanding political rights, both for administrative and cultural autonomy and for a stake in Afghan politics at the national level.”⁵ The trend toward expressing minority identities becomes more marked with the weakening of the central authority. But already since the Soviet Revolution, the model of the Soviet Central Asian Republics based on “independent nationalities” was increasingly a reference to the ethnic groups of the north of Afghanistan.

In the 1980s, the Communist regime changed the policy of its predecessors and recognized the ethnic pluralism and the existence of nationalities (*mellat*). Among the different points mentioned in the “Programme of action of PDPA,” the most significant was the “[b]asic solution of the national question in the country on the basis of equality and brotherhood, without any discrimination and with due consideration of the interests, wishes and rights of all the nationalities, tribes and ethnic groups including Pashtoons, Tajiks, Uzbeks, Hazaras, Turkmen, Baluchs, Nuristanis, etc.,” but “with deep respect to the role and importance of the Pashtoon tribes in the history of our country and in defending the borders of the country ...”⁶

By decree Kabul made official the existence of eight nationalities based on the Soviet model. The nationalities in question were those above named, plus the Pashais. They each were bestowed with a national language, established with the help of Soviet linguists, and endowed with “cultural” rights (i.e., textbooks, publications, and radio programs). The bi-monthly magazine *Afghanistan Today*, published in English, had a regular rubric entitled “Fraternal nationalities.” They were, however, nationalities without a territory, because of the impossibility to delimit spatially the entities made up from dispersed ethnic groups. No political autonomy was envisaged by the Kabul regime, nor was anything resembling a federalist state structure.⁷

5. Robert D. Crews and Amin Tarzi, eds., *The Taliban and the Crisis of Afghanistan* (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 2008).

6. Quoted from *Afghanistan Quarterly*, Vol. 35, No. 3 (1982), pp. 91-92.

7. See Pierre Centlivres, “Les groupes ethniques et les ‘nationalités’ dans la crise afghane,” in Riccardo Bocco and Mohammad-

In the 1980s, the Communist regime changed the policy of its predecessors and recognized the ethnic pluralism and the existence of nationalities (*mellat*).

When the *mujahidin* entered Kabul in the spring of 1992, they did not favor this pluralist orientation. Yet, Article 8 of the 1992 draft Constitution of the Islamic State of Afghanistan states: “Pashtu and Dari of all the languages of the country will be the official languages [...]. Other languages spoken in the country will be used in publications, media and learning of languages and literatures in their respective regions.” At that time, the subsequent factions and territorial divisions were: Afghanistan-Jumbesh (essentially Uzbek) in the north, Hazarajat with the Hezb-e Wahdat in the center, Jamiat and the Northern Alliance of Massoud and Rabbani in the northeast, which seemed to echo the defunct policy of nationalities. They represented and represent still an ideological lever which is not without strength and appeal. As we have previously written: “Moreover, the interest in nationalities has brought many inhabitants of Afghanistan to redefine their identity above the tribal or local level, and has led small groups to consider their integration into a broader unit.”⁸

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Today, the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, adopted by the Loya Jirga on January 4, 2004, states explicitly in Article 4, §3 that: “The nation of Afghanistan is comprised of the following ethnic groups: Pashtun, Tajik, Hazara, Uzbek, Turkmen, Baluch, Pashai, Nuristani, Aymaq, Arab, Qirghiz, Qizilbash, Gujur, Brahwi and others.” The New Afghan National Anthem, written by the poet Abdul Bari Jehan, also lists in verse 14 ethnic groups living in Afghanistan (Afghan Hindus and Sikhs are not mentioned).

During the 2009 presidential elections, no candidate developed his program under an ethnic label. If the different ethnic groups demand neither political autonomy nor their incorporation into a neighboring country, and all consider themselves as part of Afghanistan, they nonetheless want to be recognized as distinct cultural and social entities.

Reza Djalili, eds., *Moyen-Orient: migrations, démocratisation, médiations* (Geneva and Paris: PUF, 1994), pp. 161-170; and “*Tribus, ethnies et nation en Afghanistan*,” in Hosham Dawod, ed., *Tribus et pouvoirs en terre d’islam* (Paris: Armand Colin, 2004), pp. 115-143.

8. Pierre Centlivres and Micheline Centlivres-Demont, “State, National Awareness and Levels of Identity in Afghanistan from Monarchy to Islamic State,” *Central Asian Survey*, Vol. 19, Nos. 3-4 (2000), pp. 419-428.

Respecting Afghanistan's Sovereignty

Assem Akram

Respect for Afghanistan's sovereignty is a *sine qua non* condition to restoring the country to normalcy. The fact that a country expects and demands that its sovereignty be respected should not be misconstrued as a refusal to engage the outside world — as a sign that the country is drifting towards some type of chauvinistic nationalism.

Sovereignty matters to the Afghans because it is tied to the legitimacy of the government that seeks to lead them. In principle, sovereignty should matter to the international actors involved in Afghanistan as well because a legitimized government is the first step towards viability — perhaps even democracy — and definitely a step closer towards the exit door. Respecting sovereignty is a two-way street and the prerequisite to harmonious international relations. We have all witnessed how a weak government lacking legitimacy, unaware of its sovereign rights/duties and unable to have them respected, is the best recipe to turn a country into a haven for international terrorism.

IN DEFENSE OF SOVEREIGNTY

Historically, Afghan leaders fought hard and used all their diplomatic skills to preserve their country's sovereignty in the face of the advancing European expansionist empires. In the early 20th century, at the height of European colonialism, King Amanullah successfully fought the third Anglo-Afghan war (1919), infuriated the Europeans over the Piperno case (1925), and refused to rely on Bolshevik troops to restore his power (1929). In 1959, the Afghan government led by then-Prime Minister Mohammed Daoud declared *persona non-grata* a French diplomat who had torn apart the poster of a pro-Algerian independence movie (*Jamilah*). In 1977, Daoud, who at the time had abolished the monarchy and had become President of Afghanistan, confronted Soviet President Leonid Brezhnev over the latter's criticism of his domestic and foreign policies.

Vigilant as they were on issues of sovereignty, both Amanullah and Daoud nonetheless were ardent advocates of greater international collaboration to advance Afghanistan's development. Their actions illustrate that a leader can assert sovereignty while at the same time engage the rest of the world.

THE THEFT OF SOVEREIGNTY

It has become *cliché* to say that Afghanistan has experienced three decades of incessant



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war. While this statement helps people understand the suffering of the Afghan population, it fails to truly depict the damage done to Afghanistan as a state — that is, as an organizational apparatus capable of running a country.

Thirty years of failed political experiments by the Communists, the *mujahidin*, the Taliban, and today's anything-goes ill-defined system have severely damaged the fabric of Afghan society. The only rule that applies is that of survival. The “commoners” live to survive another day, while the “fortunate ones” — those with the right connections — are concerned only with how to amass wealth quickly (often through questionable means) and/or obtain positions of “prestige” for vanity's sake.

Most of Afghanistan's current leaders — those in power in Kabul and their opponents, such as the Taliban and its strategic allies — reached political maturity in exile. They, like the leaders of other Afghan factions who preceded them, have sought money and weapons from outside to advance their political and oftentimes military agenda inside. They have bought allegiances with foreign money and have killed rivals with bullets provided by outside players. They have acted with total disregard for Afghanistan's sovereignty.

Most of Afghanistan's current leaders — those in power in Kabul and their opponents, such as the Taliban and its strategic allies — reached political maturity in exile.

Similarly, the countries and groups involved in the current conflict have acted with callous disregard for Afghanistan's sovereignty. Foreign armies crisscross the country free of any legal or statutory constraints. They are able to imprison, kill, and even torture with impunity. The Kabul government is too feeble and dependent to demand the respect of its sovereign rights, assuming that it is aware of them. On the opposite side, the Taliban and their associated networks (e.g., the Haqqani or Hekmatyar groups) are being funded by foreign extremist supporters linked to al-Qa'ida. For them, Afghanistan is just one battleground in the global jihad wherein they can take revenge on the West while attempting to reinstate an illusory Caliphate.

RESTORING SOVEREIGNTY AND BOLSTERING LEGITIMACY

The legitimacy of the government in Kabul would be greatly enhanced were its leaders to demonstrate that they understand what is at stake and demand the respect of their country's sovereignty. It is also crucial that the members of the international community involved in Afghanistan, whose proclaimed goal is to stabilize and normalize the situation in that country, understand the sensitivity of the matter and pledge to respect it.

Drawing upon the examples of leaders such as Amanullah and Daoud, Afghan leaders could and should seek to prove to their people and to the world that they are their own men — not just instruments in the hands of foreign interests — and that they will not compromise sovereignty and the interests of the nation for the sake of petty gains and/or ideologically/ethnically-driven purposes.

Akram...

To bolster the Afghan government's legitimacy, international actors involved in that country's affairs should adopt a more hands-off approach and be smarter in the way they exert their influence. The most visible aspect of that influence, which does not permit the slightest appearance of legitimacy to the current government in Kabul, is the presence of foreign military forces and their unregulated action. This needs to be seriously reconsidered in order to be less intrusive and be substituted without delay by Afghan national security forces, no matter how untrained and unprepared they might be. In the current situation, quality does not matter as much as quantity and the priceless value of its symbolism.

Arguably, there is only one source of legitimacy for international interventionism: the United Nations. As imperfect an institution as it is and as sheepish as it can sometimes be, it still has credibility in a country such as Afghanistan.

The United Nations should fully play its role and be the one who actively seeks to bring peace, stability, and reconstruction to Afghanistan. Instead of having the United States, and its military instrument NATO, taking over the direction of the international community's multi-faceted intervention in Afghanistan through the United Nations, it should be the other way around. The UN should seek to be the institution that confers legitimacy on any military action for the sake of regional and international stability. NATO taking over ISAF has blurred the line between ISAF and non-UN mandated coalition forces. This is detrimental to the whole enterprise: The United Nations is the only institution that can be regarded as "neutral" and therefore not an occupying force at the service of a lone foreign power and its surrogate allies. Consequently, UN-mandated forces would be less likely to generate extreme reactions and boost the ranks of violent armed opposition groups.

There is a symbiotic relationship between a country's sovereignty and the legitimacy of its government. When the government is dependant on a single source for its survival, it becomes enslaved by that source, loses legitimacy, and is consequently less able to defend the country's sovereignty. In the case of Afghanistan, which relies mainly upon multilateral and international institutions for its day-to-day functioning, a balance can nonetheless be struck whereby the central government is not merely a "puppet" in the hands of a single handler. In fact, such a balance had existed prior to the Communist takeover of 1978.

Sovereignty, multilateral partnerships, and positive neutrality are the keys to restoring the delicate balance that will allow Afghanistan to return to normalcy and become a player and a partner, rather than a pawn, in the regional and international systems.

Instead of having the United States, and its military instrument NATO, taking over the direction of the international community's multi-faceted intervention in Afghanistan through the United Nations, it should be the other way around.

Charting a Course for a Better Future: Responding to the Crimes of the Past

Niamatullah Ibrahimi

Thirty years of war have taken an enormous toll on all aspects of Afghan society whose traditional social fabric has broken down, giving rise to a new generation of political and military elites. The cycles of violence over the past three decades have included massive human rights abuses by all parties, leaving a legacy of pent-up grievances and profound feelings of injustice.

The results of a national consultation published by the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC) in January 2005 showed that more than 68% of Afghans had suffered the loss of a loved one or injury during the years of war and that the majority of those questioned urgently wanted to see war criminals brought to justice. The report urged the government to take action to address the abuses of the past, including supporting criminal investigations and prosecutions, arranging for reparations for the victims, as well as vetting public officials to keep criminals out of power.¹ Yet, there has been little progress in addressing the crimes of the past or in preventing their recurrence.



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THE LEGACY OF WAR: JUSTICE SERVED?

The question of addressing the past and delivering justice for victims of human rights violations has cast a long shadow over the post-2001 transitional process launched in Bonn. Feelings of victimization and injustice stemming from the previous years of warfare are interwoven with multiple and contradictory versions of the history and causes of conflict in the collective memories of various communities. These feelings continue to influence political behavior and alignments.

What has further complicated the situation is the policy of the international community and of the post-Taliban Afghan government of accommodating and integrating former militia commanders and war elites, many of whom have blood on their hands, into the official structure of the government. In fact, former militia commanders and alleged war criminals formed the backbone of the post-Taliban administration and are still playing influential roles in the country's politics. At the time that the transitional government was established, it was believed that any attempt to bring these individuals to justice would jeopardize the fragile political process. But contrary to the hope for reform, many of these figures and groups continued to commit human rights abuses with impunity.

1. The report, *A Call for Justice*, is available at the website of the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission, <http://www.aihrc.org.af>.

Attempts to reform and strengthen the justice system have produced few tangible results. The traditional perception of rampant corruption and lack of impartiality in the Afghan justice system is compounded by widespread corruption in the justice and security institutions. Furthermore, there are many parts of the country where justice and the rule of law is virtually non-existent and perpetrators of human rights abuses occupy key positions of power and continue to act with impunity. The present Afghan judicial system lacks the capacity to address crimes and losses of this magnitude. Cases of serious human rights abuses committed since the fall of the Taliban regime have yet to be investigated and prosecuted.

Many government institutions and officials who are meant to provide security and justice and protect the human rights of the people are viewed by ordinary Afghans as major sources of insecurity and injustice. A survey by the Human Rights Research and Advocacy Consortium in 2004 found that victims across the country often do not trust the people who are authorized to dispense justice. Many respondents asserted that they do not see major differences between former militias and the newly trained national police force. The domination of justice and law enforcement agencies by former militiamen and factional commanders remains a key contributor to the pervasive sense of insecurity throughout the country.²

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Based on the findings of the reports and surveys, the Afghanistan government in consultation with the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) and the AIHRC developed a plan of action for peace, reconciliation, and justice which was approved by the cabinet in December 2005 and officially launched a year later. The plan, which was to span a three-year period, includes five key actions: acknowledgement of the suffering of the Afghan people through symbolic measures, institutional reform, truth seeking and documentation, promoting reconciliation and national unity, and the establishment of accountability mechanisms. Despite the strong emphasis on the need to maintain stability and ensure reconciliation, the Afghan government has committed itself to an action plan that ends amnesty for perpetrators of war crimes, crimes against humanity, and other gross violations of human rights.

However, the Afghan government has displayed a chronic lack of political will to implement the plan. Except for some symbolic moves, it has failed to fulfill its main obligations. The three-year timeframe for the action plan has expired, and there are few signs that the state will honor its commitments.

It is increasingly apparent that many of Afghanistan's problems, including the growing insurgency, are being fed by a prevailing culture of impunity, weak or absent rule of law, and corrupt and abusive state institutions, particularly at the provincial and district levels. This is because the lack of accountability for past and present human rights abuses deprives the Afghan state and its international partners of the political and moral authority that is necessary to win and maintain the confidence of the Afghan population.

2. *Take the Guns Away*, Human Rights Research and Advocacy Consortium, September 2004, <http://www.afghanadvocacy.org>.

TOWARDS A CULTURE OF ACCOUNTABILITY

In the face of a growing insurgency and fears of public disengagement from the political process, the international community has come to recognize the urgent need to tackle corruption, improve the rule of law, and negotiate a political settlement with the insurgents. However, these issues can only be dealt with effectively if they are placed within the larger context of the political, social, and historical realities of the country. Corruption can only be addressed if it is viewed as part of the pervasive culture of impunity and weak rule of law, and a political accommodation with the insurgents can only be reached if it is based on a solid foundation of justice and meaningful reconciliation. The past eight years have clearly shown that short-sighted political compromises and power politics are not the solutions. Peace, stability, and democracy can best be achieved and sustained when Afghanistan makes a clear break with its past — when the Afghan government, vigorously supported by its international partners, make it a priority to replace the culture of impunity with a culture of accountability.

Impunity and Instability: An Unbroken Cycle

Abdul Jalil Benish

Impunity has a long history in Afghanistan. Over a century ago, King Amir Abdur Rahman massacred the Hazaras and Uzbeks of Afghanistan and confiscated their property. But in return, he was honored as the founder of the new Afghanistan. King Zahir, who during his 40-year rule did little to develop Afghanistan, is celebrated as “the Father of the Nation.” The *mujahidin* who, in Kabul alone, murdered nearly 60,000 civilians were honored as Afghanistan “freedom fighters,” while the Communists who were indiscriminately killing civilians were considered a “peoples’ party” (Hizb Khalq). Mullah Omar, the leader of the Taliban, whose suicide bombings killed worshipers in mosques, earned the title of “Leader of the Faithful.” Tragically for the Afghan people, this pattern continues.



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IMPUNITY PREVAILS

December 10, Human Rights Day, is celebrated each year throughout the world to honor the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). On that day in 2006, after approving the Transitional Justice Action Plan, President Hamid Karzai proclaimed December 10 “War Victims Day” in Afghanistan. The same day, the President, while watching a documentary on the human cost of war, shed tears and expressed his deep concerns and sympathy for the victims¹.

Exactly a year later, while commemorating the victims, the President acknowledged his inability to take decisive action against suspects of war crimes, stating, “The government of Afghanistan is not able to punish the war criminals and violators of human rights.”² In this meeting, he also linked past criminal suspects to foreigners.

However, during the first press conference following his reelection, the President — regarding the presence of the suspects in the new government — stated, “Afghans have been labeled in different ways, but today is not the time to repeat old issues. Afghans are not going to be deceived by foreigners anymore, since these issues cause a split.”³

1. Abdul Jalil Benish, “Only Shedding Tears is Not Enough,” December 23, 2006, <http://www.watchafghanistan.org>.

2. BBC Persian, http://www.bbc.co.uk/persian/afghanistan/story/2007/12/071209_k-a-afghan-human-rights.shtml.

3. *The Truth*, An Afghan Monitoring Bi-weekly Newsletter, Issue 8, October 30, 2009, <http://www.watchafghanistan.org>.

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The conduct of the Afghan Parliament, or “house of the people,” tells a similar story. On January 31, 2007, Parliament approved a bill titled “the National Reconciliation Manifesto,” which declared general impunity for all suspects of past war crimes. Meanwhile, the country’s judicial branch suffers from poor professional capacity, widespread corruption, and the lack of independence.

In Helmand — one of Afghanistan’s troubled provinces — an assailant attacked a local commander named “Khano,” killing him and 23 civilians. Subsequent investigations showed that the attacker had filed a suit against Commander Khano, but had resorted to violence due to the lack of access to justice.⁴ The case of Commander Khano is not an exception. Tracking most of the many cases of insecurity in the country leads us to facts similar to those of the Commander Khano case.

THE COST OF IMPUNITY

A survey conducted by the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission regarding the implementation of justice on past crimes showed that 86.8% of the population supports securing justice, 76.4% of the population thinks that prosecuting the criminals results in an improvement of security, and 90% want perpetrators of human rights to be removed from government posts.⁵ Ignoring the demands of such an overwhelming majority of the population inevitably will result in their disaffection from the government. Such popular disaffection, in turn, is likely to cause an upsurge in vigilantism resembling the Khano case. The fact that most major past criminal suspects occupy high-level government posts merely compounds this problem.

Impunity in Afghanistan is like an unwritten law which benefits the wealthiest and most powerful criminals.

Impunity is prevalent not just with respect to war criminal suspects but for suspects of all crimes, including members of the most dangerous narcotics smuggling mafia, kidnappers, and corrupt high-level government officials. Impunity in Afghanistan is like an unwritten law which benefits the wealthiest and most powerful criminals.

Impunity is the avoidance of justice, which lies at the heart of security. Indeed, security without justice is very fragile. On the other hand, securing justice is an essential element of securing peace and stability. Thus, there exists a direct link between impunity, justice, and security. It is highly unlikely that peace can be achieved by ignoring the desire of 86.8% of the Afghan population for justice.

Impunity also encourages the commission of more crimes. When criminals of any type are not prosecuted, this usually results in the repetition and increased level of crime. As we know very well, most organized criminals or insurgents have criminal records. Declaring general impunity or introducing impunity-based policies for powerful criminals has a direct, negative impact on stability.

4. Abdul Jalil Benish, “Transitional Justice in Afghanistan: End or New Beginning?” February 20, 2007, <http://www.watchafghanistan.org>.

5. AIHRC, “Call for Justice,” January 29, 2005, <http://www.aihrc.com.af>.

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A CRUEL JOKE

There is a joke that goes: “One who kills two persons is imprisoned, one who kills 200 people is sent to the madhouse, and one who kills 20,000 people is invited to the peace conference.” Unfortunately, Afghanistan is a good example of such an unpleasant joke, for those who brought about human insecurity are security providers, those who were infamous for breaching laws are the law-makers, those who were notorious thieves are now keepers of the treasury, those who were accused of massacring people are their representatives, and those who were accused of destroying the capital city are considered national heroes.

II. Security: The Interplay of Domestic and External Forces

How the Guests Became an Enemy: Afghan Attitudes towards Westerners

Since 2001

Kate Clark

More than five years of gruelling insurgency has made it difficult to remember that, in 2001, the American military intervention was largely welcomed by Afghans. The national currency rose in value when it became clear there would be outside intervention and, for several years, Afghans across the country demanded the deployment of foreign forces in their areas. In June 2001, at the Emergency Loya Jirga, the nation's representatives gave their biggest round of applause, not to the newly mandated leader, Hamid Karzai, or the former King, Zahir Shah, but to the British officer who had led the deployment of foreign troops to the capital, General John McColl.

In October 2001, when the American bombing of Kabul began, people said they were relieved. They had experienced far worse violence in the mid-1990s when Afghan *mujahadin* factions laid waste to a third of the capital in the random rocketing of civilian areas. In 2001, Kabulis saw how the US Air Force bombed Taliban targets and al-Qa'ida houses with precision. The inevitable, but occasional mistake which led to Afghan civilians being killed was taken with a spirit of patience. People hoped these sacrifices would end a quarter of a century of bitter conflict and that foreign intervention would bring peace, an end to isolation, and easier economic times. Most Taliban went home in 2001, hoping for just that; it would be several years before armed opposition to the foreign troops and the US-backed government really got going.

The popularity of this Western military intervention in a Muslim country with a historical antipathy to invaders was extraordinary. However, the goodwill towards the West, particularly the United States, was underpinned by history; the United States had supported the jihad after the Soviet Union occupied Afghanistan in 1979 and was assumed to be friendly. Even the Taliban, when in government, had seemed genuinely perplexed to be criticized by the nation which had armed the *jihadis* of the 1980s.

Afghanistan had been strangely isolated in the Muslim world. Salafi Arab fighters who had come to support the jihad against the Soviet occupation and later to support the Taliban had given Arabs a bad name — they were perceived to look down on Afghan people and Afghan Islam. Pakistanis were particularly disliked because Islamabad was blamed for meddling in Afghanistan, and the Iranians were only slightly less castigated. “We don't really think of non-Afghans as proper Muslims,” a friend explained.



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Before 2001, very few Afghans had heard of Palestine — even though the Israeli occupation had been the totemic issue among Muslims for decades. It is now common to hear Afghans routinely linking their fate with that of the Palestinians, Iraqis, and Kashmiris, and speaking about Afghanistan as part of a global community of Muslim believers (the *umma*) which is being attacked by the West. This penetration of standard Islamist ideology is due partly to exposure to external media. It also seems to have become a useful way for Afghans to explain what has happened to their country since 2001.

The longstanding goodwill towards Westerners, which even manifested itself among some Taliban during their time in government, has certainly now been destroyed, eliminated by the failures of the 2001 intervention — the ongoing war and the corrupt government which the West is seen as supporting. Working in today's Afghanistan, I have to assume that in most places, there will be people who would like to kidnap or kill me because I am a foreigner. Being a journalist or a humanitarian worker is no protection. We are now largely classed with the foreign armies as non-Afghan, non-Muslim, and hostile. Where I know people or have an introduction, or in poorer and more isolated areas which have seen only a little of the Western aid circus and no large foreign troop deployments, people remain friendly, but generally there has been a sea-change in attitudes since 2001.

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Before 2001, I travelled widely in Afghanistan, crossing frontlines and sleeping in isolated guest houses several days' travel from a city or town. The default response to a foreigner was hospitality. There were always dangers — bandits, gangs, landmines, and, in certain phases of the war, rockets and mortars. During the times when the Afghan norms of warfare broke down, Westerners might be shot and robbed by militiamen and very occasionally, foreign women were raped. However, these were, more or less, the same dangers that Afghan civilians faced. Indeed, foreigners were less likely to be deliberately harmed. The value which Muslims, in general, and Afghans, in particular, place on guests meant that we tended to be protected. Except for the Communist era (1978-1992), when there was a Cold War hostility to Westerners, foreign journalists, and aid workers have managed to work alongside pretty much every faction in the civil war, including Islamist and religiously conservative groups. Until recently, Westerners had rarely, if ever, been *targets* in Afghanistan.

The Taliban in government were xenophobic, but still treated foreign journalists with polite formality. When I tackled subjects which the regime wanted to keep quiet — civilian massacres, evidence of al-Qa'ida camps — officials became bullying, but still in a strangely polite way. They put pressure on me by threatening my Afghan staff and contacts. The only genuine menace I encountered directly came from foreign fighters, who would issue vicious but empty threats. Westerners, like al-Qa'ida radicals, were classed by the Taliban government as guests and were not to be harmed.

The transformation in how Afghans view Westerners developed gradually, as Afghan patience and optimism has been worn away. Since about 2003/4, we have become targets of the Taliban insurgency. Anger and suspicion towards the

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West has become widespread, extending well beyond Taliban strongholds to Afghans who both oppose the Taliban and hate the foreigners. Afghans ask why the United States and other Western countries have backed a government whose corruption is the main cause of opposition, why it allows commanders and security officials to abuse citizens with impunity, why there is so little to show for the billions of dollars of aid money that have been spent, and why the foreign armies keep killing civilians.

The Taliban now wholeheartedly use international jihadist discourse, employing imagery completely alien to Afghan history: They are fighting a jihad against “Crusaders” and “the Jewish and Christian armies and their Afghan slaves” who want to “eliminate Islam.” Afghans, both pro- or anti-Taliban, now find conspiracy theories a useful way to try to make sense of the situation, believing the Americans are deliberately causing unrest in Afghanistan or that London is running the Taliban.

For a journalist, the consequences of this rift are deeply troubling. How can you report on a conflict which you can only safely witness from one side? Western policymakers should be even more worried and for Afghans, of course, it has been a disaster. Opportunities to end chronic conflicts like the Afghan civil war are rare: the American/Karzai project now looks set to fail, just as the *mujahadin*

and the Taliban failed to bring peace in 1992 and 1996. When the foreign troops and aid workers eventually go home, it seems likely that they will leave behind a nation disillusioned and, in parts, radicalized, where Westerners are no longer viewed as guests or friends. At best, we have come to be seen as weak and incompetent, at worst, as enemies and invaders.

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Post-Soviet Pakistani Interference in Afghanistan: How and Why

Najib Lafraie

The monumental defeat of the Soviet Red Army in Afghanistan and its withdrawal in 1988-89 and the collapse of the pro-Moscow communist regime in Kabul in April 1992 did not usher in an era of peace and stability for the Afghan people. The fighting among the former *mujahidin* groups in the first half of the 1990s and the rise of the Taliban and resistance against them in the second half of the decade have been generally referred to as a “civil war.” A more appropriate term, however, would be “*imposed* civil war.” If not for Pakistan’s encouragement and support for certain Afghan groups to wage war, the situation would have been entirely different.

The disengagement of both the Soviet Union and the United States from Afghanistan allowed Pakistan to almost totally replace interference from the North with interference from the South in the 1990s. (Iran and Uzbekistan also interfered in Afghanistan, though their meddling paled in comparison to that of Pakistan.) It is important to emphasize that Pakistani meddling in Afghanistan dated from before the 1979 Soviet invasion. Migration of the Afghan Islamists as a result of President Mohammad Daoud’s persecution in the mid-1970s provided the Pakistani government with an opportunity to use them to hit back at the rival Afghan government. Among those Islamists, who later became leaders and prominent members of the anti-Soviet resistance movement, were two young men who chose opposite directions. While Ahmad Shah Massoud distrusted the Pakistanis and kept his distance once he realized their designs, Gulbuddin Hekmatyar became a trusted friend and ally. Massoud returned to Afghanistan in early 1979 and did not visit Pakistan again for more than a decade. Hekmatyar visited Afghanistan from time to time but stayed mostly in Pakistan. He received the lion’s share from the international assistance distributed by the Pakistani Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) and called for an Afghanistan-Pakistan confederation when Soviet withdrawal became imminent.

The ISI’s relationship with Masoud and Hekmatyar was at the heart of the post-Soviet Pakistani interference in Afghanistan and a major cause of the imposed civil war. Pakistan was hoping Hekmatyar, with all the financial and military assistance he had received, would be able to replace the Communist regime in Kabul. Massoud outmaneuvered Hekmatyar and the ISI both politically and militarily. Through skillful negotiations, he forced the Kabul regime to announce its readiness to surrender unconditionally. Instead of going it alone, however, he asked the resistance leadership in Peshawar to form a government and take power in Kabul. Hekmatyar and the ISI, who were planning a solo



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takeover to be followed by an offering of minor shares to others, were put in a dilemma. They could not openly oppose the formula agreed upon by the resistance leaders despite being unhappy that Hekmatyar was not offered the leadership role. Thus, Hekmatyar's representative signed the Peshawar Agreement while he himself was hatching another plan in the vicinity of Kabul.

Hekmatyar's plan was to launch a coup in Kabul with the help of a faction of the Communist regime which was not happy with the unconditional surrender. Unfortunately for him, Massoud learned about the coup plot and managed to insert his forces into Kabul in time, acting as the Defense Minister of the transitional authority formed in Peshawar. The coup attempt failed, and Hekmatyar was prevented from infiltrating Kabul by force. He decided to remain outside the capital, but nominated a loyalist to assume the position of Prime Minister. Ironically, it was during this time, when his Prime Minister was in the city, that he started launching rockets on Kabul. This was the beginning of the imposed civil war.

The ISI had a problem not only with Massoud, but with the whole government set-up. While living in exile, Burhanuddin Rabbani, the President, had generally toed the Pakistani line. But there were times when he had defied Pakistani wishes. This author remembers well how much pressure was exerted on Rabbani and other resistance leaders to declare their support for Shah Nawaz Tani's March 1990 coup, before its failure became apparent. In retrospect, it seems that Tani had acted in collaboration with Hekmatyar and the ISI. It was not evident then; nonetheless, Rabbani and other leaders steadfastly refused to accede to Pakistani demands. Rabbani also had defied Pakistan's taboo against Afghan resistance leaders' initiation of direct relationships with foreign countries. He led the resistance leaders' delegation to Washington to meet President Ronald Reagan in June 1986, despite the ISI's disapproval and Hekmatyar's outcry. He also led resistance delegations to meet with the Russians in Taif, Saudi Arabia, in December 1988 and in Moscow in November 1991.

Pakistan was unhappy with the Rabbani government's foreign policy as well. Since it had played host to millions of Afghan refugees and had facilitated international support for the resistance, Pakistan expected the new government in Kabul to look at Islamabad as a "big brother." This was not acceptable to the Rabbani government, which sincerely wanted to have close and friendly relations with Pakistan, but not at the cost of an independent foreign policy. Especially disturbing to the Pakistani government — and particularly to the ISI — was the new government's announcement that they wanted to open a new chapter in Afghanistan's relations with India, despite the Indian government's good relations with the former Communist regime. Pakistan took offense, even though the Rabbani government voiced strong support for the cause of Kashmiri Muslims. To the credit of the Indian Foreign Office, their diplomacy was mature enough to realize the delicate situation and never raise this issue with their Afghan counterparts.

In their desire to have a trusted ("puppet?") government in Kabul, Pakistan seemed to be pursuing certain "national

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interest” objectives. The notion of “strategic depth” was one of them. Afghanistan serving as strategic depth for Pakistan in case of an Indian attack was first proposed by General Mirza Aslam Beg, the then-Pakistani Army Chief of Staff. In a recent article in the *Pakistan Observer* (January 4, 2009), General Beg defends the idea and argues that the Soviet defeat in Afghanistan, Iran’s emergence as a strong player after its war with Iraq, and the end of Zia ul-Haq’s dictatorship in Pakistan had prepared the ground for the unity of these three Muslim countries “as the bastion of power, to defeat and deter the common enemies ... [and] achieve the essential element of ‘Strategic Depth.’” He blames the “enemies” for causing the civil war in Afghanistan to “defame and defeat” the unity initiative.

Establishing close relations with the newly independent Central Asian republics through Afghanistan may have been another reason for Pakistan’s desire to have a trusted friend in Kabul. After the disintegration of the Soviet Union, Pakistan found itself in competition with Iran and Turkey for the hearts and minds as well as the markets of the five Central Asian nations. However, Pakistan lacks direct borders with those countries and can reach them only through Afghanistan. Thus, having a friendly government in Kabul was essential for that purpose. However, peace and stability in Afghanistan was equally important. By pushing for a *trusted* friend in Kabul, Pakistan in fact acted to its own disadvantage. President Rabbani’s government was keen to promote Pakistan’s relations with Central Asia because it was in Afghanistan’s interest as well. Pakistan’s mistrust, however, led to the imposed civil war and the ensuing chaos and anarchy, turning close relations with Central Asia into an elusive dream for Pakistan.

As noted earlier, the first trusted friend that Pakistan wanted to install in Kabul was Hekmatyar. Massoud was unable to dislodge him from his strongholds in Char Asyab, south of Kabul. For three years, Hekmatyar targeted the city with tens of thousands of rockets that he had stockpiled and the new ones he received from the ISI. He also launched numerous ground attacks. The most serious one was in January 1994 in a joint operation with Abdur Rashid Dostom, the leader of a militia group formed during Najib’s regime and allied to Massoud until that point, and Abdul Ali Mazari, the leader of the Shi’ite Wahdat Party. Only the ISI could bring such strange bedfellows together!

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Once Pakistan realized Hekmatyar’s inability to attain power in Kabul, it designed a new plot. As Professor William Maley notes in his book, *The Afghanistan Wars*, General Naseerullah Babar, the then-Pakistani Interior Minister, can be considered the “Godfather” of the Taliban. However, soon after their emergence, the ISI also threw its weight behind them. ISI seemed not to have cut all ties to Hekmatyar, though. This author witnessed Hekmatyar’s genuine surprise that the Taliban had reached the gates of Kabul in late September 1996, a few months after he had finally agreed to enter Kabul as Prime Minister, and heard him murmur to the effect that the ISI had told him this would not happen. Apparently he had forgotten the old adage: “There are no permanent allies, no permanent enemies, only permanent interests!”

Repeating History: Parallels between *Mujahidin* Tactics and Afghanistan's Current Insurgency

Shahm Mahmood Miakhel

Since 1747, all of the invaders or occupiers of Afghanistan have made almost the same mistakes. All were obliged to leave Afghanistan, resulting in the downfall or demise of their empires. In general, Afghans are independent thinkers and believe their own way of life to be the best. Interfering in their day-to-day affairs brings animosity and hatred against their would-be rulers, occupiers, and invaders. Nor do Afghans accept the imposition of rulers or types of government which would clash with their basic values.

Unfortunately, most rulers and outsiders have tried, and failed, to bring changes in Afghanistan from Kabul; that is, they have assumed that the values and ways of life that prevail in the capital or the few other major cities are shared throughout the country. In reality, urban life is totally different from that in the *atraf* (rural areas) of Afghanistan. In most cases, Afghans from rural areas do not feel at home in cities. Afghans from rural areas who immigrated to Pakistan, Iran, and other parts of the world have tried to maintain their traditional ways of life even in other countries, at least for the first generation. The differences between urban and *atraf* life in Afghanistan is depicted quite well in the 1980s Pakhto/Pashto film *Da Kundai Zoy* [Son of a Widow]. The protagonist, Mr. Maqsudi, alias Shadgul, is a widow's son who leaves his village to seek a new life in Kabul. In his native village, he had heard many tales of city life (e.g., meeting girls, drinking alcohol, etc.). Struggling unsuccessfully to adjust to city life, Shadgul ends up in the 'Ali Abad psychiatric hospital in Kabul.



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Outsiders always installed weak allies to achieve their goals. The British Empire supported a weak member of the royal family, Shah Shuja, who didn't have sufficient public support to rule Afghanistan. In the end, the Afghans defeated the British army and killed Shah Shuja. Even though the British had a relatively good understanding of the Afghan polity, especially the Pakhtun/Pashtun tribes with whom they had dealt on the frontier, their policy in Afghanistan and in the region generally was based on the principle of "divide and rule." It became difficult for them to please every tribe or individual, and their alliances with various tribes shifted quite regularly. A tribe or an elder was pro-British one day, but anti-British the next. Eventually, the British gave up their efforts to control Afghanistan and accepted it as a buffer zone between British India and the Czarist Russian Empire, until Afghanistan finally achieved its independence from British influence in 1919. Thereafter, the British didn't support the popular and progressive government of King Amanullah Khan, which they deemed a threat to British India. Instead, they

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supported weak and divisive allies and helped spread propaganda through local mullahs that King Amanullah had become an infidel, which eventually led to his being toppled and seeking asylum in Europe.

After the Communist coup in 1978, the Soviet Union repeated the British mistakes, supporting a group loyal to them who did not respect local values and tried to impose Marxist principles on the people. This practice produced one failed puppet government after another, culminating in the collapse of Dr. Najibullah's government in 1992.

From 1992 until 2001, Afghanistan's neighbors also tried to support puppet governments in Afghanistan; however, their policies, too, failed. The Afghan people cautiously accepted the Bonn Agreement of 2001, regarding it as a starting point for establishing an inclusive government that would respect Afghan values. Yet their hopes proved misplaced. The Afghan government and the international community were more effective in deploying hollow slogans than in delivering upon their promises to help bring about prosperity, justice and democracy. Meanwhile, warlords, organized criminal networks, and human rights violators gained political and economic power. On a cultural level, if we look at the programs broadcast by Afghanistan's television networks, we find Hindi, Iranian, Pakistani, and English dramas, songs, and serials — which are far from embodying traditional Afghan values and indeed provide ready ammunition for religious groups that oppose the government. Even the Ministry of Information and Culture and the Afghan Parliament tried to ban some of these programs, but have not been able to do so. Consequently, people in rural areas see the government of Afghanistan not as representing their concerns, but as being manipulated by outsiders. The government encourages this idea by painting itself as helpless and blaming the international community for most of the country's problems.

Recalling the *mujahidin* uprising against the Communist regime in 1978 and comparing it with the current situation, it is clear that the insurgents are using the same tactics.

Recalling the *mujahidin* uprising against the Communist regime in 1978 and comparing it with the current situation, it is clear that the insurgents are using the same tactics. In the earlier case, the *mujahidin* tried to discredit the government by calling it an infidel regime supported by the Soviet Union, thereby dissociating the government from the people. The *mujahidin* would attack government posts or targets and take shelter in the villages. Then, the government and the Soviet forces would target the villages to punish them for cooperating with the *mujahidin*. The latter used traditional folklore songs and distributed audio tapes to incite people against the Communist regimes.¹ One such folkloric poet in eastern Afghanistan, Rafiq Jan, would record his songs on audio cassettes and distribute them to the *mujahidin* to take to the front. The Taliban and Afghanistan Government Enemies (AGEs) today are using these same tactics. They retreat to the villages, which leads to counter-attacks that cause civilian casualties. The more civilians die, the easier it is for insurgents to recruit. The Taliban also use the same kind of folkloric songs as the *mujahidin* did, though they have access to cell phone networks and distribute these folkloric songs with videos of fighting scenes.

1. For further reference, see David Edwards, *Before Taliban: Genealogy of the Afghan Jihad* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2002).

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Just recently, I saw a clip of these songs on the phone of a local person in Kunar province. Even though such people are uneducated, they know how to transfer these songs from one phone to another through Bluetooth technology. Thanks to China, these phones are cheap enough that even relatively poor people can afford them.

The following poem entitled *Pat* or *Ezat* (honor), which was composed and sung by someone who calls himself “Watan-mal” (Patriotic), and accompanied by visual combat scenes, is instructive. This kind of poetry, sung without musical instruments, was allowed during the Taliban regime. The poem professes that death is better than living without honor:²

I would prefer death rather than living with humiliation,
I denounce slavery, I denounce it.

If I do not have honor, I denounce (such life),
I denounce slavery, I denounce it.

I would prefer death rather than living with humiliation,
I denounce slavery, I denounce it.

If people call me a puppet, I denounce it,
I denounce slavery, I denounce it.

I denounce such *chapan* (long coat), *waskat* (vest) and *qara qul* (skin cap),³
I denounce slavery, I denounce it.

I would prefer death rather than living with humiliation,
I denounce slavery, I denounce it.

If someone is against my beloved Islam, I denounce it,
I denounce slavery, I denounce it.

I denounce disobedience to my religion,
I denounce slavery, I denounce it.

I would prefer death to living with humiliation,

2. For further information on Pakhtunwali and honor, see Shahm Mahmood Miakhel, “The Importance of Tribal Structures and Pakhtunwali in Afghanistan: Their Role in Security and Governance,” in Arpita Basu Roy, ed., *Challenges and Dilemmas of State-building in Afghanistan: Report of a Study Trip to Kabul* (Shipra Publications, 2008), pp. 97-110.

3. The references connect the poem to Afghan President Hamid Karzai, who wore these items of clothing to create a symbolic connection to different ethnic groups.

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I denounce slavery, I denounce it.

If men and women are sitting together, I denounce it,
I denounce slavery, I denounce it.

I denounce such kind of law, republic and democracy,
I denounce slavery, I denounce it.

I would prefer death to living with humiliation,
I denounce slavery, I denounce it.

If they call my women (*tor sari*) to go out (of the country), I denounce it,
I denounce slavery, I denounce it.

I denounce such kind of hopes and wishes,
I denounce slavery, I denounce it.

I would prefer death to living with humiliation,
I denounce slavery, I denounce it.

If there is no pious Talib (in power), I denounce it,
I denounce slavery, I denounce it.

I denounce saluting those who obey strangers (foreigners),
I denounce slavery, I denounce it.

I would prefer death to living with humiliation,
I denounce slavery, I denounce it.

I denounce such a kingdom that I am begging,
I denounce slavery, I denounce it.

Oh Watanmal, I denounce such a humiliating life,
I denounce slavery, I denounce it.

I would prefer death to living with humiliation,
I denounce slavery, I denounce it.

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Strikingly, AGE's use of this poem to incite people has been more effective than the heavily funded strategic communications efforts of coalition forces to "win hearts and minds."

CONCLUSION

Notwithstanding their ideological and other differences, both the Soviet Union in the late 1970s and 1980s and the US-led, primarily Western, coalition since the 2001 military intervention followed similar policies. These policies were, and are, based on the false assumption that prevailing attitudes and behaviors in urban areas are uniformly shared in rural parts of the country. These policies supported individual rights against the traditional communal values of Afghans. The US and its coalition partners would do well to ensure, albeit belatedly, that their policies are mindful of, and attuned to, these transcendent values of family, personal relationships, and honor. Failing to do so will lead them to defeat, as it did Britain and the Soviet Union, and will perpetuate the tragedy of Afghanistan.

Via Afghanistan: Regional Influences

G. Rauf Roashan

Afghanistan lies at the crossroads of West, South, and Central Asia. Throughout history, she has both gained and suffered because of her strategic location. Civilizations, religions, great conquerors, and philosophies have crossed over Afghanistan every which way. During the colonial era, Afghanistan was considered the key to the Indian subcontinent. For this reason, regional and major world powers have long sought to control, neutralize rival plans, or assert their own influence over the country. The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 triggered a 30-year period of intense geopolitical rivalry in which Pakistan and Iran, far from being idle onlookers, have promoted their own interests and agendas.

PAKISTAN

During most of Afghanistan's decade-long fight against Soviet occupation, Pakistan was ruled by General Zia ul-Haq, who sought to use the Afghan crisis for his own political purposes in Pakistan. He decided to support the seven Afghan *mujahidin* groups. He welcomed more than five million Afghan refugees, whose presence he then used to attract humanitarian assistance from the world at large. This assistance was delivered to the government of Pakistan, and Pakistani officials were in charge of its distribution. A considerable amount of the aid benefited Pakistanis rather than the needy Afghans. The Pakistani government also was at the receiving end of the military support to the *mujahidin*, especially through Egypt and Saudi Arabia. The long years of the Afghan Jihad served as a period during which General Zia ul-Haq renewed most of his military equipment from the supplies intended for Afghan freedom fighters.

Meanwhile, Pakistan's Intelligence Services, the ISI, gained in power and status, so much so that it was entrusted with making decisions regarding the Afghan *mujahidin's* war tactics as well as which leader to support and how. The ISI made no attempt to unify the Afghan *mujahidin* groups. It also was given freedom to plan for a Pakistan-friendly government in Kabul (i.e., a government subordinated to Islamabad).

General Zia ul-Haq also hoped that Afghan friendship would serve to support Pakistan in its conflict with India. He calculated that the implantation of an extremist Islamic regime in Kabul would result in Afghanistan being more tightly bound to Pakistan. Zia planned to capitalize on this relationship to obtain more financial help from the rich Arab states of the Gulf. To do this, however, he had to show the Islamic countries that as the head of one of the relatively advanced Islamic nations, Pakistan was strictly ap-



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Roashan...

plying Islamic principles in its jurisprudence. He helped push the legal system in Pakistan towards Islamic *Shari'a* and authored laws that according to his followers were truly Islamic. Naturally, this had deep effects on the social life of the masses in Afghanistan as well. Pakistani Islamist *madradas* thrived, enlisting not only Pakistanis, but mostly young Afghan boys from refugee camps in Pakistan. This group later formed under the auspices of the ISI and under the eyes of its American advisors, the movement that is known as Taliban, or seekers of Islamic knowledge.

The sudden and dramatic death of Zia in a plane crash left a vacuum that was not successfully filled by the civilian government that followed him. The military and especially its ISI wing fell into the hands of another general, General Pervez Musharraf. He followed the same pattern of staging a coup, holding power as the supreme commander of the military and later staging a so-called election through which he became the President of Pakistan. In all of this, Musharraf enjoyed the loyalty of the ISI and therefore assigned due importance to it. By this time the ISI had become a very powerful organization with profound links to extremist movements in the country which it supported.

On the other hand, Pakistan is still the key to security in Afghanistan and the region. She must prove to the world at large that she is a viable country...

Like its predecessors, Musharraf's government too did not want to see a strong, fully independent government in Afghanistan. To that end, the Pakistani military aligned with extremists, including the Pakistani Taliban in order to export their ideology into Afghanistan. During the first Islamic regime in Afghanistan that replaced the Communist regime of Najib, Pakistani military and civilian officials were assigned within the government to imitate the Pakistani system of administration. Later, after the toppling of the Taliban regime in Afghanistan, Pakistani intervention paved the way for extremists to cross the border into Afghanistan, commit acts of violence there, and return to the safe haven of the tribal belt. This continued despite the Pakistani government's claim to be an equal partner in the fight against terror in Afghanistan. Diplomatic efforts by the United States did little to rectify the situation.

The post-Musharraf civilian government of Pakistan has pledged to cooperate to counter extremism. However, the seed of terror and extremism that Pakistan had sown in Afghanistan has taken root in its own land. The powerful Pakistani military has found itself struggling to fight extremism effectively in Pakistan itself. On the other hand, Pakistan is still the key to security in Afghanistan and the region. She must prove to the world at large that she is a viable country, although she was put together hurriedly by bringing many differing nations of Pashtuns, Baluchis, Sindhis, and Punjabis together in an artificial country.

IRAN

Iran's recent, turbulent past has witnessed extremism as well. In 1979, the secular monarchy was toppled by an extremist clergy. In the name of Islam and democracy, a regime developed in Iran that seems to serve neither cause effectively. Sitting on great oil wealth and claiming an ancient culture and history, Iran sees itself poised to export its anti-secular type of governance throughout the region.

Iran has a broad set of interests in Afghanistan. Economic and especially cultural domination of the region have been the long-standing dreams of Iranian regimes. It is more so now than ever. Opening a natural gas market to the sub-continent has been a strong incentive. Supporting the Shi'ites of Afghanistan is another. Iran also has a long-standing interest in the waters of the River Helmand that flows in the southwest of Afghanistan, draining in the border region in Sistan basin.

An Afghanistan deeply in trouble and at war constituted a great invitation for Iranian intervention. During the very hard days of the fight for freedom from Soviet occupation and later during the *mujahidin* regime, Iran maintained its presence in the country, so much so that even when a hot war was going on in Afghanistan against the Soviet Union, high-ranking Iranian foreign ministry officials would travel clandestinely to Afghanistan for talks with minority groups. Iran, at times, openly sided with Afghan leaders of the Northern Alliance and Wahdat Party factions. For a number of years, Iran provided refuge for Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, a controversial *jihadi* leader of the Islamic party. The Iranian regime thus sought "natural allies" among the minority groups of Afghanistan.

Making political gains in Afghanistan's muddy waters seemed easy and profitable, so Iran seized the opportunity to try to influence the Afghan leadership friendly to it. Supporting extremist tendencies in neighboring Afghanistan would give credence to Iran's own strict Islamic rules.

Yet Iran did not play its other card, namely the refugees from Afghanistan, well. While Pakistan, for its own benefit, tried to influence the refugees by providing them breathing space, Iran restricted all Afghan refugees, including those who sought helping hands from fellow Shi'ites. And unlike Pakistan, Iran did not receive extensive foreign economic aid to help support the almost two million Afghan refugees on its soil. Nor did Iran receive any military help to funnel to Afghan *mujahidin*.

Iran restricted all Afghan refugees, including those who sought helping hands from fellow Shi'ites.

But perhaps, one of the most important issues that affect Iran is the illegal trafficking of drugs that find their way to Iran both from Afghanistan and Pakistan. The problem of drug addiction has deeply affected Iran in the past almost half a century, and with the unrest in Afghanistan and access to arms by the smugglers, the problem has dramatically increased. Iran cannot ignore this profound threat and thus is interested deeply in a solution to the poppy production in Afghanistan.

CONCLUSION

Afghanistan, with a population of about 30 million, is a relatively small country affecting the interests of many countries in a big way. Involvement by Pakistan and Iran in the affairs of Afghanistan has done little to benefit the people of Afghanistan and has backfired on them. Presently, there is a great need for a plan to regulate all foreign activities in Afghanistan in a meaningful and coordinated manner that contributes to stability in the country and the surrounding region.

Mullah Omar Wants You! Taliban Mobilization Strategies or Motivations for Joining the Insurgency

Ghulamreza Fazlinaiem and Nick Miszak

The Taliban insurgency in Afghanistan seemingly benefits from an unlimited reservoir of “foot soldiers” ready to take up the fight against the Afghan government and its international military supporters. The foot soldiers’ motivation is often attributed to ideology, poverty, and/or a lack of education. However, the ability of the Taliban insurgency to mobilize recruits is complex and driven by a mix of political, economic, and social factors.

While some motivations driving the Taliban foot soldiers are similar across Afghanistan, others are specific to a given local context. After all, Afghanistan is a complex country, and circumstances of how and why young men may join the insurgency are very much influenced by social relations that differ across provinces and districts.

Drawing on field research conducted in southern and central Afghanistan, two exemplary cases — the Tirin Kot district of Uruzgan province and the Chak district of Maidan Wardak province — are used to highlight the complex localized dynamics that drive young men to join the Taliban insurgency. The cases underline similarities and differences between these two regions, and the necessity to understand local issues when trying to understand, and possibly counter, Taliban recruitment methods.

TIRIN KOT, URUZGAN: POWER STRUGGLES AND POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC MARGINALIZATION

The Taliban insurgency in Tirin Kot is strongly shaped by a leadership conflict between the Populzai tribe of President Hamid Karzai and the Hotak tribe of Taliban leader Mullah Mohammad Omar.¹ Since Hamid Karzai came to power in late 2001, the Populzai tribe has been able to dominate local politics by appointing another Populzai as first Provincial Governor. In contrast, with the fall of the Taliban, the Hotak tribe lost the prominence it had enjoyed under the Taliban regime.

Yet the shifting power balance from the Hotak to the Populzai alone does not explain why the Hotak rejoined the Taliban insurgency. Predatory practices of the first governor of Uruzgan and associated Populzai leaders led to a systematic marginalization



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1. The Taliban leader Mullah Muhammad Omar was born in Deh Rawud District.

and alienation of non-Popalzai tribes, the Hotak tribe in Tirin Kot especially. In addition to direct harassment, arrests, and torture, Populzai leaders exploited their privileged connections with the new Afghan government and supporting international actors, in order to channel resources to their constituencies and offer employment opportunities to young men in the Afghan National Police, private security or reconstruction contracts. All this provided sufficient recruitment propaganda to Hotak leaders. Citing harassment and allegations of extortion at the hands of pro-government forces and continued civilian casualties facilitated the mobilization of young men against the government and foreign troops. In the eyes of the Hotaks in Tirin Kot, the Populzai are collectively guilty for the behavior of some of their leaders, which they use to justify the beheadings of ordinary Populzai travellers.

In addition, the Populzai are considered stooges of the Americans and “traitors,” since they enjoy the support of US military forces in Uruzgan. This allowed Hotak elders to add anti-foreign sentiments to their propaganda, making their cause appear more legitimate to the masses. This paradigm shows some similarities to the case of Chak.

Decades of Islamist political activism have left their mark on local institutions and the young men socialized in them.

CHAK, MAIDAN WARDAK: ISLAMIST AND NATIONALIST DISCOURSE AND THE ROLE OF CRIMINAL NETWORKS

“Afghanistan is occupied by America, we must liberate it.”

— Taliban insurgency slogan in Maidan Wardak.

In contrast to Tirin Kot, the insurgency in the Chak district cannot exploit tribal dynamics or political and economic marginalization. The mobilization of foot soldiers in this case rests largely on an Islamic and nationalistic discourse against “foreign occupiers” and cuts across tribal lines. Thus, the decision of Taliban foot soldiers to support the Taliban insurgency in Chak is much more similar to the jihad against the Soviet occupiers, only now the US, the former supporter of the *mujahidin*, is seen as the enemy. The Afghan government is considered a puppet of America much the same as the People’s Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) was viewed as a puppet of the Soviet Union, thus justified to be overthrown.

From the inception of the jihad in the early 1980s to the demise of the Taliban regime in late 2001, local *jihadi* factions, the Arab welfare foundation *Lijnat al-Dawa* and later the Taliban regime and their Pakistani affiliates, heavily invested in social services and religious education in Chak. Decades of Islamist political activism have left their mark on local institutions and the young men socialized in them. The implications have been far-reaching and provided the Taliban insurgency with a broad support base that allows them to draw foot soldiers from a wide range of social groups. Residents of the Chak district provide examples of medical doctors and engineers who abandoned their jobs in Kabul and joined the Taliban insurgency. A widely cited case tells the story of an electrician with a degree from Kabul University in 2006 who left his job with the Areeba telecommunications company in order to build Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) and explosive vests for suicide bombers.²

2. He was killed in 2008 when one of his bombs exploded in his house, killing also his mother, sister, and one brother.

The fact that education institutions in Chak are treated differently than elsewhere is illustrated by the fact that most schools remain open in Maidan Wardak, despite an overwhelming Taliban presence, while in Uruzgan, schools, students, and teachers are constantly targeted by the Taliban. Education in Uruzgan is associated with a disliked government, while in Wardak it is considered much more home-grown.

Furthermore, the Taliban insurgents in Chak district initially displayed a pragmatic incorporation of criminal networks into their insurgency that boosted the number of fighters (or boots on the ground).³ Mostly former *jihadi* fighters, they generally fight for greed. Many (or the majority of) criminal networks are essentially highway bandits flourishing in the absence of rule of law and security. Exploiting the weakness of the government, theft, highway robberies, and murder were more common occurrences before the Taliban insurgency resurfaced. While the Taliban promised to rid the local population of violence and criminality, they also showed pragmatism, by incorporating some of the criminal groups into their ranks only to jettison them once the insurgency gathered strength.

[T]he Taliban insurgency has understood how to exploit local grievances to their own advantage and how to frame their mobilizing ideology in a way that resonates with the local community and leadership ...

IN FORM OF A CONCLUSION

Both cases bring to light the underlying local dynamics that lead to a supply of Taliban foot soldiers to the insurgency. Poverty, and/or a lack of education are not the sole reason for young men to become Taliban foot soldiers. In the Chak district of the Maidan Wardak province, the mobilization is framed as a liberation struggle against an occupying force and a corrupt Afghan government. In Uruzgan, the political and economic marginalization of certain tribal groups facilitates the mobilization of young men by the community leadership.

In both cases, the Taliban insurgency has understood how to exploit local grievances to their own advantage and how to frame their mobilizing ideology in a way that resonates with the local community and leadership and provides the legitimacy to foot soldiers' actions. The cases highlight the necessity of a nuanced response by the Afghan government and international military forces to address the seemingly bottomless pit of Taliban foot soldiers. Understanding the local context and complex mix of political, economic, and social factors that leads to the mobilization of Taliban foot soldiers is a necessary step to addressing the Taliban insurgency.

3. This is also true of other areas in Afghanistan to varying degrees.

Intimidating, Assassinating, and Leading: Two Early *Mujahidin* Commanders

Reflect on Building Resistance Fronts

Michael Semple

Saleh Mohammad and Ezzatullah Atif¹ were among the angry young Afghans who, in the first three years after the 1978 coup, drove their government out of the countryside. Mobilizing the youth of their areas into clandestine networks and then refashioning these into *jabhas* (resistance fronts) was their first experience of leadership. Their successful mobilization laid the foundations of the war of attrition, which eventually defeated the Soviet Union and toppled its client government.

Through campaigns of intimidation and killing, they forced government officials and regime loyalists back to the city. They created a situation in which, beyond the city limits, no one dared openly cooperate with the government. Later, the government made periodic forays into the *mujahiddin*-infested villages, while the *mujahidin* used assassination and rocketing to project their power inside the cities' security perimeters. The countryside belonged to the likes of Ezzatullah and Saleh Mohammad, who not only built up their armed groups but for a while also dispensed justice.



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SALEH MOHAMMAD

On September 5, 1978, a young man studying in a mosque in Panjwai packed up his books and headed to Kandahar City to join the underground resistance to the un-Islamic government. Saleh Mohammad was an orphan from a village in the foothills of the Band-e Turkestan. His earliest memory of poverty is of begging for milk for a malnourished baby brother. For Saleh Mohammad, the six years he spent studying in Kandahar's mosques and *madrassas* had provided him with status, a peer group, and a means of survival. He was a classic *talib*. This country boy went on to establish a reputation as one of the top commanders of the jihad, his badge of honor a death sentence declared *in absentia* on national radio.

When he reached Kandahar City, Saleh Mohammad met up with fellow *talibs* who, five months after Taraki's coup, were already active in the resistance. The *talibs* were cliquish and, as guardians of the religion, had a real sense of being bound to form the vanguard against the alien government, long before the tribes embraced the jihad. For a year Saleh

1. This essay is based on the author's interviews with Saleh Mohammad and Ezzatullah Atif. They are better known by their *jihadi* aliases of Mullah Malang and Mullah Ezzat.

Simple...

Mohammad did “political work” — travelling throughout greater Kandahar to distribute anti-government propaganda, invite Muslims to join the resistance, and raise funds. Eventually government intelligence penetrated the *talibs*’ network, and Saleh Mohammad spent the brief period of Hafizullah Amin’s rule in Kandahar’s jail. Released after the arrival of the Soviets, Saleh Mohammad walked to Quetta and ten days later returned to fight. In the first half of 1980, he served a rapid apprenticeship in jihad, carrying a gun alongside Mawlvi Abdul Sattar, one of the early Kandahar commanders.

Then, in the summer of 1980, Saleh Mohammad struck out on his own. He moved to Malajat, a rural area adjoining Kandahar City, and started to build his own *jabha*. Saleh Mohammad chose Malajat because, from his days as a *talib*, he knew many householders who would take him in and give him shelter. He went there alone, and no other *mujahidin* groups were then active in the area. But “comrades have a way of finding each other,” and with forays to Panchwai and Arghandab, he located young men whom he knew from the *talibs*’ pre-war weekly social evenings. Within a year Saleh Mohammad found himself at the head of a group of 40 armed men.

In the first year, Saleh Mohammad and his comrades operated underground. They conducted guerrilla attacks by night and hid in the safe-houses by day.

In the first year, Saleh Mohammad and his comrades operated underground. They conducted guerrilla attacks by night and hid in the safe-houses by day. Although there were no other *mujahidin* groups in the area and the government was the dominant force, Saleh Mohammad could depend upon the population’s sense of Muslim solidarity for protection. In this stage of the struggle, they neutralized what remained of government influence in the villages of Malajat and the adjoining areas. “In Taraki’s period there were all sorts of government-formed Committees in the Kandahar villages. But the government did not arm them. At the start of Karmal’s period he gave them weapons and formed militias.” Saleh Mohammad and his group targeted anyone in the villages associated with the government, including the elders and tribal figures who had accepted government weapons. They posted threatening letters at night and conducted murderous ambushes. “Eventually all these people either left for the city or handed over their weapons to us.” And as Malajat was next to Kandahar, the new *mujahidin* used it as a base for raids into the city, assassinating Party members and officials in hit-and-run terror attacks.

After the group had severed the area’s links with the government, they established their front in a fixed base. Saleh Mohammad learned the techniques of fortifying *sanghars* and then taught these to the neighboring fronts. As the *mujahiddin* emerged from their underground phase, Saleh Mohammad started to take on more leadership functions. For a while in 1981 and 1982, he used to preside over *jirgas*, deciding minor disputes which people brought to him. Saleh Mohammad occupied the space which the government had vacated. His *mujahidin* had become the dominant power. But this was only a phase, because later a proper Islamic court was established in Panchwai, and, in any case, the intensifying conflict drove most of the population out of Malajat. The front made a transition to full-scale confrontation with the government. By the time of the Soviet withdrawal, Saleh Mohammad commanded 800 armed men in Malajat, Panjwai, Arghandab, and Shahwalikot.

Simple...

EZZATULLAH ATEF

In Paghman, 300 miles to the northeast of Saleh Mohammad's battleground, another Afghan "orphan" emerged as a commander and leader of his people. Ezzatullah recalled his sense of loss. "I was three years old when my mother died. If you lose your father, it is not so difficult, but if you lose your mother and have to grow up without her, then you resent the world."

Ezzatullah's family claims descent from Qais bin Lais, the original Arab proselytizer reputed to have brought Islam to Kabul, and family members played a prominent role in the resistance to the British in the Second Anglo-Afghan War. The family's status ensured that despite the loss of his mother, Ezzat was brought up in the family home and was able to attend high school.

Ezzat was 16 and studying in 11th grade when the Communists grabbed power. Khoja Musaffar Lycee was a much more politicized environment than Saleh Mohammad's pre-war Kandahar. Ezzat had witnessed the tussles of the *Ikhwanis*, Communists, and Maoists in student politics. He had heard speeches by Rabbani Atesh, an early inspiration of the Muslim Youth, and knew that Communist leader Hafizullah Amin was from the same valley. In the high school playground, Ezzat built up a schoolboy gang nicknamed the Yaran. The political factions each had a form of address. You called your associates "*rafique*" (comrade) if you were Communist and "*baradar*" (brother) if you were *Ikhwani*. Ezzat's gang used the super-informal "*yar*" or mate. The Yaran was a gang of mates, too relaxed to be *Ikhwani* and too Muslim to be Communist.

After the Communist coup, Ezzat started underground resistance against the government. He describes sneaking out of his first floor bedroom window at night and climbing back in undetected before his father rose for morning prayers. The charismatic schoolboy turned the Yaran into a clandestine terrorist group.

They started with *shab namas* for propaganda and intimidation. In the early days the Yaran reproduced their pamphlets with carbon paper and delighted in messages such as "death to spies." They raised money and bought and stole a few light weapons. Then they launched a terror campaign against anyone associated with the government in Paghman. First they went after Party members and officials, ambushing them outside their homes. By the end of 1979, those who had escaped assassination fled to the city, as it was no longer safe for them in the villages.

In Paghman too the government initially tried to control the villages through the numerous revolutionary committees, through arming militias, and through co-opting tribal elders as spies. The Yaran next targeted these collaborators, putting on shows of force in their villages, intimidating and assassinating until they broke from the government. Beyond the Company Bridge, the boundary of the city and Paghman, no official was safe, and any patrol risked ambush.

In Paghman too the government initially tried to control the villages through the numerous revolutionary committees, through arming militias, and through co-opting tribal elders as spies.

Simple...

For Ezzatullah too, once he had established himself as the leader of a group and had driven the government out of the area, the transition from hit and run attacks to a fixed *jabha* started with interaction with older *mujahidin* and a trip to Pakistan. Over time, an infusion of cash and weapons allowed him to build up a standing army of some 6,000 men. But alongside the military struggle, Ezzatullah also emerged as an *amir-e mantaqa* — a local chief of his home area. He became the senior figure in his Arab tribe and the dominant personality in his locality, to whom people looked for the resolution of disputes and protection from harassment by state or jihadi groups alike. Although Ezzat's military power declined after the collapse of the PDPA government in 1992, he continued to act informally as *amir-e mantaqa* in subsequent periods.

CONCLUSION

From 1978 to 1982, variants on the story of these two commanders were acted out by hundreds of others across Afghanistan. Men with the capacity to lead first assembled their peers then mobilized the population through appeals to the spirit of jihad and threats of violence. They systematically applied terror to separate state from population and neutralize all state efforts to reverse this process. For the rest of the jihad period, in the areas where this mobilization had taken place, a dualist system of Pale (government territory) and Beyond the Pale (*mujahidin* territory) prevailed. There was no question of government providing security for population Beyond the Pale. Government survived by defending the Pale.

But to appreciate the significance of the revolt by those who practiced intimidation and terror from 1978 to 1982, you have to consider their subsequent careers. Drawing upon the prestige and influence they had accumulated as *jihadi* commanders, Saleh Mohammad and Ezzatullah both went on to become pillars of post-2001 Afghan society. Ezzatullah became a property developer, tribal chief, and confidante of many figures inside the post-2001 government. Saleh Mohammad dabbled in business, was elected to Parliament from his native province, Badghis, and discovered a passion for reviving juniper and pistachio forests.

Twenty-five years after Saleh Mohammad packed up his books and Ezzatullah climbed out of his bedroom window, another generation of angry young Afghans invoked the spirit of jihad, resorted to the same instruments of intimidation and terror, and pushed the state back into the Pale. Some of their leaders have even been students of Saleh Mohammad. It remains to be seen whether the evolution of the conflict and political context eventually will allow the latest generation of Afghan rebels to apply their talents to peaceful leadership or even to reintegrating Pale and Beyond the Pale.

Twenty-five years after Saleh Mohammad packed up his books and Ezzatullah climbed out of his bedroom window, another generation of angry young Afghans invoked the spirit of jihad, resorted to the same instruments of intimidation and terror...

Land Grab in Sherpur: Monuments to Powerlessness, Impunity, and Inaction

Joanna Nathan

In September 2003, armed police and bulldozers violently ejected around 250 people from land in central Kabul and demolished their homes to make way for the lavish mansions of the freshly empowered elite.¹ Sherpur, as the area is known, lies in the shadow of the diplomatic enclave and as such is some of the most valuable land in the capital.

Amidst a public outcry, the fledgling Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC) spoke out strongly against the land-grab and released a list of 29 senior officials and powerful individuals,² including six cabinet ministers, the mayor of Kabul, and the governor of the central bank who had received plots. By other estimates — with ownership often obscured by the plot being given to powerful people's relatives — only four of the 32 cabinet ministers in the interim administration did not accept land.³

What the evictions in Sherpur made clear — literally *concrete*, as the new mansions sprang up — was that this was to be business as usual. New regimes over the ages had grabbed and redistributed land as patronage to their supporters, and nothing was going to change with the 2001 intervention. The international community would stand back and watch, as the men they had rearmed and re-empowered to drive out the Taliban, and continued to support militarily and financially, divided up the spoils of war right next-door to their embassies. This was the “light footprint” in action.

Sherpur was an area redolent in history, having been the site of the ill-fated British cantonment during the second Anglo-Afghan War in 1879. It remained largely military land, now in the hands of the Afghan Ministry of Defense, many of those driven off had been squatting for decades amidst the various conflicts.⁴ The Defense Minister,



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1. For accounts of events see “Adequate Housing as a Component of the Right to an Adequate Standard of Living,” Report by the Special Rapporteur, Miloon Kothari Addendum, Mission to Afghanistan (August 31-September 13, 2003), E/CN.4/2004/48/Add.2, March 4, 2004 and the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission, Annual Report: 2003-2004, p. 28.

2. Ron Synovitz, “Afghanistan: Land Grab Scandal in Kabul Rocks the Government,” Radio Free Europe, September 16, 2003; Pamela Constable, “Land Grab in Kabul Embarrasses Government,” *The Washington Post*, September 16, 2003.

3. “Housing Plan for Top Aides in Afghanistan Draws Rebuke,” *The New York Times*, September 23, 2003; Ron Synovitz, “Afghanistan: Land Grab Scandal in Kabul Rocks the Government,” Radio Free Europe, September 16, 2003 and Pamela Constable, “Land Grab in Kabul Embarrasses Government,” *The Washington Post*, September 16, 2003.

4. A Defense Ministry spokesman insisted that Fahim was simply acting in accordance with master plans for the city: “these houses are planned according to the master plan for Kabul. Marshall Fahim doesn’t have any intention to interfere in the plans of the municipal

Nathan...

Marshall Muhammad Fahim, was demonstrating his power and proffering patronage to his peers at a time when the Northern Alliance was at the very zenith of its post-2001 political and military power. Kabul's Deputy Mayor, Habibullah Asghary — who received a plot himself — explained that: “The Defense Ministry distributed the land to its commanders and high-ranking officials who defended our country and freedom.”⁵

Technocrats too, even those who had spent years abroad in well-paid jobs, claimed their piece of the action. Then-Central Bank governor (later Finance Minister) Anwar Ahady, freshly returned from a teaching position at Providence College in Rhode Island told the media that he was entitled to the land and denounced anyone who dared criticize the process, as participating in “political terrorism.”⁶

Technocrats too, even those who had spent years abroad in well-paid jobs, claimed their piece of the action.

Then-Education Minister Younus Qanooni (now Wolesi Jirga speaker) agreed, telling the same press conference that while state land was being transferred to individuals it was being done legally: “There is a difference between those who are given land by the current rulers under current laws and those who take land by force.”⁷ One of the very few Afghan officials to publicly condemn the move was then-Finance Minister Ashraf Ghani Ahmadzai, who correctly foresaw that “when land is taken like it was in Kabul a few days ago, this creates a crisis of governance.”⁸

The AIHRC led the way in exposing those involved in the scandal with its head Sima Samar and Commissioner Nader Nadery bravely and strongly speaking out. The UN Special Rapporteur on Housing and Land Rights, Miloon Kothari, was also coincidentally in Kabul and expressed deep disquiet — calling for dismissals. “Fahim, the minister of defense, is directly involved in this kind of occupation and dispossession. And ministers that are directly involved have to be removed,” he told the press.⁹

For this, Kothari was reproved by the UN's Special Representative of the Secretary General (SRSG), Lakhdar Brahimi, who clarified after his letter was made public that while they agreed in substance, individuals should not have been named publicly.¹⁰ The international diplomatic missions also preferred a “neutral” silence even as they provided the authorities in Kabul, in “Karzai ‘to stop officials’ land grab,” BBC, September 12, 2003.

5. Ron Synovitz, “Afghanistan: Land Grab Scandal in Kabul Rocks the Government,” Radio Free Europe, September 16, 2003.

6. Pamela Constable, “Land Grab in Kabul Embarrasses Government,” *The Washington Post*, September 16, 2003.

7. Ron Synovitz, “Afghanistan: Land Grab Scandal in Kabul Rocks the Government,” Radio Free Europe, September 16, 2003.

8. “Karzai ‘To Stop Officials’ Land Grab,” BBC.

9. Ron Synovitz, “Afghanistan: Land Grab Scandal in Kabul Rocks the Government,” Radio Free Europe, September 16, 2003.

10. His letter of reproof was publicly released by Qanooni at the press conference to back his claim. Brahimi then insisted that there was “absolutely no disagreement” with Kothari on substance but criticized the public naming of officials. Pamela Constable, “Land Grab in Kabul Embarrasses Government,” *The Washington Post*, September 16, 2003. A spokesman explained: “For the united Nations to make a statement of that important we need to have a lot of substance to justify it,” in “Press Briefing by Manoel de Almeida e Silva, Spokesman for the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Afghanistan,” September 18, 2003, available UN News Centre.

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military and financial backing to these same men.

Meanwhile, at the palace, President Hamid Karzai's staff insisted that it had all been done without his knowledge. However, the non-response — setting the stage for many scandals to come — was to create an “independent” investigative commission.¹¹ It completed a report in October 2003 which has never been publicly released.¹² The only tangible action was the removal of the Kabul police commander Abdul Bashir Salangi, who had led the forceful eviction, which resulted in reports of injuries. Although, in a maneuver foreshadowing the response to many a future outcry — he was immediately given another job in Wardak.

What emerged from the rubble of the simple mudbrick homes were tasteless mansions of sparkly jewel-bright clashing colors, mirrored glass, three-storey colonnades, and *faux* Greek pediments. They were modeled on the gaudy constructions that had sprung up in Peshawar during the decades of war — simply predicated on massive unaccountable cash flows — referred to by expats as “narcotecture.” Bulging damp patches along the external walls marked the poor quality of the construction with a lack of insulation meaning they are singularly unsuited to Kabul's harsh weather.¹³ This was, after all, about ostentatious display, rather than creature comforts.

Six years on, most of the new owners have completed their building work and foreign organizations — including embassies, media groups, UN agencies, and even rule of law projects — are moving in and rewarding their landlords with rents often well over \$10,000 a month. Fahim, having been dumped by President Karzai in 2004, looks set to return as Deputy President. His ally, Bashir Salangi — vetted out of the police force altogether in 2006 — has been appointed Governor of Parwan province.

The Sherpur evictions were a seminal event in puncturing the enormous hope that had surrounded the 2001 intervention. The resulting mansions serve as monuments to the powerlessness of ordinary Afghans and a daily reminder to Kabulis of the impunity of the new administration and international inaction in the face of it.

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11. Presidential Order No. 3861.

12. “World Chronicle,” United Nations, Program No. 938, recorded April 27, 2004. Guest: Miloon Kothari.

13. Anne Feenstra, “Kitschy Kabul Wedding Cake,” *Himal*, October 2008.

List of those people who received plots in Shirpoor area

No.	Name	Status	Number of plots
1	Mr. Ahady	Governor of the Afghanistan Bank	1
2	Habiba Sarabi	Minster of Women's Affairs	1
3	Khalique Fazel	Chair of Evaluation and Review Commission on State Industries	1
4	Marshal Fahim	Defense Minister	1
5	M Y Qanooni	Minister of Education	1
6	Kabul Mayor's Deputies	Deputies of Kabul Municipality	1
7	Hamid Seddiqi	Employee of Former King's Office	1
8	Hedayatulalh Dayani	Employee of Former King's Office	1
9	Malik	Possibly Mr. Karzai's Relative	1
10	H M Muhaqqeq	Planning Minister	1
11	Baba Jan	Commander	1
12	Haji Almas		1
13	Amanullah Guzar		8
14	Abdul Raheem	Minister of Justice	6
15	Haleem Khan		1
16	Shakir Kargar	Minister of Water and Power	1
17	Baba Jalandar		1
18	Gul Haidar		1
19	Commander Gada		1
20	Gen. Momen's Family		1
21	Gul Agha Sher Zoi	Minister of Urban Developent	1
22	Haji Ferozi	055 Corp's Commander	1
23	Haji Katib	MoD Employee	1
24	Muradi	Director of Planning of Kabul Municipality	1
25	Besmillah Khan	Deputy Defense Minister	1
26	Gen. Aziz		1
27	Mr. Jegdalik	Mayor of Kabul	1
28	Haji Qadir's Family		1
29	Dr. Taj Mohammad		1

Liberating Afghanistan

Robert D. Crews

Over the last three decades, foreign interventions have played a critical role in transforming Afghan society and integrating it into global politics. Among the countries torn apart by invasions and civil wars, Afghanistan is the only one to be shaped by direct military occupation at the hands of both Cold War superpowers. For roughly 18 of the past 30 years, foreign armies and political elites have dominated Afghan politics. Only 12 years separated the departure of Soviet troops in 1989 and the arrival of the Americans and their allies in 2001. But even during this tumultuous period of civil war, regional powers, joined by a host of transnational entities, from al-Qa'ida to energy corporations and aid agencies, mediated the contest for power within the borders of Afghanistan.

The period from 1979 to 2009 forms a unique period in which a succession of foreign actors set out to remake Afghans. They deployed different resources and ideologies and varying degrees of coercion in these projects. Yet these outsiders shared the assumption that their efforts would in fundamental ways liberate Afghans, freeing them from the fetters of the past — feudalism, poverty, and patriarchy — in short, everything these foreigners associated with “backwardness.” With the aid of the superpowers and, at key moments, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), Afghans would become “modern.”¹ These good intentions, the fruit of European Enlightenment thought, have fueled Central Asia’s Thirty Years’ War.

Such projects of transformation have failed not because Afghans are more xenophobic or belligerent than others, or because, as many critics of such policies now claim, the country is a timeless “graveyard of empires,” whose reason for existence since Alexander the Great has been to bring ruin to foreign armies. Nor can the failure of these interventions be explained solely because they came from abroad. In fact, Afghans have participated actively in each of these ventures and redirected them in ways their foreign masters could rarely control.

A closer look at the Soviet and American experiences points to some of the reasons why policies aimed at liberation have unleashed tragic and unforeseen consequences.

1. For further exploration of these themes see Conrad Schetter, “Afghanistan: Willkommen in Umerziehungslager,” *FriEnt Impulse*, No. 5 (2006), pp. 6-8; and Renate Kreile, “Befreiung durch Krieg? Frauenrechte in Afghanistan zwischen Weltordnungspolitik und Identitätspolitik,” *Internationale Politik und Gesellschaft*, No. 1 (2005), pp. 102-120. Similarly, one should also recall that Muslim fighters from the Middle East have long been active in promoting their own visions for the transformation of Afghans.



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Viewed from the perspective of Afghanistan, the differences between these projects narrow considerably.² Despite their adherence to competing ideologies, in Afghanistan both spoke the language of women's rights, economic development, and democratization. While the specific circumstances that prompted Moscow and Washington to intervene were unique, at a basic level each acted in search of great power prestige. One attempted to demonstrate the ideological and strategic vitality of a sclerotic Soviet system, while the other tried to show that it could wield its might on a global scale to punish anyone who threatened American security and power. Once established in Afghanistan, however, both states pursued, albeit in inconsistent and contradictory ways, policies aimed at radically altering the Afghan social landscape, provoking opposition within the country and abroad.

Rather than seeing this opposition as an eternal feature of a society supposedly dominated by tribal warriors, it is important to recall the specific contexts in which resistance to these projects emerged. In 1978, not long after the Afghan Communists seized power in Kabul, the regime's heavy-handed program for bringing revolution to the countryside provoked protests. These were followed by mutinies among the armed forces. The resistance swelled as the regime adopted repressive measures. The arrival of Soviet troops to bolster the embattled government prompted further mass uprisings and gave birth to numerous guerrilla "fronts." In the wake of 2001's "Operation Enduring Freedom," a broadly based anti-government and anti-coalition movement took longer to appear. But already in 2003 armed fighters who had been marginalized by the new authorities and who were critical of the foreigners' presence and the legitimacy of the government of Hamid Karzai were quite active in the east. By 2009, they moved throughout Afghanistan (and neighboring Pakistan) with *de facto* control of large swaths of the country.

Soviet and American reliance on airpower ... proved to be a clumsy counter-insurgency tool and drove legions of farmers, traders, and clerics into the opposition.

Although these militants have been the subject of numerous studies that seek to understand their place in international networks, many other structural features common to these interventions influenced the decisions that young Afghan men made about their futures after 1979 and again after 2001. Soviet and American reliance on airpower, intended to offset manpower shortages and the logistical obstacles posed by the country's rugged terrain, proved to be a clumsy counter-insurgency tool and drove legions of farmers, traders, and clerics into the opposition.³ Soviet commanders tolerated greater loss of civilian lives than their American and NATO counterparts. But even the "surgical strikes" of the latter were politically disastrous in an era when many Afghans could learn about them almost instantly throughout the country by radio, television, and Internet. Moreover, the widespread government use of irregular Afghan militias, who pursued their own agendas against rival groups, alienated populations who fell victim to their abuses, pushing them

2. See Odd Arne Westad, *The Global Cold War: Third World Interventions and the Making of Our Times* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

3. For a fuller picture of this varied opposition, see the brilliant analysis of Thomas Ruttig, "The Other Side: Dimensions of the Afghan Insurgency: Causes, Actors — and Approaches to 'Talks,'" Afghanistan Analysts Network, <http://aan-afghanistan.com/index.asp?id=114>. See also, Graeme Smith, "What Kandahar's Taliban Say," in Antonio Giustozzi, (ed.), *Decoding the New Taliban: Insights from the Afghan Field* (London, UK: Hurst and Company, 2009), pp. 191-210.

into the ranks of the insurgents. House searches were yet another contentious issue. The mass arrests, secret prisons, and torture that Afghans endured under both foreign powers also undermined the legitimacy of these states and their Afghan allies. The Afghan Communists and Soviets engaged in such practices on a wider scale, but new media amplified American adoption of similar strategies before Afghan and international audiences. For many Afghans, the Pul-i Charki prison persisted as a symbol of tyranny under successive governments. Yet Guantanamo became a truly international icon of human rights abuses connected to the American war.

These military aspects of the US and Soviet interventions in turn colored other policies relating to the transformative projects introduced by these states. In both cases, military forces intervened on behalf of “progressive” Afghan actors. These elites proved, however, to be often unruly clients. The Afghan Communists who seized power in 1978 outstripped the radicalism of the Soviet leadership, who devoted much of its energy to tempering their allies’ brutality and redressing their “mistakes.” Similarly, Karzai increasingly sought to distance himself from the Americans, especially on the issue of civilian casualties.

Karzai’s electoral fraud in the summer 2009 presidential election encapsulates the dilemma created by a relationship built on military intervention and occupation: Though dependent upon outsiders for their survival, Afghan elites have frequently pursued their own interests and challenged the authority of their backers with the knowledge that they were indispensable to foreigners who sought indigenous cover to legitimate their policies. Like great powers in many parts of the globe, the Soviets and Americans found that exercising power through local elites bore significant risks. Crises of legitimacy bound the two parties together.

Between 1979 and 2009 neither of these interventions succeeded in creating an Afghan state that enjoyed broad legitimacy or that reached far beyond Kabul. Hesitant to commit extensive civilian or military resources, the great powers were also handicapped by their ignorance of Afghan society (even though the Soviets were ahead of the US in their linguistic expertise and intelligence) and by the pervasive corruption produced not only by the war economy of drugs and guns but by the Soviet supply system and the American cult of privatization.

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Development agencies attempted to fill the gap, but these, too, were often ideological enterprises that insisted on countering local norms relating to age and gender hierarchies. After 2001, the creation of “Provincial Reconstruction Teams” (PRTs) militarized humanitarian operations.⁴ Liberation has proved a perilous affair, particularly for Afghan civilians.

The Soviets and Americans shared an anti-colonial ideology for most of the 20th century. However, their actions in

4. For a vivid illustration of the ideological rigidity of many foreign NGOs, see the PBS Frontline documentary “Afghanistan — A House for Haji Baba,” (2003), <http://www.pbs.org/frontlineworld/stories/afghanistan/>.

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Afghanistan bolstered opponents who framed their conduct there as “imperialist” and who rejected as hypocrisy the foreigners’ “democratization,” along with their claims on behalf of women. With the US-led phase of this war entering its ninth year and many of its emancipatory ideals discredited in the eyes of Afghan critics, more and more Afghans appeared poised to seek their own liberation in anti-imperialist nationalism.

Ending the 30-Year War in Afghanistan

Nake M. Kamrany

Afghanistan has been plagued by war for 30 years. The conflicts that have occurred during this time have involved major world powers, Afghanistan's neighbors, and various Afghan factions. The cumulative toll of these conflicts on the country and its people is enormous. Yet, despite three calamitous decades of death and destruction, peace and stability is achievable.



AFGHANISTAN'S CALAMITOUS 30-YEAR WAR

In the decade following the Soviet invasion in 1979, 1.5 million Afghans were killed, another million were injured and disabled, 6.2 million fled to Pakistan, Iran, and the rest of the world, and 2.2 million more were internally displaced. The monetary damages sustained by Afghanistan during this period were estimated at approximately \$644.8 billion.¹

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The Soviet invasion also triggered a proxy war between the United States and the Soviet Union in Afghanistan. One of the critical factors contributing to the Soviet withdrawal was the failure of the Afghan Marxist regime to bring into its fold people in the villages, districts, and provinces of Afghanistan. Meanwhile, the informal coalition among Iran, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, China, and the United States empowered the *mujahidin*, as did US-supplied Stinger shoulder-fired missiles, which could shoot down Soviet helicopters.

During the period immediately following the Soviet withdrawal (1992-1996), the Rabbani and Hekmatyar *mujahidin* factions began to clash — drawing the rest of the Afghan warlords into the fray, destroying the capital city of Kabul, and inflicting death and destruction upon thousands of civilians. Since the Afghan resistance against the Soviet Union had been organized along ethnic lines, in the post-Soviet era, each of the ethnic ally-based *mujahidin* groups pursued their own narrow interests, seeking wealth and power at the expense of national unity and reconstruction. The Rabbani regime was characterized by stalemate and disarray. The “governance gap” fostered the conditions in which Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) created the Taliban and then assisted them in their rise to power.

1. It should be noted that the government of Russia, geopolitical successor to the Soviet Union, has refused to consider the payment of war reparations to Afghanistan.

However, having consolidated their power in 1996, the Taliban implemented draconian domestic policies and also provided a safe haven for Usama bin Ladin and al-Qa'ida. 9/11 brought an end to the reign of the Taliban, when their leader, Mullah Muhammad Omar, refusing to heed the advice of the *Loya Jirga* (Grand Assembly) he had convened, rejected then-US President George W. Bush's demand to either turn over Bin Ladin to the United States or order him to leave Afghanistan. In the ensuing military intervention, US forces allied with the Northern Alliance routed the Taliban.

In November 2001 the United States and representatives of regional powers, most notably Iran and Russia, selected Hamid Karzai as President of the Transitional Administration of Afghanistan. Subsequently, the traditional Afghan procedure of *Loya Jirga* was employed to choose the President, and a US-style constitution was promulgated. This was followed by a presidential election in 2004, and the election of the Parliament. Rich countries met in Tokyo, London, and Paris to pledge economic aid. US forces were supplemented by the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in which some 40 countries participated.

The chief beneficiaries of this debacle have been the Iranian and Pakistani intelligence services and those Afghan strongmen on their respective payrolls.

The initial objective of the US invasion of Afghanistan was to capture Bin Ladin. Subsequently, however, other objectives were added, including establishing a stable democratic state with the ability to sustain and defend itself, and the prevention of the return of the Taliban to power and Bin Ladin to Afghanistan. However, during the period 2001-2009, even as more foreign troops were deployed, security conditions deteriorated. By the end of 2009, the number of US and NATO soldiers climbed to over 100,000, but security conditions nonetheless worsened.

During the same period, economic conditions also deteriorated, as unemployment exceeded 40% and poverty was widespread. The production of poppies in Afghanistan exceeded 90% of the world's total, and governance reached its lowest point, as warlords and drug lords grew in power. Finally, the August 2009 presidential election was marred by allegations of widespread fraud.

More importantly, the conflict intensified, marked by a rising number of increasingly sophisticated guerrilla-style attacks on US and NATO forces, resulting in mounting casualties. This, in turn, caused popular support for the war in the United States and other NATO countries to erode.

Who is to blame for the debacle? One view is that the Soviet invasion and occupation (1979-89) traumatized and disrupted the social system so badly that it never recovered. After this, intra-*mujahidin* rivalry exacerbated Afghanistan's weakness, and Usama bin Ladin exploited this. Some argue that the US decision to launch the Iraq War in 2003 diverted resources and attention away from Afghanistan. Others fault the Afghan government of Hamid Karzai for failing to extend its influence, power, and economic development programs to the areas where 80% of the population resides — namely in the 36,000 villages beyond the capital.

Wherever the blame truly lies, precious time has been lost. The chief beneficiaries of this debacle have been the Iranian and Pakistani intelligence services and those Afghan strongmen on their respective payrolls. The insurgents have plenty of funds to recruit and pay suicide bombers and foot soldiers.

WHAT IS TO BE DONE?

To bring an end to the 30-year war in Afghanistan, several players would have to change the rules of engagement. It is not clear whether any single Afghan player can effect such a change. None has shown a propensity to negotiate, compromise, and put national interest above narrow personal and tribal objectives.

Nevertheless, there are many approaches that can be employed for various key players to reach to transform the conflict, including their agreeing to rule according to some other workable model, such as the Swiss model, whereby a few representatives choose a leader for a limited time based on performance. Alternatively, educated expatriate Afghans who are not involved in politics could play a constructive role in bringing the disparate parties together to craft a cohesive national approach by means of an Intra-Afghan Dialogue. Yet another option is for cultural and tribal leaders (not warlords) to launch a process of negotiation, compromise, and settlement.

A number of additional measures could be undertaken to support whichever of these political options is adopted, including a massive media blitz in favor of ending the war; the implementation of small- and medium-scale economic development projects; the participation of university students in the process of reconstruction and development; the acceleration of the training of the Afghan army and police; the possible reinstatement of conscription; and the inclusion of non-insurgent Taliban in future electoral and other processes. In the final analysis, all classes of Afghans must acknowledge and accept full responsibility for their future.

However, the international community also must assume responsibility for Afghanistan's transformation from war to sustainable peace. The United States government has acknowledged that the Pakistani ISI, the Iranian intelligence service, and Arab funds are supporting the insurgent Taliban. It follows that as a first step the United States must neutralize al-Qa'ida in Pakistan not only through their own counterterrorism activities, but also by persuading the government of Pakistan to close insurgent sanctuaries and the ISI to cease clandestine operations in Afghanistan. Likewise, the Iranian government also must be put on notice to terminate their support of insurgents or face stiff retaliation by the United States.

More importantly, the broader issue of the Afghanistan drama is a deep conflict that has been brewing among Pashtuns over the past eight years. In the aftermath of the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks, the United States regarded the Taliban as the enemy that had offered a sanctuary to Usama bin Ladin and al-Qa'ida. Unfortunately, this view was

The broader issue of the Afghanistan drama is a deep conflict that has been brewing among Pashtuns over the past eight years.

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extended to the Pashtun tribes at large (as the Taliban are predominantly Pashtuns), and US forces subsequently took punitive measures, including air strikes, in most of the Pashtun villages in the west, south, and eastern part of the country. It follows that the United States must mend ties with the Pashtun tribes.

CONCLUSION

As the Obama Administration adjusts its strategy toward Afghanistan, the critical issue that will determine its success or failure is how Afghans — from ordinary villagers to leaders — perceive US intentions and deeds. Earning the Afghans' acceptance and support requires that the policy itself resonate with them. That policy should therefore be geared toward fostering peace and reconciliation, reinstating farming, and rebuilding businesses, infrastructure, and commerce. Above all, a greater effort must be made to inform and consult Afghans at all levels and at every stage of the policy process.

The recent US strategic shift is designed with a significant new focus to shorten the Afghan war and make it possible for American and NATO soldiers to withdraw from Afghanistan. Afghan leaders should capitalize on this opportunity and provide moral authority, working assiduously to help end Afghanistan's 30-year war.

The Army in Afghanistan, from Abdur Rahman to Karzai

Mark Sedra

The project to develop a modern army has been at the heart of the state formation experience in Afghanistan since the emergence of the modern Afghan state in the mid-19th century. A historical survey of the military-building efforts of the various regimes that ruled Afghanistan over the past two centuries reveals a distinct pattern. Two models of military development and organization can be identified. The first favored the creation of a modern, centralized institution inspired by the Western example and can be referred to as the modernization model. The second, which can be called the hybrid model, is underpinned by a compact between the central state and tribal actors in the periphery and comprises a fusion of traditional practices and structures with a limited centralized military apparatus. The Afghan state has vacillated between these two paradigms, with the shifts between them often mirroring the conflict cycle.

An evaluation of the impact or effect of these models on the state building process and conflict dynamics also provides instructive conclusions. The application of the modernization model has tended only to provide transitory stability, largely dependent on the availability of external rents. The hybrid model, in seeking to reconcile tribal and modern structures and norms, has tended to foster greater stability and social peace. It only has broken down due to external intervention or the emergence of a radical domestic modernizing agenda.

The internationally sponsored state building process launched after the fall of the Taliban regime in 2001 has favored the modernization model, and like previous efforts to apply this approach, it has proven inadequate to contain domestic sources of insecurity. Frustration over the slow pace of change and numerous setbacks encountered in the implementation of this military modernization agenda have prompted Afghanistan's state builders to experiment with elements of the hybrid model, such as the mobilization of militia groups to supplement the formal security forces. However, the process continues to rely overwhelmingly on the construction of centralized military structures that closely imitate Western military institutions. Despite historical trends, it is not clear whether jettisoning the modernization model in favor of the hybrid model would bring greater stability and security to contemporary Afghanistan, as the socio-cultural *milieu* has changed over the past three decades. Civil war transformed traditional Afghan society, facilitating the emergence of a new stratum of elites whose power is derived from their access to weapons and illicit markets rather than tribal or religious authority. While the scope of this transformation has varied in different parts of Afghanistan, it has nonetheless altered the



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state-society and center-periphery relationship in a manner that could impact the efficacy of the hybrid model.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE AFGHAN ARMY IN HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Efforts to create an effective centralized Afghan army gained momentum in the late 19th century, first under Amir Sher Ali Khan (r. 1863-1878), credited with founding the modern Afghan army, and later under Abdur Rahman Khan (1880-1901), widely perceived to be the founder of the modern Afghan state. While the Durrani dynasty that ruled Afghanistan from 1747 to 1793 primarily relied on tribal levies (*lashkars*) to enforce their authority, Abdur Rahman endeavored, with British subsidies, to make the central army the main instrument of state power.¹ Although he was intent on curbing the dependence of the Afghan state on the tribal chiefs, he recognized that he could not completely sideline them. Accordingly, he adopted a hybrid military model that featured a centralized army at the center that was built and sustained with the support of the tribes. This approach was exemplified by the system of conscription instituted by Abdur Rahman, the *hasht nafari* or “eight person” system. It required one in eight Afghan men to serve in the military and gave village and tribal leaders the authority to select those who would fill state quotas. The families of those individuals spared from service were responsible for supporting the conscript’s family, a policy enforced by the tribe.² As Kristian Berg Harpviken states, “Abdur Rahman was able to exploit existing, or ‘traditional,’ organization in the service of the modernizing state.”³

They recognized the limitations of a state-imposed societal transformation, moderated their objectives, and sought to enact a compromise with traditional forces in Afghan society.

Abdur Rahman’s grandson, Amanullah Khan (1919-1929), diverged from the hybrid model of his grandfather, advancing a more radical modernization agenda that sought to remove all vestiges of tribal authority from the army through the creation of a smaller, streamlined force trained by Turkish advisors. The confrontation with tribal society that this approach precipitated led to the collapse of his regime in 1928. The Musahiban Dynasty (1929-1973) reverted to the hybrid model of Abdur Rahman. It used foreign grants to reestablish the central army while also reinstating the *hasht nafari* and the tribe’s indispensable position in recruiting and sustaining the force. They recognized the limitations of a state-imposed societal transformation, moderated their objectives, and sought to enact a compromise with traditional forces in Afghan society. This approach facilitated a level of peace and stability almost unprecedented in Afghanistan’s modern history.

The Musahiban monarchy unraveled in 1973 when President Muhammad Daoud Khan (r. 1973-1978) seized power in a *coup d’état*, declared a republic, and forced King Zahir Shah into exile. Daoud sought to reorder state-society relations in Afghanistan, tipping the balance of power away from the tribes and in favor of the state. With Soviet assistance, Daoud further modernized the army, opening military training facilities and boarding schools intended to create a new generation of officers detached from tribal influence. Perhaps most importantly, Daoud, like Amanullah, dispensed

1. William Maley, “Political Legitimation in Contemporary Afghanistan,” *Asian Survey*, Vol. 27, No. 6 (June 1987).

2. Barnett R. Rubin, “Lineages of the State in Afghanistan,” *Asian Survey*, Vol. 28, No. 11 (November 1988), p. 1194.

3. Kristian Berg Harpviken, “Transcending Traditionalism: The Emergence of Non-State Military Formations in Afghanistan,” *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 34, No. 3 (August 1997), p. 275.

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with the *hasht nafari* and introduced universal conscription. While this was a period of increasing assertiveness of the state in which the tribe's historical position in Afghan society showed signs of weakening, it was also a time of growing political instability.

In April 1978, pro-Soviet Army officers belonging to the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) overthrew the Daoud government. The PDPA regime intensified Daoud's modernization policy. An influx of Soviet troops, advisors, and military aid was designed to create a massive, centralized security apparatus capable of subduing the tribal periphery. As with the Amanullah regime, efforts to dominate and transform the tribal periphery aroused resistance from traditional forces, this time coalescing around Islam in the form of the *mujahidin*, which led to the withdrawal of the Soviet Red Army in 1989 and the weakening of the government and its institutions.

The US eschewed existing structures and historical experience in building the Afghan National Army (ANA), choosing instead to construct the institution anew from the ground up.

The Communist government under Najibullah survived for three more years, due in large part to its application of a hybrid military model, as evidenced by the mobilization of informal militia groups. With his army under increased pressure due to the withdrawal of Soviet forces, Najibullah enhanced the regime's dependence on *qawm*⁴ and tribal militias. He brokered new arrangements with militia groups, primarily in the north, to protect key roads, security installations, and economic assets. By 1990, the number of armed men in government-allied militias stood at an estimated 60-70,000, twice the size of the regular army. However, this compact between state and tribe was more unstable than in previous eras due to the war's transformation of tribal society. The state was now dealing with factional, ethnic, and warlord militias rather than just tribal chiefs. Securing their allegiance required extensive bargaining and trade-offs and was more vulnerable to changes in political or economic dynamics. These new elites were conflict entrepreneurs that appeared less bound by the tribal conventions, customs, and codes that had imbued the state-tribal compacts with a semblance of stability and predictability. Reflecting the significance of this change, it was the defection of one of the largest government-allied militias led by General Rashid Dostum that triggered the collapse of the Najibullah regime.

THE AFGHAN NATIONAL ARMY

The post-Taliban state-building process returned Afghanistan to the modernization model employed by Amanullah, Daoud, and the PDPA. The United States, together with several allied donors, set out to create a modern Western-styled military apparatus capable of projecting power across the country. The US eschewed existing structures and historical experience in building the Afghan National Army (ANA), choosing instead to construct the institution anew from the ground up. Although the ANA has gradually grown in numbers and effectiveness, reaching 80,000 troops by 2009, it has not been able to quell the growing unrest centered primarily in the Pashtun belt in the southeast. Afghanistan's

4. *Qawm* is often translated as tribe, but in actuality refers to any form of solidarity, whether based on kinship, residence, or occupation. See Barnett R. Rubin, *The Fragmentation of Afghanistan: State Formation and Collapse in the International System* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), p. 25.

state builders have responded to this threat in two ways: First, they have flirted with the notion of moving toward the hybrid model, implementing several initiatives to recruit tribal forces to supplement and reinforce the formal security apparatus, including the Afghan National Auxiliary Police⁵ and Afghan Public Protection Force.⁶ Western officials have romanticized the notion of tribal self-defense forces epitomized by the *arbakee*, “a sort of tribal police ... legitimized and controlled by tribal elders.”⁷ Although only indigenous to rural Pashtun areas of southeastern Afghanistan (Paktia, Paktika, and Khost), it has been presented by some donor officials as a panacea for the whole country.

Similar to the Najibullah period, attempts to empower militia actors have run into the face of a tribal society in the midst of structural change. Many traditional security systems and norms active during the Abdur Rahman and Mushahiban eras are no longer alive or viable in some parts of Afghanistan, illustrating the fluidity of culture and tradition in the face of historical change and societal upheaval.

Second, state builders have shown signs that rather than shift paradigms to a hybrid model as a means to address the security crisis, they may radicalize their modernization agenda through a large-scale expansion of the ANA and security apparatus, much in line with the strategy of the PDPA regime three decades earlier. Over the past eight years, the force target of the ANA gradually has increased from 70,000 to 134,000 and there are calls to expand the force ceiling to over 200,000.

CONCLUSION

History has shown that the hybrid model is the most effective approach to building and maintaining an army and security apparatus in Afghanistan. However, the transformative impact of the war may have made it less viable. By contrast, any effort to intensify the modernization model as a means to cure Afghanistan’s security ills can only work if external actors are willing to support and subsidize the force indefinitely. This was a commitment neither the British nor the Soviets were willing to make — resulting in the fall of their client regimes — and it appears unlikely that the current configuration of Western state builders will show greater resolve. What is clear is that the current approach is not working, and in line with Afghan history, a paradigm shift is needed. It may involve a new type of compact with rural traditional society, one based less on traditional norms and conventions and more on modern ideas of social empowerment and power sharing. On the other hand, the current state building process and the regime it has inaugurated may itself have to fail before a more viable alternative can emerge.

Any effort to intensify the modernization model as a means to cure Afghanistan’s security ills can only work if external actors are willing to support and subsidize the force indefinitely.

5. Cyrus Hodes and Mark Sedra, *The Search for Security in Post-Taliban Afghanistan*, International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) Adelphi Paper (London: Routledge, 2007).

6. Mark Sedra, ed., *Security Sector Monitor: Afghanistan*, Centre for International Governance Innovation (CIGI), No. 1, July 2009, <http://www.cigionline.org/publications/paper-series/ssrmonitor>.

7. Conrad Schetter, Rainer Glassner, and Masood Karokhail, “Beyond Warlordism: Local Security Architecture in Afghanistan,” *Internationale Politik und Gesellschaft*, No. 2 (2007), p. 147.

Crisis in South Asia

Robert L. Canfield

South Asia is a region in crisis — plagued by a set of interlocking problems that have deep and tangled roots. And Pakistan, not Afghanistan, is at the center.

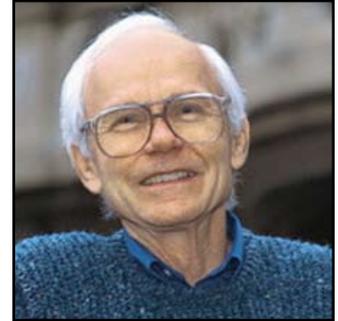
THE INTERNATIONAL COALITION — SUPPORT ERODING?

By fall 2009, the war in Afghanistan-Pakistan had turned ominous. The Taliban were gaining ever more strength in communities around Afghanistan. General Stanley McChrystal, head of the International Security in Afghanistan Forces (ISAF), the coalition force opposing the Taliban, expressed his belief that without changes, the war could be lost within a year. In the meantime, the countries providing troops for the ISAF were losing resolve. The Italians declared their desire to leave, and the Germans wanted out. Even the Americans, whose commitment was crucial, were dithering as they considered the proposals. The generals wanted many more troops (as many as 40,000) while Vice President Joe Biden wanted fewer; prominent US Senators demanded a timetable for getting out, and some of them were ready to quit immediately. The British alone seemed confident about staying — they said so often, as if to keep up their resolve.

Meanwhile, the legitimacy of the Afghan government for which these forces had been fighting was deeply compromised by voting irregularities in the August 2009 presidential election. Corruption seemed to have trickled all the way down: local officials, underpaid and under protected, demanded cash and special favors to perform rudimentary services. And the illicit opium economy — involving countless numbers of people, both powerful and weak, and rural and urban — was generating nearly half the country's income. General McChrystal's broadly published judgment of the situation could not have helped the situation on the ground, for it reaffirmed what the Taliban had been claiming all along: They will be there when the Americans have left, and ultimately they will prevail.

AFGHANISTAN — A FRACTURED SOCIETY

What can the ordinary good people of Afghanistan do but reconsider their connections in such a climate? After so many years of war, they have learned how to survive. Dr. Alessandro Monsutti reports that the Hazara families situate their relatives on both sides of a conflict in order to ensure viable options, whatever the outcome; similar strategies must be in practice elsewhere in the country. This society, after so many years of



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conflict, is now composed of fragile alliances and agreements that can be invoked or ignored as circumstances require. These are the means through which people cope with the exigencies of internecine and intermittent war that grinds on for decades.

But when it comes to preferences, there is no doubt about the genuine wishes of the Afghan peoples: They want a government that responds to their circumstances, not, as currently, one that fails to provide services or protection, or one that, like the Taliban when they were in power, limits simple pleasures such as kite flying, music, and television. Scarcely 6% admit to wanting the Taliban back. Rather, they would like a democracy that works. Thousands of people — women as well as men — of every ethnicity, participated in the first national election. At that time, the voting booth-inked finger was a mark of pride. It is largely frustration with the current administration and a fear of the threats of the Taliban that reduced participation in the last election. The evident corruption of the process has deflated hope, but reportedly a few people still want to go through the election again.

They want a government that responds to their circumstances, not, as currently, one that fails to provide services or protection, or one that, like the Taliban ... limits simple pleasures such as kite flying, music, and television.

PAKISTAN — A CONFLICTED STATE

Most of the talk among Americans is about what to do about Afghanistan while little is being said about the source of the Taliban problem: Pakistan. It was the Pakistani military which, in the mid-1990s, made use of a group of earnest, zealous schoolboys led by their Qur'anic teacher, Mullah Muhammad Omar, to create an organized, trained, and equipped, and essentially Pashtun, military force. After their defeat in 2001, the Taliban who escaped into Pakistan's tribal areas found a supportive environment for reconstituting themselves, which reportedly they began to do as early as 2003. They could not have acquired their present sophistication without the help of Pakistan's Inter Services Intelligence (ISI), the agency that protected, trained, and provisioned the Afghan Taliban for the real agenda — the ongoing war against India.

Because the real concern of the Pakistani military is the struggle with India over Kashmir, they consider radical fighting groups like the Taliban to be vital resources. As a Muslim state claiming the right to rule adjacent Muslim lands, the Pakistani military has allowed radical Islamist groups to form so that they can be deployed in case of war (i.e., in the continued war) with India. The most notable of those which the ISI fostered and supplied were the Jaish-i Muhammad, the group that captured and murdered *Wall Street Journal* reporter Daniel Pearl in 2002, and the Lashkar-i Taiba, who produced suicide bombers for Kashmir and masterminded the attacks in Mumbai in 2008 in which 173 people were killed. Owing to the tolerance of the ISI, Mullah Muhammad Omar, head of the original Taliban, has long had his headquarters in Quetta despite official claims that he cannot be found.

The reason for this policy is that Pakistan needs a friendly Afghanistan. Ever since the 1980s, the Pakistanis have recognized the importance of Central Asia to their future. Afghanistan must be a friendly state to Pakistan through which

the resource-rich lands of the Central Asian republics can be accessed. The Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan gas pipeline, for example, which has been in the planning stage for years, is crucial to Pakistan's future prosperity. For that, Pakistan, with China's help, already has invested over a billion dollars to build a new port on the Indian Ocean at Gwadar. Another reason for Pakistan's desire for a friendly government in Kabul is the perceived need for "strategic depth" in case of war with India.

In truth, Pakistan is a conflicted state. It is fighting a war with India while it claims to be helping in the "War on Terror" against al-Qa'ida and the Taliban. While affirming friendship with the United States, Pakistan's government regards Afghanistan as allied to India and thus an enemy regime. The Taliban, opposed to the Kabul government, are prized assets for the war with India. The contradiction in this policy came vividly to light in 2008 and 2009 when some of the Taliban began to push beyond the tribal zones where they had been based conveniently close to the Afghanistan border, establishing themselves in neighboring sectors of Pakistan. After taking over Swat, they announced their intention to impose their brand of "Islamic *Shari'a*" there. But what finally aroused the Pakistani military was a prominent Taliban leader's announcement that he and his followers were determined to impose *Shari'a* throughout the country. The Pakistani army responded by attacking the Taliban of Swat; friends only a few weeks before, they instantly became mortal enemies. As a result of the fighting, more than two and a half million residents of Swat fled their homes, creating a crisis for the government.

The crisis in South Asia defies easy solutions, for the Afghanistan-Pakistan and the Pakistan-India conflicts intersect and crosscut each other.

CONCLUSION

The crisis in South Asia defies easy solutions, for the Afghanistan-Pakistan and the Pakistan-India conflicts intersect and crosscut each other. Here we find a scarcely legitimate state and a fractured society (Afghanistan), a conflicted state (Pakistan), a resolute opposition (the Taliban), a looming neighbor (India), and a foreign military force (ISAF) trapped in a conflict that they scarcely understand — this tangle of forces has challenged the creative abilities of all who have posed solutions. It should be no wonder that the principal actors find themselves in a quandary.

Replacing the Strategy of War through Peace

Aziz Hakimi

The United States and NATO effort to stabilize Afghanistan is showing signs of severe tension. As Afghanistan further descends into chaos, President Barack Obama's administration is not of one mind about what course of action to follow in Afghanistan. The current review of President Obama's Af-Pak policy, which was announced in late March 2009, has turned into a divisive debate of irreconcilable options between his senior national security team. The reverberations emanating from this debate are clearly felt in war-torn Afghanistan.



Notwithstanding which way the debate in Washington is finally settled, many Afghans are skeptical that a new strategy will bring about a lasting peace in their country. And that is because Afghanistan is often seen as a problem as opposed to an opportunity to be exploited for peace.

Fundamentally, the problem in Afghanistan is political in nature. It is not a problem of terrorism or global jihad. The failure to reach a political solution and the absence of justice has paved the way to war. It is an internal war — essentially a civil war. The United States is supporting one party in this civil war. Al-Qa'ida, Pakistan's ISI, and other regional powers support the Taliban to offset the US-supported Karzai government. This support is essentially instrumental in character. It is not necessary, and can be avoided. It will require that we work out a sound political solution. Our failure to do this has prolonged the war. It has cast the problem in military terms. And the solution pursued is a disproportionately military one. This thinking must be reversed.

THE TRAGEDY AND FOLLY OF PEACE THROUGH WAR

The current thinking that we must escalate the conflict in order to weaken the Taliban and force them to the negotiation table is flawed. Escalating the conflict will prolong the war. That is precisely what the Taliban want. They expect the United States to prolong the war. That gives them a mission and a purpose. So instead of giving them a *raison d'être*, we must take it away from them. Ending the war, not expanding it, must be our first priority. We must not look for a forced exit strategy, with all the humiliation and defeat that comes with it. A prolonged war will result in the death of many more Western and Afghan troops and countless civilians. Rising troop casualties and civilian deaths will weaken political support in Washington and will give Afghan politicians the pretext to denounce the United States and appeal to nationalism. Public opposition to the war

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will increase, and as a result, our mission will become more complicated.

Under the current approach, forging peace is a derivative of fighting war. Many in Afghanistan see this war as a continuation of former US President George W. Bush's "war of revenge." It is time for President Obama to present the mission in Afghanistan differently. The ultimate objective of the mission should be "working for peace to end the war," rather than "prolonging the war to win the peace." The latter policy is neither sustainable nor winnable. Afghans are tired of war; they will be our allies if we respond to their need for peace. We will lose them if we continue to respond to their distaste and fear of war mainly by conducting military operations.

TOWARDS A STRATEGY FOR LASTING PEACE

The first essential ingredient of a new strategy is to focus not on fighting, but on achieving a political solution and addressing the justice agenda, which will delegitimize the Taliban and make it unnecessary for them to seek support from al-Qa'ida, the ISI, and other regional actors. Politics is safer and much cheaper than waging war. If the United States and its coalition partners are looking for an exit strategy, then that is the one they should choose.

The second ingredient is to vest in the Afghan people the authority and capability to reconstruct and develop their lives and livelihoods. When development aid is used to buy Afghan "hearts and minds" and delivered by American groups to serve US objectives, that assistance becomes an easy target for the Taliban. The change process, from war to peace, needs to be given to the Afghan people.

Politics is safer and much cheaper than waging war. If the United States and its coalition partners are looking for an exit strategy, then that is the one they should choose.

The third ingredient is to promote reconciliation at all levels. After three decades of war and internal strife, the only structures that the vast majority of Afghan people trust are their families and tribes. That is what they have fought for and will continue to fight for. When we focus our efforts on building peace, there will be no need to arm militias and tribes to fight the Taliban.

The fourth ingredient is to support local governance systems. Across Afghanistan today there are whole districts that are still peaceful. Such districts are found in provinces where the insurgency is active. These districts, with their own functioning community governance systems, must be the new platform on which to build a larger peace. The Chamkani District in Paktia Province, for example, is an oasis of peace despite insurgent activities in the province. It has managed to remain peaceful because of its strong tradition of tribal solidarity and social cohesion, which have served as a bulwark against Taliban infiltration.

The fifth ingredient is to help spur cooperation between and among Afghan civil society groups, which currently vie with each other for foreign funds. There are hundreds of Afghan-led successes across the country. However, the Afghan

people are generally unaware of them. Indeed, foreign donors have made every effort to take the credit. Two examples illustrate the negative impact of donors' aid policies. In the lead-up to the August 20, 2009 presidential elections, Afghan civil society groups presented a joint action plan for election monitoring and civic education. But the donors decided to fund individual NGOs and civil society groups, forcing them to compete with each other. Similarly, donor policies, despite advice from the Afghan independent media community, have not supported the establishment of a media trust fund to channel funding to independent media, which would have fostered collaboration, rather than a disunity of effort. When these activities are viewed as indigenous Afghan building blocks, the Afghan people will gravitate more strongly to them and be less susceptible to the insurgency's appeals to Islam-ism and nationalism.

CONCLUSION

Long-term peace in Afghanistan is possible. On two recent occasions, military force has brought short-term stability — the ascendancy of the Taliban, and the US-led intervention in November 2001. Both partially succeeded because the Afghan people were tired of war and ready to try the offered alternative. But both cases proved that fighting in order to achieve long-lasting peace will not work. Long-term peace in Afghanistan can be achieved through a strategy that above all strives to achieve a political solution, privileges ownership and control by local actors over foreign donors, helps to advance reconciliation at all levels, and encourages and supports cooperation among Afghan civil society groups.

III. Politics: At the Center and on the Periphery

Perspectives on Democracy and Democratization in Afghanistan

Anna Larson

In the post-2001 era, many assumptions have been made about the benefits of democracy in Afghanistan.¹ International assistance has focused on the re-establishment of representative democratic institutions, such as a presidential system, bicameral parliament, and provincial councils. However, little attention has been paid to Afghan perceptions of democracy. Indeed, far from unquestionable, the benefits of democracy are not universally acknowledged among Afghans.

First, the term itself is contentious, carrying associations of both Western liberal values and the secularism of the Soviet regime under the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) in the 1980s.

Second, many Afghans are disappointed that the outcomes of democracy — the high expectations of the social and economic development that democracy would bring, along with increased security — have not been met.

Third, the under-performance of elected representatives in democratic institutions has served to consolidate the gap between people and government, and has not proved to be a means through which the interests of the majority of citizens can be addressed.

In spite of these negative perceptions, however, AREU research suggests that there is still widespread support for the process of selecting government through democratic means, provided that these take place within a secure environment and exist within an “Islamic framework.”

The meaning of the word “democracy” in Afghanistan is a key point for consideration. Without translation into Dari or Pashto, Afghans use the English word, which often carries negative connotations of Western liberal values and the militant secularism proposed under PDPA rule in the 1980s. When asked to define democracy, the majority of respondents in AREU's study talked about “unlimited freedom,” whereby social restrictions over people's behavior were not enforced either by the state or any other ruling (or religious) body. While some aspects of this freedom, such as the freedom to vote in



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1. This essay is based on findings from an AREU study on Afghan perspectives of democracy and democratization. See Anna Larson, “Toward an Afghan Democracy? Exploring Perceptions of Democratization in Afghanistan.” Kabul: AREU, 2009. The study will be extended to cover a greater area of Afghanistan in 2010.

elections, for example, were widely seen as a positive step forward, there exist serious concerns about the potential rise of immorality in a democratic society. A number of urban respondents expressed the belief that without strict social controls in place, youth or “uneducated” people would “mis-use” democracy, or use the word to justify morally unacceptable behavior. In light of this, an overwhelming number of respondents made a stark distinction between Western and Islamic democracy, whereby the former represented the unlimited and immoral freedoms associated with Western society, and the latter encapsulated desirable democratic freedoms acceptable within the “framework of Islam.”

Democracy is also widely associated with the promises that were made — but as yet not delivered — by the government and international community during the Bonn Process. There is widespread disillusionment with the benefits that democracy can bring, due to an expected improvement in rule of law and economic development which has not occurred. Many respondents made the comparison between the economies of established democratic states and that of Afghanistan — demonstrating the scale and weight of expectations in what “democracy” should have provided. Interestingly, there is also a clear tendency among respondents to link democracy with the notion of state-provided services and market restrictions, such as state-controlled commodity prices. This indicates both an association of democracy with the socialist PDPA policies of the 1980s, and also a connection made between democracy and social justice — envisioning a society in which every citizen is entitled to the same social and economic benefits. Respondents clearly indicated that the current situation was far from this “democratic” ideal, and thus could not be labeled “democracy.”

However, key aspects of democratic society, such as the encouragement of multi-party competition, political opposition, and freedom of expression, were seen as potential contributors to insecurity rather than means to promote peace and stability.

In a similar manner, it is clear that democracy is considered by most Afghans interviewed to be untenable without a secure environment in which it can develop. At the time of data collection (February-July 2009), the potential for unrepresentative elections due to limited polling in insecure areas was of great concern. However, key aspects of democratic society, such as the encouragement of multi-party competition, political opposition, and freedom of expression, were seen as potential *contributors to insecurity* rather than means to promote peace and stability. This is unsurprising given Afghanistan’s recent political history and tendency towards a winner-take-all politics, but it is nonetheless a key factor contributing to public skepticism of “democracy” in the current climate.

Finally, there is considerable disillusionment with the democratic institutions that have been (re-)installed since 2004-05. Democratic representation in Parliament and provincial councils is seen as ineffective, due to perceived fraud in elections, the under-performance of elected representatives, and the overarching powers of the executive which are seen to intervene in parliamentary processes. Moreover, for many there is a fundamental gap between the people and government. This is largely due to the fact that elected representatives for both Parliament and the Provincial Councils are elected by province, and yet only those constituents closely familiar with individual Members of Parliament or Provincial Council members (i.e., those from the same *district*) consider themselves truly represented or representable.

This essay has briefly discussed three key reasons for the decline of popular support for the democratization process as it currently exists: democracy as a problematic word with negative connotations; unmet social and economic expectations; and the mal-function of democratic institutions. However, as indicated initially, the *idea* of government elected by popular vote is still widely welcomed. Respondents in this study discussed the benefits of an “Islamic democracy” or “democracy within the framework of Islam,” in which a democratic system of selecting government would be combined with Islamic values. These terms are defined in different ways by different people, but they clearly demonstrate the desire of many Afghans to be part of the global movement towards public participation in government.

This may seem incredible after the 2009 elections, infamous for low voter turnout and allegation of fraud. But people’s *desire* to take part in choosing their government cannot be measured by turnout for an election in which the outcomes were widely considered pre-determined, and in which for many, voting was a life-threatening experience. For many Afghans, these elections did not represent a “test” of democracy or democratic principles at all. A common viewpoint found in this study was that the development of democratic systems of government takes time, and that this process cannot be implemented quickly. Members of the international community and donor governments would do well to remember this in the current environment, in which there is a tendency to portray the elections in 2009 as the only way to measure democratic governance in the country. Democracy and democratization in Afghanistan will be lengthy and fragile but valuable processes, which urgently need to be redefined from Afghan perspectives.

For many Afghans, these elections did not represent a “test” of democracy or democratic principles at all.

Political Leadership in Post-Taliban Afghanistan: The Critical Factor

Saghar Chopan and Malaiz Daud

A hasty, fluid, and poorly conceived process of creating leadership in a post-war situation mainly provides the space for rich and powerful — mostly corrupt — individuals to prevail because their roles, styles, and abilities overshadow concerns about their background, characteristics, homogeneity, and behavioral patterns.¹ Regrettably, such is the case in post-Taliban Afghanistan.

The hasty entry of Hamid Karzai, his cabinet colleagues and regional leaders eight years ago is proving a costly deal. The resources of Afghan non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are used at will for individual benefits, because donors rarely condition their aid on an assessment of background, characteristics, and behavioral patterns of key staff of the recipient. So-called Afghan civil society is predominantly comprised of the rich and powerful whose abilities (speaking English, understanding Western culture and values) and lifestyles (luxurious homes, mobility, and access to technology) enable them to communicate better with donors and other representatives of the international community than grassroots or other sectors of society with the same field of specialization are able to.

This essay explores the subject of the post-Taliban political leadership in Afghanistan by addressing two related questions: First, why is the quality of political leadership, especially of individuals occupying high office, a critically important ingredient for a successful post-conflict transformation? And second, which features of political leadership are most conducive (and in the Afghan case have been present or missing) to furthering peace and reconstruction?

POLITICAL LEADERSHIP IN AFGHANISTAN — ESSENTIAL BUT DEFICIENT

Political leaders who occupy a high office in a legally sanctioned government have more power than political leaders who do not, simply by virtue of the legitimacy of government and the resources at their disposal. In a post-war situation and in a unique case like that of Afghanistan, political leaders are of particular importance. They may possess more power than those in an orderly institutional setting because they mainly engage on behalf of their constituents in an environment where fewer checks and balances are in place for accountability and transparency.

1. G.R. Bassiry and R.H. Dekmejian, "America's Global Companies: A Leadership Profile," *Business Horizons* (January-February 1993), p. 47



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Institutionally, political leaders in post-war settings will eventually determine the fate of reconstruction efforts. They set the institutional rules of the game, breaking them at any point, or not agreeing upon them at all. As Ashraf, Ghani, and Clare Lockhart have written:

[They] must demonstrate that they can forge and maintain international partnerships for generating legitimacy in the international system and opportunity in the economy, understand and navigate the opportunities and constraints of globalisation, and maintain the trust and loyalty of citizens at home by generating a belief that the state can enhance their lives and capabilities. They must be able to conceive of an architecture of change that operates across functions on global, national and local levels. They show to their citizens that they participate in the world as respected global leaders, as well as representatives of distinctive cultural identities.²

Equally important is the role of political leadership in inspiring and rallying everyone, including interveners, around a vision with which both government organisations and broader society, as well, can identify.³ Additionally, their persistent and deep involvement in all levels of development programs and familiarity with details further encourages success.⁴

FOUR CRUCIAL FEATURES OF EFFECTIVE POLITICAL LEADERSHIP⁵

1. Purposefulness and Determination

Lack of determination and decisiveness can easily be pointed out as Hamid Karzai's main weakness. Ordinary Afghans, foreign diplomats, aid workers, political leaders and even armed opponents of the Karzai government are aware of it and have spoken about it. But how much does it matter? Take as an example the National Solidarity Programme (NSP) — arguably the only success story in post-Taliban Afghanistan. The NSP, which covered almost all of rural Afghanistan, was comprehensive: It addressed issues of governance, focused on rebuilding or building small infrastructure, and gave local communities “ownership” (block grants were transferred directly to members of the community who planned, implemented, and accounted for projects of their own design after receiving thorough training in planning, administra-

Lack of determination and decisiveness can easily be pointed out as Hamid Karzai's main weakness.

2. Ashraf Ghani and Clare Lockhart, *Fixing Failed States: A Framework for Rebuilding a Fractured World* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 189-190.

3. Ghani and Lockhart, *Fixing Failed States*, p. 190.

4. Ghani and Lockhart, *Fixing Failed States*, p. 191.

5. Drawing upon four main features of political leaders of developmental states, explored by Leftwich in “The Developmental State” (1994), we are analyzing the cases of five different ministers in the current cabinet of the Afghan Government, with whom one of us [Malaiz Daud] worked directly and closely from early 2003 until July 2009.

tion, accounting, and meeting management).

Aware of his precarious position in the government, the lead minister, who had been included in the cabinet merely on the back of his technical know-how, was aware of the fact he did not have sufficient popular support to sustain his position. That, along with his background as a long-time humanitarian worker, made him determined to create an exemplary ministry. This cannot be divorced from his technical skills, knowledge, and experience in the fields of humanitarian assistance and development. To achieve success, he had to bank heavily on members of the NGO community. In this effort, he appointed a former professional adversary as his Deputy Minister and a fellow member of NGO community as the Chief Coordinator. Their collaboration proved instrumental to the NSP's success.

All three are cabinet colleagues now. However, they have yet to come up with something similar to, or better than, the NSP. The reason is clear: They do not have common goals, towards which they generate determination of the same levels. In fact, they are seeking to undermine one another in order to wield or retain more power, emboldened by the ill counsel of advisors, all of whom are foreign nationals. In one case, an Australian advisor actively and blatantly tweaked the donors to divert funds from their previous ministry to the new one to great dismay of their former boss and in spite of abundance financial resources. Important for the two offshoot ministers is also to create identities of their own and banish the *protégé* tags.

In one case, an Australian advisor actively and blatantly tweaked the donors to divert funds from their previous ministry to the new one to great dismay of their former boss and in spite of abundance financial resources.

2. Intimate Relationship with the Bureaucracy

The success of the Minister of Rural Rehabilitation and Development (MRRD) to execute the NSP successfully was also due to his intimate relationship with the bureaucracy which he nurtured during his time in MRRD. His model was initially criticized. Karzai's Chief of Staff told one of the authors in 2005 that creating a parallel structure of advisors by the Minister was costly, temporary, and counterproductive to the efforts institutionalization. However, what he had not foreseen was the plans of the Minister to embed the capable legion of advisors, on temporary consultancy contracts, into the main bureaucracy. His Deputy Minister was his senior advisor for a year until he was incorporated into the civil services structure. The trend went on, and the new elements presented a perfect example of a modern bureaucracy responsive to the demands of a post-war reconstruction phase.

In contrast, the inability of Karzai's Chief of Staff not only hampered his efforts to reform his office but even cost him his job. The argument is reinforced by the case of the newly establish Independent Directorate for Local Governance (IDLG) whose director has kept the rotten bureaucratic structure intact and installed some new inept individuals. His advisory team — the Strategic Coordination Unit, or SCU — which consists of some capable individuals, has struggled to push their agenda. The SCU consistently has been undermined by the civil servants whose authority derives from

their positions of power. In late 2006, the lead Inwent⁶ consultant and the FES⁷ Resident Representative sought one of the author's advice on why their capacity-building and organizational development program for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was failing. We jointly concluded that the Minister's incompetence and lack of integrity and determination were the reasons.

Similarly, the current Minister of Education (MoE) has complained in closed circles about the loyalty of his top bureaucrats who were installed by his predecessor, a supposed adversary. He says, "they are my deputies during the day and his deputies at night," one of his confidants admitted to me this year. The former Minister (the same man who had successfully led MRRD) had created a synergy at MoE, replicating that success. However, the model is dependent on its agents. And the current Minister's antagonistic relationship with the former Minister shapes his suspicions of his colleagues. Mutual lack of trust has thrown the ministry in disarray and impact of change is clear in its performance. This means that the intimate relationship with the bureaucracy, a crucial denominator for success, has ceased to exist, depriving it from achieving its goals.

Afghanistan's political leadership lacks a common vision and are only unified by one thing: political survival.

3. Despite Internal Differences, United for a Cause

Afghanistan's political leadership lacks a common vision and are only unified by one thing: political survival, as the cases of the five ministers discussed in this essay reveal. The moment they realized that the link between their personal ambitions and their counterparts' weakened, their alliances fell apart and they formed destructive alliances against each other.

Furthermore, Karzai's fragile administration has only responded in unity when threatened. They are united against insurgents because the latter threaten their very existence and hold on power. This is and has been the main reason for Karzai's tolerance of a few disloyal governors who make personal gains of their government positions but never threaten Karzai's central authority. The mere fact that every political leader in Afghanistan pins his/her survival to their favorable relationships with interveners has made the political leaders reluctant to work for what should have been a key demand of the international community — a common Afghan vision or goal.⁸ The difference between political leadership of Afghanistan and their counterparts in other developmental states seems to be their perception of tools for preserving their power. The former sees tainted alliances with drug barons and warlords and reliance on interveners as their salvation. The latter saw economic growth and social progress as their salvation because it earned them the support of their constituents.

6. Inwent is a consultancy group based in Germany.

7. Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES) is a German political foundation affiliated with the German Social Democratic Party. FES had contracted Inwent to design and execute the capacity-building and organizational developmental program for the Afghan Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

8. One of many examples is German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier's public support for the Afghan Foreign Minister, in the form of a threat issued to the Afghan Parliament, which had cast a vote of no confidence against the Minister.

4. Relative Autonomy from Special Interests

As is the case in many post-conflict countries, Afghanistan has yet to formulate its set of national interests. And as is typically the case in aid-receiving countries, the Afghan government is completely driven by the interests of aid providing countries. During my time with the five ministers, I saw them regularly bow to both internal and external special interests. One Minister had to retain an entire department for the sake of only one person who was supported by Karzai's Second Vice President. The department cost hundreds of thousands of dollars over a number of years and its head was a constant source of conflict in the ministry, slowing down or, at times, completely damaging the implementation of crucial development projects. A second Minister was so obsessed with keeping the ethnic balance that he appointed numerous incapable individuals, which not only demoralized others but also badly factionalized the Ministry, making the delivery of services almost impossible.

One Minister had to retain an entire department for the sake of only one person who was supported by Karzai's Second Vice President.

The Ministry of Agriculture has been one of the most incompetent government entities in a country where 70% of the population is dependent on agriculture for livelihood. Yet, its Deputy Ministers have held onto their positions due to their affiliations to two political parties accused of war crimes before and during the Afghan Civil War. One Deputy Minister famously solicits and engages in physical intimacy with his subordinates to the point of harassment. A number of his family members are employed in the Ministry in violation of standard procedures. The same is the case with the Afghan Development Association (ADA), one of the main Afghan recipients of donor funding, where 80% of staff are hired based on their membership of or goodwill towards a particular political party or their relationship with its management.⁹ Consequently, the institutions in question constantly have labored to execute their mandates or reach their potential capacity instead of just serving the interests of a few.

CONCLUSION

The political and civil society leadership of Afghanistan lacks the popular support required for achieving peace. It is the responsibility of the leadership to facilitate the emergence of a common purpose in a society through creating reciprocal and equitable relationships among community participants. In Afghanistan, such a situation has not yet prevailed. Moreover, it may never happen since the leadership is almost totally disconnected from the society and incapable of understanding this crucial reality and working towards it.

9. Chairman of ADA Board of Directors, currently serves in Karzai's cabinet.

Afghanistan's Democrats: From Underground to Marginalization

Thomas Ruttig

In the spring of 2000, some 25 Afghan women and men secretly gathered in a private house in western Kabul. Many of them had never met each other before. Therefore, they were divided in two separate groups that sat in different rooms. These courageous people belonged to a dozen or so political parties and groups that had formed in the underground and now waited for foreign visitors. One of the participating groups had decided not to write a party program of its own but instead adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. A second one was a network of Pashtun tribal *shuras* that tried to organize resistance against the Taliban from Quetta (Pakistan) and had sent a woman as its representative. The participants wanted to let the world know that there were still people in Afghanistan who believed in internationally accepted norms and values.

A UN worker, huddling in a rusty taxi, was spirited in after having been driven in spirals through Kabul's empty streets. A visiting high-ranking diplomat of a West European country had backed out of the dangerous meeting only hours earlier.

Eighteen months later, five participants of this meeting¹ flew to the UN-chaired conference in Bonn that would decide on Afghanistan's post-Taliban political future at the invitation of the United Nations and the German government. But one day before it opened, this fifth delegation was told that it could not sit at the conference table.

Those in Kabul and Bonn referred to themselves as "democrats." One of their early activists, however, cautioned them, when they later met in a strategy workshop in Islamabad. "We are only half-democrats. The real democrats will come after us. We have to prepare the ground for them," he said.

The history of political parties in Afghanistan goes back more than 100 years, to the first constitutionalist movement (1903-9). From the beginning, most of these groups strove for reforms of the tribal-aristocratic monarchy and some form of parliamentarianism. After World War II, Afghanistan saw two phases of liberal opening (1947-51 and 1963-73), when a free press and proto-parties² emerged which, however, were not legalized and therefore were unable to participate in elections. (Although they managed



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1. The parties represented were: the Republican Party, the People's Party, the Afghanistan Freedom and Democracy Movement, the Islamic and National Council of Afghanistan's Tribes and the Alliance of Fighters for Peace and Progress of Afghanistan. See Thomas Ruttig, *Islamists, Leftists — and a Void in the Center. Afghanistan's Political Parties and where they come from (1902-2006)*, Konrad Adenauer Foundation: Kabul/Berlin 2006, pp. 16-17.

2. Vladimir Boyko, "The Origins of Political Parties in Contemporary Afghanistan in the Light of New Archival Data," *Central Asia Journal*, Vol. 46 (2000), pp. 189-205.

to get individual candidates elected.) In 1964, Afghanistan became a constitutional monarchy. Between 1987 and 1992, under President Mohammed Najibullah, a phase of “guided party pluralism” followed. Political parties were officially registered for the first time, but mainly leftist groups took up the offer.

By the mid-1960s, the party spectrum had differentiated into the three political currents that still dominate today: the Islamists, the secular leftists (now of more social democratic leanings), and the ethno-nationalists. The new democrats emerged as a fourth current after 2001. They could tie in with those earlier democratic experiences.

All parties attract mainly the educated classes. But as a result of the Afghan education system — which favored the sons of the Pashtun tribal aristocracy who joined schools and universities in the urban centers but maintained their links with their original communities (useful in times of regime collapse) — Afghanistan’s political parties are not entirely urban phenomena. Those parties, however, never had much time and space to come into the open and build constituencies.

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In the early phase after 2001, Afghans in general found democratic principles to be attractive. They contrasted these principles with their experience from three successive anti-democratic regimes, which were accompanied by state and morale collapse, general lawlessness, and impunity. In 2004, a survey showed that only 12% of Afghans rejected democratic reforms, but they wanted them be harmonized with Islamic principles. The authors concluded: “It seems that no strong opposition to democracy develops ... from the support of *sharia*.”³ The broad popular mobilization for the Loya Jirgas in 2002 and 2003 as well as for the first election cycle of 2004/05 showed the significant interest of Afghans in political participation. Even Islamist parties were compelled to integrate the democratic discourse into their political rhetoric and programs.

However, this enthusiasm has waned. The low turnout during the 2009 presidential elections was not only the result of Taliban threats but also of popular disenchantment about an externally manipulated democratic process.

In the post-2001 period, political parties in general — and the democratic ones in particular — have been sidelined in the political process, particularly from elections. In 2003, the government procrastinated about the political party law. The parties repeated the mistake of their moderate colleagues in the 1960s, waiting too long for the official “green light” to become active. During the 2005 parliamentary and provincial council elections, only individual candidates were allowed to run but they were not permitted to add their party affiliation on the ballot papers — in contravention of the law. The complicated voting system (SNTV) added to the marginalization of parties. The United Nations contributed with sham consultations held with the parties after the decision on the electoral procedure already had been made. A leading force behind this ex-

3. Werner Prohl and Felix Werdin, *Demokratie und gesellschaftlicher Wandel in Afghanistan. Empirische Untersuchung zur Akzeptanz demokratischer Werte in einer islamisch geprägten Gesellschaft* (Kabul: Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, Afghanistan Office, April 2004), S. 2, 21.

clusion was the President, who had adopted the populist belief that parties in general were responsible for the civil wars.⁴

Uncoordinated, without significant resources, and under pressure from both the government and the warlords — whose militias were still not disarmed — the largest alliance of Afghan democrats won only eight seats in the lower house in 2005. Furthermore, these deputies failed to coalesce and to link up with liberal independents. Depleted of their scarce resources, those parties lost momentum. Their membership and structures crumbled, although most of these organizations still survive.

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During the 2009 presidential elections, almost all Afghan political forces — including the democrats — were divided about which candidate to back. Most of them finally opted for Dr. Ashraf Ghani and his reform program because, as one party leader said, he was “the most democratic amongst the candidates.” Even parties from the same alliance opted for different candidates. This reflects the fact that personalities still weigh heavier than programs, and that the internal cohesion of those parties and alliances is still weak. On the other hand, it is the potential strength of pro-democratic parties that they try to overcome the ethnic divide and to develop “national” programs.

At the same time, they compete with the *tanzims*⁵ on an extremely uneven playing field. The *tanzims* have a clear advantage because they maintain armed militias, occupy positions of power, and have illegal access to government and external resources.

Since 2007, as was clearly visible during the 2009 elections, two poles have emerged in Afghanistan’s weakly consolidated and extremely fragmented political landscape:⁶ the Karzai camp and the ex-*mujahidin* National Front as the strongest opposition force. The pro-democratic groups try to maintain equidistance without always being able to resist the temptations of the financially much more robust main camps.

While democratization was advocated as one element of the post-2001 Afghanistan international mission, in practice the Western democracies neglected their would-be Afghan democratic allies. There was a perception that any support for alternative political forces might undermine President Karzai and the over-centralized presidential system tailor-made for him. As a result, a potential counterweight for the surging Islamist forces, both in the insurgency and amongst Karzai’s allies, is missing.

4. “Afghanistan was destroyed, tormented, put through lots of suffering because of the bickering, because of the in-fighting, because of the political agendas of the parties that were not national. Afghanistan needs to have a day off on that.” Quoted in *Talking Point Special: Hamid Karzai*, BBC, October 1, 2003, Transcript, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/shared/spl/hi/talking_point/islam_west/02_10_03/html/thewindow.html, December 15, 2007.

5. The term *tanzim* is used by most Afghans for the *mujahidin* parties that fought the Soviets and the regime backed by them between 1978 and 1992. Nowadays, they are sometimes labeled “*jihadi* groups.” They still are linked to militias and are in fact military-political “parties.”

6. A recent count reveals 110 registered political parties. See <http://www.moj.gov.af/?lang=da&p=label19>.

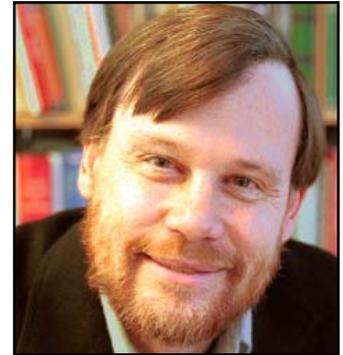
Political Legitimacy in Afghanistan

Thomas Barfield

For most of its history, Afghanistan never constituted a single state because its territories were parts of larger empires. Under these regimes political legitimacy was anchored only in a ruler's ability to maintain order and provide security. While today we assume that rulers must be representative of the people they rule, until the mid-18th century, the rulers of Afghanistan were almost invariably outsiders, mostly of Turco-Mongolian origin. This only changed after Ahmad Shah Durrani established a Pashtun dynasty in 1747 that would rule Afghanistan for the next 230 years. It retained many of the characteristics of its Turco-Mongolian predecessors, particularly the tradition that restricted leadership of the kingdom to members of the royal clan. From 1747 until 1838, Afghan rulers had only close relatives as rivals. Other Pashtun tribal groups stood aloof from such dynastic struggles and only demanded that the victor continue to respect their traditional rights or pay them off.

This well-established tradition of exclusive elite authority began to erode in the 19th century as the increasing sway of Western colonial powers changed the political structures of the region. During the course of two wars (1839-42 and 1878-80), the Afghans expelled the British from the country, but only by employing rural militias in rebellions over which the dynastic elite had no control. This set up a contradictory dynamic in which the Afghan rulers encouraged armed resistance to expel foreign invaders but then refused to share power when the war was over. It also valorized the principles of the defense of Islam and the Afghan nation, but at the cost of undermining the exclusivity of dynastic privilege. With each succeeding crisis and popular military mobilization, the restoration of state authority became harder and disputes over who had the right to rule the state became fiercer. The constant fighting over succession that gave tribal groups the considerable autonomy ended when Amir Abdur Rahman (r. 1880-1901) created a highly centralized state in which he was the sole arbiter.

Abdur Rahman's successors all strived to maintain his level of centralization, but without success. In 1929 the dynasty was toppled in a civil war against his grandson, King Amanullah. But when a Tajik amir took the throne, they rallied behind a collateral Muhammadzai lineage led by Nadir Shah. Fear of being rejected as an usurper forced Nadir to hold a *loya jirga* to ratify his elevation to the kingship. While often described as "traditional," the only other assembly convened to elect a leader occurred in 1747 when Ahmad Shah founded the dynasty. None of his successors saw the need to repeat



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the experiment. The dynasty continued under his son, Zahir Shah (r. 1933-73), and his nephew, Daud (r. 1973-78), although Daud ruled as the President of a self-proclaimed republic. A Communist coup in 1978 ended Daud's life and terminated 230 years of dynastic rule. This government found its legitimacy challenged to such a degree, that only an invasion by the Soviet Union (1979-89) preserved it. As a result, Afghanistan was engulfed by an uncontrollable conflict that replicated on a grand scale the pattern of the Anglo-Afghan Wars — the mobilization of groups throughout the country in resistance to (or in support of) the new regime.

More than any other set of events, the Communist coup and the Soviet invasion opened the question of political legitimacy in Afghanistan. The old dynastic tradition lay in ruins, yet there was nothing to replace it. This issue of who had the right to rule, and on what basis, lay unresolved even after the Soviet Union withdrew in 1989 and its client regime collapsed in 1992. Lacking any overarching political unity among themselves, the various *mujahidin* resistance factions led the country into a vicious civil war and lay the groundwork for the rise of the Taliban. These conflicts eviscerated the formal state structure they were fighting to control and engulfed an ever larger part of the Afghan population into political struggles from which they previously had been isolated. All the ethnic and regional groups in Afghanistan became politically and militarily empowered, reversing the process of centralization that had been imposed by Amir Abdur Rahman.

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In 2001 the United States invaded Afghanistan in response to the September 11th attacks on New York and Washington. The Taliban regime collapsed quickly, and a new regime, led by Hamid Karzai, was installed in Kabul. A series of *loya jirgas* was held to give his regime political legitimacy and to draft a new Constitution. But choosing a leader by *loya jirga* had been used only twice in 250 years, and no leader in Afghanistan's history had ever come to power via an election. Nor were the virtues of majoritarian rule immediately obvious to the country's many regional and ethnic minorities. Beyond these questions of process, there was the question of whether such a new political system could escape the stigma of its foreign imposition. Nothing undermined the legitimacy of any Afghan government quicker than the charge that it was beholden to foreign masters.

A competent government might have overcome the defects that created it, but Afghan state building in the 21st century was fatally flawed in both structure and leadership. It attempted to restore a system designed for autocrats in a land where autocracy was no longer politically sustainable. The 2004 Constitution created a regime barely distinguishable from earlier Afghan monarchies and dictatorships. Despite the talk of inclusivity and popular participation, none was allowed at the local level. Provincial governors, police officials, and even schoolteachers were appointed exclusively by the central government in Kabul without consultation. Such a system required strong leadership at the top to be effective, and Karzai was not up to the task. It was the failure of leadership, more than defects in process and structure, which undermined his government's legitimacy.

Barfield...

After a quarter century of war and social disruption, ordinary Afghans were not seeking perfection. They sought only security, economic stability, and a chance to live normal lives. Ironically, this was what the traditional systems of elite dynastic rule had provided over the centuries: security of life and property in exchange for obedience. Had Karzai been able to establish security and extend his government's control throughout the country, he would have met this basic pre-modern test of legitimacy. Holding an election in August 2009 (particularly one viewed as cynically fraudulent) did not compensate for his government's failure to meet this bedrock benchmark. The government administration came to be seen as corrupt and unable to deliver the security and economic development that ordinary Afghans expected. Fearing any possibility of rejection at the polls, Karzai committed such blatant fraud to ensure his reelection that his electoral victory weakened rather than strengthened his government. At the end of the process, he was a ruler who met neither Afghan nor international standards of legitimacy.

Afghan history portends an unhappy end for such a ruler, whether at the hands of his foreign patrons or his own people. Once again, a new Afghan ruler will seek to establish his authority and legitimacy. The country's past suggests that to be successful such a ruler will need to convince the Afghans that he will not be beholden to foreigners even as he convinces these very same foreigners to fund his state and its military. In the absence of such a figure, and the departure of foreign forces, Afghanistan will not survive as a unitary state. The most likely event in that case would be a sundering of the country along regional lines since these always have been the true political bedrocks of the country.

Afghanistan's Second Presidential Vote: How to Respond to a Flawed Election

Martine van Bijlert

In the run-up to Afghanistan's second presidential election, voter enthusiasm was muted by the widespread perception that the outcome would be determined not by votes, but by international decision-making, political backroom deals, and fraud.¹ The events during and after polling only confirmed this view: There was overwhelming fraud and manipulation, often organized or facilitated by government and electoral officials; responses to the crisis were crafted in behind-the-scenes negotiations between local political leaders and powerful international actors; and in the end the winner was declared based on a series of improvised procedures and decisions that were ratified by statements of international approval.

The main international actors — the UN (UNAMA and UNDP), United States, European nations, and NATO/ISAF — had been unprepared for the unfolding crisis, despite warnings that the absence of independent institutions had left the process wide open to manipulation and fraud.² Embassies in Kabul, which relied on briefings by electoral officials and the UN for their information, sent their capitals reassuring reports about “fraud mitigating measures” and assessments that possible “irregularities” would not fundamentally undermine the credibility of the vote. The main concerns had been about voter turnout and security — in particular after several high-profile attacks highlighted the vulnerability of the process. So once the elections had taken place and voters had voted, there was an overwhelming sense of relief and achievement, as reflected in most early statements on the conduct of the election.³

However, many Afghans felt quite differently: They were rattled by the many security incidents, including in areas that had been safe before, and offended by the fraud and manipulation that many of them had witnessed personally.⁴ As the international press caught on to the unprecedented scale of the fraud, references to the courage of the vot



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1. For a detailed analysis see Martine van Bijlert, *How to Win an Afghan Election; Perceptions and Practices*, Afghanistan Analysts Network (AAN), August 2009, <http://www.aan-afghanistan.org/index.asp?id=128>.

2. Several reports, among others by the AAN and International Crisis Group (ICG), had warned that the rather liberal distribution of voter cards — a total of 17 million cards among an estimated electorate of 9.8 million — had laid the groundwork for potential mass fraud.

3. For the text of these statements see <http://www.afghanelections.org/pdf/Statements.20Aug2009.pdf>.

4. For more details see Martine van Bijlert, *Polling Day Fraud in the Afghan Elections*, Afghanistan Analysts Network (AAN), September 2009, <http://www.aan-afghanistan.org/index.asp?id=301>

ers and the achievement of a fully Afghan-led process were no longer sufficient to suggest a credible vote. The UN leadership and foreign diplomats were confronted with a dilemma that would shape their actions and decisions: how to deal with flawed elections when you desperately need them to be seen as credible and legitimate?

Most nations were faced with dwindling public support and had tried to downplay the problems relating to the elections — and anything else — as long as possible. A complicating factor was the narrative of the increasing Afghan lead role and how that would ultimately guarantee a smooth exit. This made diplomats reluctant to engage more closely, even if this meant leaving the process in the hands of blatantly biased institutions. So with the UN Special Representative of the Secretary General (SRSG) in the lead, they opted for a hands-off approach and insisted that “the process run its course.” This resulted in a major confrontation between the two main electoral bodies. The Independent Electoral Commission (IEC), which was not independent, removed several anti-fraud triggers from the counting process, releasing well over a million suspicious votes — most of them for Karzai — into the count, before announcing the results. In doing so, it not only ignored a binding order by the Electoral Complaints Commission (ECC), but it also fatally undermined the idea of a functioning Afghan process. And this is when the UN stepped in.

The expectation of the main international actors that ultimately Karzai would win meant that discussions were essentially about whether it should be a first or a second round victory...

Backed by the main international ambassadors and assisted by two electoral experts, who were hastily flown in, the UN SRSG embarked on a highly complicated audit process aimed at restoring the perceived legality of the process. The route was not obvious and the procedures chosen were complicated and as a result non-transparent. This was illustrated by the continuous confusion over its details and implications — even among those who were regularly briefed. The “process” was precariously held together by the consent of the two main presidential competitors (which had to be renegotiated several times), the repeated expressions of support by a select group of international ambassadors, the assumed expertise of the UN advisers, and the reluctant cooperation of the IEC — while the rest of the country waited.⁵

The expectation of the main international actors that ultimately Karzai would win meant that discussions were essentially about whether it should be a first or a second round victory and how this could be used to shape future relations. In the meantime, negotiations in search of a political settlement — which included only the two main competitors — continued. This was closely followed and encouraged by international diplomats who hoped that an Afghan-led solution, which could still be presented as legal, would provide an alternative to going into an actual second round of voting. The absence of a clear international focus, other than insisting on the legality of the process and an Afghan lead, meant that the UN and its backers became hostage to the political posturing of both candidates and was left with no leverage over the IEC once the second round was announced. At the same time international envoys were seen to be heavily involved in intense negotiations with the two candidates. Great political capital was spent in persuading Karzai to accept

5. For more details on the audit and the confrontation between the IEC and the ECC, see the electoral blogs on <http://www.aan-afghanistan.org/index.asp?id=5>.

the second round and praising him when he did — and then in convincing Abdullah not to contest the outcome when the IEC, after his pull-out, announced Karzai's victory on November 2, 2009.

This focus by international actors on following a precarious — almost imaginary — process in order to insist to domestic audiences that “the system worked” was a high risk strategy.⁶ The intense involvement in a process that resulted in Karzai's re-election signalled to Afghans that he is again the international community's choice. It confirmed their suspicions that the electoral process — even if it is expanded to include complicated fraud investigations — is mainly an elaborate cover for decisions made elsewhere. And the failure to prepare for a flawed election — instead hoping that it would turn out to be “credible enough” — forced the international actors to step in without achieving actual leverage. This means they are again seen as “being in charge” without actually possessing the means to influence what happens.

6. The claim that the system worked is dubious, as in a fully Afghan led process it is unlikely that the Electoral Complaints Commission — which would have consisted of only Afghan commissioners — would have been able to withstand the pressure and deliver such far-reaching rulings.

The International Community and Afghan Elections: Helping or Hobbling Democratic Development?

Nipa Banerjee

The handling of the 2009 election represents the international community's most recent contribution to the destabilization process of Afghanistan. The international community chose to ignore the obvious risks of fraud before the August 20 polling as well as the evidence of fraud immediately afterward. As a result, Afghanistan has endured a political crisis that threatened to divide the country along ethnic lines, weakened the legitimacy of the winning candidate, and undermined domestic support in the countries of the NATO/ISAF force. The election fiasco is only another example of the general chaos that the international community's unplanned actions have created in Afghanistan.



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THE 2004 ELECTION: DEMOCRACY PROMOTION ON TRACK?

Largely dominated by the UN and well salaried expatriate staff, the first election held in Afghanistan in 2004 was hardly Afghan-led. However, the face of the election was inspiring: a universal adult franchise marked by a very high turnout; disciplined voters; a high percentage of women voters; and a somewhat peaceful electoral operation across the nation.

Observers in residence in Kabul and international observer teams declared the election as fraud-free and promoted it as a successful benchmark of democracy promotion. Yet, a former envoy of a Western nation recently claimed that the 2004 election was pervaded by fraud as well. The prevalence of widespread fraud in the election, fully financed with Overseas Development Assistance (ODA) funds, was not divulged by Western diplomats or the UN at the time. This implies a deliberate cover-up in an attempt to keep the Afghan and donor nations' publics under the illusion that a free and fair election had been held and that democracy promotion was on track.

THE 2009 ELECTION: SUPPORT FOR AFGHAN DEMOCRACY?

During the election campaign, BBC journalists found clear evidence of the selling of voter registration cards and the bribing of tribal leaders as a method for vote buying. The BBC widely broadcasted these findings. However, the international community ignored the warning, as if to suggest that no better process can be expected in Afghanistan, which is not a mature democracy.

On the day of the election, Kabul was like a ghost town. By the afternoon, news streamed in about extraordinarily low turnout across the country, especially in Kabul and in the eastern and southern, predominantly Pashtun, areas. This was shocking for those who had witnessed the 2004 and 2005 elections, which registered 70% voter turnout.

Within an hour of the closure of the polling stations, international diplomats in Kabul and political leaders in Western capitals gleefully announced the election to be a complete success — *not a free but a nonetheless fair election*. However, this positive assessment ignored the hundreds of serious security incidents across the country, including people losing their fingers, nose, and ears. The fact that Afghans did not vote in large numbers was considered “normal” (i.e., Afghans do not know how to exercise democratic rights). Little, if any, importance was ascribed to the voter apathy resulting from the failure of the international community to enhance the country’s security and development.

The UN’s most disingenuous step was the firing of Peter Galbraith, the Deputy Special Representative of the UN Secretary General at the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), who prior to the election had identified the potential for fraud and proposed actions for alleviating it during the polling process. The UN interpreted Galbraith’s propositions as interference in Afghanistan’s national affairs. This position is hypocritical. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), for example, is guilty of such interference — acting in violation of the aid effectiveness principles of the Paris Declaration of 2005 by operating its DEX (Directly Executed) development projects not owned or implemented by the Afghan government. The international community indirectly endorsed the Galbraith’s misguided firing by reiterating their strong support for the UN Mission in Afghanistan.

It also was disingenuous of the international community to congratulate President Hamid Karzai, whose back had been pushed to the wall by the United States and its allies (who earlier had argued non-interference) for agreeing to a run-off after the Election Complaints Commission’s recount reduced his votes to below 50%. As the President of the country, it is Karzai’s first duty to abide by the Afghan Constitution, and he did so. Does he need to be congratulated for observing the laws of the land? Again, the unstated argument was that because Afghans do not know any better, congratulations were due simply for observing the law. Similarly, congratulations piled up when the Independent Election Commission cancelled the run-off and declared Karzai the winner. Whether the decision strengthened or weakened the legitimacy of the government was hardly debated.

AFGHAN DEMOCRACY: CHASING AN ILLUSION?

What is the conclusion to be drawn from the circumstances described above? The international community’s behavior and the democratization process associated with it reflect either a lack of understanding of, or the expedient disregard

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for, what constitutes democracy, democratic development, and elections. Clearly, this behavior also reflects the lack of respect for Afghans, including for the elected President.

Afghans themselves are disgusted, as illustrated by their criticism of the United Nations. They have charged that the UN interfered in Afghanistan's election process by firing Galbraith, who many of them believe had their interests at heart. Many Afghans also are outraged by the fact that though they risked their lives to go to the polls, they were effectively disenfranchised by vote-rigging.

Afghanistan is a new democracy in the early stages of a long process of transition from non-democratic towards democratic rule. At this stage, we should not arrive at the dramatic conclusion that it is impossible for democracy to take root in Afghanistan.

In countries such as Afghanistan, where large portions of the adult population are illiterate and a substantial number of people live below the poverty line, a vigorous democracy is more difficult to achieve than in countries with better socioeconomic conditions. Yet, over the past three decades, democratic openings have taken place in countries where some of the preconditions conducive to democratic development — the level of modernization and wealth, political culture and institutions — are weak. Democratic consolidation in such countries takes time.

Democracy is far more than just elections. It requires independent courts; nonpartisan civil servants; robust institutions and universities; the rule of law and property rights; a free press; constitutional checks and balances, and above all, a culture of openness and tolerance, especially of minorities. To be sure, the critically important process of institution building requires external support. But the international community should seek to ensure that its approach to providing this assistance is not paternalistic.

In the wake of the 2009 Afghan election fiasco, one may be tempted to draw all sorts of facile conclusions, including perhaps that elections do not matter, or at any rate do not matter to Afghans. Yet, nothing could be further from the truth. Elections afford citizens the ability to choose their leaders. And elections *do matter* to Afghans, who are not prepared to give up their right to vote. The international community should help Afghans to exercise this right by assisting them to run free and fair elections. Regrettably, the international community did more to abrogate this responsibility than to honor it in the 2009 Afghan election.

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An Island of Stability in Southern Afghanistan

Casey Johnson

Over the last two years, the Government of Afghanistan (GoA) and international military forces have lost ground to the insurgency across the southern provinces of Kandahar, Ghazni, Zabul, and even Helmand, where recent military operations have been displacing civilians (and insurgents) without yet restoring government control or stability. Many areas that had once been relatively stable and under the (tenuous) control of the government have a regular and strengthening insurgent presence. Though 80% of the population across the south remains “pro nobody” — distrusting an ineffectual government and fearing a repressive Taliban — an increasing number of neutral communities are now forced to either recognize insurgent control in their areas as a matter of survival, or else flee. The factors contributing to this downward spiral are diverse and well-documented, if not fully understood.

More interesting — and, from a policy perspective, more useful — is an analysis of Uruzgan: the single southern province to buck the regional trend of increasing volatility and grow more stable and come under greater (though still tenuous) government control over the last year and a half. Why has the situation improved here? And what role have international actors¹ played in this turnabout?

And it has been a turnabout. In the fall of 2007, only a year after NATO expansion brought Dutch and Australian forces to Uruzgan, the provincial capital was under regular attack, and an insurgency composed of former Taliban regime members, new recruits, and foreign fighters controlled virtually all of Deh Rawud (the birthplace of Taliban leader Mullah Omar) and Chora Districts. Today, Deh Rawud has the highest level of stability of any district in southern Afghanistan where the GoA is present;² the government now controls between 50 to 60% of Chora; and though key areas of Tirin Kot district are still under insurgent control, the provincial capital is no longer under siege and corridors of relative stability now link it with Deh Rawud, Chora, and even Nesh district of northern Kandahar, where residents confronted with an expanding insurgency in the southern part of their district now often travel to markets in Tirin Kot rather than Kandahar City. During the course of field work in Deh Rawud and



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1. Mainly Dutch and Australian NATO forces, though US Special Forces are also present

2. Districts such as Gizab (Uruzgan) and Baghran (Helmand) arguably have been more stable over the last two plus years, but also completely controlled by insurgents. Hazara areas of Uruzgan and Ghazni are also considered to be stable, but the GoA has a limited presence here, and the areas have a *de facto* autonomous status. Another southern district with a GoA presence and a measure of stability is Spin Boldak (Kandahar).

interviews with individuals from Chora conducted in Tirin Kot City during the first week of August, I asked residents why and how the situation had improved in their areas. Not surprisingly, their answers provided no recipe for stability, though a number of overlapping themes did emerge.

The insurgency made a mistake and the communities mobilized themselves.

In Deh Rawud the methods of foreign insurgents were so drastic and the bombardments and fighting in the district so heavy that the local population decided to support the government and remove insurgents as a way of getting rid of foreign insurgents *and* foreign bombs. A coalition of all tribes formed and put up a fighting force aided by international military forces.

In Chora insurgents burned stores of wheat and a newly constructed community building. After this incident, the largely Barakzai community located in the west of the district made a conscious and coordinated decision to turn towards the government and away from the insurgency.

Though increased government and international security actors have positively impacted the security situation, many of those interviewed felt that in both districts this fundamental first step by the communities themselves was the *sine qua non* for bringing areas of the districts back under government control.

Traditional leaders have decision-making power. In Chora tribal elders and notables have been allowed to remain armed and have personal guards (often family members, usually no more than one or two). The fact that pro-government tribal elders have been able to keep a small security team (especially as many of them live in areas with no form of state police protection) has allowed them to remain in the district, which in turn has been a key factor in maintaining tribal and community unity, and garnering wider support for development projects and government initiatives.

After the government regained control of Deh Rawud district in late 2007, the Ministry of Interior directly appointed an Afghan National Army officer as District Governor (DG). Though the DG, an ethnic Tajik from outside Uruzgan, is still fundamentally seen by locals as an interim actor, his outsider status has been a blessing, as he has been less prone to entanglement in communal feuds, and has not been able to dominate local governance bodies in the way that native District Governors (many who are essentially local strongmen with a selective clientele) have done in the south since

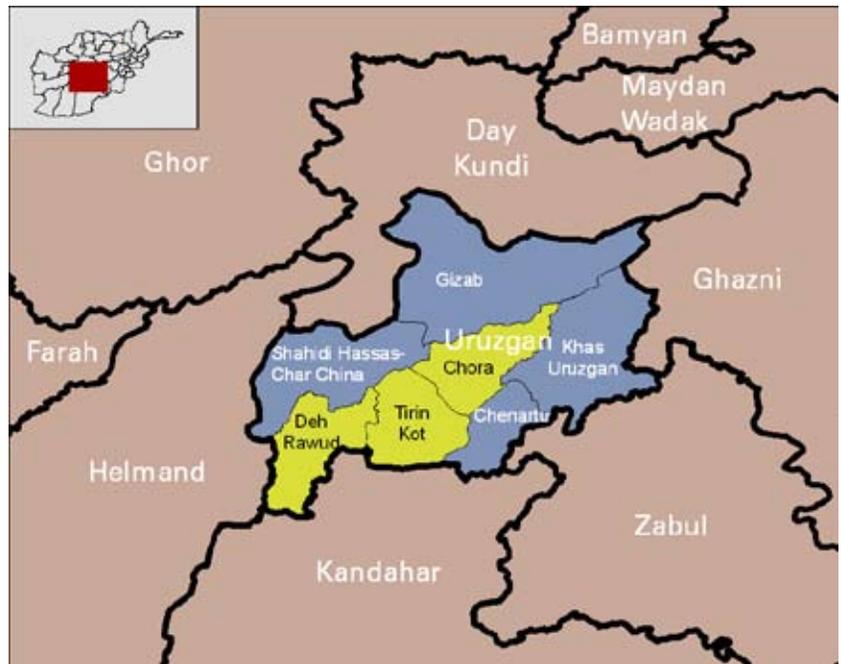


Figure 1: Uruzgan Districts and surrounding provinces of southern Afghanistan. Map copyright The Liaison Office (TLO).

the fall of the Taliban.³ As a result, local governance bodies in Deh Rawud have been given the breathing room that has allowed them to gain influence in their own right; and, in turn, communities now feel they have more say in development and governance issues facing the district.

Aid is reaching many communities who chose to turn against the insurgency. It is interesting that locals in Chora did not cite the presence of foreign military forces as a primary reason for increased security. They did, however, emphasize that the current Dutch engagement approach was not alienating the community or causing people to join the insurgency, compared to areas of Ghazni province where residents were able to provide examples in which aggressive house searches by US and Polish forces have shamed male family members into joining the insurgency to enact revenge and remove communal stigma. Further, aid/development which the Uruzgan Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) is bringing to Chora is now a key factor in gaining community support because it demonstrates to locals (in both government- and insurgent-held areas) the material benefits of turning towards the GoA. Using aid as a carrot in Afghanistan often has backfired and divided the communities it sought to help. In this case, the community's decision to first turn away from the insurgency relied heavily upon the ability of tribal elders to make an effective case that it was in the group's best interest to do so. Had aid then failed to reach these communities, these elders' leadership would have directly been called into question and the area would have been ripe for the re-emergence of insurgent actors. While this is not necessarily evidence that aid/development directly contributes to stability, the fact that some residents in insurgent-controlled parts of the district have been voting with their feet and moving into government-controlled territory in order to access services is a positive sign. Likewise, many individuals in Shahidi Hassas, a district to the north of Deh Rawud still largely under the control of the insurgency, witness the development occurring in Deh Rawud and have organized a communal *shura* as a focal point for reaching out to development actors and planning potential development projects in their areas.⁴

While this is not necessarily evidence that aid/development directly contributes to stability, the fact that some residents in insurgent-controlled parts of the district have been voting with their feet and moving into government-controlled territory in order to access services is a positive sign.

There is still a long way to go in Uruzgan: The district of Gizab remains under tight insurgent control and fighting in the volatile district of Khas Uruzgan continues to generate internal displacement; communal divisions rooted in unequal access to resources and political representation remain; civilians are still being killed in coalition force airstrikes; and, most importantly from a sustainability perspective, GoA capacity remains low, with key provincial-level actors often

3. These governance bodies include: a 29-person "development *shura*" composed of tribal elders and engineers who monitor the implementation of development projects supported by the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development; a 40-person tribal *shura*; and a 73-person *malikan* (village representative) *shura* that serves as a contact point for international actors.

4. A similar *shura* exists in Khas Uruzgan district. Both councils operate in areas with a high insurgent presence and are attempting to remain independent of both the government (so they are not targeted by insurgents) and the insurgency. This is a fine and dangerous line to walk, and in some cases it means maintaining direct lines of communication with the insurgency and/or incorporating moderate "local Taliban" into the council.

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working at cross purposes or in competition. Nonetheless, there is a shared feeling among many communities in the districts of Deh Rawud, Chora, and Tirin Kot that things are getting better — that, while the government is still weak, and corruption still exists, the GoA is gradually becoming more accountable, and corruption has at least fallen within range of “acceptable” levels.

As the Dutch Parliament debates if (and how) the Netherlands will withdraw from Uruzgan when its commitment to ISAF ends in the summer of 2010, it is crucial that the nation which steps in to fill the departing Dutch presence have the financial means and a strong aid and reconstruction network to maintain (and increase) the ongoing level of development. More basically, there must be a clear transfer of knowledge regarding best engagement practices and ground realities from the Netherlands civil-military mission to any incoming nation; or else this island of relative stability will be swamped by an increasingly volatile southern tide.

The Peripherization of the Center: “Warlordism” in Afghanistan

Conrad Schetter and Rainer Glassner

Notions of “security” can greatly vary and even be understood in a contrary way. In the case of Afghanistan, international observers heavily stressed the lack of physical security, circumscribing it with the term “warlordism.” This labelling was the expression of a modern, state-centric understanding of physical security, which generally assumes that the state institutions hold the monopoly on violence. Contrary to this blueprint, individual actors — so-called “warlords” — were identified as the ones who control *de facto* the means of violence. Between 2002 and 2006, virtually no influential political figure in Afghanistan could elude this label, which subsequently became the category for all actors spoiling or even casting doubts on the international agenda of the Afghan peace process.

In our opinion, “warlordism” and its connotations are not sufficient to characterize the structures of violence in Afghanistan. While the existence of “warlords” in Afghanistan is undeniable, the manifold forms of individual leadership as well as the local differences regarding security arrangements are significant; they could be positioned on a linear axis, with “warlords” on the one side and the modern state on the other.

PERIPHERIZATION OF THE CENTER

“Warlordism” often is regarded as a local phenomenon characterized by a power struggle between the center and the periphery. The interactions between the center and the periphery are quite complicated, as each side endeavours to influence the other. However, in recent years, the “Afghan center” has not been in the position to strengthen its power in the periphery, while the periphery has gained the ability to impose its interests on the center. We can refer to this development as the “peripherization of the center” in Afghanistan.

The Afghan state never developed beyond an embryonic stage. The successive conflicts that have plagued Afghanistan since 1979 destroyed the remaining state structures. Therefore, the Afghan government which was established in December 2001 possessed neither a well-founded authority nor legitimacy in the eyes of the people. The twin objectives of the Afghan government were to re-establish a state-owned monopoly of violence and to dismantle local militias. The international community supported the Afghan government in pursuing these goals. However, their two main initiatives — the Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration (DDR) process (2003-2005) as well



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as the subsequent Disbandment of Illegal Armed Groups (DIAG) process (begun in 2005 and planned to be completed in 2011) — have fallen short. Although they were able to collect a number of weapons, they were not able to disband the clientelistic structures between the commanders and their militiamen. In most cases, influential commanders were able to preserve their power by taking official positions or by transferring their militias to regular units of the army and the police. Accordingly, the security sector of the state to a large extent consists of commanders and their militias.

In addition, President Hamid Karzai's strategy to restrict the power of commanders, who received a position in the state apparatus, was only moderately successful. Karzai decided to rotate governors, ministers, and police chiefs from one position to another in order to prevent them from establishing autonomous power bases. Initially, this strategy yielded some positive results, as in 2004, when Karzai removed Ismail Khan from his post as Governor of Herat and appointed him as Minister of Energy and Water in Kabul. Since then, however, this policy has encountered increasingly stiff resistance not only from the persons concerned, but also from the local elites. In many cases, local elites have prevented the government from taking action by mobilizing their clients in order to demonstrate that the enforcement of the state decision would be destabilizing and increase the likelihood of violence.

Due to the absence of a reliable state, many Afghans regard the phenomenon of “warlordism” as a system of political life that is better than an unpredictable future.

Furthermore, the political center in Kabul is strongly influenced by local politics. Local elites endeavour to maintain close relationships with executive branch officeholders or members of the Parliament. It is often the case that local elites are connected to political decision-makers in Kabul through family ties. The ability of local elites to influence decision-making processes in the capital, in turn, has an impact on local politics. Thus, local resistance constrains the central government's efforts to implement its decisions beyond the capital, while the influence of local elites on the central government's decision-making processes impinges on the latter's sphere of activities. This highlights why the localization of power is so tremendously significant for understanding Afghan politics.

LOCAL SECURITY ARCHITECTURE

Due to the absence of a reliable state, many Afghans regard the phenomenon of “warlordism” as a system of political life that is better than an unpredictable future. However, a certain socio-political order can only be sustained as long as it is regarded as legitimate or as unchangeable. This is why power-holders need legitimacy to endow their power with authority. Socio-political order under such conditions follows its own rules, and in many cases overlaps with modern concepts of statehood. Local power-holders resist state penetration, and aim instead to instrumentalize state resources for their own interests. Yet, at the same time, they are partly able to provide security and certain welfare functions to their constituencies, thereby gaining legitimacy. Moreover, local elites are strongly embedded in societal contexts. This “embedding” limits their scope of action and produces expectations within their constituencies.

As our research on Kandahar, Kunduz, and Paktia showed, one can even find a variety of different security architectures within a province, often diverging from valley to valley and from village to village. Our fundamental finding is that a contextualization is the key to understanding local security architectures.

First, social structures play an eminently important role and have to be always regarded in the very specific local context: The different social structures in Paktia and Kandahar make clear that a characterization as “tribal Pashtuns” as such is too superficial to say anything meaningful about the tribal impact on the security architecture. Moreover, the history of a given region must be taken into consideration. Due to the colonization process of the 20th century, the population of Kunduz, for example, is shaped by a high degree of heterogeneity, and also by a rift between the Pashtun latecomers on the one side and the indigenous inhabitants on the other. The lack of a common ground of values and rules between these groupings contributed to the fragmentation of “warlordism” in Kunduz. Paktia provides the opposite example: With a tradition of tribal culture accepted by the people at large, strong tribal institutions averted “warlordism.”

Second, local economies have an impact on the security architecture. In regions such as Kandahar, which rely heavily on drug cultivation and the drug trade, one can witness the establishment of strong warlord structures. Apparently, the financial resources connected with the drug economy contribute to the strengthening of hierarchical structures. This argument is supported by the example of Kunduz, where a strong clan succeeded in establishing itself in the district of Imam Sahib, which is strategically important for the trans-boundary drug trade to Tajikistan, while the district of Khanabad, which is not benefiting from the drug economy, faces a fragmentation of the control of power and violence.

Third, the presence of the state has a significant impact on the security architecture. In general, the state seeks to control the security sector and to establish a monopoly on violence. One could imagine that in places where the concept of state is more widely accepted, the dominance of the “warlords” is easier to break. But contrary to this, as the examples of Kandahar and Kunduz reveal, “warlordism” is very distinct in exactly those regions where the state (i.e., the notion of the state held by local elites) is regarded as important. “Warlords” often perceive the state as a desirable resource to control and to have access to. Thus, in the case of Afghanistan, it seems that “warlordism” is a concomitant phenomenon of the state-building process, rather than being diametrically opposed to it. In contrast, the egalitarian tribal structures in Paktia, where the state is hardly recognized as such, prevent the consolidation of “warlordism.”

In the case of Afghanistan, it seems that “warlordism” is a concomitant phenomenon of the state-building process, rather than being diametrically opposed to it.

Lastly, it is important to assess the role of the international community. The presence of international actors undoubtedly led to the disappearance of weapons being displayed in public — “warlords” and militias have been forced to keep a low profile. This trend is particularly discernible in those Afghan provinces where the international community has contributed substantial funds for reconstruction (e.g. Kabul, Herat). For many “warlords”, a share of these financial resources constitutes a vital economic incentive. Yet the international presence does not always have a taming influence

on the violence structures. Ultimately, it was the establishment and equipping of Afghan “warlords” and their militias by the US Army in the War on Terrorism which caused the temporary emergence of “warlordism” and continues to determine the security structures in Kandahar to this day.

CONCLUSION

This contribution intended to stress the complexity and locally very heterogeneous security structures in Afghanistan. Even though a broad definition of the term “warlord” can be applied to many actors of physical violence in Afghanistan, it fails to take into account the vast variety of local security architectures. While the state and international actors have a direct influence on the security architecture, local social and economic conditions primarily shape the security mechanisms. Moreover, the concentration of power at the local level is so strong, that even the core institutions of the state are under siege by local interests.

Finally, it is important to note that the international media increasingly has resorted to using the term “Taliban” in place of “warlord” to denote the highly dynamic political structures in Afghanistan. Meanwhile, many analysts again have fallen into the trap of redefining the highly differentiated political landscape in Afghanistan again along a bipolar axis: The recent trend is to construct the isomorphism of the categories Taliban, Pashtuns, insurgents, and drug dealers to make clear who the enemy is. However, this tendency expresses much more the concerns of the interventionists than it reflects the highly differentiated local realities of Afghanistan.

Legitimacy or Credibility? The Case of the Afghan State

Shakti Sinha

The continuing controversy about the fairness, or lack thereof, in the conduct of the Afghan presidential election reflects the very high stakes involved. It is understandable that the Western countries which sustain the Kabul regime would want to demonstrate to their citizens that the casualties suffered by their forces are a worthy cause. But why would the Afghan political class invest so much of its resources and credibility in an election to an office that is very often described derisively in Western media as the “Mayor of Kabul”? The basic premise of this essay is that the post-Taliban Afghan government is seen as legitimate in the eyes of the Afghans; however, its lack of credibility across a host of fields, including in delivering justice, in its patronage of the corrupt and the discredited, in its failure to deliver on economic growth, and its perceived lack of inclusiveness has allowed the insurgency to create instability in the country.¹

The Afghan political scene has been dominated by protracted maneuvering, particularly since the enacting of the new Constitution. With the elections to the National Assembly and its inauguration in December 2005, following the presidential election of a year earlier, President Hamid Karzai got an opportunity to reshape his Cabinet. Even though he narrowly failed to get his candidate elected as the Speaker of the Lower House (Wolesi Jirga), and a number of his candidates for ministers were rejected by the Wolesi Jirga in the first round, Karzai managed to create a new team, which was a mix of technocrats, regional strong men who had to be moved out of their areas, and political lightweights of the largest ethnic minority, the Tajiks. Still, the erstwhile Northern Alliance seemed to be disproportionately represented in the cabinet. In fact, its heavyweights, the Panjsheri Tajiks of Massoud’s Shura-i-Nazar, had been sidelined one by one, and other regional strongmen such as the “Amir of Herat” Ismail Khan and the unquestioned leader of the Uzbeks, Abdul Rashid Dostum, had been moved to Kabul and their respective “regimes” were continuously squeezed by Kabul’s representatives in their areas. Since then, there has been no stable state of affairs. There was an attempt to create an alternate political grouping, the United National Front, which initially drew anti-Karzai forces from the opposition as well as within the government and which articulated a more federal approach to governance. This, however, fell apart as a result of Karzai’s abilities to “buy” allegiances of important individuals through offers of office, patronage, and half carried out threats of prosecution and exile, sometimes using a combination of approaches for the same individual.



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1. The foreign element in the growth and sustenance of the insurgency is deliberately left out, as it does not effect the logic of why the government suffers from loss of credibility.

The distortions in the election process, starting with large-scale irregularities in the registration of voters, and subsequent efforts at determining election results using fraudulent means have been covered extensively in media reports; any outcome achieved, even if broadly in line with actual public support, is unlikely to be acceptable not just to the losers but also to civil society and external observers. There have been allegations of ballot stuffing in the Pashtun-dominated south and east, where insecurity prevented normal election activities and where Karzai draws his support, as well as in parts of the north (though on a much smaller scale), such as Balkh province, where the local administration is backing the main opposition candidate, Dr. Abdullah Abdullah.

The viciousness of the Afghan electoral process is inexplicable if one looks at the totality of budgetary resources and discretion available to the Afghan government. Of the \$2 billion in annual recurrent and development expenditure of the Afghan government, about two-thirds is externally funded.² The foreign-funded component — particularly the money which is routed through the multi-donor-funded, World Bank-administered Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund (ARTF), as well as direct assistance from the World Bank and Asian Development Bank and from bilateral donors — is closely monitored and presumably subject to international standards of audit. While there are reported leakages, mainly from payment of salaries to policemen and (much less so) to teachers, the amounts involved hardly merit the stakes apparent in the Presidential race.

Of the \$2 billion in annual recurrent and development expenditure of the Afghan government, about two-thirds is externally funded.

Similarly, the international partners of the Afghan government have constantly complained about the increased level of corruption in the Afghan public sector and the apparent inability of the state to confront it. In fact, the top leadership is often accused of complicity in this, particularly in the appointment of unqualified, and even criminal, elements to key government positions in the provinces. Reports of substantial money changing hands in the appointment of provincial heads of police and even of district administrators and district chiefs of police are quite common, and have been the subject of a number of evaluation studies. At the same time, critics say that the writ of the government does not run beyond Kabul, and that the countryside is under the control of local “warlords.” And yet, many of these same “warlords,” dependent on their takings from the drug industry, extortion, and kidnapping, are the ones who pay to be appointed government functionaries at the provincial and district level. Superficially, it is not clear why a local strongman in unchallenged control of an area would agree to share his loot with various government notables and even minions in Kabul — especially since Kabul cannot budge him.

The answer lies in the need for legitimacy. *De facto* power can only take an individual so far. And this is where Kabul comes in. Only the government led by the President can give the mantle of legitimacy to the strongest of power entrepreneurs. This is what makes corruption in the system endemic. Taking a loan to pay a bribe to buy an office is seen as an investment, and government appointments in an economically stagnant society are the only means of social

2. The overwhelming amount of external development assistance bypasses the government system, and while this has implications for government credibility and even legitimacy, it is not something that Afghan politicians can fight over.

advancement. Part of the reason why Western observers often mistake the latent legitimacy that control over Kabul, or of the seals of government, gives any regime is that the structure and role of government in Afghanistan is so different from what they are used to. On the one hand, a society like Afghanistan has a broad array of power systems operating, with *de jure* systems necessarily limited in their scope largely because of reasons of history, geography, social factors, and recently, the predominance of the war economy. On the other hand, the yearning for stability that arises from such dynamic situations and the social upheaval that has occurred as a result of over a century of government efforts at “fragmenting” society, and the experience of one-fourth of Afghans in refugee camps, has meant that only a central core of the Afghan nation is seen as legitimate and needed to restore order and stability.

It is this legitimacy and power of distributing patronage, even in situations where government’s actual control is nebulous, that makes the conduct of free and fair elections so critical for Afghanistan’s future. For while the recipes for state building should be discussed in the light of what has failed and succeeded, once legitimacy is lost, it will be near impossible to regain.

Assuming that Afghanistan is able to complete the electoral process in a satisfactory manner, and the winner is seen as largely legitimate, it allows the Afghan political system and its international partners space to rectify the failure of the Afghan state to deliver justice, security, and social and economic services. This is not just a technical exercise implying improved public sector capacity, better public finance systems, or physical infrastructure, but an exercise in political economy that takes into account Afghanistan’s need for a legitimate central core with the genuine involvement of local communities in matters of concern to them, best mediated through multiple tiers of democratically elected representative bodies.

Afghans must be supported in the important job of state building, so that the window of legitimacy that is available is not lost but rather used to allow a more secure Afghanistan to develop.

This dispersion of power within a national framework could help in pushing through important public administration reforms that are the minimum required to improve service delivery. But this would need to be backed by improved incentive structures and by the provision of minimum physical infrastructure. The scaling up of the community-based National Solidarity Program to higher levels of spatial agglomeration could help initiate sustainable economic growth at the district and provincial level. Many impediments to private sector-led growth have been identified. While exogenous factors such as insecurity are a larger issue, government and its partners should proactively remove microeconomic impediments. The police must be seen as an agency that upholds public order, and its counterinsurgency role must be reduced even as the Afghan National Army is built up. Afghans must be supported in the important job of state building, so that the window of legitimacy that is available is not lost but rather used to allow a more secure Afghanistan to develop.

Electing to Fight in Afghanistan

Astri Suhrke

The move to hold a second round of elections in Afghanistan on November 7, 2009 has at least had one positive result: it has brought out the fundamental limitations of introducing Western democratic election processes in a deeply divided society that, moreover, is at war with itself and with external forces.

A FLAWED ELECTION OR A FLAWED ELECTORAL SYSTEM?

The conflictual nature of elections has long been recognized by scholars such as Jack Snyder and Edward Mansfield,¹ though contested by others, such as Roland Paris and Timothy D. Sisk, who point to the pros and cons of elections.² In the Afghan case, the arguments against elections at the present time seem overwhelming, and not only because of their inherent potential for generating violence. The political system introduced after 2001 also increases the issues at stake in the elections and works at cross-purposes with the traditional and informal political institutions of the country.

The August 2009 presidential election demonstrated the political and logistical problems of holding elections in the middle of a war. Participation was low, estimated at just over 30% for the nation as a whole. However, the participation rate was much lower in the southern provinces and the southeast, where the security situation had deteriorated most and the insurgents had vowed to stop the elections. Local observers estimated a voter turnout of 5-15% in Kandahar. Similar estimates appeared from other areas in the south and southeast. In Kandahar, once the thriving cultural and commercial hub of the south, violence in the past year or two has so impacted the residents that the common salutation when friends part is, "See you soon, if we are still alive."³ When just staying alive and trying to accumulate enough capital to get out, what is the point of risking life and limbs in an election?

A predictably low turnout in this region was, of course, a perfect incentive for President Hamid Karzai's faction to cheat. Kandahar is the home territory of Karzai's Populzai tribe. Together, the south and the southeast constitute the heartland of Afghanistan's

1. Jack Snyder and Edward Mansfield, *Electing to Fight: Why Emerging Democracies Go to War* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2005).

2. Roland Paris and Timothy D. Sisk, "Pathways of the Political: Election Processes after Civil War," in Roland Paris and Timothy D. Sisk, eds., *The Dilemmas of Statebuilding* (New York: Routledge, 2009), pp. 196-224.

3. Alex Strick van Linschoten and Felix Kuhn, "See You Soon if We're Still Alive," *Foreign Policy*, October 26, 2009.



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Pashtun population. Effectively deprived of a large part of his constituency, the President allowed large-scale ballot box stuffing in this area so as to make up for the expected loss. The result was a 60% “turnout” from Kandahar.⁴ The problem was clearly anticipated by UN officials. Peter Galbraith, then-Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) to the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), advocated not opening polling booths at all in the insecure southern areas. This would have formally disenfranchised a significant part of the Pashtun population in advance of a UN-supported election — something the United Nations naturally could not do.

For many Afghans, the elections — and especially the initial demand for a second round after Karzai failed to attain an absolute majority the first time around — was primarily an exercise in “external legitimacy,” arranged by and for the benefit of international actors. But although international actors initially dominated the strategic space in the political game, Afghan leaders have recaptured significant space for tactical movements. In economic and military terms, the Afghan government is extremely dependent upon outside forces. Foreign assistance accounts for almost 90% of budget funds (development and operating budgets taken together). The US government and the leadership of NATO determine military strategy and train and pay the Afghan army, police, and militias. The structural constraints of this situation limit the government in numerous ways. In the aftermath of the elections, for instance, Karzai had to accept international demands for scrutiny that led to the scrapping of one million of “his” votes. Yet, the President soon recaptured the initiative by refusing to include Abdullah in a government of national unity, which the internationals at one point were pressing for, and instead insisting on a second round (which he then aborted). In the end, Karzai was seen as the man who provided a face-saving exit from a chaotic election situation.

The present winner-take-all presidential system is poorly suited to contemporary Afghanistan, where the principal minorities emerged from the civil war of the 1990s with heightened political consciousness, organization, and grievances.

A WINNER-TAKES-ALL CENTRALIZED PRESIDENTIAL SYSTEM: RECIPE FOR INSTABILITY?

Power-sharing in the form of a government of national unity may still be possible, but the election crisis points to more fundamental problems. The present winner-take-all presidential system is poorly suited to contemporary Afghanistan, where the principal minorities — Uzbeks, Tajiks, and Hazara — emerged from the civil war of the 1990s with heightened political consciousness, organization, and grievances. Their demands for a measure of parliamentarism and for fiscal and administrative decentralization did not win out in the constitutional debate in 2003-04, but have remained and indeed become stronger. The ethnic issue resurfaced during the last election. Karzai represented the majority Pashtun tribes, which traditionally have ruled in Afghanistan. His main challenger, Abdullah Abdullah, while of a mixed Pashtun-Tajik family, was closely associated with the Tajik-led Northern Alliance that briefly gained control over Kabul after the 2001 intervention, and most of his supporters are from the minority communities.

4. Martine van Bijlert, “AAN Election Blog No. 23,” <http://aan-afghanistan.com/index.asp?id=265>.

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The Pashtun have traditionally favored a centralized state. During the constitutional debate they mobilized on ethnic grounds to get a strong presidency.

The United States likewise favored a centralized system that made for simpler patron-client relationships in service of the US national security objective of defeating militant Islamists. US interests were ably and actively promoted during the constitutional deliberations by Zalmay Khalilzad, at the time the Bush Administration's Special Representative to Afghanistan. The Constitutional Assembly thus settled for a presidential system and a formally centralized state. The Parliament was later weakened by an election law that introduced a curious and rarely used system designed to inhibit political party representation (the Single, Non-transferable Vote system, or SNTV).

The person who attains even a single vote more than 50% of the votes cast in the presidential elections captures virtually the entire pot of political power.

The overall result was to focus on the presidency: The person who attains even a single vote more than 50% of the votes cast in the presidential elections captures virtually the entire pot of political power. For a heterogeneous and divided society, this system is particularly destabilizing. This point is readily recognized in the political science literature, which suggests that parliamentary or mixed systems are more inclusive, more open to coalition-formation and power-sharing, and therefore more appropriate for deeply divided societies.

A mixed or parliamentary system also would harmonize with the Afghan political traditions of shifting alignments and flexible coalition-formation, in which contests often involve bargaining which leaves both parties with some gains and intact personal honor.

CONCLUSION

Admittedly, the trend in Afghanistan for the past 30 years has been towards a more centralized state and greater concentration of power in the presidency. But this development also has brought fierce contestation over the state and devastating violence. Arguably, therefore, the consolidation of legitimate power at the center requires a revisiting of the 2004 Constitution. Post-election comments from analysts and UN officials point in the same direction.⁵ Absent space in the policy discourse for this possibility, the fight over the presidency may tear the nation apart to divide the north from the south and, at the very least, greatly complicate efforts to defeat the militant Taliban.

5. See, for example, Steve Coll, "War and Politics," *The New Yorker*, October 26, 2009; statements by Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General (SRSG) Kai Eide to the press; and Nick Horne, "We Must Force Political Change or Fail," http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/comment/columnists/guest_contributors/article6898668.ece. (The author recently resigned from UNAMA.)

IV. Economy and Development: Challenges and Prescriptions

Understanding Informal Institutions in Afghanistan

Paula Kantor

Building legitimate institutional structures which facilitate inclusive development and deliver effective governance is central to stability in Afghanistan. How to do this is the daunting question which has stymied progress toward prosperity and peace. Examining rhetoric and practice around building legitimate institutions illustrates that legitimacy is often linked with formality. This can leave informal institutions neglected, even if that is where legitimacy and trust may already lie. This essay contends that this formal/informal divide is misleading, and that privileging the formal is detrimental to efforts to develop legitimate and effective structures. Instead, understanding how informal institutions have worked, and building from them, may be a more appropriate way to increase Afghan ownership and improve the sustainability of any reforms made.



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FORMAL/INFORMAL DIVIDE

To be formal is to be official, recognized, and registered, to be part of the accepted system, from the point of view of bureaucratic procedure and structures. According to some, these characteristics provide formal institutions legitimacy and a privileged role in development.¹ Informal institutions are defined based on what they are not (i.e., formal). In this way, they tend to be the discounted and devalued part of the binary opposition, and identified as quite separate from their formal counterparts.

This division of the formal and informal, and the tendency to value the former over the latter, means that what informal institutions offer tends to be overlooked. This is particularly the case in the Afghan context where informal structures are what sustained populations through decades of conflict and weak governance. Local systems of social protection, social control, and rule of law delivered for people — not without flaws, but in ways that have become understood and trusted. In this context, imposing formal institutions may be counterproductive, particularly if no effort is made to assess what systems already exist, how they function, and what can be improved. Formal institutions may reduce human security if they intervene in existing systems without understanding the potential for unintended consequences, leading to dissatisfaction and growing mistrust.

The division of the formal and informal not only devalues informal systems which may

1. World Bank, "Afghanistan: State Building, Sustaining Growth, and Reducing Poverty," Report No. 29551-AF (Washington, DC: World Bank, 2004).

be highly functional, but it also tends not to mirror reality. Evidence shows that in practice formal and informal systems become entwined. Not recognizing this can be problematic, as illustrated below through a study of interventions in Afghan rural credit markets.

INFORMAL CREDIT, MICROCREDIT, AND LIVELIHOOD SECURITY

The effects of separating the informal and formal are readily apparent in the case of credit systems in Afghanistan. AREU research shows that this false division, and particularly a disregard for informal credit systems in the process of introducing microcredit (MC), led to increased vulnerability in rural contexts, which can in time become a destabilizing factor.²

Devaluation of and disregard for informal credit systems in Afghanistan were apparent in how microcredit was introduced in 2003. The rhetoric justifying investment in MC was that Afghans, and particularly rural residents, lacked access to any credit facilities. Therefore, there was an extensive unmet demand for credit which MC services could fill. This presumed that the credit market was a blank slate, lacking any competitive products. Evidence from AREU's research suggests that this presumption was false. Access to credit was not, and is not, currently lacking. Informal credit markets exist and provide significant amounts of credit for both consumption and investment purposes, in some cases in amounts equal to average loans sizes from MC programs. The unwillingness to acknowledge the presence of an informal credit system, which continues today, has several consequences.

However, those who initially developed MC programs in Afghanistan did not factor informal credit systems into their thinking.

First, MC was clearly an additional — not the only — source of credit, meaning that lack of access to credit was insufficient justification for the expansion of formal credit systems to rural Afghanistan. MC entered a credit market operating with considerable complexity, in which its products had to compete with what the informal system offered in order to retain clients and ensure positive livelihood impacts. Microfinance institutions (MFIs) need to invest in understanding the nature of the market they are entering and design products which meet client interests.

However, those who initially developed MC programs in Afghanistan did not factor informal credit systems into their thinking. MFIs made little to no assessment of existing informal markets and their strengths and weaknesses in considering potential client demand, developing MC products, or deciding in which areas to provide MC. This lack of information gathering about informal credit systems was a significant gap, because good product design depends on knowledge of the context and customers. Investing the time to understand local credit systems can lead to more responsive and innovative MC products, which are more widely accepted and legitimate. This can improve MFI and client livelihood

2. Case study material is drawn from Paula Kantor, "From Access to Impact: Microcredit and Rural Livelihoods in Afghanistan" (Kabul: AREU, 2009); Floorje Klijn and Adam Pain, "Finding the Money: Informal Credit Practices in Rural Afghanistan" (Kabul: AREU, 2007); and Paula Kantor and Erna Andersen, "Building a Viable Microfinance Sector in Afghanistan" (Kabul: AREU, forthcoming).

viability, supporting local development. Inattention to this step meant MC programs faltered; they are currently going through a significant reform process, including reassessing products offered.

Disregarding existing informal credit systems also results in a lack of knowledge of how formal and informal credit systems interconnect and how this may affect client debt levels and repayment capacity. AREU's research identified clear linkages between formal and informal credit systems in its study villages. Often these links started from a need to find the money to meet a MC repayment deadline, with many borrowers turning to informal sources because they had not been able to earn enough return from the loan's investment activity to meet both consumption and repayment needs in the timeframe allotted by the MC program. Since most MFIs measure their success through repayment rates, informal credit systems supported the success of MC through enabling repayment. This hid increasing client debt burdens and how MFI viability improved at first, while client livelihood security deteriorated.

Like informal credit exchanges, micro-credit borrowing is often about more than the money.

A third problem with disregarding the existence of informal credit systems is misunderstanding the meaning of credit in rural Afghanistan. Like informal credit exchanges, microcredit borrowing is often about more than the money. Though MFIs conceive of MC as a market-based financial transaction, respondents in AREU's study perceived it differently. They embedded their understanding of the role of MC within existing social relations and used MC as another tool with which to create or strengthen social ties. This should come as no surprise, given the importance of social networks to livelihood security in the Afghan context. Social relationships form the social protection system through which people survived the many phases of conflict in the absence of state support, and this continues today. By not recognizing the social dimensions of microcredit and informal credit in Afghanistan, MFIs run the risk of not fully understanding how their programs operate on the ground, why they may or may not be successful, and how they may influence client livelihood strategies in unanticipated ways.

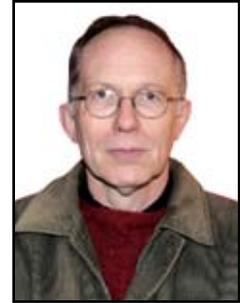
CONCLUSION

The case of credit systems in rural Afghanistan points to the need to understand informal institutions, since they may provide the best point of departure for new interventions. Imposing formal systems which may lack the legitimacy of existing informal institutions may be inefficient at best and counterproductive at worst. The key is to take the time to understand what institutions have legitimacy and what improvements in equity, access, or outcomes are needed in order to ensure new systems enhance instead of detract from human security and stability.

Afghanistan's Opium Poppy Economy

Adam Pain

Richard Holbrooke, the US Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan, recently described the US counternarcotics effort in Afghanistan as “the most wasteful and ineffective program I have seen in 40 years in and out of government.”¹ Yet, during the period of 2005-2008, the United States allocated about \$1.468 billion to counternarcotics activities, compared to a UK contribution of \$1.545 billion. Holbrooke’s remark is therefore a fairly damning indictment of the US government’s effort — one with which it is difficult to disagree. How did the United States get it so wrong?



This essay focuses on the bigger issues and the awkward but persistent themes related to counternarcotics policy. It starts by laying out four issues that must be considered, before addressing the following questions: What drives the opium poppy economy? What have been the consequences of its trajectory? Finally, what room is there for an improvement in the policy response?

FOUR ISSUES

First, it is often argued that Afghanistan’s opium poppy economy is unprecedented. However, it is important to note that opium has a history, dating back to the promotion of its cultivation and the globalization of its trade by the British in India. In the 1960s and 1970s, opium cultivation shifted to Southeast Asia, a decade later to Turkey and Pakistan, and later to Afghanistan. Opium poppy is a footloose crop. If “success” is achieved in Afghanistan, history indicates that cultivation will move somewhere else. Under such a scenario, what would “success” in Afghanistan mean — that is to say, what would be its consequences?

Second and related, the opium market is driven by demand. To borrow from Mancur Olson, it is an “irrepressible market.” The demand is largely, although not exclusively, in the West. To what extent is the West accountable to Afghanistan for the factors that drive the opium market? Does it make sense to seek to regulate a market by addressing the supply, rather than the demand end? Moreover, there is also a legal market for opium, which is the source of morphine — still the most effective pain killer and grown in the United Kingdom and elsewhere for that purpose. One could question the consistency of seeking to destroy a crop deemed to have been grown for illicit purposes, while

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1. Cited in Christopher Blanchard, *Afghanistan: Narcotics and US Policy*, Congressional Research Service 7-5700, RL32686 (Washington, DC: CRS, 2009), p. i.

considering its cultivation by others to be licit.

Third, there are some distinct political and governance tensions related to the attempts to control opium cultivation. It could be argued that opium poppy is located at the intersection between an emergency requiring short-term measures and a development problem necessitating a considered long-term response. Thus, is the cultivation of opium poppy a symptom of a problem (the development problem) or a cause of it? Counternarcotics policy essentially has treated opium poppy as a cause and, therefore, as something to be eradicated; in fact 50% of the US effort so far has been devoted to eradication measures. But if, as some have argued, the cultivation of opium poppy is an outcome of state failure and therefore a symptom, then governance issues of decentralization, the participatory process, and individual rights — not least, the right to food security — might take precedence. Instead, there has been a centralized response that emphasizes control of opium and prioritizes the West's public good.

Fourth, the opium economy tells us something about the state-building process in Afghanistan. Thus far, the narrative largely has been apocalyptic, emphasizing the opium economy's effects on corruption and the building of a shadow state. But crises also can generate transformatory processes. More could have been done to help the Afghan government craft a response to opium poppy that would have enhanced its legitimacy and contributed to state building. Opium arguably has done more to reduce poverty, drive the rural economy, and, perhaps more controversially, support conflict resolution processes than anything else on offer. Could the opium economy not have been used more creatively to assist the state building effort?

Opium arguably has done more to reduce poverty, drive the rural economy, and, perhaps more controversially, support conflict resolution processes than anything else on offer.

WHAT HAS DRIVEN THE OPIUM POPPY ECONOMY?

In general, it is clear that market demand drove the expansion of opium cultivation in Afghanistan from 2001 to 2006. There is nothing exceptional about the way the opium market works in comparison with any other commodity market, including in Afghanistan.² But cultivation also has been driven by the need for welfare and food security, and conditions of risk and insecurity. In that sense, opium has been a low risk crop in a high risk environment. Price and profit does matter, and the opium economy traverses three conceptually distinct economies that in practice are seamless: a welfare or coping economy, a black economy where profit is the motive, and a war economy wherein, it can be argued, opium is a conflict commodity.

One needs to look more closely at the spatial patterns of cultivation in Afghanistan and be attentive to where it has spread, when and why, and where it has not been grown. The body of evidence³ indicates that several, often location-

2. Sarah Lister and Adam Pain, *Trading in Power: The Politics of "Free" Markets in Afghanistan*, Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit (AREU), Kabul AREU Briefing Paper (2004).

3. David Mansfield and Adam Pain, *Evidence From the Field: Understanding Changing Levels of Opium Poppy Cultivation in Afghanistan*, Kabul AREU Briefing Paper (2007), <http://www.areu.org.af>.

specific and dynamic factors are the key to understanding the spatial patterns of cultivation. They include underlying agro-ecological factors (water availability being crucial), combined with land scarcity and limited market access. Underlying determinants of social inequality, linked in many cases to social identity (ethnicity) and location (upstream or downstream in irrigation systems) also are relevant. In addition, drought, price shifts, food insecurity, and physical insecurity — confounded by the effects of counter-narcotics practice, threatened or actual — play a role in shifting cultivation.

All this means that that the key indicator of counter-narcotic success that has been used — changes in opium poppy area⁴ — is deeply problematic. There has been a distinct tendency to muddle and confuse correlation of changing area with counternarcotics efforts. There also has been a tendency to assume causality, when the underlying changes in opium poppy area have little to do with counternarcotics efforts.

Counternarcotics policy largely has assumed profit maximization and individual choice in its behavioral change model. Yet, what is the role of choice when the determinants of poverty are individualized, are considered as an outcome of relations,⁵ and are linked to social position (individual and community) within interlocking structures of inequality,⁶ such as the patterns of cultivation in Balkh in northern Afghanistan clearly illustrate? There is a need to understand the behavior of households and individuals, and the choices that they have, given the social and contextual conditions in which they live. Counternarcotics policy must focus much more on changing the context within which households lead their lives — on poverty inequalities and gradients of poverty — rather than on individual household behavior.

Counternarcotics policy must focus much more on changing the context within which households lead their lives — on poverty inequalities and gradients of poverty — rather than on individual household behavior.

WHAT HAVE BEEN THE CONSEQUENCES OF THE OPIUM POPPY TRAJECTORY?

This needs to be considered at multiple levels. First, there is no doubt that opium poppy has been the best “cash transfer;” that is, opium has done more to reduce income poverty and assure food security than anything else on offer. Despite efforts to paint the opium economy as debt inducing and impoverishing, the evidence does not support this.⁷ The growth of the opium economy has had important multiplier effects on the rural economy — creating access to land and employment both on and off farms. There is no other crop that could have done this. It could be argued that opium has arrested a historical trajectory; that is, it has kept people in the rural economy. Once opium cultivation is eliminated, migration out of a land-based economy will be inevitable for many who are either landless or whose land holdings are miniscule.

4. David Mansfield. *Counter Narcotics in Afghanistan: The failure of success?* Kabul AREU Briefing Paper (2008), <http://www.areu.org.af>.

5. David Mosse, *Power and Durability of Power: a Critical Exploration of the Links between Culture, Marginality and Chronic Poverty*, Chronic Poverty Research Centre, CPRC Working Paper 107 (2008).

6. See Adam Pain, *The Spread of Opium Poppy Cultivation in Balkh*, Kabul, AREU CaseStudy Series (2007).

7. Adam Pain, *Opium Poppy and Informal Credit*, Kabul, AREU Issues Paper (2008).

Opium certainly has been a lubricant for existing social structures — assisting conflict resolution processes⁸ and easing underlying social tensions between different ethnic and social groups.⁹ Undoubtedly, it has supported the rise of a “shadow state,” where the distinction between using official position for the public good and private gain merges. But one has to be careful to separate out the pre-existing patterns and structures of bureaucratic behavior which always have been distinctly patrimonial in Afghanistan (which some would refer to as “government by relationships”¹⁰) from the direct consequences of the opium economy.

Much has been made of the link between opium and conflict, and particularly between opium and the insurgency in the south. It has been argued that opium and the Taliban are intrinsically related to each other.¹¹ There is no question that revenue from opium tax or trading has contributed to the Taliban’s funds. However, opium’s overall contribution is certainly debatable;¹² moreover, it is highly unlikely that if the insurgency were to lose opium as a source of funds, this would undermine its resource base. Opium has not been intrinsic to the insurgency, simply a resource that has been opportunistically used.

What have been the consequences where opium has declined? Recent field evidence from Badakhshan,¹³ where poppy has been grown for a century or more, points to a collapse in the rural economy, a decline in food security, and emigration to Iran or into employment in the army or police (which carries its own risks).

POLICY RESPONSES

Counternarcotics policy has been part of the problem — a tendency by key players, notably the United States, by virtue of its funding weight, to go it alone in a program that has achieved little. Contextual, engaged responses have simply not been on the agenda. There has been donor competition with alternative organizational structures making a mockery of policy coherence and coordination.¹⁴ The distortionary effects of the size of the US counternarcotics budget and its emphasis on eradication have undermined the government of Afghanistan’s counternarcotics strategy, which has placed greater emphasis on reducing the opium crop area as an outcome of other counternarcotics measures than on

The effect of US funding has been to locate the effort on eradication at the bottom of the opium poppy value chain where 90% of the actors are to be found. The effects have been poverty and conflict inducing, as poor people turn to the insurgents for support.

8. J. Koehler, J. and C. Zuercher, “Statebuilding, Conflict and Narcotics in Afghanistan: The View from Below,” *International Peacekeeping*, Vol. 14, No. 1 (2007), pp. 62-74.

9. Adam Pain, “The Opium revolution: continuity or change in rural Afghanistan?” in Harriss-White and Heyer, eds, *The Comparative Political Economy of Development: Africa and South Asia* (London: Routledge, forthcoming).

10. Hamish Nixon, *Subnational State-building in Afghanistan*, Kabul, AREU (2008).

11. British Government, “Lord Malloch Brown Announces New Plans to Tackle Afghan Drugs,” <http://www/fco.gov.uk/servlet/Front?pagename=OpenMarket/Xcelerate/Showpage8>.

12. Antonio Guistozzi, *Koran, Kalashnikov and Laptop: The Neo-Taliban Insurgency in Afghanistan* (London: Hurst, 2007).

13. Adam Pain, *Livelihood Trajectories in Afghanistan*, Case Study, Kabul, AREU, Draft Paper (2009).

14. Adam Pain, “Narcotics and Counter-Narcotics: Responding to an Irrepressible Market?” in Cole, Dowling, and Karp, eds., *Deconstructing the Afghan Security Sector* (Geneva, DCAF LITVerlag Security Governance Series, forthcoming).

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eradication as the means to bring about an end to the opium economy. The effect of US funding has been to locate the effort on eradication at the bottom of the opium poppy value chain where 90% of the actors are to be found. The effects have been poverty and conflict inducing, as poor people turn to the insurgents for support.

Much has been made of the provinces that have achieved poppy-free status, but this is likely to be highly fragile and many of the underlying drivers of the recent decline are likely to be durable, not least given the close link between the opium economy and provincial level political structures.

Where is there room to maneuver? More efforts could be made to link policy to government budgetary mechanisms, giving the Afghan government greater control and ownership of policy, with strings attached to funding of course. While some counter-narcotics action at the production end of the value chain may be necessary, it has to be consistent with good counterinsurgency practice. This would entail focusing on changing the context of insecurity, economic opportunity, and local governance, which dictates household choice. The worst effects of the opium trade undoubtedly need to be targeted, particularly its coercive power. All the reports indicate that Afghan government officials are among the worst offenders in this respect. But above all, there needs to be a greater effort to craft a strategy based on a much more open-minded, informed, and strategic engagement with the present conditions in Afghanistan and the opportunities that they offer.

A Strategic Dispersion: The Remittance System of Afghan Refugees and Migrants

Alessandro Monsutti

The conflict that tore Afghanistan apart following the Communist coup of 1978 and the Soviet invasion of 1979 resulted in a massive population displacement. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), by 1990 Afghans had become the world's largest refugee group, accounting for approximately 6 million people.¹ Although the exodus of Afghans has reached an unprecedented level in recent decades, it is important to note that the region has a long history of migration: Nomads who move seasonally to bring their herds to better pasture lands use the opportunity to trade with sedentary farmers; mountain people go to urban centers or lowlands to find menial jobs; pilgrims, scholars, soldiers, and refugees are also part of this cultural tapestry.²



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There is a growing awareness in migration studies that movements are neither definitive nor temporary, but rather follow a recurrent and multidirectional logic. In the Afghan case, many refugees have visited home after their first flight. There are few domestic units that do not have at least one member residing abroad. Through their continuous back-and-forth mobility, Afghans have established a transnational community that not only encompasses the surrounding countries of Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Iran, but extends to the Arabian Peninsula and the West. Today, as in the past, Afghans — like other groups of migrants and refugees — are sending large sums of money to their relatives back home.

It is crucial to look at these remittances for several reasons. First, they show how the flight from violence is not always incompatible with economic strategies. Second, they have social and economic implications for their regions of origin of refugees and migrants. Third, the remittances stimulate and orientate mobility, because refugees and migrants provide information to their relatives in the region of origin about the opportunities that exist elsewhere. Remittances reveal the existence of social networks that connect distant locations. For Afghans, dispersion is not merely a traumatic consequence of war and poverty; it also may be a planned choice by which members of family groups strive

1. Rupert Colville, "Afghan Refugees: International Support Is Draining Away After Two Decades in Exile?" *Refuge*, Vol. 17, No. 4 (1998), pp. 6-11.

2. M. Jamil Hanifi. "Anthropology and the Representations of Recent Migrations from Afghanistan," in E.M. Godziak and D.J. Shandy, eds., *Rethinking Refuge and Displacement: Selected Papers on Refugees and Immigrants*, Vol. 8 (Arlington, VA: American Anthropological Association, 2000), pp. 291-321.

to diversify their livelihoods. In so doing, they spread the risks caused by the insecurity that dominates their lives as much in their region of origin (persistent violence) as in their destinations (police pressure, waves of expulsion).

The case of the Hazaras is illustrative. Originating from the central mountains of Afghanistan, this largely Shi'ite community is regarded with suspicion and contempt by the Sunni majority. Driven by poverty and political marginality, they left their home region in the past in search of jobs. The Hazaras, like other Afghan groups, have set up very effective migration networks articulated on the dispersion of kith and kin between Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Iran.³ Since the mid-1990s, an increasing number have gone to Europe, North America, Australia, and New Zealand.⁴ Each location has advantages and disadvantages. In Afghanistan, the Hazaras have experienced a process of political empowerment, but the overall situation of the country remains bleak. In Pakistan, most Hazaras headed for Quetta, the capital of Baluchistan. There, they benefited from a Hazara community that had been established in the late 19th century when the town was part of British India. Refugees and migrants were able to move relatively freely, but few economic opportunities were available.

The Afghan migrant therefore entrusts his money to a businessman who specializes in informal remittances, known locally as a *hawaladar*, from *hawala*, “transfer (of money),” “credit letter,” or “check.”

In contrast, it is fairly easy to find a menial job in Iran on a building site, in an industrial mill, or on a farm. However, due to increasing pressure from the authorities of the Islamic Republic and the periodic waves of expulsion, it seems difficult to settle down on a permanent basis with a family. When an Afghan working in Iran wants to send his savings to his family in his home country, he cannot use the official banking system because he is unlikely to have identity papers. An additional obstacle is the banking network in Afghanistan: It has gradually expanded since the fall of the Taliban in 2001, but is still almost nonexistent in the countryside. The Afghan migrant therefore entrusts his money to a businessman who specializes in informal remittances, known locally as a *hawaladar*, from *hawala*, “transfer (of money),” “credit letter,” or “check.” Where possible, the migrant gets in touch with a *hawaladar* known to him — a member of his tribal section or a person from the same valley or from the same district as he. If the relationship is more distant, the presence of a middleman who is responsible to both parties is required. The *hawaladar* sends a letter to his partners in Afghanistan stating the details of the transaction and gives the migrant another letter to be sent to his family.

Since the fall of the Taliban regime and the establishment in late 2001 of a government in Kabul supported by the international community, most transfers have been made directly from Iran to Afghanistan. In the 1990s, however, tensions between the Shi'ite regime and the Sunni militants made crossing the border between the two countries particularly difficult. Therefore, the *hawaladar* active in Iran usually remitted the collected funds to Pakistan, either by bank transfer or in the form of goods (particularly manufactured goods such as plastic items, clothing, or fabrics). A partner recovered the money or the merchandise and sold them on the spot, turning a profit. He could use the money obtained to make

3. Alessandro Monsutti, *War and Migration: Social Networks and Economic Strategies of the Hazaras of Afghanistan* (New York and London: Routledge, 2005).

4. Alessandro Monsutti, “Itinérances transnationales: un éclairage sur les réseaux migratoires afghans,” *Critique Internationale*, No. 44 (2009), pp. 83-104.

some additional profit (on the currency exchange market for example), but ended up buying other goods (flour, rice, cooking oil, tea, and sugar, but also pressure cookers or plastic slippers). These goods were shipped by truck to a third partner who ran a store in rural Afghanistan. With the money from the sale, the shopkeeper reimbursed the families of migrants. The commission charged for this transaction was low (most of the time, less than 3%), because the benefit of a *hawaladar* was linked mainly to his capacity to run a business without having sizable capital of his own.

Despite the trauma of war and exile, the Afghans thus have been able to take advantage of geographical dispersion and the resulting diversification of economic activities to develop particularly effective transnational structures of cooperation.

In development studies, the debate about the effects of remittances in the regions where migrants originate is intense. On the one hand, some scholars stress that the money sent by migrants is often intended for the purchase of consumer goods and prestigious or lavish spending, thereby contributing to increasing social inequality. On the other hand, a growing number of development agencies emphasize the potentially positive role that remittances play in contributing to local economies, provided that capital is invested productively.

If the emigration of young men has caused long-term problems for the reconstruction of Afghanistan, it is nevertheless a survival strategy that has proven effective.

If the emigration of young men has caused long-term problems for the reconstruction of Afghanistan, it is nevertheless a survival strategy that has proven effective. The *hawala* system has helped many Afghan families to cope when facing the most trying conditions. Beyond their economic contributions and limitations, remittances from migrants have a social dimension. It is through this means that scattered people remain in contact and still constitute a group of solidarity and mutual aid. Remittances thus help to produce and reproduce social relations despite war and dispersion.

In the case of Afghanistan, remittances have further potential: The *hawala* system could be complemented by a banking system that contributes to the transformation of the money sent into a source of investment. In this way, remittances could help finance the rehabilitation of infrastructure and participate in the creation of jobs.

The *hawala* system as used by Afghans — a complex intertwining of cooperation and competition, trust and mistrust — helps us to understand how the geographical and economic diversification that results from population displacement can, and has, spread the risk and become a planned strategy.

From Sustainable Jobs to Sustainable Peace and Prosperity

Taymor Kamrany

Despite the capital infusion and increased commerce that have occurred since 2001, the Afghan economy today faces an astounding 40% unemployment rate. The dismal figure is not a result of global economic crises; rather, it is due to the ineptitude of the Afghan government to create stable jobs outside the public sector. Imagine what a low-skilled, unemployed father would do to feed his eight starving children? In Afghanistan, the possibilities range from petty theft to drug trafficking, and even terrorism that can reach the doorsteps of Europe and America. In Western countries, there are support systems to re-train labor forces and thereby ease the transition into new jobs. In Afghanistan, there is no support system, making the situation even more daunting for the unemployed.

AFGHANISTAN'S LABOR FORCE PREDICAMENT

Since 1979, Afghanistan has focused mostly on building its “defense industry,” primarily consisting of guerrilla warfare, as the main source of employment. As the result of three decades of conflict and the lack of education and training, an entire generation of the Afghan workforce was practically lost. According to the CIA World Factbook, the current Afghan labor force is slightly over 15 million, with roughly 80% of the working employed in the agriculture sector and the remaining 20% split evenly between industries and services. In other words, the Afghan labor pool consists primarily of an uneducated labor force with few skills that can be transferred to other industries. More importantly, whether in farming or carpet weaving, these few industries have neither access nor visibility to global markets and are mercilessly exploited by enterprising businesses from the region.

According to the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the 6.3 million Afghans who managed to escape the war and took refuge in surrounding countries had neither access to basic education nor vocational training. In addition, remittances from Afghan expatriates in the West created a “welfare state” mindset, thus further contracting the skilled labor pool and sapping the desire to work.

THE PATHWAY TO SUSTAINABLE JOBS

While the Afghan story is quite complex, there are ways to turn it around. The dismal situation of high unemployment coupled with a high number of low-skilled members



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of the labor force can be dealt by means of a short-term job infusion and a long-term strategy for creating a more skilled labor force.

In the short term, the government of Afghanistan must clearly define and articulate their vision and strategies of creating more sustainable jobs to increase economic growth. On the policy side, the Afghan government must establish an unemployment target of less than 10% and begin implementing public works projects to reach that target. The recent announcement of the decision to privatize some 50 public enterprises will help, but the magnitude of the unemployment problem requires the implementation of agricultural and infrastructure projects throughout the country, not just in metropolitan areas such as Kabul. Decentralizing economic activities offers two potential benefits. First, it could prevent the further concentration of wealth and income in Kabul, which has increased the gap between the rich and poor. Second, it could cause the labor force to respond to employment opportunities in the provinces. This, in turn, would redistribute the population away from Kabul, which has a capacity of 500,000 inhabitants but whose current population is estimated at more than four million. Additionally, foreign non-governmental organizations (NGOs) must transfer their work to local Afghans, thereby reducing the army of foreign consultants and contractors. This will not only put people to work, but also lower labor costs and reduce the initial start up cost of development projects.

The Afghan government must establish an organization charged with implanting vocational training centers throughout the country, including at the provincial level, training locals with new job skills and providing on-the-job training work experience.

In the longer term, the Afghan government must create jobs that are within the reach and expectation of the local population through education and training. Lack of education is one of the key drivers of Afghanistan's social and economic development problems. Increased levels of literacy and vocational training will lower unemployment rates as well as increase productivity and economic output. More importantly, education and vocational training will increase the rate of economic and technological convergence between Afghanistan and the rest of the world. This convergence will foster more investment, including foreign direct investment (FDI).

The Afghan government must establish an organization charged with implanting vocational training centers throughout the country, including at the provincial level, training locals with new job skills and providing on-the-job training. Depending on the area, the vocational training curriculum can range from office skills and entrepreneurship to specialized fields such as automotive and heating/air conditioning repair. This organization also should assist training centers to team up with local businesses so that participants also can gain on-the-job training and job placement following the completion of their courses.

The Afghan government also will need to team up with local banks to create specialized small private loans, such as micro-finance loans, to create new local businesses in conjunction with training centers. Perhaps they can put local entrepreneurs to work with the creation of 100,000 new small businesses throughout the country capitalized with low-

interest investment loans.

Today, Afghanistan is caught in a vicious cycle whereby the lack of security and corruption make foreign direct investment impractical. While some government officials are simple opportunists and take bribes, others are forced to fall into this practice to make ends meet. Regardless of the reason, this high level of imposed corruption “tax” must be removed. While Afghanistan cannot compete directly for foreign direct investment with regional economic powerhouses (e.g., Russia, India, and China), it nonetheless has a comparative advantage in agriculture and in handicrafts such as carpet weaving. In order to exploit its advantage in agriculture, Afghanistan must institute measures to provide farmers with canneries, food storage, pesticides, farm equipment, and irrigation systems, as well as access to global markets.

CONCLUSION

Afghanistan’s dismal economic situation can be rectified. In the short run, there is a need for the infusion of jobs through public works projects. In the longer run, with a more transparent government, less corruption, and better security, Afghanistan can attract foreign direct investment and become self-sufficient. With guidance from regional economies and the West, Afghanistan can once again live the dream of becoming a trading post along the Silk Road. With education and vocational training, the Afghan economy can move up the value chain, creating and attracting newer industries in order to develop a more balanced economy. The creation of sustainable jobs will not only attract FDI, but also bring peace and prosperity to this war-torn country.

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Losing Hearts and Minds in Afghanistan

Andrew Wilder

In 1988, following the decision by Soviet leaders to withdraw their forces from Afghanistan, the US Agency for International Development (USAID) funded a study that produced a “Retrospective Review of US Assistance to Afghanistan: 1950-1979.”¹ The study’s purpose was to identify lessons from the large US bilateral aid program during the three decades prior to the Soviet invasion in order to inform the anticipated launch of a new USAID development program following the withdrawal of Soviet troops in 1989. Tragically, the Soviet withdrawal was followed not by a period of development, but by bloody internecine civil war and devastating levels of destruction.

Although the planned USAID program never materialized, many of the observations and findings in this fascinating review seem strikingly relevant and applicable to the current massive international development program launched more than two decades later. The report noted, for example, how a critical shortage of qualified personnel seriously undermined the utility of major investments in large-scale development projects, and that “US expectations of the time required to achieve effective project results in Afghanistan were generally unrealistic.” The report also noted that the results of sustained investments to strengthen public administration proved “highly disappointing,” as “the Afghan civil service did not change its basic orientation.” However, the following two conclusions from this study are perhaps the most relevant to current efforts to promote security and development in Afghanistan:

- 1.) The US generally had too much confidence in the applicability of technical solutions to complex social and economic development problems and of the appropriateness and transferability of US values and experience. This over confidence ... meant that too little attention was paid to local circumstances and values in the preparation and execution of aid activities.
- 2.) The use of aid for short-term political objectives, in the competition with the Soviet Union in Afghanistan, tended to distort sound economic rationale for development, and in the process to weaken the longer-term political interests of the United States. Aid as a tool of diplomacy has its limita-



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1. Maurice Williams, John Kean, and Joann Feldman, “Retrospective Review of US Assistance to Afghanistan: 1950-1979,” Devres, Inc., September 30, 1988.

tions when politically motivated commitments are at much higher levels — and promise more — than can reasonably be delivered in economic returns.

These findings are a depressing reminder of how clearly identified development lessons from Afghanistan's past clearly have not been learned. Particularly troubling is the continued unrealistic expectation that development assistance can not only effectively promote development objectives, but security objectives as well. Thus, development aid that in the 1960s and 1970s was expected to win hearts and minds in the Cold War battle with the Soviet Union is now being programmed specifically to win hearts and minds in the battle against the Taliban-led insurgency.

Particularly troubling is the continued unrealistic expectation that development assistance can not only effectively promote development objectives, but security objectives as well.

The use of reconstruction and development aid to separate the Afghan population from insurgents is a core component of the US and NATO/ISAF counterinsurgency (COIN) strategy. A common explanation for the growth of the insurgency is that inadequate resources were invested in reconstruction. To help reverse this trend there have been massive increases in reconstruction and development funding through both civilian and military channels. For example, in 2010 the US government plans to nearly double (to \$1.2 billion) the main fund available to military commanders in Afghanistan to support projects intended to “win the hearts and minds” of the local population. The primary purpose of these funds is to promote security rather than development objectives, so not surprisingly the lion's share of US development assistance is directed towards insecure rather than secure areas of the country. For similar reasons, a growing percentage of US development assistance in Afghanistan is channeled through military or civil-military units such as the Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) rather than more traditional humanitarian and development agencies.

Given the centrality to the counterinsurgency (COIN) strategy of the assumption that aid is an important stabilization tool, and the billions of development dollars allocated based on this assumption, there is surprisingly limited evidence from Afghanistan that supports it. To begin with, there is little evidence that poverty or a lack of reconstruction are major causes of the insurgency in Afghanistan, so it is not at all clear how reconstruction projects can be effective in addressing the insurgency. As already noted, the assumption is also not supported by historical evidence. Indeed, a quick look back into Afghanistan's history would show that national and international efforts to rapidly develop and modernize Afghan society have tended to fuel political instability rather than stability. Many scholars have attributed the downfall of King Amanullah (r. 1919–1929), for example, to resistance from the deeply conservative countryside to his Ataturk-inspired modernization and liberalization efforts. During the 1950s–1970s, Afghanistan was one of the largest per capita recipients of foreign aid due to the Cold War competition to gain influence. The new social forces that were unleashed during this period of relatively rapid modernization (at least in urban areas), most notably the Islamist and Communist movements at Kabul University, proved to be tremendously destabilizing. This is not to suggest that past development and modernization efforts have not had some very positive development benefits, but to highlight that it is unwise to assume that they will contribute to stability and security.

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Research carried out over the last two years by Tufts University suggests that far from winning hearts and minds, current aid efforts are much more likely to be losing them.² The research highlighted this at a time when more development dollars are being spent in Afghanistan than ever before, and Afghan perceptions of aid and aid actors are overwhelmingly negative. There are a number of explanations for the negative impressions, including that post-2001 expectations of Afghans have been raised to unachievable levels. A common complaint was that nothing or not enough had been done, despite in some cases considerable evidence all around of many recently implemented projects. This of course raises the question that in one of the poorest countries of the world, how much reconstruction and development will be necessary to win “hearts and minds”?

There were also many complaints about the poor quality or inappropriate nature of projects. The zero-sum nature of Afghan society, where one group’s gain is often perceived as another’s loss, contributed to aid projects generating numerous complaints that “they got more than we did.” The practice of channeling most aid to insecure areas not surprisingly was also bitterly criticized by Afghans living in stable areas, who felt that they were being punished for their peacefulness. As one community member from a relatively secure district in the northern province of Faryab complained:

Why are Ghormach and Qaiser receiving so much aid ... whereas our area hardly received anything? Help needs to go to secure areas so that people get trust in the government, but meanwhile we are left without assistance which makes us feel more distant from the government.

But the overriding criticism of aid efforts was the perception of massive corruption that is both fueled by, and undermines the impact of, aid programs. This is perhaps an inevitable consequence of too much money being pumped into an insecure environment with little planning, implementation, and oversight capacity. Not only was corruption contributing to aid projects losing hearts and minds, it was also fueling instability by eroding the legitimacy of government officials and institutions, not to mention the credibility of international actors. There is also evidence of aid projects having a destabilizing effect by consolidating the power of one tribe or faction at the expense of another. As one disgruntled Afghan government official stated in Urozgan province in the south:

The practice of channeling most aid to insecure areas not surprisingly was also bitterly criticized by Afghans living in stable areas, who felt that they were being punished for their peacefulness.

The problem of foreign aid exacerbated the situation because Durrani [a major Pashtun tribe] not only got all the power in government, but some also controlled and benefited from all the aid programs.

Security is the number one priority of Afghans. If development assistance is clearly addressing the main causes of con-
2. For an overview of the research, see “Winning Hearts and Minds? Understanding the Relationship between Aid and Security,” <https://wikis.uit.tufts.edu/confluence/pages/viewpage.action?pageId=19270958>.

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flict, and contributing to significant improvements in security, it would make sense to program development resources to promote security objectives. But when there is extremely little evidence that development assistance is contributing to improved stability, and some evidence that it may at times be contributing to instability, then development should be valued as a good in and of itself, and development resources spent to promote development objectives. History suggests aid projects are not very effective at winning wars in Afghanistan. Policymakers should learn from the past, and stop setting up development programs to fail by expecting them to be effective weapons of war.

Rebuilding Afghanistan: Practical Measures for Improving the Economy

G. Faruq Achikzad

It is a difficult task to suggest a specific recipe for the improvement of the economy of any failed state. The case of Afghanistan presents even more challenges.

THE MAGNITUDE OF THE CHALLENGE

The country has been in a state of war for 30 years. In fact, the Soviet invasion damaged the socio-economic core of this impoverished country almost beyond repair. The aftermath of 14 years of Communist regimes devastated the country even further, followed by the two-year reign of warlords and the six years of Taliban rule. The 9/11 tragedy prompted the United States to drive the Taliban and al-Qa'ida from Afghanistan and bomb their training facilities.

Unfortunately, at the end of 2001, the United States, under a United Nations umbrella, haphazardly installed a provisional government through the Bonn Process. But this came about only with a great deal of manipulation and arm-twisting. With the job undone, the United States shifted its focus to Saddam Husayn's Iraq, leaving Afghanistan in a state of flux. Meanwhile, other regional powers continued to meddle in Afghan affairs. Added to this mix was the growth of the drug trade, which reached unprecedented levels.

The so-called democratic system that the West, spearheaded by the United States, imposed on Afghanistan, did not work under Hamid Karzai's inept stewardship, as the necessary institutions to hold the system were absent. Indeed, the controversial August 2009 presidential election highlights the inherent weaknesses of the state machinery and demonstrates that the country's fate remains uncertain, with the insurgency ever growing.

Given this complex set of circumstances, it is very difficult to suggest a particular formula to rebuild Afghanistan. Nevertheless, a number of practical measures can be adopted which would help the country avoid a further waste of time and resources, and would create the framework for appropriate state-building and sustainable socio-economic development.

It must be emphasized that the most important precondition for success is respecting



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Afghanistan's sovereignty — including a demilitarized Afghanistan free from interference by all powers, and neighboring countries in particular. Based on the respect for sovereignty, a clear process must be created through which Afghans can establish a credible government with proper security and defense forces, a sustainable financial system, and a viable socio-economic development strategy.

MEETING THE CHALLENGE

Despite the enormity of the challenge, it is nonetheless possible to suggest guidelines for a few practical and practicable measures in three broad areas for improving the country's economy:

1. State Building

Capacity building must be the cornerstone of any strategy aimed at fixing a failed state. Toward this end, the main focus must be on "Afghans for Afghanistan," that is, concentrated on training Afghans to build their own country. While intensive technical, as well as vocational, training must be launched within the country, the educated diaspora must be encouraged to take part in this crucial endeavor. This could be accomplished through several means:

- A Global Initiative of Volunteer Expatriates for Afghanistan (GIVE Afghanistan).

This initiative would aim to use the expertise of young diaspora Afghans who have either completed their studies or are in the process of doing so for the reconstruction of their homeland on a short-term basis. This is essential for capacity building and future socio-economic and political stability of Afghanistan. The Afghan diaspora possesses unique characteristics and capabilities, including linguistic ability and cultural and religious values that are deeply ingrained in Afghan society. This, coupled with their expertise in various professions, will enable the Afghan government to build capacity through direct transfers of knowledge.

- Worldwide Townhall Meetings

By holding townhall meetings where there are sizeable Afghan communities, the Afghan government can, and must, galvanize support for its efforts. The purpose of these meetings would be to invite talented Afghans who have either worked in Afghanistan or hold prominent jobs overseas to return to their homeland to assist in rebuilding the country.

- Advisory Group for Reconstruction (AGR)

The formation of an Advisory Group of eight to ten capable Afghans with national and in-

ternational experience must be invited to advise the United Nations system (including the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund) and other international and bilateral stakeholders on how to approach the economic ills of Afghanistan. The important distinctive attribute of the AGR would be its independence from the government, which would enable it to provide objective advice on socio-economic matters and to avoid superimposing certain costly, foreign ideas on the country.

- A Master Plan to Assist and Support Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs)

This plan would focus on helping Afghan refugees and internally displaced persons in need of shelter, particularly those still living in makeshift homes and tents, to build their own homes; for example, by drawing upon the experiences of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, UN Habitat, and other international and bilateral institutions. The World Food Programme's (WFP) food-for-work program could prove very useful in this respect.

2. Aid Coordination

It is now well known that billions of dollars of donors' money intended as Afghan has been wasted. The lack of accountability, transparency, and coordination has led to extravagant salaries for inexperienced workers hired by crony contractors/non-governmental organizations. Their multi-tiered subcontractors have caused overhead costs to skyrocket. To circumvent these intractable problems, I would like to propose the following mechanisms:

- Afghan Reconstruction Fund (ARF)

The ARF would be the resource mobilization and allocation vehicle for reconstruction and should be subject to an impartial audit by a reputable international firm. Under its resource allocation responsibility, the ARF must insure the quality and sustainability of the proposed projects and programs. The ARF would be bolstered by a strong Board of Trustees consisting of an equal number of high-level donor representatives and the Afghan public and private sectors. Since the Board may not be obliged to meet more than twice a year, its Executive Board, consisting of professional economists and other seasoned staff, would run ARF's day-to-day work.

- Reconstruction and Development Authority (RDA)

Since the Ministry of Finance handles the Ordinary Budget of the country, the RDA would be responsible for the Development Budget. RDA's most important tasks would be drawing

up, in coordination with the ministries involved with reconstruction as well as with all provincial governments, a multi-year development plan for the country as a whole. RDA would have to work hand-in-hand with ARF in order to devise a viable reconstruction and development plan. Overseeing the Development Plan as a whole and its implementation at all levels of the Government would be the next important responsibility of RDA.

3. Economic Policy

- Council of Economic Advisors (CEA)

The primary function of this body would be to provide the President with a clear set of macroeconomic policies and to devise a coherent strategy. The CEA should be comprised of a chairman and three top-notch Afghan economists. Additionally, the CEA must be staffed with competent individuals and equipped with an up to date library. Their activities must be digitized, using cutting edge technology. In addition to providing advice to the President, the CEA must also provide clear guidance to the ARF and RDA on all national economic policy matters; in fact, the above three bodies must work together in a coordinated fashion in order to implement an efficient and effective macroeconomic plan.

CONCLUSION

Given the extensive damage inflicted on Afghanistan by three decades of continuous conflict, the enormous waste of resources by international contractors, lack of transparency and endemic corruption in the Government, there are no simple prescriptions for improving the economy. However, in addition to respecting Afghanistan's sovereignty — the most important precondition for success — it is urgently necessary to build human capacity and further develop the state's institutional infrastructure.

V. Society: Perceptions and Potential

Who Guards the Guardians? The Protection of Civilians in Afghanistan

Susanne Schmeidl

General Stanley A. McChrystal, Commander of the International Security Assistance Force and (ISAF) and US Forces-Afghanistan (USFOR-A), recently pledged a revised military strategy making the protection of “the Afghan people against the Taliban as the top priority.”¹ Still, August 2009 turned out to be one of the deadliest months for Afghan civilians “with 308 conflict-related deaths reported of which 281 (91%) were attributed to AOGs [Armed opposition groups] and 22 (7%) to PGFs [Pro-Government Forces].”² While it is easy to point fingers at the insurgency and their tactics of embedding themselves among the civilian population, deliberately intimidating communities, and targeting those considered pro-government or pro-international, it is dangerous for democracies to compare themselves to those they are fighting,³ especially as the Taliban also have recently outlined civilian protection issues in their guidelines.⁴



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The question, however, is, does McChrystal really know what he has promised, and is his understanding of protection the same as that of other international actors? Even though the International Committee of the Red Cross and other agencies have advocated a “working consensus” as to the meaning of protection,⁵ the lack of a universally accepted definition allows different actors (e.g., state, humanitarian, political, military) to apply very different standards. Here, it might be worth revisiting the history of international military engagement in Afghanistan and the dangers a confused understanding of protection can create.

First, the US-led intervention in Afghanistan in 2001 was rationalized, at least partially, on “pro-

1. “US ‘needs fresh Afghan strategy,’” BBC, August 31, 2009, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/8230017.stm.

2. UNOCHA, 2009, “Monthly Humanitarian Update,” Issue 9, August 2009, [http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/RWFiles2009.nsf/FilesByRWDocUnidFilename/MUMA-7VUADF-full_report.pdf/\\$File/full_report.pdf](http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/RWFiles2009.nsf/FilesByRWDocUnidFilename/MUMA-7VUADF-full_report.pdf/$File/full_report.pdf).

3. Cf. Thomas Ruttig, “Hollow Excuses,” Afghanistan Analysts Network, September 12, 2009, <http://aan-afghanistan.com/index.asp?id=318>.

4. The latest Taliban *layha* (decree), which appeared in 2009, refers to protection several times. The six basic principles signed by Mullah Omar include two such references: [4] — “use advice, care, resolve and cleverness in your plans and operations”; and [6] — “safeguarding the people’s lives and property safe is the noble aim of our *jihad*.” Point Three of Article 41, which regulates suicide attacks, states: “during suicide attacks the best attempts have to be made to prevent the killing of and causing casualties amongst the common people.” See *De Afghanistan Islami Emarat Dar-ul-Insha: De mujahedino lepara layha*. (I would like to thank Thomas Ruttig for pointing this out.)

5. “... all activities, aimed at obtaining full respect for the rights of the individual in accordance with the letter and the spirit of the relevant bodies of law (i.e. human rights, humanitarian and refugee law). Human rights and humanitarian actors shall conduct these activities impartially and not on the basis of race, national or ethnic origin, language or gender...” (1999), <http://www.icva.ch/doc00000663.html>, as cited in Droege, 2008.

tection” grounds. In light of the post-9/11 intervention into Afghanistan, however, it was likely closer associated with “the broader concepts of *political* protection — through the deposing of abusive regimes, creation of newly accountable political structures and reconstruction of national law enforcement and security mechanisms”⁶ than the humanitarian protection of civilians.

Second, the intervention focused more on minimizing American casualties and enhancing the prospects of military success than on protecting Afghan civilians. Coalition forces during Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) chose to ally themselves with militias belonging to the loosely connected group called the Northern Alliance “who had been engaged in fierce inter-factional fighting after the defeat of the Soviet-backed government in 1992,”⁷ which proved extremely costly to the longer-term political development of Afghanistan.⁸ According to a tribal elder from Saripul, “the Americans did not think about the North. They just gave power back to the warlords.”⁹ This continuous rule of strongmen has resulted in many Afghan civilians suffering, and has contributed to the re-emergence of the Taliban.

Third, the Afghan mission has never been a clear peacekeeping operation (PKO), even though ISAF is a self-described “coalition of the willing” with “peace-enforcement mandate under Chapter VII of the UN Charter.”¹⁰ Furthermore, “many military actors are not yet accustomed to identifying and protecting civilians in hostile environments as part of an international or third party intervention.”¹¹ For example, there has been a failure to acknowledge what it actually means for civilians to live in contested areas and be caught between multiple actors. This dilemma is illustrated by the comments of a tribal elder from Uruzgan, who stated in an interview: “There are now six governments — Provincial Reconstruction Teams, Hazara Militias, Afghan National Army, Afghan National Police, district government, and the Taliban. We are caught in the middle of all of them. If you side with the government, then the Taliban will kill you. If you side with the Taliban, the government will take you or the bombs will fall.”¹²

“There are now six governments — Provincial Reconstruction Teams, Hazara Militias, Afghan National Army, Afghan National Police, district government, and the Taliban. We are caught in the middle of all of them.”

Fourth, some of the actions of the international military have dually failed in the key task of restoring security in Afghan-

6. James Darcey, “Political and humanitarian perspectives on the protection of civilians”, Prepared for the HPG Geneva Roundtable on Protection, January 22, 2007, p. 1.

7. Susanne Schmeidl, “The Emperor’s New Cloth: The Unravelling of Peacebuilding in Afghanistan,” *Friedens-Warte – Journal of International Peace and Organizations*, Nos. 1-2 (2007), pp. 69-86.

8. J. Alexander Thier, “Afghanistan,” in William J. Durch, ed., *Twenty-First-Century Peace Operations* (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace and The Henry L. Stimson Center), pp. 467-572.

9. Interview, Tribal elder, from Saripul, Spin Boldak, in Kandahar-city, 29 May 2009; cf. Philip Smucker, 2002, “Afghan War Crimes a Low Priority”, *Christian Science Monitor*, September 12, 2002; <http://www.csmonitor.com/2002/0912/p06s01-wosc.html>.

10. The following nine UN Security Council Resolutions relate to ISAF: 1386, 1413, 1444, 1510, 1563, 1623, 1707, 1776 and 1833 (on September 23, 2008). In January 2002, a detailed Military Technical Agreement was developed between the ISAF Commander and the Afghan Transitional Authority in order to provide additional guidance for ISAF operations.

11. *The Protection of Civilians during Peacekeeping Operations*, Brussels: European Parliament, 2008. <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/activities/committees/studies.do?language=EN>, p.9; drawing on Victoria Holt, “The military and civilian protection: developing roles and capacities,” *Respecting the Rules of Engagement: Trends and Issues in Military-Humanitarian Relations*. Humanitarian Policy Group (HPG) Report No. 21, March 2006, p. 53.

12. Interview, tribal elder from Khas Uruzgan, Uruzgan, in Kandahar-city, May 30, 2009.

istan and establishing a competent, responsive government. A tribal elder from Uruzgan puts it bluntly “The US and its allies are not interested in bringing security to Afghanistan.”¹³ There are two issues frequently raised by Afghan civilians: aerial bombardment and nighttime house searches linked to arbitrary arrest. A tailor from Zabul exclaims that “the Americans are ruling us in our homeland and the government is not capable to prevent wars and bombardments. If they cannot stop Americans from bombing us, how can they help us?”¹⁴ Many Afghans are only too painfully aware of the prison at Bagram Air Force Base north of Kabul — the Guantanamo Bay of Afghanistan, where no law seems to apply.

Afghans have even begun to identify those who disturb them most. In Kandahar they speak of the “bearded Americans, who behave very badly, vs. the shaven Americans who only behave badly some of the time.” The reference here is to Special Forces operations that have a clear hunt-capture mission which (according to interviewees) appear to be conducted using all means necessary, including violating the Geneva Conventions (e.g., breaking and entering civilian houses, arbitrary arrests and detainment, and torture). It is clear for many Afghans that the “hunt, capture, or kill” counterterrorism stance of the US-led coalition forces in Afghanistan focuses less on the protection of civilians in Afghanistan than on those in the US and other Western countries.

To date, responses to, and compensation for, civilian casualties and destruction of property has been *ad hoc* emergency assistance, and largely inadequate when compared to the scale of losses.¹⁵ There is neither sufficient protection in areas of origin to prevent displacement, nor safe passage to areas of exile, nor protection in exile. Recently, however, an influential counter-insurgency specialist with prior military experience argued that the international community has a “moral obligation” in Afghanistan to the civilian population, especially in the Pashtun south, given that previous military activities have contributed to increasing insecurity.¹⁶ This does suggest, particularly in light of the revised military strategy, that the concept of an ethical responsibility toward the protection of civilians — with more emphasis placed on adherence to obligations under international humanitarian law — is gaining momentum.



A September 2003 caricature that shows, from right to left, Mr. Yunus Qanoni, the current Speaker of the House of Representatives, Mr. Aahadi, the current Minister of Finance, and Mr. Nader Nadery. The three sit at a press conference after Nadery exposed the involvement of these two powerful figures, along with 16 other warlords and high-level officials, in illegal seizures of poor people’s property and the forced eviction of the poor from their houses followed by the reallocation of the plots among various commanders and warlords. In this press conference, Nadery resisted the pressures of these powerful figures and insisted that justice be given to the poor people affected by this chain of events. Thus, Nadery forced the powerful to provide answers to the people.

13. Interview, tribal elder from Khas Uruzgan, Uruzgan, in Kandahar-city, May 30, 2009.

14. Focus Group Discussion, Taylor, from Shahr-e Safa, Zabul, in Kandahar-city, May 2009; For disappointment with Afghan government cf. Interview, Laborer, from Muaqur, Ghazni, in Zhari Dasht camp, Kandahar, May 2009 and Focus Group Discussion, Tribal elder, from Shiberghan, Jawzjan, in Zhari Dasht camp, Kandahar, May 2009.

15. CIVIC, 2009, *Losing the People: the Costs and Consequences of Civilian Suffering in Afghanistan*.

16. David Kilcullen, *Defeating Global Terrorism: Counter-terrorism, Modern Warfare & Rule of Law in Countries of War*, Wallace Wurth Memorial Lecture, John Niland Scientia Building, UNSW Kensington campus, Sydney, Australia, September 3, 2009.

So far, Afghans remain skeptical of the sincerity of the promises made by international military actors, with one laborer from Uruzgan asserting: “The international military does not care about civilian casualties. If they hear shots fired in a village, they will bomb the entire village,”¹⁷ and an elder from the same province providing the following anecdote: “A couple of weeks ago, international military forces raided a village, but didn’t find anything, still they had the village bombed and two women were killed.”¹⁸ This would mean ceasing aerial bombardments (which have a high likelihood of killing innocent bystanders) and other aggressive hands-on military operations that are likely to alienate civilian communities further. It might be more important to revisit the meaning of civilian protection and focus on more robust peacekeeping than counter-terrorist activities. This would include either withdrawing or reigning in Special Forces operations that act in violation of international humanitarian law. The recommendations from Afghan civilians are simple: “We just want the war to stop. We don’t want them to disturb people and instead build and assist and help with roads, schools, hospitals etc.”¹⁹ Are Western military forces listening?

17. Interview, Laborer, Khas Uruzgan, Uruzgan, in Spin Boldak, May 30, 2009.

18. Interview, Tribal elder, Khas Uruzgan, Uruzgan, in Kandahar-city, May 30, 2009.

19. Focus group discussion, Tribal elder, from Musa Qala, Helmand, in Kandahar-city, May 2009.

Afghanistan's Children: The Tragic Victims of 30 Years of War

M. Siddieq Noorzoy

The harm inflicted by three decades of war on the people and the country of Afghanistan have been cumulative. Hard statistics are difficult to find, and many of the available data are estimates. During the decade of war following the Soviet invasion in 1979, Afghanistan lost an estimated 1.8 million killed, 1.5 million disabled (among whom were more than 300,000 children), and there were 7.5 million refugees. More than 14,000 villages also were destroyed.¹ During the present war launched by the US against Afghanistan on October 7, 2001, estimates are that over 100,000 Afghans have lost their lives and many have been disabled.

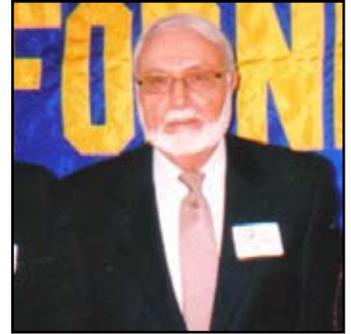
The total number of children killed is not known. But, with a population where close to 50% are under the age of 20, the losses among the children can be reasonably assumed to be proportionate to the age distribution of the population. According to the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), about 235,000 are displaced.

Approximately 78% of Afghans live in rural villages. Families are large, with many children and extended relations. The accumulated body of information about the fate of the Afghan children provides *prima facie* evidence that they have experienced more dramatic harm than most in recent conflicts. During the 1980s, as part of the Soviet campaign to drive out the rural population, children were specifically targeted. Soviet forces kidnapped an estimated 50,000 Afghan children from villages, orphanages, and city streets in an effort to indoctrinate them in Communist ideology and use them to form militias. Soviet aircraft also dropped a variety of “toy” bombs on Afghan villages and rural fields — mines and bombs made to look like toys — which maimed many children.

Children also suffered during the civil wars fought among different factions between 1989 and 2001, when many were recruited into militias. More recently, US/NATO airstrikes have killed a number of children in villages across the southern and eastern provinces.²

1. See M. Siddieq Noorzoy, “Economy in Modern Afghanistan,” *Encyclopedia Iranica*, Vol. VIII, 1997, pp.163-169.

2. One such aerial bombing occurred on July 6, 2008 during a wedding ceremony, as reported by Alastair Leithead on BBC’s web site, “Afghan Survivors Tell of Wedding Bombing.” This bombing killed 52 Afghans, among whom there were 39 women and children, including the teenage bride. The next horrendous bombing came on August 21, 2008 against the village of Azizabad in the Shendand district of Herat, which killed 90 innocent Afghans according to local people, officials in Kabul, and a UN report, and as reported by the *New York Times* on August 27, 2008. Among these victims were 60 children. On October 16, 2008 BBC radio and Ariana television (Kabul) carried news of yet another aerial attack in Helmand that



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Afghan children have been kidnapped and sold as “terrorists” by members of the Northern Alliance to the US Special Forces for \$5,000 each.³ According to some reports, they have been imprisoned for years in Guantanamo Bay and in secret prisons in Afghanistan.⁴ Afghan children also have been forced into armies, the police force, and militias. The United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) reported from Kabul on June 24, 2004 that 2,205 children between the ages of 14-18 were demobilized. UNICEF also reported that there may be as many as 8,000 remaining child soldiers, police, and militiamen.

The hazards of war have taken other forms as well. The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) reported in 1999 that 31% of Afghan children had been victims of land mines. Even in 2007, land mine casualties numbered 811, many of them children. Children, like the general population, also have been subjected to dangerous radiation through aerial and ground attacks where depleted uranium bombs and shells have been used.⁵ Cluster bombs, resembling food containers, also have injured children.⁶ Compounding the problem, according to UNHCR’s Director in Kabul, Ruud Lubbers, “the Kabul government asked us to stop assistance to the refugees.” As a result, some of these refugees, including children, died of exposure to the cold.⁷

The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) reported in 1999 that 31% of Afghan children had been victims of land mines.

Ariana television reported several times that children were sold for food by their families in the north during the 2007 drought. They have been put to work at young ages, with some 60,000 working on the streets of Kabul in 2009 and denied schooling.

Furthermore, missionaries are robbing their religion from them in exchange for food help and school supplies.⁸ The Afghan children have grown up as refugees and IDPs, and they have suffered from neglect and a lack of laws and institutions to protect them.

killed 27 Afghans, among whom were 18 women and children. On May 4, 2009 another aerial attack took place in Farah, which according to the Afghan media killed 147 Afghans, among them 65 children. Ariana and Tolo television networks from Kabul report daily losses of Afghan lives from the war.

3. In February 2004, BBC radio reported on three such cases, including an interview with one of them.

4. According to an account by the Associated Press in June 2008, the Pentagon reported to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child that ten Afghan children were being held in detention centers in Afghanistan. One of them, Mohammad Anwar, who was 12-years-old when imprisoned, was released on August 20, 2009 from Guantanamo after six years. Ariana television reported on August 21, 2009 that he is suing the US government for torture and abuse.

5. On December 25, 2007, Dr. Akram Babury and on July 9, 2008, Dr. Mirakai described this tragedy on Payam-e Afghan satellite television from Los Angeles — displaying slides and pictures of deformed Afghan children, some cancer victims — whose deformities and ill health seemed to be caused by depleted uranium shells used in the present war.

6. See David Edwards and David Cromwell, “Cluster Bombs and ‘Calamity Conditions’ in Afghanistan,” *Media Lens*, January 24, 2002.

7. Quoted in *Dawat*, Norway, December 2002, p. 3. The refugees were the same Pashtuns from Zhere Dasht in the southwest that had been driven earlier from their homes in the north by criminals and members of the Northern Alliance.

8. This practice reportedly has also been used by non-governmental organizations operating in Afghanistan. NBC News reported on May 18, 2006, for example, that US missionaries in Kabul had converted 2,000 Afghans, including children, to Christianity. The Internet has many stories of Christian proselytizing in Afghanistan. Such missionary work sets a dangerous precedent in a highly conservative Islamic society — not to mention that it places Afghans, especially children, at great risk.

As a result of these conditions, Afghan children suffer from one of the highest mortality rates in the world. According to UN data, the mortality rate for Afghan children under five years of age ranked second in 2007. The UN Development Programme (UNDP) reports that 42% of the Afghan population lives on less than one dollar per day, while UNICEF reported acute malnutrition among 16% of Afghan children. Life expectancy remains low, at 44 in 2007. According to the UNDP Human Development Index, Afghanistan stands at 174th among 178 countries. With such grim statistics for the adult population, children would be unable to thrive even under peaceful conditions.

More than five million children, both boys and girls, now attend school. Given that in 2001 one million children were going to school, the new figure is good news.

A large number of Afghan children are physically disabled. During the late 1980s, according to United Nations estimates, more than 300,000 Afghan children, victims of war, were disabled. A survey taken in 2005-2006 found that there were between 747,500 and 867,100 disabled Afghans, or 2.7% of the population. More than 50% of the disabled lived in Kabul, Khandahar, and Heart — areas which have seen the most fighting during the past three decades. Among the disabled, half were under the age of 19.⁹ Thus, there are probably over 400,000 disabled Afghan children, victims of direct conflict and leftover landmines.

Afghan children also have had to contend with the destruction of the educational system. Much of this destruction occurred during the Soviet occupation.¹⁰ Following the Soviet retreat in 1989, there were not enough schools and, due to constant conflict, rebuilding the education infrastructure to meet the demands of the larger population and modern educational requirements was nearly impossible. Since 2001, the argument that much progress in education has been made is repeated often. The most frequently cited statistic is that more than five million children, both boys and girls, now attend school. Given that in 2001 one million children were going to school, the new figure is good news.

But this good news offers an incomplete picture. In fact, just as many children of school age do not go to school due to a variety of constraints, including the primary reason — they serve as the main income earners for both urban and rural families. In addition, schools are not evenly distributed throughout the country; in the south and east, for example, where the war is being fought, few schools are operating. Some of the problems faced in this area are discussed in two recent reports from Kabul. These reports disclose, among other things, the practice of US and other foreign military forces of offering school supplies as part of its campaign to win over the population, which has placed children and the schools that they attend at risk of attack by armed insurgents.¹¹

9. Handicap International has been working in Afghanistan since 1980, and it has expanded its programs more recently. There are a series of five reports on its web site on various issues related to disability. See <http://www.handicap-international.us>.

10. See M. Siddieq Noorzoy, *The Social and Economic Consequences of Soviet Policies in Afghanistan* (Miami: FL: Institute for Soviet and East European Studies, 1987), especially pp. 23-34.

11. Radio Free Europe/ Radio Liberty (RFE/RL) reported that some of these children were from Kabul. See Ajmal Samadi, "Education Policy Today Will Determine What Afghanistan be in 2020," RFE/RL (Kabul), August 31, 2009.

CONCLUSION

In 2009, the high death toll continues. The UN Assistance Mission to Afghanistan (UNAMA) reporting from Kabul said that 1,013 civilians were killed in the war from January to the end of June 2009, compared to 818 in the first half of 2008 and 684 in the same period in 2007.

Meanwhile, as many as six million Afghan children are acutely vulnerable. They are not attending school. They are searching for work on urban streets and in fields. And they are at risk of exploitation, poor health, severe injury, and needless death. They are the tragic victims of war in a society whose institutional support systems had been weak or nonexistent prior to the outbreak of conflict 30 years ago, and which have been nearly impossible to rebuild since. A society where the traditional social networking and customs once offered protection has all but disintegrated. Peace is the first prerequisite for the long and arduous task of rescuing Afghanistan's children from this tragic plight.

How Hearts and Minds Were Lost in Afghanistan?

A Personal Experience Working with the International Military

Zabih Farhad, Kandahar

It has been eight years since the US-led invasion into Afghanistan that helped bring down the Taliban in late 2001. From my vantage point in Kandahar, the Taliban now seem stronger than ever, having added improvised explosive devices (IEDs) and suicide bombing to their repertoire. There has been much contemplation, in Afghanistan and elsewhere, about what the role of the United States is in Afghanistan. Many Afghans wonder what the US-led invasion has brought them, and if the US military is really in Afghanistan to help the Afghan people. US General Stanley McChrystal has declared that the protection of Afghan civilians is more important than the number of Taliban captured. But what does this all mean for ordinary Afghans who have had a mixed experience over the past eight years?

Zabih Farhad (pseudonym) worked as an interpreter for US and ISAF forces in Afghanistan for five years.

I would like to add to the ongoing debate on the situation in Afghanistan from my own personal experience of working as an interpreter for the US Army for five years, starting at the very impressionable age of 17. In the first years after the US invasion of Afghanistan, I tried to show off to my friends during patrols in Kandahar City that I was an interpreter with the US Army — the liberators of Afghanistan. This seems like a long time ago. I would no longer act this way, not only for the sake of my security, but also because I have changed my mind about the role of the US Army in Afghanistan.

I know that there are problems with every organization, and that even bad organizations can have good people in them. I have had a good experience with the US Army, which has impressed me with the discipline among officers (high- and low-ranking alike) and the good behavior toward interpreters. Other armies, such as the British or Dutch, for example, at least from my experience, do not even treat their interpreters well. In an assignment in Helmand, I found out that many British soldiers held all Afghans in contempt, and said things such as, “These [interpreters] are also F... Afghans.” In an assignment with the Dutch Special Forces, we were not told where we would work until we arrived. Worse, initially we were not allowed to drink water without permission, despite scorching temperatures. After some arguments, we were allowed eight bottles of water a day. My personal belongings, especially notebooks in which I recorded poetry, were searched. After these two experiences, I decided that the only good military were the Americans. But while they treated us interpreters well, their behavior toward the Afghan people was deplorable. This is the reason why ultimately I grew ashamed to

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work with the US military and decided to leave.

While what I am presenting here is only anecdotal evidence, there are enough of these stories to suggest a serious pattern that may explain why the US military is no longer seen in a good light.

First, there is an issue about whether or not international military forces provide security to the local population or endanger their lives. The practice of Forward Operation Bases (FOBs) and other military bases to occupy private land in the vicinity of villages points to the latter. Areas outside the FOBs — often neither clearly marked nor secured — can be used as practice grounds for weapons testing. Sometimes these weapons hit the ground without exploding and are carelessly left behind. Unfortunately, it is often children, sent out in search of wood or water, or to take care of animals, or who are simply curious about these foreigners, who stumble upon these unexploded devices. Many children either have lost body parts or their lives this way. During nighttime operations, the use of flares to help light an area has resulted in setting hay and wheat harvests on fire, destroying entire crops. It often takes villages days, if not weeks, to file their complaint and receive a meager compensation.

I once believed that the Americans and other internationals had come to help Afghanistan. Now I am no longer sure.

Second, there is the indirect negative impact on the quality of life of villagers. In an area that already suffered from drought and water shortage, US soldiers, while trying to level a training area, decided to dump dirt inside a hole that belonged to local irrigation systems (*karez*). They would not listen to their Afghan interpreter telling them the *karez* was providing crucial water supply to surrounding villages. When villagers started to notice that the flow of water to their houses was not only decreasing but also polluted, they went to inspect and found the damage. When they tried to complain to the FOB, villagers were left waiting outside the entry gate for several hours until they were informed they should take their complaint to the governor of the province. This went on for days, weeks, and months — all the while the villages lacked clean drinking water, resulting in many children getting sick.

Third, there is the mistreatment of prisoners. One day, a sergeant of the Afghan National Army (ANA) told me that nobody wanted to guard the detainees at the US Special Forces compound because of a practice to punish those who would not confess with a very terrible kind of “music.” The ANA soldiers felt they would lose their minds listening to this music. I had never heard of anything like this — for me, music has only been a pleasant experience. As my experience until then with the US Army had been positive, I thought the ANA sergeant must be joking, so I tried to find a pretense to enter the US Special Forces Base to see for myself. When I came close to where the detainees were held, I indeed heard the music, and even after only a few minutes I could not stand it myself. I was horrified, wondering how people I previously thought very highly of could do something so bad. Some time later, an international friend of mine told me that there was something called “noise torture” or sensory deprivation, which was prohibited under international humanitarian law. I had heard of neither.

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After these experiences I decided that I no longer wanted to work with the US Army, or any army for that matter. I once believed that the Americans and other internationals had come to help Afghanistan. Now I am no longer sure. I want to believe the words of General McChrystal that they want to protect the Afghan people, but the track record of the international military so far is so very poor that I am not sure many Afghan villagers who have suffered under past US (or other) military operations are willing to believe there will be a change of strategy. I am not surprised that many villagers have joined the Taliban. I would never do such a thing, but so far I have not had to make the same hard choice that some villagers have. I hope that I will never have to make such a choice, but if forced to, that I will be able to go somewhere else.

Local Perceptions of Rural Development Programs

Katja Mielke

The NGO people drive around in big white cars, live in our cities' best houses and receive high salaries, though most of them would be jobless in their own country. They come here for two, three hours, and we tell them what they need to hear. They express empathy with our difficult situation, and then they get back into their air-conditioned four wheel drives and race off leaving us behind in a cloud of dust. Often they are never seen again.

—Farmers in rural Kunduz Province, 2006

Representing dozens of similar statements from average rural dwellers in Afghanistan, this apt quotation says a lot about how rural development agents are perceived in the Afghan countryside. Yet as perceptions are most likely to be biased in the eyes of the persons concerned, the critical reader might ask: Why should local perceptions matter anyway? And, by the same token, why focus on rural development programs?

Afghanistan is a rural country; the majority of its estimated 28 million people are in rural areas. With the exception of the large cities (i.e., Kabul, Herat, Kandahar, Mazar-i Sharif, and maybe Jalalabad), all other provincial capitals have no urban infrastructure. To speak of an employment sector does not address Afghan realities, as there are no statistics available, and no industries or service sector worth mentioning which would be indicative of an urban lifestyle and economic development. Whatever Afghanistan has could be categorized in some way as private business, though most of its people have subsistence livelihoods that rely strongly on large family networks with casual unskilled labor, and often remittances from kin abroad. Given this situation, the rural development sector is the most crucial in the framework of current attempts at state-building and economic reconstruction in Afghanistan. If the “hearts and minds” of the Afghan population are supposed to be won by the international community, the rural countryside is *the* arena — not elite circles in Kabul whose members are estranged from the rest of their country and its people. The success of even modest reconstruction and development goals will depend on how effective and sustainable rural development programs are in the eyes of the rural population.

If we take stock of some of the biggest rural development programs which have been applied (not completed) so far, the gap between money spent on rural development measures and perceived benefits is enormous. The National Solidarity Program (NSP), the predominant nationwide effort to develop rural infrastructure and overhaul traditional local governance in the whole of Afghanistan’s countryside by participatory empower-



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ment, has a mixed record. The program is financed by major donor governments of the international community. The Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development has oversight over the implementation by so-called Facilitating Partners, until recently all of which (with only one exception) have been foreign non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Donors and the Afghan government consider the infrastructure component, which includes the block grant financing of communities of 20 to 300 families with \$200 per family, to be largely successful because wells, roads, schools, hydro-power facilities, bridges, and health stations were built. Even if portions of the funds have been misused by “corrupt” community representatives or NGO and other administrative staffs, and not counting the quality and probable rather short longevity of construction, the infrastructure build-up is visible — given the baseline of more or less complete destruction. This is acknowledged by the rural population, although questions of privileged access and the benefit of the infrastructure and the cash-for-work construction programs hint at the fact that the second program component, the promotion of good local governance, achieved very limited impact. Newly set-up Community Development Councils, which were supposed to be democratically elected and to represent the interests of all community members, often have been found to act in the interests of a few. Women councils were set up on paper but not in practice.

Another example is the Kunduz River Basin Program, a pilot program funded by the European Commission in North Afghanistan that aims at restructuring the irrigation water sector according to river basin units. Accordingly, new administrative levels (e.g., River Basin Council, Sub-Basin Councils, etc.) are being introduced. In cultivation areas, at the local level, water users and farmers are organized into Water User Associations and Canal Committees. In the upper catchments of the Kunduz River Basin, Natural Resources Management Committees are being established. The record of failure in good local governance promotion for these councils and associations is similar to that of the National Solidarity Program’s Community Development Councils. When asked what meaning and benefit the newly established institutions yield for them, rural Afghans commonly respond: “We have our works, and this is an NGO-matter.” This response reflects an attitude dominated by suspicion and distrust towards outside interference in the local social order. At the same time, it is a matter of course that material advantages are sought (like the infrastructure measures) and resource flows tapped. A brief look into the Afghans’ experience with foreign interference is self-explanatory in this regard.

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While massive aid flows were directed towards Afghanistan during the two decades of civil war and violent conflict prior to 2001, these funds either were disbursed in the form of military aid for the various *mujahidin* factions and later the Taliban through Pakistan’s Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI), or NGO donations that reached segments of the population very selectively. Because humanitarian aid distribution was guided by the ideological presumptions of the respective donors whose main aim was to harm the “enemy,” associated factions were supported with material or financial goods with no strings attached. Even if loyalty was most likely expected in exchange for funding under the guise of humani-

tarian support, neither donors nor distributing agents and agencies applied any sanctioning mechanism for cases when loyalty was passively withdrawn or clients openly defected to the opposite camp. As a result, the recipients of this kind of aid developed an attitude that can best be described as a “donees’ mentality.”

Today’s reconstruction and development efforts aim at more than pure humanitarian relief and have to struggle with the “donees’ mentality,” as current efforts include conditionality by implicitly demanding the replacement of asymmetrical power relations with equitable and participatory governance patterns, including women’s empowerment. Yet in the locals’ eyes, the donors’ local good governance approach constitutes an attack on the various local institutions for resource distribution, conflict resolution, and the like, which are already in place. The sheer ignorance of local norms and *ex-ante* condemnation of the local structures as inefficient, undemocratic, and unequal has caused local rejection. What is more, this rejection is covered by superficial compliance with demands to establish Water User Associations or other councils. These are then set up with the sole purpose of meeting donor and NGO requirements to qualify for funds and material resources. What is perceived as success by donors, based on reported numbers of new governance institutions, is actually a misperception. Overall, the continuation of this misperception between local target groups of rural development and NGOs as the agents of international development is the crux for understanding the current flaws and setbacks diagnosed as the local population’s lagging commitment and support for the intervention. Consequently, to remediate development in Afghanistan the interface of development programs and local communities deserves development practitioners’ and policy makers’ attention. To begin with, the education and training of local NGO staff, especially social mobilizers and translators, needs to be enhanced because it is they who are negotiating rural development with local communities.

[I]n the locals’ eyes, the donors’ local good governance approach constitutes an attack on the various local institutions for resource distribution, conflict resolution ... which are already in place.

Social Change in Eastern Nuristân: 1978-2009

Richard F. Strand

Eastern Nuristan's LanDay Sin Valley lies in one of the most ethnically diverse regions of Afghanistan. It is home to the Kata, Mumo, KShto, Kom, Binio, Jamcho, and Jashi tribal peoples, all of whom speak dialects of a single Nuristani language. Among these, the Kata and Kom are the most significant. Non-Nuristani peoples bordering these LanDay-Sin Nuristanis on the east and south include the Khów (Chitralis), Chitrali KalaSha, Damani, Palulo, Gawar, Sawi, and most importantly, Pakhtun (Pashtun) and Gujar peoples. Other linguistically separate Nuristani peoples, the Vai-KalaSha and Vasi (Paruni), lie on the western borders of the LanDay Sin Valley.¹

Most of these peoples have been forced into their mountainous enclaves through hundreds of years of Pakhtun expansion into the region via the Kunar and Pech Valleys, with the result that most of the above-named peoples confront each other in varying degrees of antagonism. The Pakhtuns, under the leadership of the Afghan Amir, conquered the pre-Islamic Nuristanis in 1896, converted them to Islam, and incorporated them into modern Afghanistan.

MAJOR SOCIAL TRANSITIONS

The last 40 years have brought numerous transitions to the societies of eastern Nuristan, including: a shift from democracy to theocracy; the loss of traditional culture; resource deprivation; growing dependency; and decreasing clarity along community boundaries.

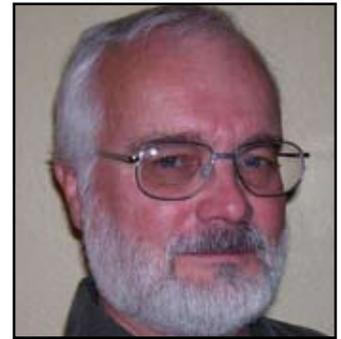
1. Democracy to Theocracy:

Before the Communist government's attack on the LanDay Sin Valley in 1978,² the Nuristanis of the valley governed themselves through community democracy in which the adult males annually acclaimed a body of elders and a body of policemen to maintain the community politically and to enforce community laws.³ Religious functionar-

1. An overview of the region's ethnic groups and languages appears on this author's website: Richard F. Strand, *Richard Strand's Nuristan Site*, 1997-present, <http://users.sedona.net/~strand>.

2. Anwar Amin, *The True Story of Our Jihad*, on *Richard Strand's Nuristan Site* (1992), <http://users.sedona.net/~strand>.

3. Richard F. Strand, "A Note on Rank, Political Leadership, and Government among the Pre-Islamic Kom," in Karl Jettmar, in collaboration with Lennart Edelberg, *Cultures of the Hindukush: Selected Papers from the Hindu-Kush Cultural Conference Held at Moesgard*



Richard F. Strand has researched and written on the languages and societies of Nuristân and adjacent areas since 1967, and his fluency in those languages has provided him with a rare inside view of tribal politics in eastern Afghanistan. From 2002-2005 Strand served as director of a major agricultural NGO in Nangarhâr Province; today he is a member of the consulting firm Ethnographic Associates, LLC, specializing in area training and analysis for the Afghanistan-Pakistan region.

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ies, be they pre-Islamic shamans or Islamic mullahs, were closely heeded and could sway politics, but they did not have the wherewithal to hold governing authority.

The early phase of the Soviet-Afghan War provided the Nuristanis' Islamic clergy with access to sorely lacking munitions through the seven jihadist parties run by Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI). Following their traditional custom of appointing a dictatorial leader over tribal affairs in extraordinary times, the Nuristanis were compelled to abandon their grassroots political leaders and rally around the better funded ISI-backed mullahs. After the defeat of the Soviets, the mullahs in Nuristan held onto their power through their assertion that they best could interpret the proper Islamic course towards God's will, a religious claim not unlike that of their pre-Islamic shamanic predecessors. Because decision-making power fell to the clergy, the need for the traditional system of elected elders and policemen was obviated.

The consolidation of clerical authority in Nuristan was partially interrupted by the intrusion of American forces into the region starting in 2002. The clergy holds the "infidel" (*kafir*) as their primary boogymen, and when American forces established combat outposts in the LanDay Sin Valley in 2006, the mullahs rallied the populace to once again resist the infidels. After intense battles at BragamaTol (Barg-e Matal) and Kombrom (Kamdesh) in September and October 2009, the Americans ceded the LanDay Sin Valley to the mullahs and their Hizb-e Islami and Taliban backers, while leaving pro-government residents in the lurch. At the expense of traditional tribal democracy, theocratic, anti-infidel rule in eastern Nuristan is now more entrenched than ever.

At the expense of traditional tribal democracy, theocratic, anti-infidel rule in eastern Nuristan is now more entrenched than ever.

2. Loss of Traditional Culture

Traditional cultural knowledge and practices have been suppressed or modified under the ideological dictates of the new theocracy. Notable is the suppression of traditional Nuristani songs, which encode tribal history and are now mostly unknown by the younger generation.

In traditional Nuristan no one could marry kinsmen within their parents' or grandparents' patrilineages ("clans"). This rule of exogamy assured that the tribe remained integrated through marriage among genealogically distant patrilineages. Under clerical dictates, exogamy lost out to Islamic-sanctioned, endogamous cousin marriage of the type practiced by Pakhtuns, and the integration of patrilineages was diminished as people married close rather than distant kin. While this process has been progressing since the conquest of 1896, the economic troubles brought by war have accelerated endogamous marriage, which conserves the resources of the extended family, but which exacerbates differences among patrilineages and weakens tribal unity.

1970 (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1974), pp. 57-63.

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The primary characteristic of the LanDay-Sin Nuristanis' traditional culture is their language, but since 1978 it has become swamped with mullah-introduced Arabic loanwords that often replace traditional Nuristani words. Nuristani populations that live in Pashto-dominated areas such as Kunar have adopted Pashto as a first language, in a final step toward Pakhtunization.

3. Well-Resourced to Under-Resourced

A recent US Agency for International Development (USAID)-funded report⁴ has confirmed that both drought and increased population have negatively impacted Nuristan's resources since the 1960s.

Flow from highland water resources, including winter snowpack and monsoonal rainfall, has decreased over the last 40 years. Forests have suffered moderate dieback from lack of water. In the LanDay Sin Valley the communities of Kombrom and KShtorm (Kushtoz) went to war over water resources in 1998, resulting in the destruction of KShtorm and the dispersal of the KShto people.

A recent US Agency for International Development-funded report has confirmed that both drought and increased population have negatively impacted Nuristan's resources since the 1960s.

Before the Soviet-Afghan War scientific healthcare had not penetrated Nuristan, and high infant mortality kept the population in check. After becoming refugees in Pakistan during that war, Nuristanis received access to primary healthcare, resulting in a plummeting infant mortality rate and an approximate doubling of their population since 1970. The adjoining Pakhtuns and Gujars have grown at an even greater rate, and the overall resulting pressure on the region's forests for fuel has greatly diminished that resource over the last four decades.

4. Self-Sufficient to Dependent

Before the first road penetrated the LanDay Sin Valley in the early 1960s, Nuristanis were virtually self-sufficient. Their few imports (salt, iron, cloth, and trinkets) came mostly via Chitral or Badakhshan rather than through their Pakhtun enemies in Kunar. The road brought a modicum of commerce that began to integrate eastern Nuristan into Afghanistan's national economy.

Not until Pakhtun timber merchants began paying Nuristanis to cut their valuable deodar cedar forests in the 1990s did the road allow a significant transformation of the daily lives of Nuristanis, especially women. In communities such as Pitigal timber revenues allowed the women to purchase produce rather than grow it themselves and the men to purchase meat and dairy products rather than raise them themselves. Instead of going to the fields to labor all day, the women stayed home for more housewifely duties, and the men built new homes on their farmlands instead of tending their livestock.

4. Richard F. Strand, Jim Du Bruille, Irfranullah Sahibzada, and Ziarat Gul. *Nuristan Natural Resource Assessment* (Jalalabad, Afghanistan: International Foundation of Hope [for USAID/LGCD], 2009).

Timber subsidies dropped after the Kabul government imposed a moratorium on timber-cutting in 2002, but the loss of revenue was offset by the rise in contracts and jobs funded by foreign donors operating through NGOs and ISAF commanders in the region. That income stream dropped off as the jihadists displaced American forces in the LanDay Sin Valley, and income-dependent locals were forced out because of their association with infidels.

5. Compact to Diffuse

Boundaries around communities have gone from compact and sharply drawn to diffuse and fuzzy — an indication of the breakdown of tribal solidarity.

In pre-Islamic times, Nuristani communities were strategically built as compact villages on defensible ground, and boundaries between each community's lands were, for the most part, well defined.

Boundaries around communities have gone from compact and sharply drawn to diffuse and fuzzy — an indication of the breakdown of tribal solidarity.

During the decade of peace before the Communist coup of 1978, many Nuristanis moved away from the villages to their outlying farmland, where many new small communities sprang up. During this time, pressure on the Nuristanis' southern boundaries increased from expanding Pakhtun and Gujar populations looking to exploit the Nuristanis' alpine pastureland.

As residents of the region brought their burgeoning families back from Pakistan after the Communists' fall in 1992, there was a scramble for land in the Kunar Valley from Barikot southward. In the war's wake, some Kom Nuristani landlords in Kunar lost control over their lands, which became increasingly settled by Pakhtuns and Gujars. The result is that a diffuse, pixilated boundary now lies between Nuristani and Pakhtun lands along the Kunar River.

CONCLUSION

Between economic hardships and the relentless anti-infidel propaganda of the local jihadist mullahs, a growing number of Nuristanis have turned villages like Pitigal into "*al-qa'ida*" communities, where democratically-oriented residents have either moved out or are hunkered down for a long term of oppression. How far the mullahs of the LanDay Sin can go in bringing peace and governance to eastern Nuristan remains to be seen, and whoever ultimately governs the region will have to deal with the accelerating effects of climate change and overpopulation.

Women's Agency in Afghanistan: From Survivors to Agents of Change

Palwasha Hassan

Often, policy debates on the empowerment of women in Afghanistan are impaired by the historic backlashes against radical top-down reforms and women's emancipation (e.g., unseating kings) or by the assumption that the male-dominated culture makes it nearly impossible to create space for the advancement of women's rights. As a result, the effort to develop a cohesive strategy for enhancing women's participation in the reconstruction agenda is hampered.

It is important to learn the historic lessons of elite-induced changes for women's rights, such as policies by Amanullah Khan and his wife Queen Soraya (r. 1919-1928),¹ Zahir Shah (r. 1933-1973), and the Communist government under the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA; 1978-1992). However, it is equally, if not more crucial, to pay attention to the emerging "empowerment"² of women, which is based on their own experiences and shared stories of forming, leading, and participating in women's groups and organizations. Through the latter, women have been able to navigate around cultural barriers and pave the way for addressing their longstanding unequal status in society.

PRE-BONN AGREEMENT: THE EMERGENCE OF THE WOMEN GROUPS

The Afghan wars of the past three decades had many tragic consequences, but they also were an empowering experience for some women. As in many conflict environments, especially when traditional support networks are exhausted, state services are fractured, and a society becomes fragmented, new opportunities for women arose in Afghanistan. Despite the fact that in refugee camps space for women was limited due to the magnification of cultural conservatism and religious radicalism, women slowly began to develop special coping strategies to work in this environment. Throughout the years of conflict, women's social seclusion became part of the resistance movement, and women started to develop new strategies of creating an alternative space for them, and to support the wider community.

1. Soraya was the daughter of Mahmud Beg Tarzi, a returned exile (considered the father of Afghan journalism) who zealously wanted to see a "backward" Afghanistan brought into the 20th century and had influence over the King. Queen Soraya also was instrumental in introducing and living change.

2. See Jo Rowlands, "A Word of Times, but What Does it Mean? Empowerment in the Discourse and Practice of Development," in Afshar Halleh, ed., *Women and Empowerment: Illustrations from the Third World* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998), pp. 11- 34.



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In many ways, the history of independent women's groups in Afghanistan runs parallel with the history of conflict. Female leaders acknowledge that they were able to learn skills in exile to which they previously may not have been exposed and acquired self-confidence by working with other women in close-knit communities and the semi-urban refugee camp environments. According to former State Minister of Women's Affairs Mahbooba Hoqoomal, "War has been an awakening for many women. Women's awareness about their rights has increased more than any time; they started their own projects from education, health, and politics."

Most women's organizations in Afghanistan began by working on the practical needs of women focusing on their quality of life, mainly by improving health care, education, and income generation (i.e., handicrafts), and only later began to focus on addressing the strategic needs of women which lead to their empowerment (i.e., leadership skills). Given the limiting environment under the *mujahidin* parties in Pakistan's refugee camps in the late 1980s, the groups established by women initially were in the form of community schools, small charities, the teaching of the Qur'an, and other less controversial activities.

These emerging community organizations slowly evolved into non-governmental organizations (NGOs), where women applied their newly learned skills through work in international NGOs or adapted their prior knowledge to the new context. Currently, many women who previously had been preoccupied by the need to generate income or acquire literacy are also working on women's rights awareness and women's political participation.

Working with other women also has helped to develop women's self-confidence and self-worth, enabling them to compete for jobs outside the family environment, something previously denied in Afghanistan's male-dominated society. By working in relief programs, women also started to learn how to negotiate a space for their work and survival. Only through their powerful negotiation skills have they been able to secure their position in the work place. This continued even under the medieval system of Taliban rule, which banned women from studying and working outside the home; women simply developed new strategies (e.g., home schooling) to help educate girls.

In this process, however, Afghan women had to make compromises on the personal level (e.g., choice of clothing). In Peshawar,³ for example, many women wore a *chador* (head scarf) or the full black *hijab* (the veil mostly worn by women in Arab countries) in order to gain access to education or work outside the home.

THE POST-BONN AGREEMENT ERA: THE CHANGE MAKERS

The post-Bonn period resulted in the opening of a wide space for women due to the new government's restoration of

3. The central city of the Northwest Frontier Province of Pakistan.

Currently, many women who previously had been preoccupied by the need to generate income or acquire literacy are also working on women's rights awareness and women's political participation.

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women's rights and the international community's recognition of the need to continue to work on women's rights. After Bonn, women, who previously had been able to work only in the non-governmental sector, were able to enter government. Prominent examples are Dr. Sima Samar, a former Minister of Women's Affairs in the Interim Administration of Afghanistan and the current Chairperson of the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission; and Dr. Habiba Sarabi of Bamiyan, who also had served as Minister of Women's Affairs (2003-2004), and is currently the country's only female governor (of Bamiyan). Other examples can be found in the Parliament. According to Minister of Parliament Shinkai Karokhail, only in organizations headed by women was she able to boost her confidence and compete with organizations led by males; moreover, the NGOs' work with communities created a situation where even the male members of those communities told her that she should run for elective office.

Women with a civil society background also were able to make huge changes in the constitution-making process in 2003 by increasing awareness about women's rights through their training of women's groups. Female participants at the Constitutional *Loya Jirga* were able to fight for a constitutional right of a 25% quota for women seats in Parliament. In the 2004 presidential elections, women's voter registrations outnumbered those of men in some provinces (showing women's eagerness to participate), and one woman was a candidate for office. During the 2005 parliamentary elections, the number of women who won seats exceeded the constitutional quotas.

In the 2004 presidential elections, women's voter registrations outnumbered those of men in some provinces...

As we move further away from Bonn Agreement, however, the audacious steps taken in the direction of women's empowerment, especially by international actors have begun to slow down. The initial three ministerial seats for women in the first cabinet (Interim Government) has now been reduced to one in the elected cabinet (2004-2009). The endorsement of a controversial bill for the Shi'a minority infringing on women's rights is another example of a backward process. What is important to emphasize, however, is that women now have created agency, and have been engaged actively in protesting infringements of their rights, such as demonstrating bravely against the "Shi'ite Personal Law."⁴ Women are in the process of creating a vibrant civil society by organizing peaceful demonstrations and lobbying presidential candidates through organized campaigns aimed at increasing female political participation. In the 2009 election, women organized two important national campaigns regarding women's rights' insecurity in the formation of the upcoming government's structure and programs.

CONCLUSION

In a traditional society such as Afghanistan, it is important to focus on a bottom-up approach when trying to empower women. Seldom are the role of female agency and the efforts of women's organizations that focus on the practical needs of the rural majority given the credit they deserve for producing long-term changes. There is ample opportunity to build

4. In March 2009 Afghan president enforced a bill with many discriminatory articles towards women's rights, including the sexual obligation of the wife in marriage, divorce, and polygamy, which has been denounced strongly by international governments and the active women's lobby on the ground.

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upon the experience of women's organizations and the small, but critical, mass of women who have emerged through such organizations, despite cultural and social constraints. This rich experience can, and should be used to inspire, enlist, and support other women. This will facilitate the slow but steady bottom-up empowerment of female Afghans, enabling them to become equal partners for change — driving the reconstruction and development agenda.

Hamida's Story: Female Agents of Change

Orzala Ashraf Nemat

Hamida, 49 years-old, lives in Kabul and is the mother of two daughters and a son. She graduated from the Science Faculty and has been a teacher for over 16 years. She lost her husband due to a rocket attack in Kabul during the civil war. Hamida was young when she was widowed; her eldest children are her daughters. Based on tradition, Hamida's in-laws asked her to marry one of her husband's brothers, but she refused. Her husband's family threatened that if she refused, they would not support her; Hamida had to promise them that she would look after the children on her own.



This is a real war-time story. Even men at that time were unable to feed their families and were unable to find jobs. However, Hamida was a determined woman. She did all kinds of work, ranging from sewing to knitting in order to support her children. As a committed teacher, she turned her tiny rented house into a home school where girls from neighboring houses came to study in several shifts each day. She had no choice but to serve as her children's teacher as well. "It is really hard for a mother to teach her own kids; they do not take you seriously, they do not focus enough, but I had to do it, as there wasn't any other option!" she recalled.

Orzala Ashraf Nemat is a leading Afghan women's rights activist and researcher who lives in Afghanistan. Orzala holds an MSc in Development Studies from the University of London and was selected as Young Global Leader 2009 at the World Economic Forum and as a Yale World Fellow in 2008.

After the fall of the Taliban in 2001, Hamida returned to her school as a teacher. The majority of her students earned very high scores in the school entrance exams. Her students' families came to appreciate Hamida's tireless efforts to educate their children. Hamida's own children also succeeded. Her eldest daughter, who this year will graduate from the Agriculture Faculty of Kabul University, has been recognized as one of the most talented student in this department! Hamida's second daughter also attends university, while her youngest son recently completed high school. Three of her children are the stars of their community in terms of behavior and talent. Hamida also earned the respect of her community.

Hamida is known as "Mother Jaan" by over 25 girls and women who are victims or at risk of violence against women. She is the manager of the Safe House in Kabul, one of the first centers of its kind. The Safe House provides education, skill building, and counseling to women and girls in need of protection and support. The girls at the Safe House include those who experienced the worst kind of abuses, such as sexual abuse, forced prostitution, immolation, and so on. Hamida is a strong and committed manager — deeply principled, kind and compassionate. Her ongoing role as the Safe House

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manager for the past five years has made her an expert in dealing with the most complicated cases of women at risk. “Believe it or not, when I listen to these women’s sufferings, I forget mine and what challenges I had faced during my life! ... Then when I see the changes in their behavior, when I see them returning to their communities as empowered women, then I get an incredible power to continue this job!” Hamida adds.

Afghan women are often portrayed simply as victims of oppression, draped in blue burqa, and lacking the voice or the courage to stand up and speak. Hamida represents a different portrait — that of the thousands of Afghan women who, in the post-Taliban period, have sought to take control of their lives — to liberate themselves — often, at great personal risk and sacrifice.

The Bonn Conference of 2001, which was a landmark attempt to bring peace to Afghanistan, brought a few women into the process of rebuilding the country. However, due to the strong presence of warlords who have a track record of suppressing women, the voices of independent women from civil society were muted.

Two significant achievements at the policy level for women at Bonn was the creation of a Ministry of Women’s Affairs and an Independent Commission for Human Rights. Regardless of how effective and functional both institutions have been, their establishment is the byproduct of the struggles of women like Hamida, who are working to change their own lives and the lives of others.

The relatively open atmosphere in the country allowed several non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and other groups to proliferate. Some organizations were already active under the high-risk circumstances of the Taliban regime. However, nation-wide programs such as Accelerating Learning, Return to School, and many others, helped get millions of girls and boys back to schools and universities. President Hamid Karzai’s decree that Afghan women have the right to choose whether or not to wear the *hijab* made it clear that there is no specific dress code that would be enforced by the state. Women in the transitional state made up nearly 27% of the civil servants, which unfortunately has been reduced in the recent years due to worsening security situation and decrease in the government’s commitment towards women. The January 2004 adoption of the Constitution explicitly affirmed that women have equal rights with men under the law. The nature of the process was more important than the results, because the Afghan Grand Assembly (Loya Jirga) included not just warlords but also representatives of different Afghan constituencies. These representatives expressed a great deal of interest in moving Afghanistan in a progressive direction.

The constitutional Loya Jirga included women representatives, some of whom were leading women from civil society groups who previously had worked to ensure that the Constitution guaranteed equal rights for women and men. As a result of their efforts, the Constitution mandated quotas for women’s political participation, equality of women and men under the law, and several other articles concerning the Afghan government’s responsibility for fulfilling all relevant

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In 2004, 48% of the voters in the presidential election were women and over 28% of the elected members of Parliament were also women, exceeding the quota of 25%. The victorious female candidates included Malalai Joya in Farah, Fauzia Guilani in Herat, and Sabrina Saqib in Kabul. This, in itself, indicates that among the common people, the ideas or views of conservatives have no place, and if there are certain guarantees for women, they have the courage as well as the talent to be in the leading positions.

Following the 2004 elections, Afghan women in civil society groups remained active, advocating further women's participation in the political decision-making process, defending women's and children's rights, and reaching out to those women in remote and rural areas in need of assistance and support. For instance, at the community level, the National Solidarity Program (NSP), which is a government-funded initiative, has helped to create women councils. In some parts of the country, separate councils for women were established, while in other parts, there are women community leaders who participate in the Community Development Council together with men. The function of these councils is to identify local needs and mobilize support to meet those needs.

The role of the international community and their support in women's struggle also needs to be considered as an important factor in the process of women's political participation. However, it is important to emphasize that, if the commitment and determination of women at the grassroots level were absent, perhaps the international community would not be in a position to facilitate change.

Since early 2006, the legal reform process is another field where women leaders from civil society, Parliament, and other institutions have been very active. Afghan women groups have created a strong coalition of women from Parliament, civil society, and the government to advocate for legal reform. One example of their efforts is formulating the Ending Violence against Women Law, which was recently signed by the President and is under consideration by the Parliament. They also have been lobbying to modify other laws that affect women's lives, such as the Shi'ite Personal Status Law.

In March 2009, a nationwide campaign for promoting women's active participation in peace processes was organized by a group of dedicated women from different parts of the country. Their demand was "No peace without justice."

Women's voices for peace, security, and development also have been strong. In March 2009, a nationwide campaign for promoting women's active participation in peace processes was organized by a group of dedicated women from different parts of the country. Their demand was "No peace without justice." Hundreds of women from Kandahar, Bamyan, Balkh, Herat, Nangarhar, and Daikundi joined forces to advocate peace and insist on their active participation in such processes. Tragically, just one month after this rally, Sitara Achakzai, a leading female member of this campaign and Provincial Council member, was assassinated.

However, this tragedy did not blunt the efforts of courageous and committed Afghan women. In the August 2009 elections, 81 more women won Provincial Councils seats than in the 2005 elections. Sitara's colleagues from Kandahar decided to run for office again despite the deterioration of security. Female civil society leaders initiated a nationwide campaign to support 328 women Provincial Council candidates and mobilize all women to participate in the elections. Despite widespread fraud, other electoral irregularities, and threats of violence, many women (and men) cast their votes — a strong indication that Afghans are eager for peace and are prepared to make further sacrifices in order to ensure a peaceful transition of power.

Historically, there are very few places in the world where women's struggle for equal rights may demand that they pay with their lives or personal dignity. However, Afghanistan is a country where such risks are real. Merely educating women about their rights can cost them their lives or those of their family members. Nevertheless, many Afghan women — like Hamida — are agents of change, rather than hapless victims and continue to assume such risks, in the pursuit of peace, justice, and prosperity, if not for themselves, then perhaps for their children.

Women's Prospects in Afghanistan: Oppression or Opportunity?

Carol Riphenburg

Recent media reports indicate that fewer Afghan women turned out to vote for a President on August 20, 2009 than went to the polls five years ago, when in some districts female turnout had been even higher than that of males. Apprehension, convention, ennui, and disorganization led to families keeping their women home on election day, even as men dared to vote. The reversal of women's rights, which they had only recently begun to exercise, is an ominous sign. This, along with the charges of election fraud and lower turnout, does not bode well for mobilizing new sectors and securing free and fair elections as a legitimate element of government in Afghanistan's presidential system.

In the early days of the Taliban's overthrow, great excitement prevailed as an interim government, containing for the first time in Afghanistan's history a Ministry of Women's Affairs, was instituted, followed by a Constitutional Loya Jirga in 2003 that led to presidential and parliamentary elections in 2004 and 2005. The 2004 Constitution reserves a quarter of the seats (68) in the lower house of Parliament, the Wolesi Jirga (House of the People), for women. Of the President's nominees to the upper house, Meshrano Jirga (House of Elders), appointed for five-year terms, half (17) must be women. The Constitution also safeguards rights for women.

However, any progress was in jeopardy from the beginning. After serving as the first Minister for Women's Affairs in the interim government, Dr. Sima Simar moved into her new offices as head of the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission only under armed guard. Malalai Joya spoke out publicly against the domination of warlords as an elected delegate to the Loya Jirga convened to ratify the Constitution. In reply, Sibghatullah Mojaddedi, chief of the Loya Jirga, called her an infidel and communist. Since the death threats she received then, Mojaddedi has survived four assassination attempts and travels in Afghanistan under a burqa and with armed guards.

However, there have been achievements. As mentioned, women now hold seats in the Afghan Parliament, and millions of girls have been able to attend primary school. Still, educational gains plunge when girls arrive at secondary school, with only 4% of female students reaching tenth grade. Violence against women is prevalent; women in public life are regularly threatened, and several have been assassinated. One of the most poignant was that in September 2008 of Malalai Kakar, a lieutenant colonel in the Kandahar police force, a high-profile position in a male-dominated country. The head of the city's department of crimes against women, she had joined Kandahar's police force in



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1982. When the Taliban took over in 1996, she was banned from the force. She resumed her job as a police officer when US-led forces in 2001 overthrew the Taliban government, which had excluded women from most outside work. Attackers ambushed Ms. Kakar in front of her home as she was setting out for work in her car.

Matters took a turn for the worse lately when President Hamid Karzai officially approved the Shi'a Personal Status Law,¹ the most shocking of a series of deals to appease fundamentalist religious leaders and former warlords. The law contains many provisions that are offensive to women. Custody rights are granted exclusively to fathers and grandfathers. A woman can leave the house without her husband's permission only if she has "reasonable legal reasons," which are unstipulated. Yet, the law does specify financial compensation to be paid by a man who rapes a child or a mentally ill woman for her loss of virginity, but leaves out any reference to criminal punishment. Karzai issued the law on July 27 with no public announcement.

When Karzai mentioned that he had signed an earlier version of the legislation, world leaders denounced him. Karzai responded by claiming that he had never seen the contentious document, and under pressure promised to review the legislation. This review led to some positive changes, including the removal of an article that gave a man the right to have sex with his wife once every four nights. Yet, many of the most repressive provisions remain. By endorsing the law, the President has frustrated hopes that official discrimination and the oppression of women by their own government was an element of days gone by in Afghanistan. Concern, therefore, continues to mount regarding the influence of conservative Islamic groups, particularly regarding their attitudes toward women. Parliament continues to pass laws that tilt closer to Islamic fundamentalist principles than to Western concepts of human rights.

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Afghanistan faces the problems typical of its status as one of the world's poorest countries. The International Monetary Fund forecasts GDP growth at 9% in 2009/10. A new power transmission cable between Kabul and Uzbekistan brought reliable electricity in February 2008. Nonetheless, widespread corruption, poppy production, the narcotics trade, insurgency, weak infrastructure, and problems with the rule of law impede development. In the judicial domain, Womankind Worldwide's latest report² on the status of women in Afghanistan identified the most serious problem facing Afghan women as the failure of the Karzai government and its international supporters to establish a legal system that truly functions. While the Constitution and Afghan law secure women's rights, they are not enforced. Presently, 85% of implemented justice occurs outside the official legal system, using *Shari'a*, customary, and tribal traditions. Womankind points out that "the vast majority of women in prison are there for *zina*," which is for allegedly having sexual relations

1. The Shi'a Personal Status Law applies only to Shi'a (primarily Hazara) women. The rights of the Sunni female population, indeed the rights of all Afghan women, are supposedly protected by the Constitution. However, many women are not aware of their rights. Furthermore, the legal system is not strong, free, and independent enough to enforce these rights. Women's issues are generally handled by tribal, customary, or *Shari'a* law.

2. John W. Warnock, "The Status of Women in Karzai's Afghanistan," *Global Research*, April 14, 2009.

outside marriage (which includes being raped), for running away from home, or for eloping with a partner to escape forced marriage. The report's authors note, "A culture of impunity reigns around honour crimes ... There is a general acceptance in society (and sympathy among judges) of men's right to murder or harm women to 'preserve honour.'"³

The struggle over the Shi'a Personal Status law and the obstacles faced by women in voting are solemn reminders of the fragility of the gains made by Afghan women since the fall of the Taliban. The Taliban controls large swaths of the country where schools for girls are being burned and female students are being attacked. Karzai, whose popularity has waned, has proposed negotiations with the Taliban and has looked to minority groups and warlords to bolster his political standing. So it is not unexpected that he was willing to consider a law proposed by uncompromising members of the Shi'ite minority. In addition, a government losing to an insurgency and at risk of losing its legitimacy by having conducted fraudulent elections won't have much time or ambition to devote to women's rights and status.

3. Warnock, "The Status of Women in Karzai's Afghanistan."

The Oppressed Women of Afghanistan: Fact, Fiction, or Distortion?

Tonita Murray

There are plentiful accounts of oppressed women in Afghanistan in the international media, development reports, and the academic literature. Instances of starving widows, under-age girls forced into marriage, high maternal death rates, rape, murder, incest, abductions, wife-beatings, self-immolation, deprivation of education, burning of girls' schools, restricted mobility, and, above all, the wearing of the burqa have been recorded in both word and image so many times that Afghan women have become the world's stereotypical victims of male domination, ignorance, and hide-bound religious belief.

Remove the sensation and it remains true that many Afghan women experience violence, deprivation, and constraints on their freedom of choice and movement. Frequently too, their condition is ignored by the Afghan authorities or taken as the norm. And when Afghan women take action to escape victimization they are often victimized again. Women running away from home can be imprisoned, and rape victims can be convicted of adultery or killed for compromising family honor. At best, they may find refuge in a shelter, but that too is little better than a prison since it puts them in a limbo from which there is no easy exit.

In feminist terms, Afghan society is markedly gendered, in that it makes stark distinctions between the roles of women and men, and is patriarchal and paternalistic. It is permeated with masculine values such as honor, justice, and hospitality, while the roles assigned to women limit their "agency," or ability to act. The family and tribe are the most important social units, and women are respected as the perpetuators of the family and the holders of its honor. Thus their bodies must be guarded to protect virginity, ensure that their progeny are legitimately fathered, and that they are not abducted or in other ways violated as a hostile act against the family unit. It is estimated that up to 90% of women never leave the home, and certainly the low number of women in public space supports this view. When women leave their homes, they carry their private space with them in the form of the burqa. This renders them taboo, invisible, and therefore secure. Thus the bodies of Afghan women are controlled physically, spatially, and politically by men because of their symbolic importance to the integrity of the family and the tribe. Recently, an eight-year-old girl raped by a neighbour who had been taken into police custody for her own protection. Her family intended to kill her because the shame of her violation had compromised their honor. In other instances, such attacks



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are never reported. Only recently have some victims and their families sought legal recourse.¹ For most, shame leads to the rejection or elimination of the harmed woman or girl, and also helps save face in suggesting to the despoiler that what was despoiled was not worth much to the family anyway.

There are several problems with presenting a monolithic view of the oppression of women in Afghanistan. First, it tends to ignore what casual observation reveals: that, despite the reports, oppressed women are not the norm. Second, accounts tend to be sensationalized by Western journalists and others searching for “human interest” stories, or attempting to characterize Afghanistan as strange, backward, and different from, if not altogether more inferior to, the rest of the world. Third, descriptions of the situation of Afghan women usually separate them from their social and cultural context and assess them according to feminized Western standards. Their situation also may be falsely ascribed to Islamic belief and practice. Lastly, the numerous accounts have the effect of depersonalizing individual victims by making them stock characters set against a backdrop of Afghanistan as a disturbed, dysfunctional, and failed state. Altogether, the effect is to present a problem so overwhelming that it cannot be wholly comprehended or solved.

The truth is that the treatment of women in Afghanistan is as various as is it elsewhere. It may be that the incidence of violence is higher than in some other countries, but the fact is we do not know exactly the rate of violence against women because there are no reliable statistics.

The truth is that the treatment of women in Afghanistan is as various as is it elsewhere. It may be that the incidence of violence is higher than in some other countries, but the fact is we do not know exactly the rate of violence against women because there are no reliable statistics. However, observation shows many caring marital and family relationships, indulgent husbands and fathers, daughters encouraged to pursue university education, and women with professional careers or working in offices or village fields alongside men who are not relatives. There are also more women in Parliament than in some Western countries, as well as women elected to Provincial Councils, serving on the community development councils formed under the Afghanistan National Solidarity Program, taking part in local *shuras*, and giving strong leadership and voice to women’s organizations. Nor are women in the private sphere necessarily oppressed. They own property, choose their sons’ wives, arrange marriages, settle disputes, and manage household resources and family property.² Historically, there have been famous female leaders such as Nazoo Anaa, “the mother of Afghan nationalism.” Even today there is at least one female “warlord,” Bibi Ayesha, who led men against both the Soviets and the Taliban.

The question of the burqa and of veiling in general is more complex than the view that it is a cumbersome garment symbolic of the Taliban repression of women. It belongs to a tradition of *purdah* in the Middle East and South Asia where it predated Islam, included Hinduism, and set gender boundaries for both men and women. While some families

1. Evidence gathered from police files. See also the website of the Revolutionary Association of the Women of Afghanistan at <http://www.rawa.org> for reports of violence against women.

2. Palwasha Kakar, “Tribal Law of Pashtunwali and Women’s Legislative Authority,” <http://www.law.harvard.edu/programs/ilsp/research/kakar.pdf>.

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may require women to wear it when they enter public space, and it is worn more in the provinces than the cities, it is not a mandatory covering. Nevertheless, it is frequently a means to mobility and an assurance of security for women entering public space.

Wearing the veil on the other hand is an Islamic symbol of modesty, worn to conceal the outer beauty in order to show the inner. While it is regarded as a symbol of repression by Western feminists, recently Muslim feminists have returned to wearing it as a protest against prevailing Western colonialist attitudes.³ It proclaims that they can be Muslim and equal to men at the same time. Muslim men also are expected to be modest and to cover certain parts of their bodies. Indeed, in Afghanistan, most men cover their heads and bodies for practical if not religious reasons, so covering in both genders might be regarded as much a social as a religious custom.

Examining similarities rather than differences between Afghan women and men could perhaps bring perspective to the question of oppressed women. Life is burdensome for women but equally hard for men. The requirement in a patriarchal and collectivist society to obey the father and assume onerous obligations to an extended family mean that men too have little choice over how they lead their lives. And while remedies are gradually being introduced for the abuse of women, less attention is paid to the frequent instances of boys sold or kidnapped for labor or sexual purposes, or mistreated in other ways.

[I]n Afghanistan, most men cover their heads and bodies for practical if not religious reasons, so covering in both genders might be regarded as much a social as a religious custom.

Charges of colonialist attitudes towards Muslim and Afghan women also may not be entirely misplaced. The gender equality programs introduced into Afghanistan by international organizations and Western women's groups are frequently based on Western ideology, concepts, and practices. Muslim feminists would argue that the Qur'an should be the starting point, since the Prophet introduced gender equality which, over centuries of masculine interpretation, has been obscured. Returning to original Islamic principles and building on existing practices and structures that support the equality of women might find greater acceptance among both women and men. A more nuanced interpretation of the status of Afghan women and a subtler approach might well yield better results.

3. See for example, Asma Barlas, *“Believing Women” in Islam: Unreading Patriarchal Interpretations of the Qur’an* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2002).

Manly Honor and the Gendered Male in Afghanistan

Sippi Azarbaijani-Moghaddam

In Afghanistan, one of the most commonly mentioned reasons for imposing restrictions on one's womenfolk is "culture," particularly the concepts of *namus*¹ and *gheirat*.² Many have taken a soft approach to gender equality to avoid treading in this cultural quagmire and tackling such sensitive issues, egged on by local counterparts equally eager to avoid the imagined dire consequences. In fact, the focus of gender studies and indeed the term "gender" for Afghans has come to be associated almost exclusively with women by Afghans, as by people in other parts of the world. This near exclusion of men from gender discourse — often sanctioned by the biased interpretations of religious texts — has led to a negative perception of gender as synonymous with women, and the process of seeking gender equality as a threat to men's privileges and an attack on a way of life.³ In the worst cases, discussions of gender lead to open hostility and retaliation for what is seen as foreign intrusion. The net result has been slow progress in gender mainstreaming.

Many men participate in the maintenance of unjust gender relations and sexist practices, becoming gatekeepers of the gender order and using social constructions of masculinity and male identity to justify it.⁴ In Afghanistan, it is becoming increasingly clear that the concept of honor, and how it plays out in changing structures of opportunity, is critical for transforming gender relations.⁵ Misrepresentations and interpretations related to the issue of honor are central to gender interactions and need to be carefully unpacked and understood. The difficulty until now has been finding an appropriate entry point to begin such discussions with men and to find a way to develop the realization that men too are gendered beings. In the Afghan context, little or no attention has been paid to "liberating" men, as well as women, from the constraints of gender roles and expectations as prescribed by narrow definitions of "culture."



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1. According to Edwards, "The concept of *namus* ... signifies those people (especially his wife, mother, sisters, and daughters), objects (e.g., his rifle), and properties (especially his home, lands and tribal homeland) that a man must defend in order to preserve his honour." David B. Edwards, *Heroes of the Age: Moral Fault Lines on the Afghan Frontier* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1996).

2. "Manliness" is an inadequate translation, as *gheirat* also can be translated as honor.

3. Emily Esplen, *Engaging Men in Gender Equality: Positive Strategies and Approaches — Overview and Annotated Bibliography*, Institute of Development Studies, October 2006.

4. Michael Flood, "Mainstreaming Men in Gender and Development," presentation to AusAID Gender Seminar Series, Canberra, December 8, 2005.

5. Sippi Azarbaijani-Moghaddam et al. *DFID Understanding Afghanistan — Poverty, Gender and Social Exclusion Analysis: 4.4.2 Gender Inequality Final Report*, The Recovery and Development Consortium, November 2008.

In recent research on gender equity within a national project, we⁶ have tried to look at gender relations at the community level from a male perspective. Findings are preliminary but indicate that there is tremendous social pressure on men, especially younger men, to adhere to stereotypes of masculinity; for example, disallowing womenfolk to emerge from the confines of the house and enter the public domain. The most frustrating exhibition of such behavior is denying women their own names in public (i.e., women can only be known as “mother of A,” “wife of B,” or “daughter of C”). Peer pressure among men takes the form of verbal harassment and, in the worst cases, persecution. Jokes, slights, and name calling which indicate that the male in question has lax morals or lacks the masculinity to control his womenfolk form a critical, insidious, and at times painful part of socialization.

Many argue that it is necessary to convince influential groups and gatekeepers that gender equality is enshrined in the tenets of Islam, but such discussions become exercises in rhetoric for some publics while other views are presented elsewhere. When we enquired of an important *maulavi*, whose opinion on social and religious matters is sought at the regional level, how he would view or describe men who allowed their wives to go to work or participate in government and non-governmental organization (NGO) programs, his answer was disturbing: He responded succinctly that such men should be regarded as nothing more than pimps who prostitute their wives. Men are guardians of a notion of communal honor and punishers of those men whose women do not follow prescribed gender roles.

In Parwan province, a young man explained that his peers often insulted him about his grandmother’s connections with external bodies, including the Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT). His grandmother is a community activist, and he is proud of her achievements. Yet, his peers claimed that all the soldiers in the PRT knew his grandmother’s name. He did not feel slighted and would retort by pointing out how his grandmother’s actions were benefitting female relatives of the man insulting him: “It is because my grandmother went to see the PRT that we have a clinic so your wife doesn’t die in childbirth.” In another case in Parwan province, a young man was placed under pressure by his peers to stop his mother from being active in community affairs. Even on the day he was interviewed, other young men in the room joked that our male team members from Kabul had heard of his mother and come to visit her. As his father was dead and he felt powerless, the young man regularly approached his older relatives to put pressure on his mother to stay at home. This strategy did not work, so he tried a direct approach with his mother. She proudly informed the research team that she gave him a good nose bleed in the ensuing fist fight and that is where the argument ended.

Fieldwork in Daikundi province, which is a remote mountainous province with a Hazara majority, showed a very different social context where men and women — even men from beyond the community — sit together and discuss development matters freely. When we asked why there was such a striking difference between these communities and others in Afghanistan in terms of *pardah*, men replied that they did not have to prove their manliness through strict and

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6. The author is leading a team of Afghans in this research, which is taking place in six provinces of Afghanistan.

brutal control of their womenfolk. In a discussion in Herat, male NGO staff discussed how even provinces can take each other on in terms of masculinity. They provided an example of the presence of a Herati woman who, appearing in the popular TV program *Afghan Star*, distinguished herself by singing and dancing — shocking behavior, to conservative Afghans. These Herati men claimed that: “Kabul simply asks Herat: ‘Which province does Setareh on Afghan Star come from?’ We know that just by asking us they are insulting our *gheirat*.” Ismail Khan, a well-known Herati commander lauded as a hero years ago for his wartime exploits, is also said to be very disgruntled that a woman who sings has been referred to as a Herati “hero.”

Men need to understand the oppressive effects of gender inequality on themselves as well as on women, accepting their responsibility to renegotiate gender relations because of the unjust privilege they hold. They have an ethical obligation to act in support of the elimination of that privilege.⁷ It is in men’s interests to change. Although gender equalities privilege men, they also impose long-term costs.⁸ Frequent deaths of women and girls in the community because of the lack of qualified female healthcare professionals can be directly linked to conservative attitudes denying girls an education. Similarly, an environment which is considered “backward” and oppressive for women is not attractive for educated, urban professionals looking for work. The result of the high rate of female deaths inevitably involves emotional, financial, and other costs for men and boys in the community. Another benefit of highlighting the pressures of dominant but negative models of masculinity in Afghan society is to use the opportunity to examine and promote positive male role models. These could include just and benevolent fathers responsible for and engaged with both women and girls in families and communities, associating with concepts such as “Father of the Nation,” a title granted to Zahir Shah, a much loved and respected monarch who represents one of the few periods of uninterrupted peace in Afghan history.

In a country where customs and even languages can differ from one valley to the next, “tradition” is discussed as if it is a constant — immutable over time and space. This rich diversity notwithstanding, there are currently very few contexts allowing men and boys to discuss the positive and negative impact of tradition on their relations with women and girls. Men and boys rarely have the space to safely and privately discuss the grievances and victimization they face as gendered beings trying to change gender relations. Additionally, we have found that the widespread lack of awareness about pressure on men to be masculine and the negative consequences of such pressures make it difficult for them to articulate their feelings with ease.

CONCLUSION

If achieving gender equality is not work which can simply be left to women but requires the active involvement of

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7. Flood, “Mainstreaming Men in Gender and Development.”

8. Flood, “Mainstreaming Men in Gender and Development.”

men who need to change their attitudes and behaviours, then we need to find ways to engage Afghan men that go beyond rhetoric. Ownership of change-related interventions at family and community levels is critical for men as well as women if long-lasting changes are to become institutionalized. Providing space for men to “decompress” as gendered beings may be an interesting entry point for exploring men’s inertia to engage with gender issues and to effect changes in gender relations. In beginning to discuss these issues with men and studying masculinity in Afghanistan as an integral aspect of gender, we are at the beginning of a new and exciting — though long — process.

The Emerging Afghan Media: Beyond the Stereotyping of Women?

Wazhma Frogh

For the past 30 or more years, media content in Afghanistan mostly has been controlled by the central government and its supporters. During this period, as throughout the 20th century, the most important and widely available forms of media have been national radio and television. However, rural perspectives and the realities of rural life have been conspicuously absent from most media content. Moreover, because of traditionally rigid gender roles, Afghan women have had very limited or almost no access to media and information sources.

MEDIA IMAGES OF WOMEN IN HISTORICAL CONTEXT

In spite of the strong hierarchy and patriarchy in Afghan society, central governments, such as that of Habibullah Khan in 1903, introduced a series of social and legal reforms to help raise the status of women and girls and used media to promote gender equality. Mahmud Tarzi started writing about gender equality, human rights, and social inclusion in his popular *Siraj ul-Akhbar* magazine, which was operated by the central government. During the same period, King Amanullah's wife, Queen Soraya, established the first women's magazine, *Irshad-e Naswan*, which focused on domestic violence and other social and political issues relating to women. This magazine was a perfect means for the Queen to convey her perspective and that of the King on women's rights.

A second period of reform occurred during the rule of the Soviet-backed Communist regime. During the Communist era, a third of teachers were women. In addition, a substantial number of women held high-profile positions in the security field and served as doctors and nurses. These efforts to emancipate women were publicized by government-controlled radio and television networks and newspapers.

Nevertheless, Afghan women were depicted in television and radio programming and newspapers as "urban, educated, and modern" citizens. This did more harm than good to Afghan women. The rural communities felt left behind, intimidated, and overlooked by the elites influencing the central government. By representing only the educated elites, the central media created a clear distinction between "good" and "bad" women in the eyes of rural Afghans. Based on these media-created images, local communities gradually formed the opinion that those who were educated wore modern European-style clothing, and worked outside the home were not of good character. Furthermore,



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Frogh...

the broadcasted images of women created a very specific and strict gender model for women and girls in rural areas to emulate — although they were the country's largest demographic. A local elder interviewed in 1990 described a rural woman as “pure, less morally corrupt, and a better Muslim” and stated that education would “pollute” a rural woman's character. Although this statement represents the view of a single individual, my ten years of experience with rural Afghanistan has proved that this elder's opinion is widely held in rural Afghanistan with regard to women and about women.

THE MEDIA AND RURAL AFGHANISTAN: NEGLECTED TERRAIN

Educating and creating jobs for women and girls in rural Afghanistan is a major challenge for the current central government and its international allies. Afghanistan's emerging media can, and must, play a significant role in meeting this challenge.

According to the 2004 Human Development Report, a rural woman knows four times less than a rural man about the constitutional process or the constitutional rights of Afghan citizens. This fact illustrates the ill effects of rural Afghan women's and girl's extremely limited access to information. The low social status of rural women and girls confines them to the immediate surroundings of her household. Yet, it is important to mention that among the rural Afghanistan, few men have access to modern forms of media, especially radio, and rarely to television due to geographic constraints and sparse socioeconomic opportunities. Meanwhile, illiteracy in the countryside defeats the possibility that communities can be reached through print media, magazines, or newspapers.

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Unfortunately, the emerging Afghan media continues to neglect rural communities. The “typical” Afghan woman is still depicted as educated, modern, and a member of the working class, while the majority of the country's women are rural, uneducated, and have a very complicated lifestyle, which is different from those portrayed in national and private television channels. It is important to recognize the backlash and resistance in rural communities that such depictions can generate. As Homa Ghosh claims, rural Afghanistan is home to “the roots of tribal powers that have frequently doomed the Kabul-based modernization effort.” Today's media, too, has overlooked the predominant role of the Afghan woman as rural housewife or rural daughter — one who does not attend school and does not work outside the home. Rural women and girls are not able to relate their lives to the content of current media programs. This creates a backlash whereby there is growing resistance to the idea of educating and empowering women and the stigmatizing of women who are educated or who do work outside the home as dishonorable.

The emerging media forms in Afghanistan have a very important role to play to undo the harm that has been created by previous media sectors with regards to their portrayal of the role and status of women in the country in its differ-

ent regions. Experiences in Afghanistan have shown that inadequate or incomplete knowledge about an incident that involved women has had a huge impact, jeopardizing the social status of women. The recent examples of the killing of female journalists has sparked rumors that have spread from one part of the country to another, closing doors for women and girls to pursue journalism as a profession. Perhaps the female journalists were killed for the same reason that hundreds of their male counterparts have been. But the media's failure to acknowledge this as a possibility has ramifications for how women are perceived and ultimately how they are treated.

We cannot ignore the impact of globalization on the emerging independent media in Afghanistan. With plenty of international intervention, the local media has almost lost its autonomy and functions as members of the global village of media actors. However, if the Afghan media endorses international standards of human rights for women with little understanding or regard for the differences between rural and urban populations, the gap between these segments of Afghan society will increase and eventually the country will be torn asunder. After all, international standards are far beyond the understanding and perception of a common villager, who still believes that if children are delivered at home by a *daya* employing traditional treatments, their children will be much healthier. This is not to suggest that the media should refrain from promoting gender equality. On the contrary, the emerging Afghan media should be doing so with greater vigor, though particular attention to challenging traditional stereotypes rather than reinforcing them.

Conclusion

Media has an important and vital role in social change, by encouraging equality and social inclusion. Therefore, the emerging media in Afghanistan must make an effort to incorporate the rural perspectives of women into the regular media content and to challenge the pervasiveness of domestic violence, gender disparities in health and education, and gender discrimination. The emerging media can accomplish these aims through several means. First, the media can feature male change agents who have had a positive impact on the lives of women and girls. Second, the media can condemn both obvious and hidden forms of gender discrimination. Third, the media can introduce to the public positive images of women as experts, authorities, and skilled resources on various issues such as health, education, security, politics, and governance. Fourth, the emerging media can take steps to strengthen its investigative research capacity and employ it to examine and bring to light the effects of domestic violence on women's and children's health, and the need to further the education and political participation of women and girls.

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Education beyond the School Room

Nancy Hatch Dupree

Experts throughout the massive aid community in Afghanistan agree that education is vital for development. Education shapes the quality of productivity, products, and services. Education informs citizens of the roles that they must play so that good governance may thrive. Education molds the quality of leadership. Yet, despite the rhetoric, the education sector is perennially underfunded; typically, it receives scarcely 10% of what is provided to other sectors.

Nevertheless, the expansion of the education sector has been spectacular, even as it suffers from the fast pace with which this growth has occurred. Surges in enrollment of a million new primary school students each year have been extolled since the blitz on education began in 2001. True, many heartwarming success stories can be told. Opportunities for girls have increased enormously. But the pace in enrollments creates major problems for the future, because substantive quality improvements in the learning system continue to be elusive.

The prominent afflictions plaguing the system indicate the enormity of the problem. Traditional rote learning and memorization remain deeply entrenched. The shortage of qualified teachers is serious. The rigid curriculum is replete with glaring omissions while reforms to teach skills relevant to the lives of the children and those demanded by the national and international market places remain agonizingly slow in materializing. In addition, an embedded bureaucracy resistant to change, as well as weak policymaking leadership preclude creative thinking. Of these, the continued pervasive reliance on rote learning is the most pernicious, for it impedes the introduction of modern techniques and discourages students from asking questions or engaging in inquiring interchanges. Teachers expound; students listen. Remembering, rather than reasoning is all-important. Individual expression is thereby dampened, initiatives discouraged, self-confidence crippled, and leadership development muted.

There is a pressing need, therefore, to spread information beyond classroom doors for the purpose of arming citizens with knowledge that they can use to enhance the quality of their lives. Only with such renewed capacities can individuals be motivated to participate in transforming the bare bones of the recently implanted democratic framework into an effective structure of governance.

Every sector, from economics to microfinance, agriculture to industry, health to educa-



Nancy Hatch Dupree, Director of the Afghanistan Centre at Kabul University, has written on Afghan history and culture since 1962 when she first went to Afghanistan.

tion, or human rights to governance can benefit from stimulating learning opportunities. Readers may wonder why such a simple observation needs repeating. Simple it may be, but high-sounding strategy papers too often ignore the obvious. Short-term fact-finding missions avidly collect data, write profound analyses, propose expensive recommendations, and launch quick fixes, only to omit sustainable components that would supply players with the knowledge they need to keep programs afloat. Additionally, faulty conceptions and just plain ignorance thwart many promising programs. Unless such attitudinal constraints are addressed through corrective learning experiences, even the best designed programs will falter. Providing practical knowledge at all levels, however, is a time-consuming, multi-pronged task requiring long-term commitments that too often lie beyond the interests of the quick-fixing consultants.

Nevertheless, now is an ideal time to reach marginalized as well as mainstream communities. During the many harsh years spent in exile, the refugees widened their horizons. Schools were available as never before, and evidence of the benefits of learning was clearly evident all around them. Refugee populations learned to expect services they had never before envisioned and developed a heightened political awareness that currently spurs expectations not only for more services but that their voices will be heard. This is a positive development, but these voices must be informed if they are to speak effectively. The yearly increases in school graduates further raises aspirations that are foiled by limited job and economic opportunities. Herein lay the seeds of the volatile unrest already making its way to the surface.

But one thing that must be remembered is that the Afghan people have shown a remarkable resilience throughout this tragic period; their coping skills are ingenious and their adherence to cherished cultural values unshakable. Given access to knowledge they can, and will, achieve, through their own efforts, a good deal of the elusive reconstruction so fervently desired, without the need to become dependent. Experience has shown repeatedly that the responses of those most in need can be brilliant. This is particularly evident in the health sector, where high child and maternal mortality rates have been dramatically lowered by making basic information on good health practices available.

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The Afghanistan Centre at Kabul University (ACKU) believes in the country's potentials. Sharing information for nation building is its primary goal. Established in Peshawar in 1989, ACKU has amassed 48,000 documents generated by UN agencies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), governments (including the Taliban), scholars, and strategists on all aspects of Afghanistan's heritage and history, as well as current aid and development issues. Since 2006 the documents have been housed in Kabul University's Main Library where over a thousand readers visit the ACKU reading room each month. A database of its holdings is available to users worldwide on <http://www.ackuaf.org>. Thanks to the generosity of the Afghan government, a more spacious facility is now under construction on the campus where more wide-ranging information-sharing activities such as lectures, exhibitions, conferences, and video dialogues between Afghan students and students abroad will soon be possible.

For further accessibility, the documents are being digitized so that information may be shared through CDs, DVDs, and other IT marvels with universities and libraries throughout Afghanistan and abroad. However, ACKU is fully mindful of the fact that most Afghans live in rural areas. The ACKU Box Libraries Extension (ABLE), which is ACKU's outreach component, sends libraries into provincial communities, to high schools, and Provincial Councils. Some 123,000 books are now in circulation through the ABLE project; thousands more have been distributed by others following the ABLE model. Many of these books in Dari and Pashto are ABLE publications — especially designed for the newly literate. Some 83 titles, ranging from history and folklore, agriculture and the environment, and health to home management have been published. Works on law and governance are provided to Provincial Councils, where too often even copies of the Afghan Constitution are unavailable.

Titles are selected to ensure sustainability. They aim to supplement knowledge beyond the school room and beyond short-term, quick-fix development projects. Primary education and adult education programs, for instance, are so often a waste of time and a waste of effort because graduates will soon lose their newly learned skills unless they are given something to read. The ABLE books discussing the essence of democracy, including the rights and obligations of both the government and the governed, are hot items these days. Planting democracy requires so much more than mastering the basics of where and how to vote.

These are small steps, but one cannot, and should not, presume to remodel a society which has lived in a certain manner for centuries overnight. Nor should the values that sustain the Afghan society be eroded. But the people of Afghanistan do have the right to access knowledge that will strengthen these values and enrich their lives.

Civil Society and Community Mobilization in Afghanistan

Wazirgul Anis

Civil Society (CS) consists of various kinds of community-based, non-governmental movements that, without waiting for or requesting government orders or assistance, come together mainly to solve problems and effect change. CS actors in Afghanistan exist at the local, district, and national levels. They are engaged in resolving problems and in calling upon people to contribute to, or participate in, community-based activities.

Because for many years Afghanistan has not had a widely accepted and effective national government, people have traditionally relied upon CS approaches and mechanisms to tackle problems. Social and community-based movements in Afghanistan consist of the *shuras* (councils) and the *jirgas* (gatherings of community elders). There are various types of Shuras, ranging from those that are clerical and educational to those that are ethnic-based. Jirgas, which are convened only occasionally, deal with problems or issues that impact a large number of people, and thus include representatives from different groups. Shuras operate daily, weekly, and seasonally.

At the beginning of the new era in Afghanistan (i.e., after 9/11), Afghan CSs proliferated and thrived. As the Afghan Constitution was not practicable in all parts of the country, CSs became very active in almost all villages. Linking up with international actors, CSs expanded into new areas and provided fresh opportunities for ordinary Afghans to improve their lives. However, in recent years, all of these CSs have been subjected to the negative influences of the government and the warlords.

Afghan CSs currently face major challenges. In some parts of the country, all such movements have ceased to function. Those that continue to operate are doing so underground. Fundamentalists and warlords have branded independent community movements as un-Islamic, Communist, or Christian and have sought to use communities as weapons, shields, and slaves through coercion and intimidation. Meanwhile, the Afghan government has been unable either to curb the influence of warlords or in other ways assist CSs. In fact, many important government figures are themselves fundamentalists or warlords. Non-governmental organizations, especially international NGOs, have tried to support CS activities. Nevertheless, the CSs are suffocating, especially in rural areas.

These forces exploit the fact that Afghanistan is a traditional Islamic country, a majority of whose population is illiterate, by seeking to persuade people that those who are



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Anis...

open-minded, favor development, and work to mobilize CSs are un-Islamic. By using religion as a tool in this manner, such forces try to shut the door to literacy, education, and productive links with the outside world — antidotes to the root causes of violence and terror.

It is important to emphasize that violent conflict and terrorism in Afghanistan are attributable to community-based problems such as poverty, injustice, underdevelopment, illiteracy, and ethnicity. CS approaches and mechanisms have played, and can play, a significant role not just in conflict resolution, but also in alleviating the conditions that give rise to conflict. And in areas of Afghanistan that fortunately enjoy some measure of peace and stability, progress has been achieved partly because of the efforts of national and international forces, but mainly because of the work of informal CSs.

Unfortunately, national and international forces have made mistakes that have had a detrimental effect on CSs. The lack of cooperation and coordination among these forces has caused community members in non-peaceful areas to lose confidence in them. Fearing that these forces will soon leave, community members remain passive and the potential of CSs is squandered. Of necessity, many communities have grown accustomed to tolerate and adapt to whatever armed group is present in their midst.

The negative effects of war are wide-ranging and long-lasting in social, economic, cultural, and educational terms. In Afghanistan, where only 27% of the population is literate and the quality and quantity of higher education is very low, most youths are unskilled and jobless. At the same time, however, there is a high demand for workers to help the country recover from years of conflict-driven devastation and to lift society out of poverty. Most importantly, there is still great hope for change and mobilization.

The challenge is to find ways to remove the influence and coercive power of fundamentalists and warlords from the face of the community in order to unleash the potential of communities. It is necessary and possible to accomplish this aim, while at the same time helping to mobilize Afghan communities. NGOs and other friends and partners of the Afghan people would do well to support this effort. There are several critical ingredients to ensuring that local communities are responsive to such support, and that this collaboration leads to CS activities that are both productive and sustainable in the long term:

- First, the community should be involved, well aware, and educated patiently to cooperate and coordinate their efforts. If community members can be convinced to take “ownership,” they will be encouraged to take further steps.
- The objectives should not be imposed on local communities, but freely chosen by them.
- Those seeking to empower and support CSs should not work *for* them, but work *with* them. Patient explanation rather than paternalism and dependency works best.

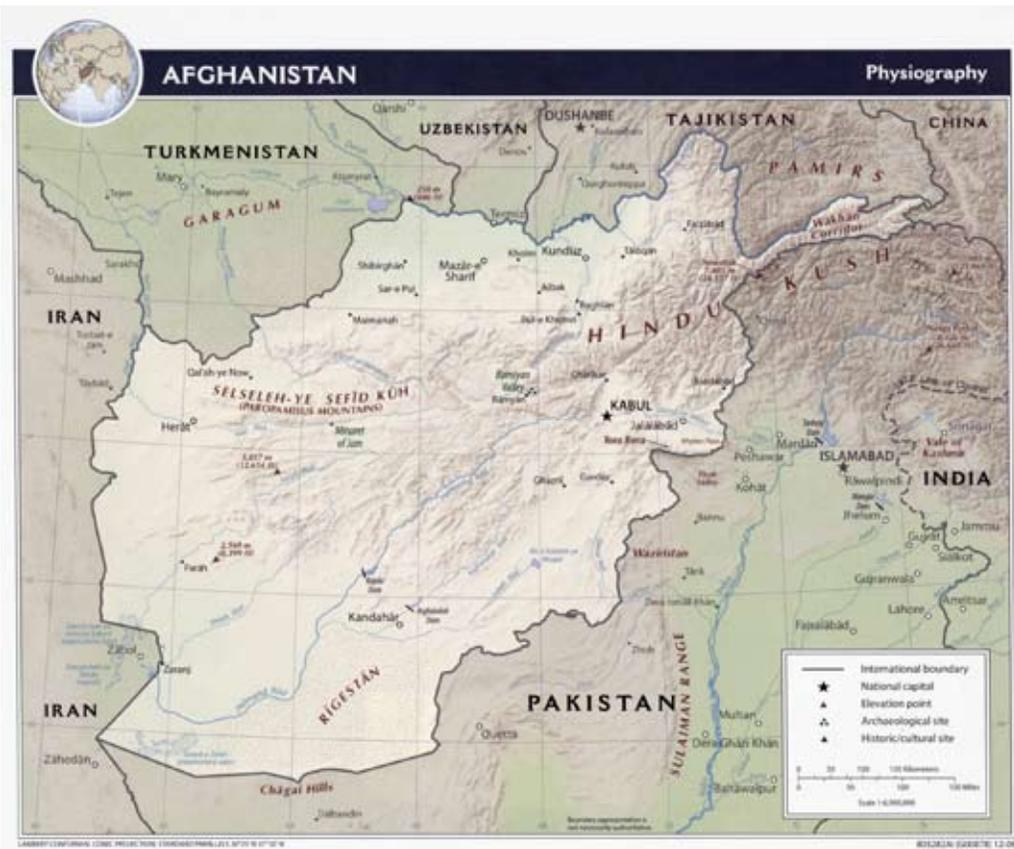
Fundamentalists and warlords have branded independent community movements as un-Islamic, Communist, or Christian and have sought to use communities as weapons, shields, and slaves through coercion and intimidation.

Anis...

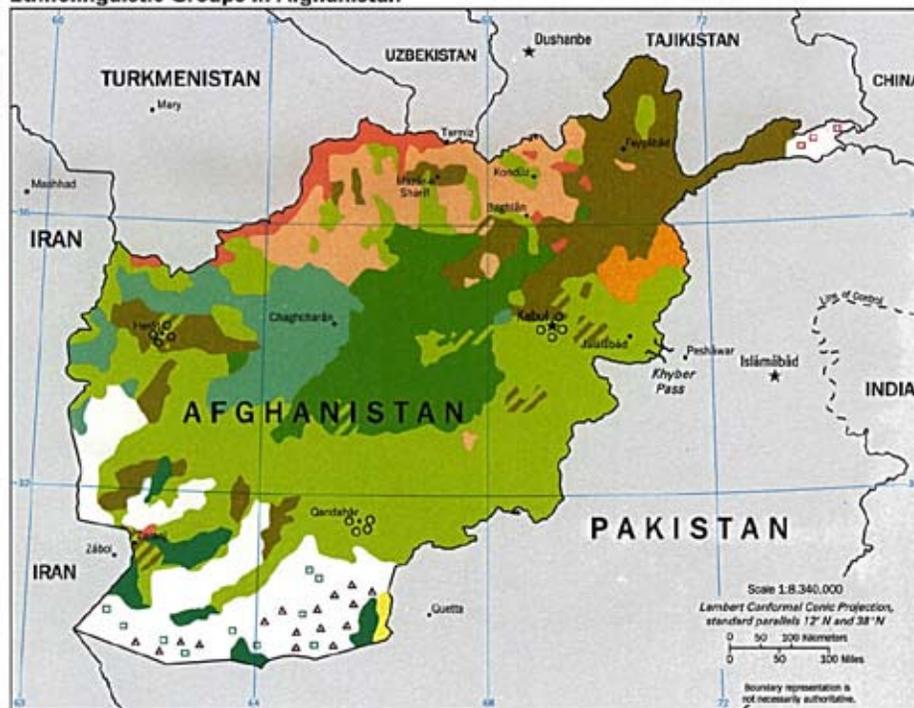
- Receptiveness to the views and concerns of marginalized community figures and broad inclusiveness should guide these efforts.
- Continuous, incremental steps should be taken to neutralize the “stick wielders” by transmitting power and knowledge to community representatives, ordinary people, and socially marginalized figures and families.
- Close attention must be given to ensuring that the work (morally and materially) undertaken is of the highest quality, which is likely to engender trust and the willingness to further cooperate.
- CSs should be encouraged to dare to accept new challenges and responsibilities.

Afghan communities today are living in cages — held captive by the warped views and values as well as the coercive power of warlords and fundamentalists. Both the Afghan government and the international community have been complicit in this. But ordinary Afghans, while vulnerable, are not powerless. Nor is the international community powerless to help them. Rather than offering to substitute the golden cage of dependency for Afghans’ current imprisonment by warlords and fundamentalists, the international community should do all that it can to liberate Afghans by supporting CS activists and activities.

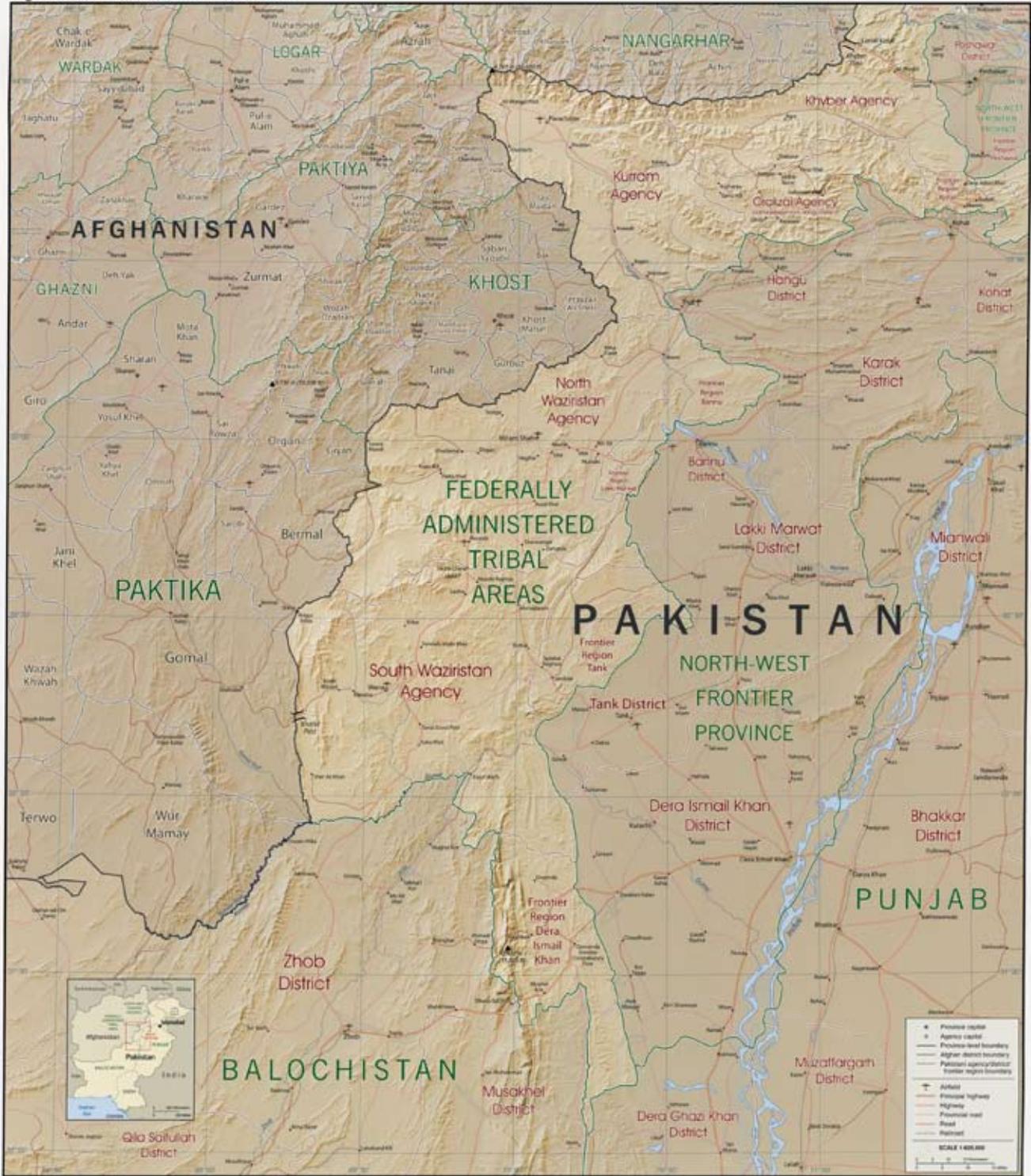
Maps



Ethnolinguistic Groups in Afghanistan

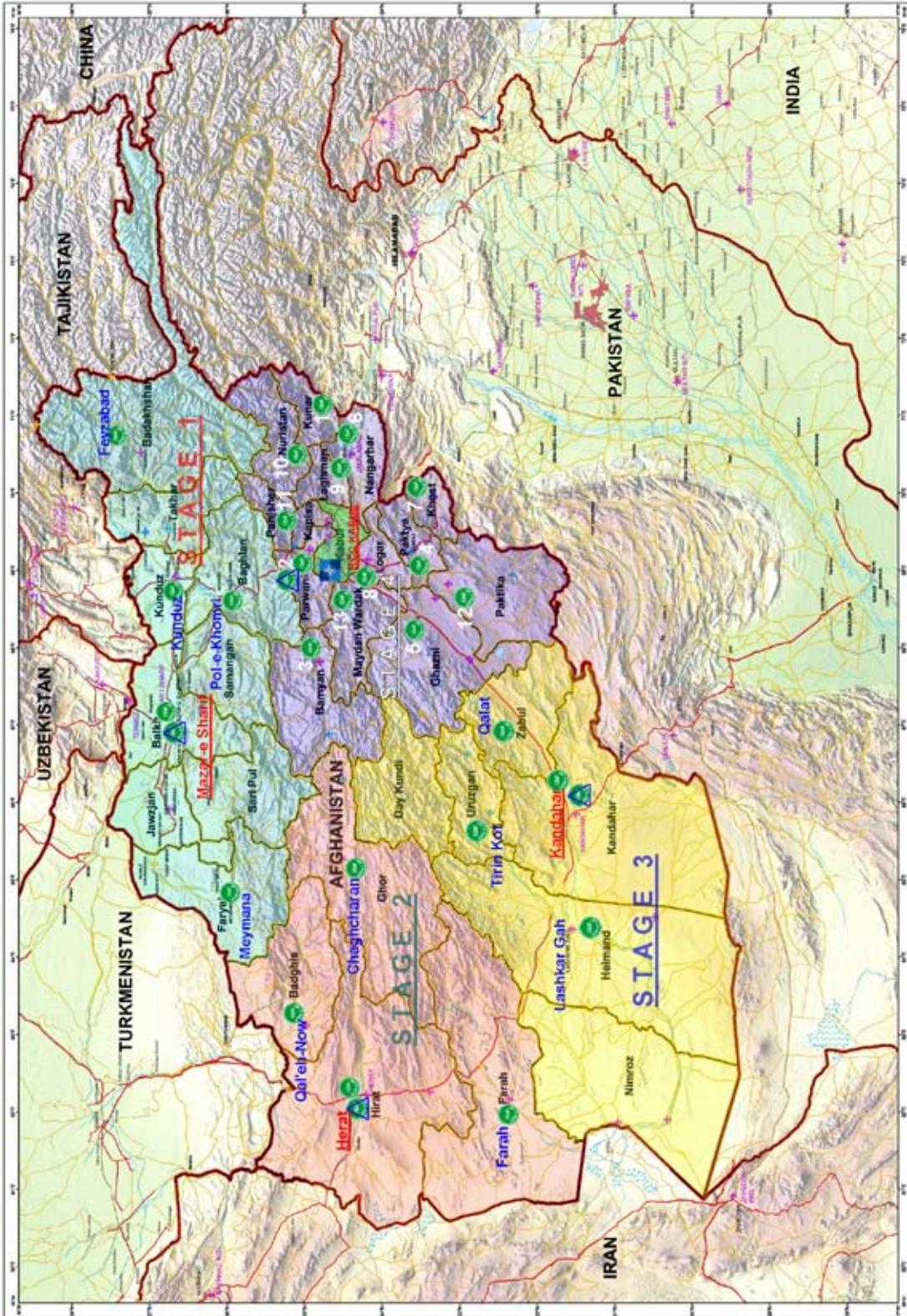


Afghanistan-Pakistan: Central Border Area





AFGHANISTAN: International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) - Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs)



- STAGE 4 - PRTs**
1. Australia (UK), USA
 2. Bagram (USA)
 3. Bagram (UK)
 4. Bagram (USA)
 5. Bagram (USA)
 6. Bagram (USA)
 7. Bagram (USA)
 8. Bagram (USA)
 9. Bagram (USA)
 10. Bagram (USA)
 11. Bagram (USA)
 12. Bagram (USA)
 13. Bagram (USA)

- STAGE 3 (Completed July 2005)**
 Maj. Gen. South (Australia), Canada
 Existing Forward Support Base
- STAGE 1 (Completed October 2000)**
 Maj. Gen. East (Bagram), U.S.A.
 Existing Forward Support Base

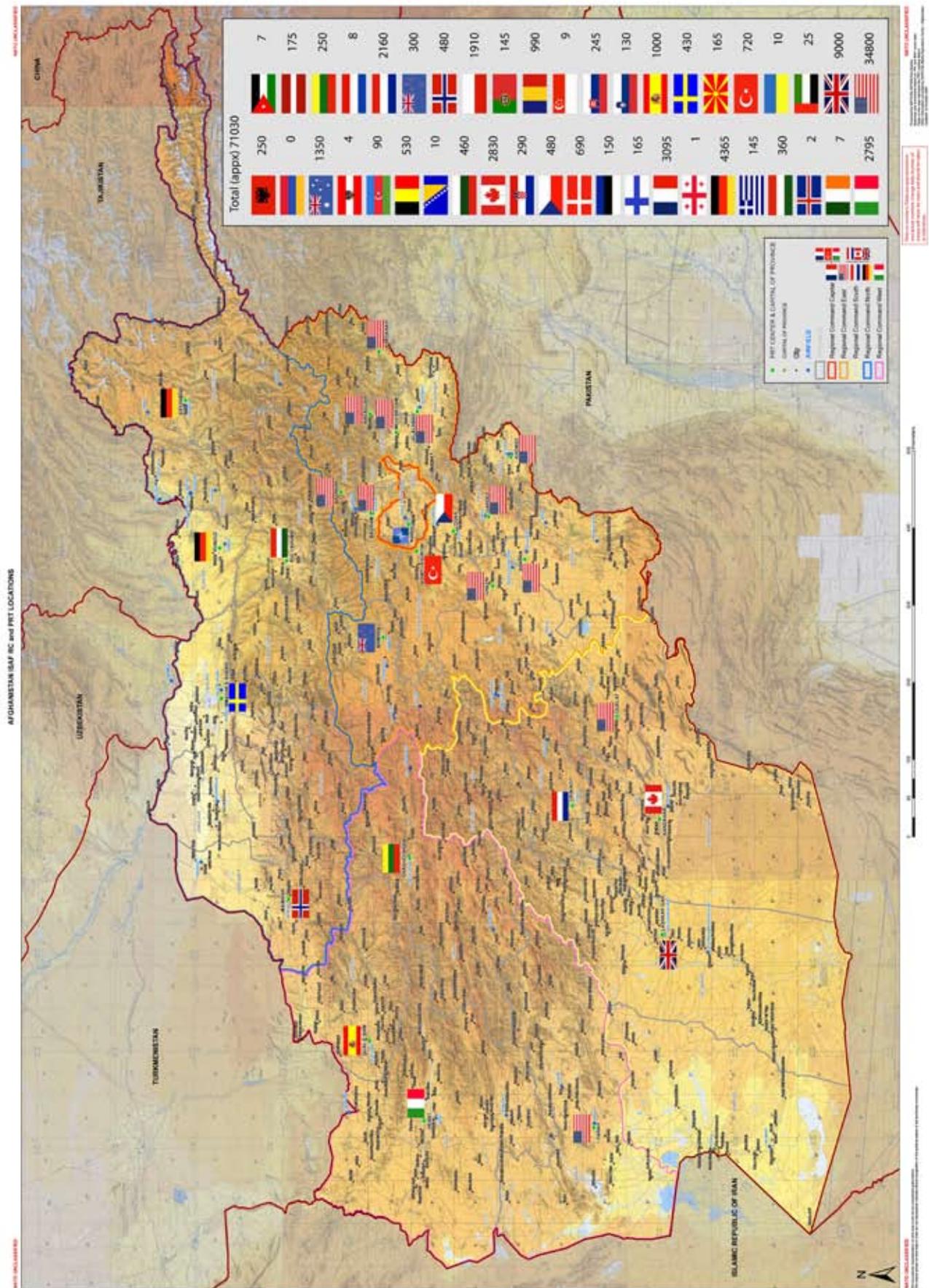
- ISAF PRTs - 8th Edition**
 Produced by STC/EN Civil Section and Public Diplomacy Division
 Date valid as of 1 September 2005
 Afghanistan Administration Division as of August 2005

Legend

- Reg. Command
- PRT Base
- Source
- Transportation
- Provincial Security
- Population

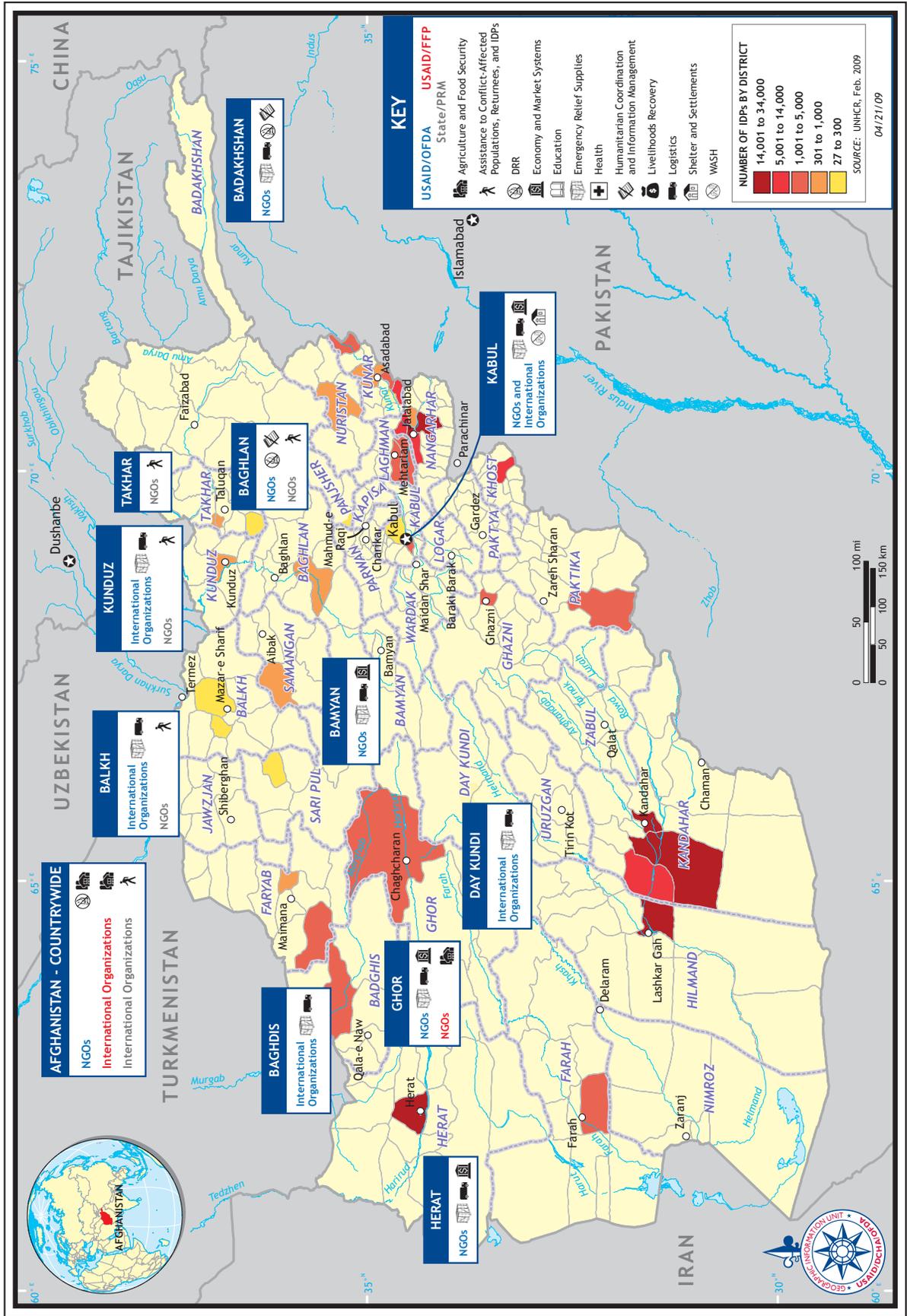
Scale
 0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100 Kilometers

Orientation Map
 Shows the location of Afghanistan in the region of the Middle East and Central Asia.



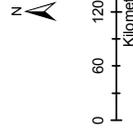


USG HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE TO AFGHANISTAN



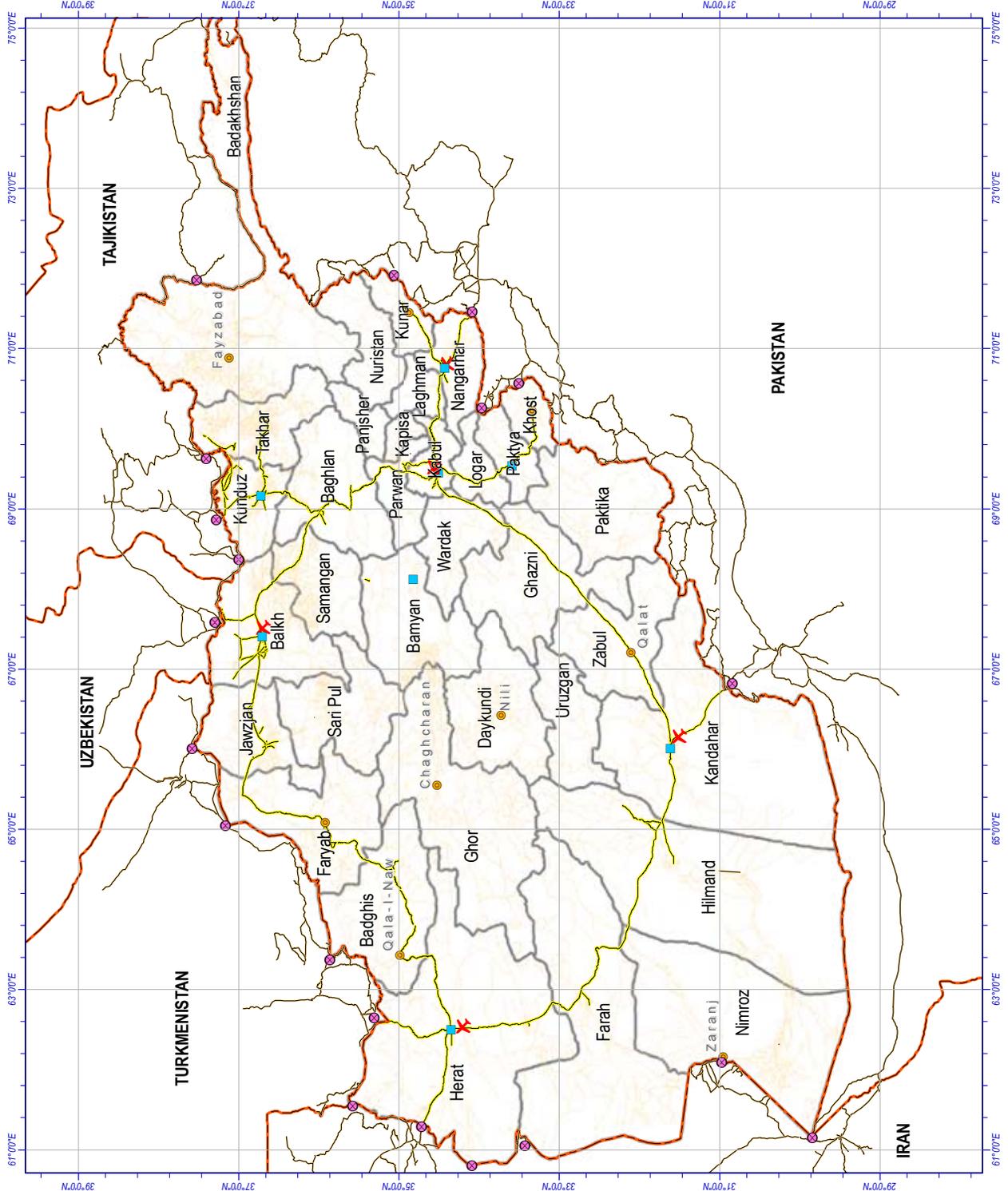
The boundaries and names used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the U.S. Government.

AFGHANISTAN TRANSPORT ROUTES (31st January 2009)



Legend

- Capital
- UNAMA Provincial Office
- UNAMA Regional Office
- Border Crossing Pts.
- Airport
- Major Road
- Road
- International Road
- International Boundary
- Provincial Boundary



The boundaries and names on this map do not imply any official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations



Prepared by the
OCHA Afghanistan
31st January 2009
Geographic System : WGS84
Data Source: AIMS, UNAMA, WFP,
FEWSNET, UNHCR

AFGHANISTAN ACCESSIBILITY MAP (31st January 2009)

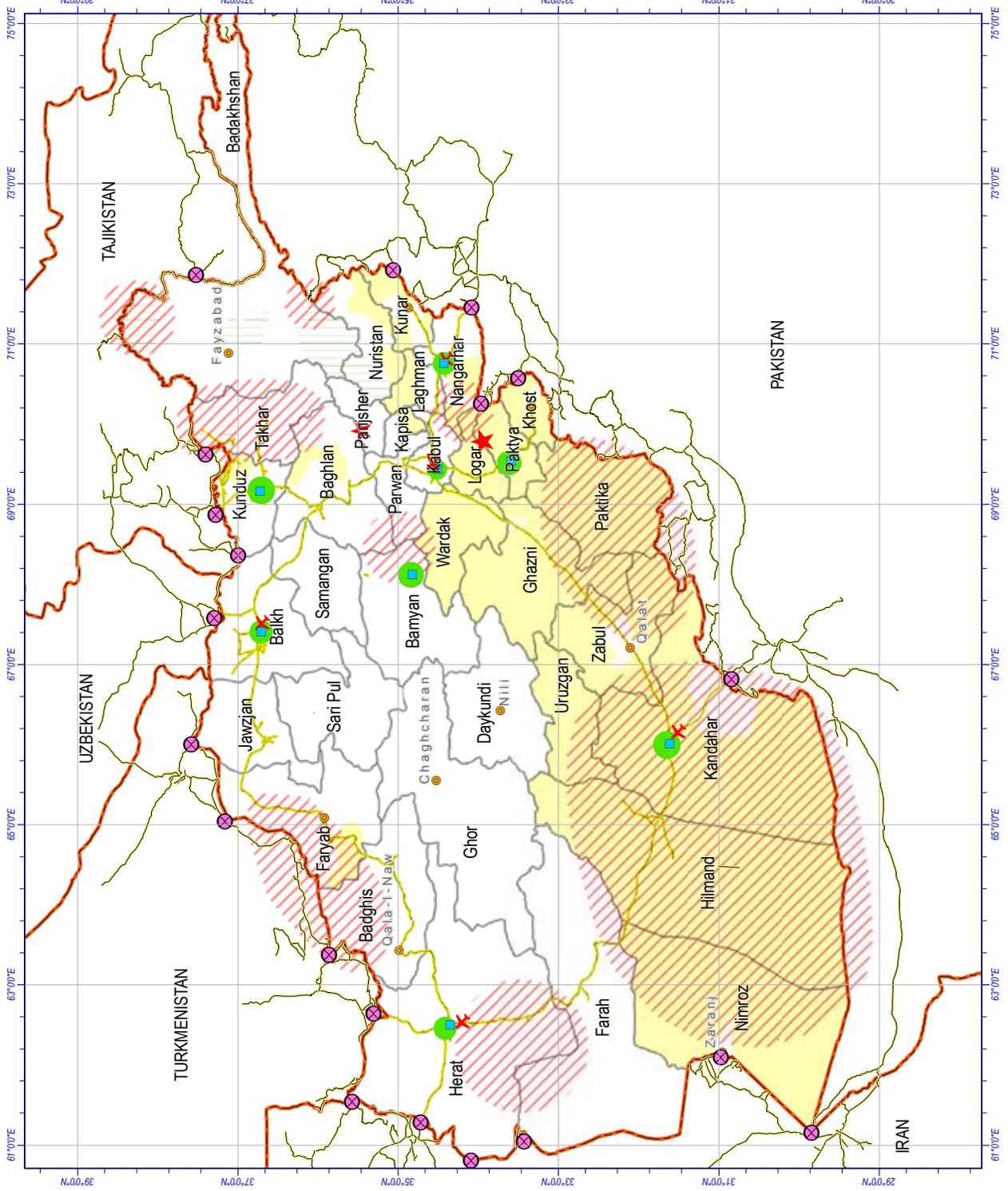


Legend	
	Capital
	UNAMA Provincial Office
	UNAMA Regional Office
	Border Crossing Pts.
	Airport
	International Road
	International Boundary
	Provincial Boundary
	Major Road
	Controlled Movement
	Security Changing Zone
	No Go Areas
	No Roads
	Earthquake

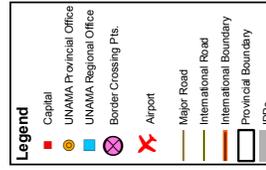
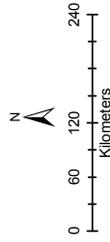
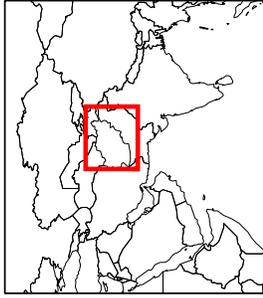
The boundaries and names on this map do not imply any official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations



Prepared by the
OCHA Afghanistan
31st January 2009
Geographic System : WGS84
Data Source: AIMS, UNAMA, WFP,
FEWSNET, UNHCR



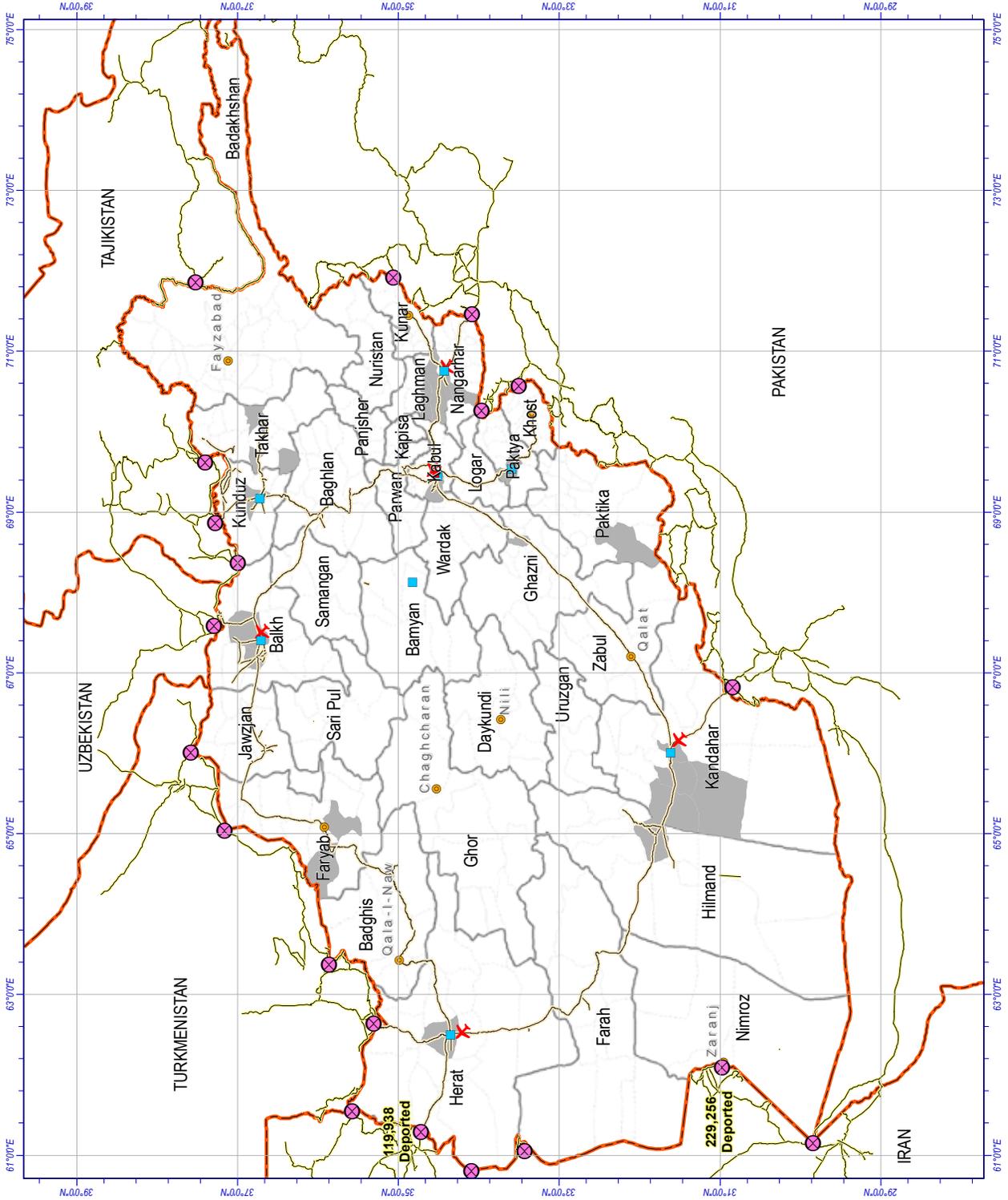
AFGHANISTAN IDPs and Deportees (31st January 2009)



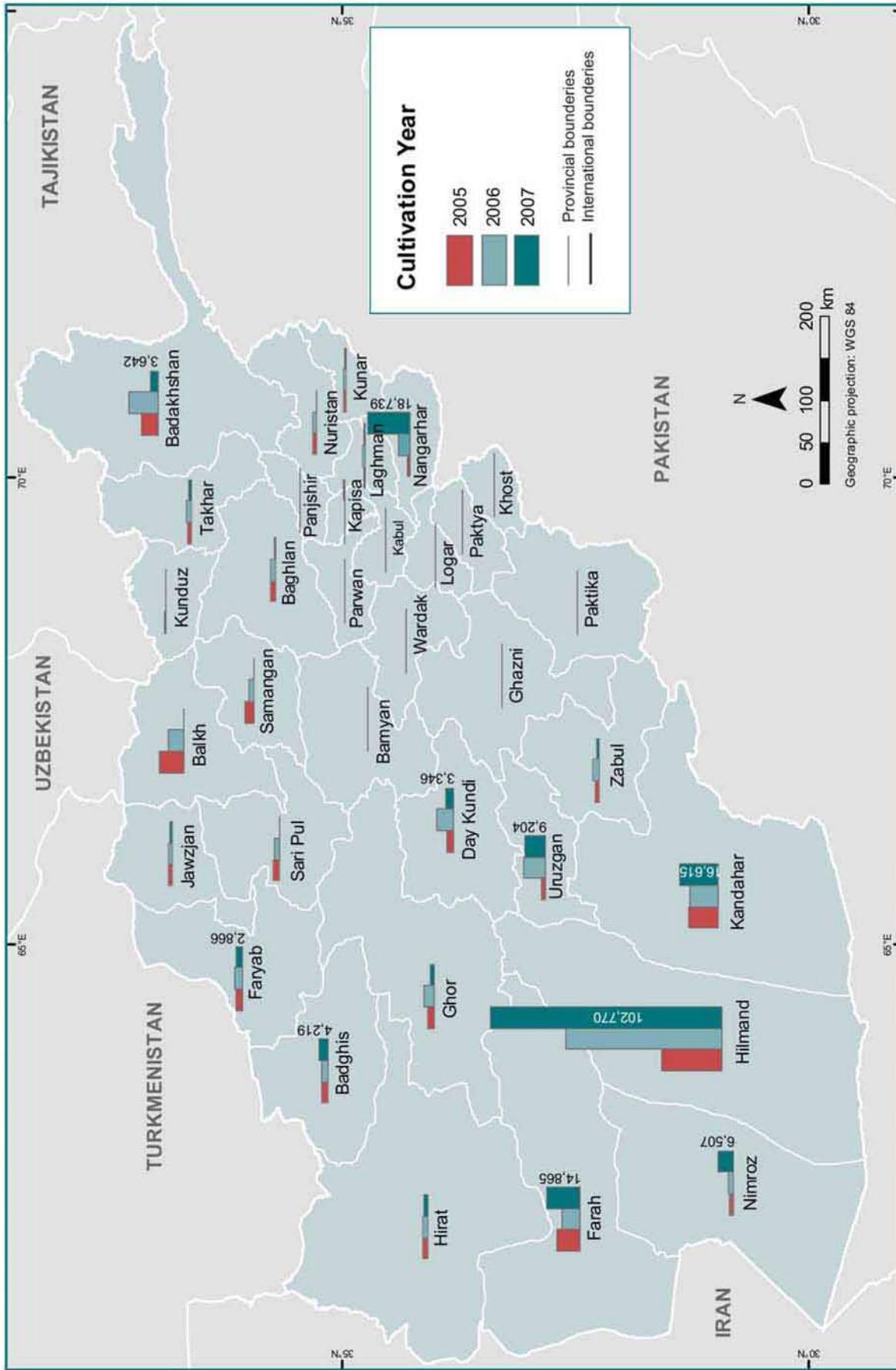
The boundaries and names on this map do not imply any official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations



Prepared by
OCHA AFGHANISTAN
 25th January 2009
 Geographic System: WGS84
 Data Source: AMIS, UNAMA, WFP,
 FEWSNET, UNHCR

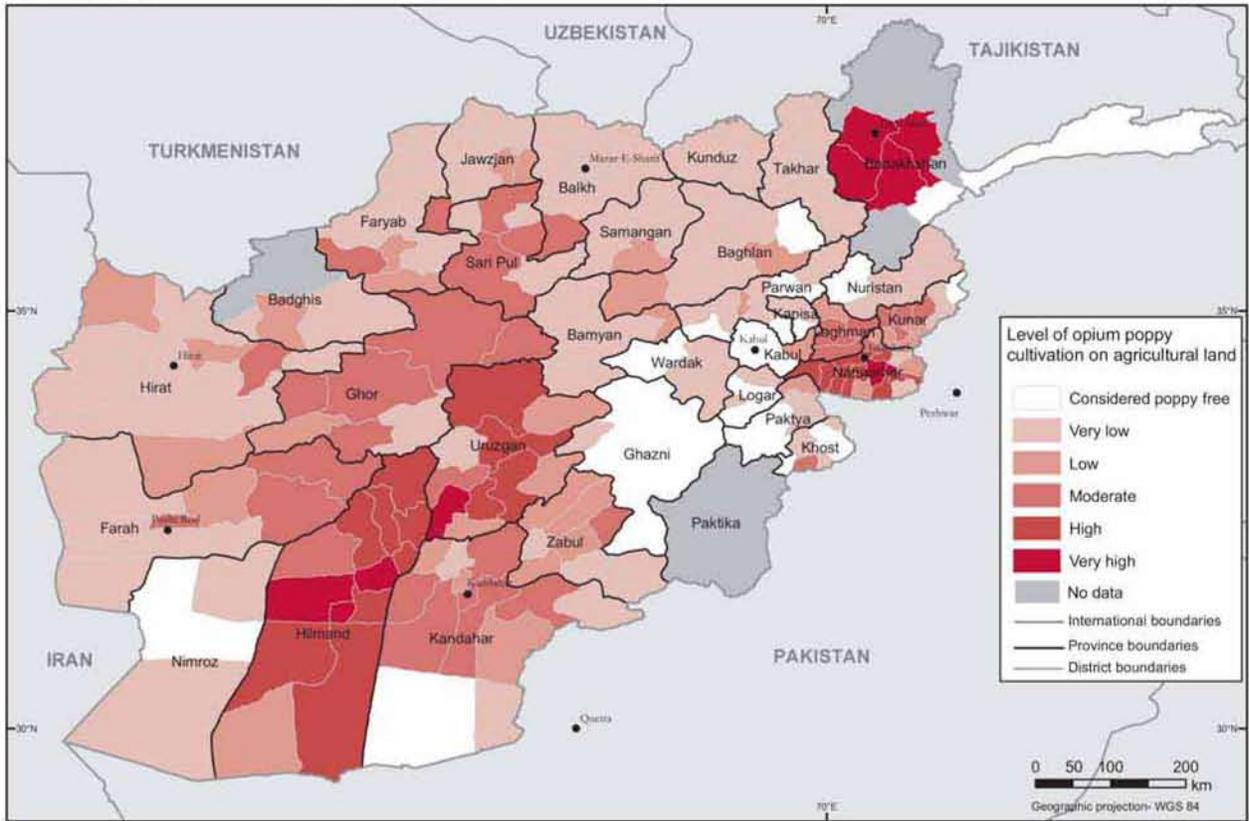


Opium poppy cultivation in Afghanistan, 2005-2007



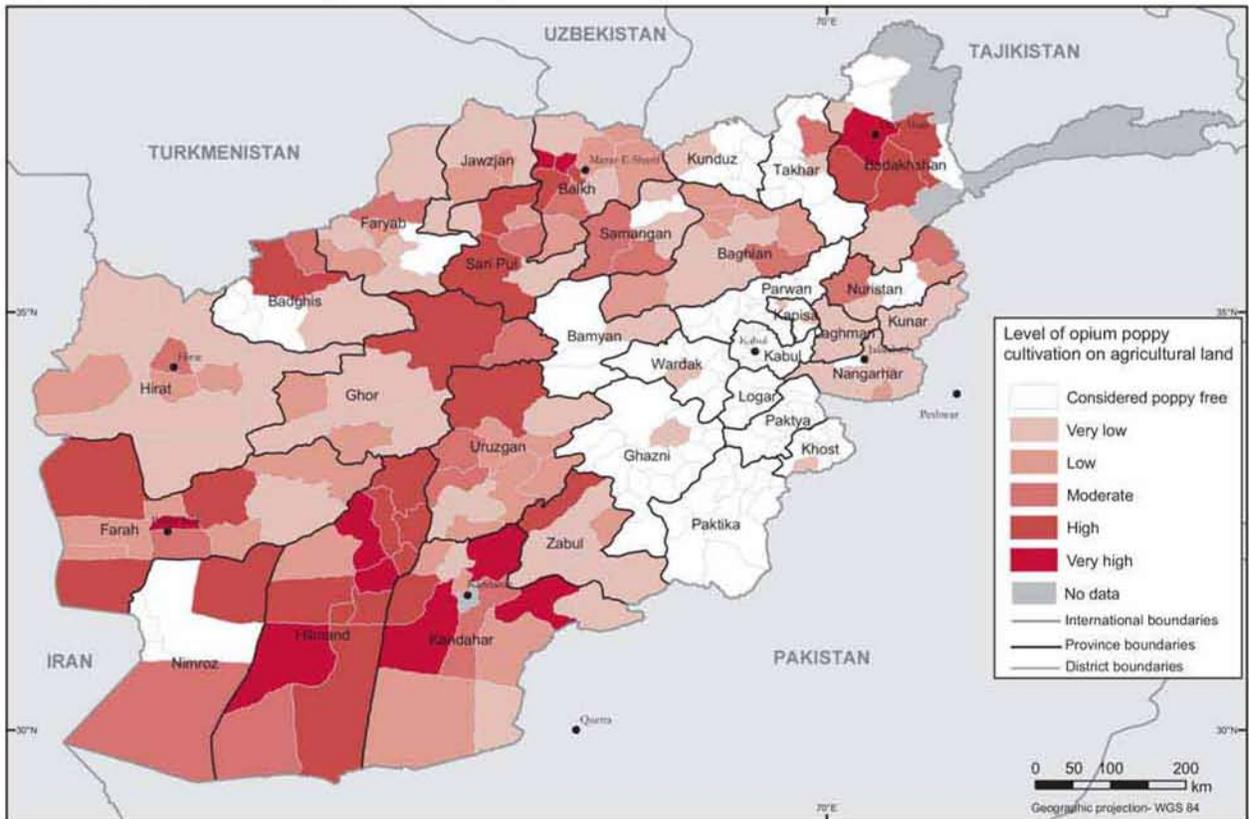
Source: Government of Afghanistan - National monitoring system implemented by UNODC
 Note: The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.

Opium poppy cultivation in Afghanistan, 2004 (at district level)



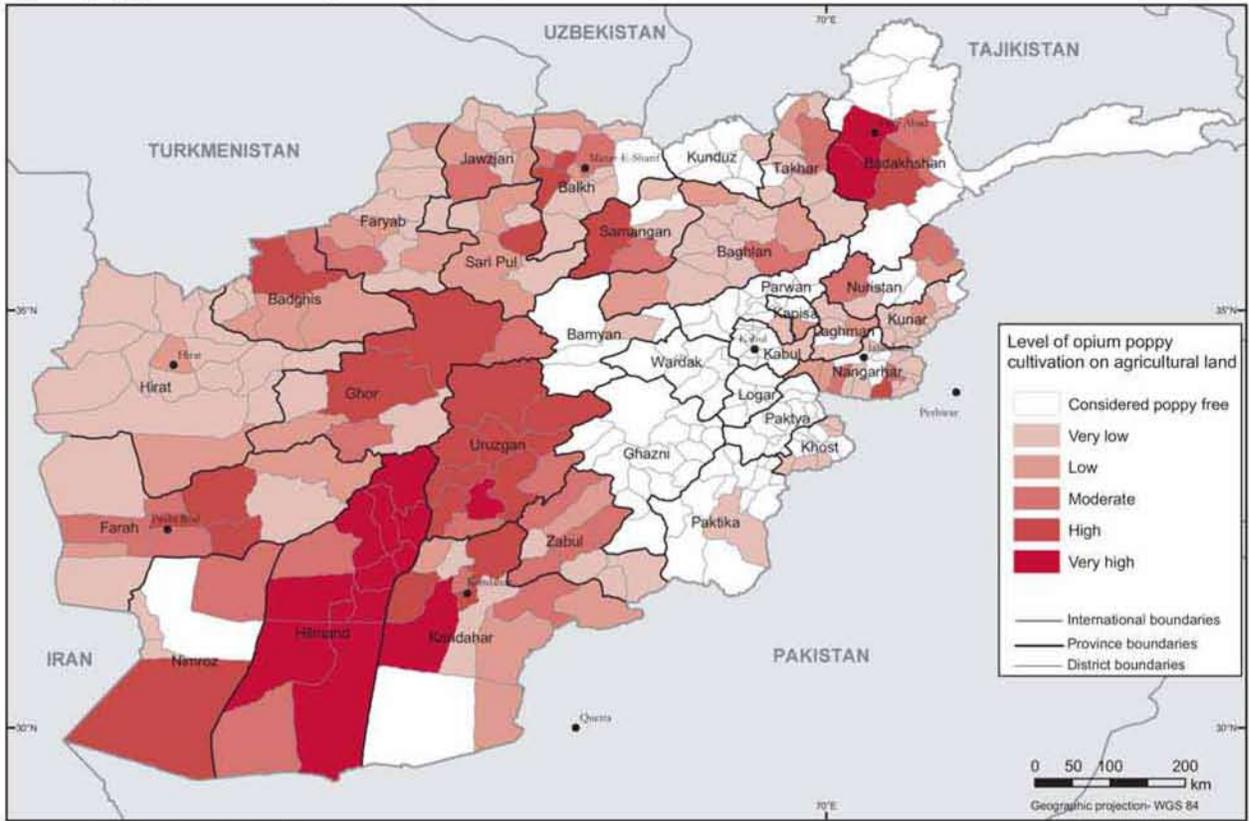
Source: MCN - UNODC Afghanistan Opium Survey 2004
 Note: The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.

Opium poppy cultivation in Afghanistan, 2005 (at district level)



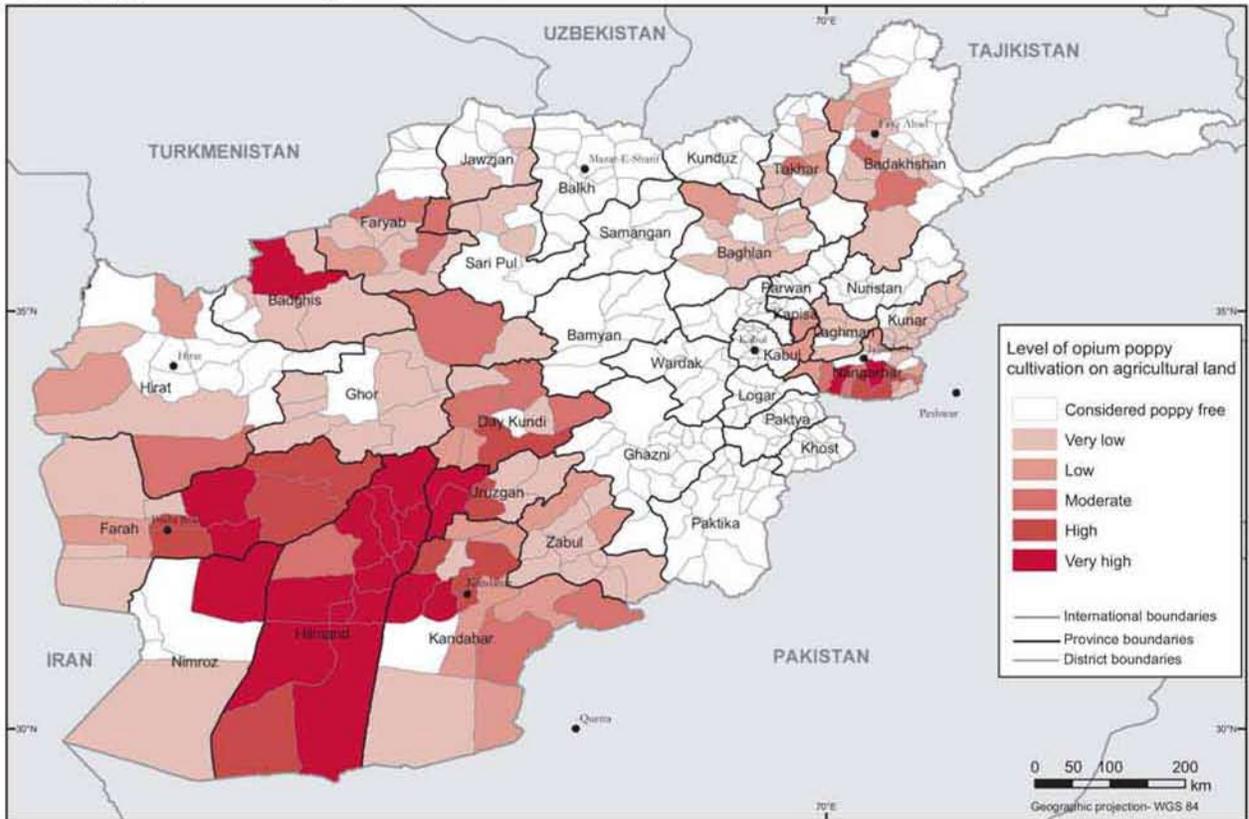
Source: MCN - UNODC Afghanistan Opium Survey 2005
 Note: The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.

Opium poppy cultivation in Afghanistan, 2006 (at district level)



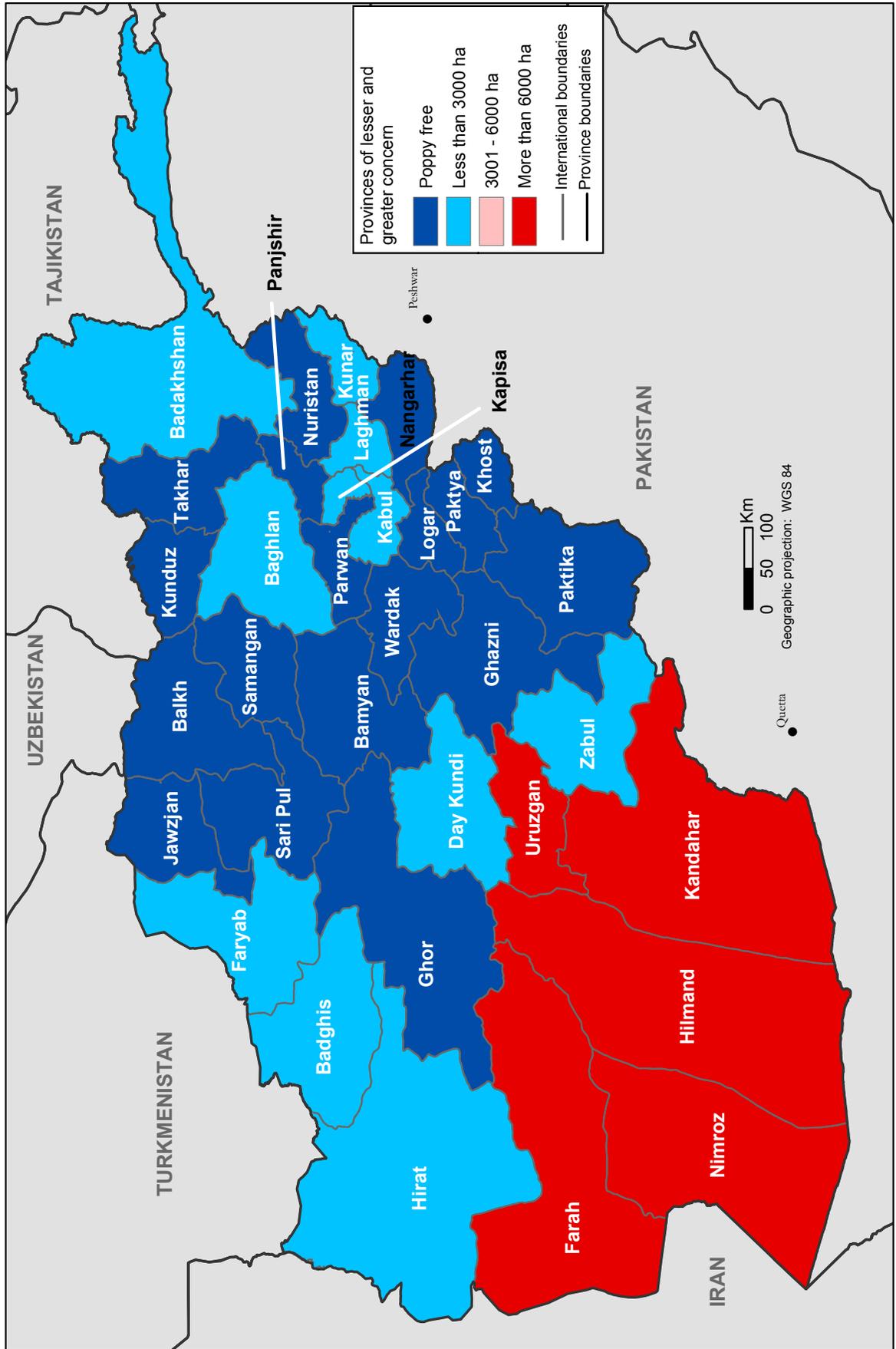
Source: MCN - UNODC Afghanistan Opium Survey 2006
 Note: The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.

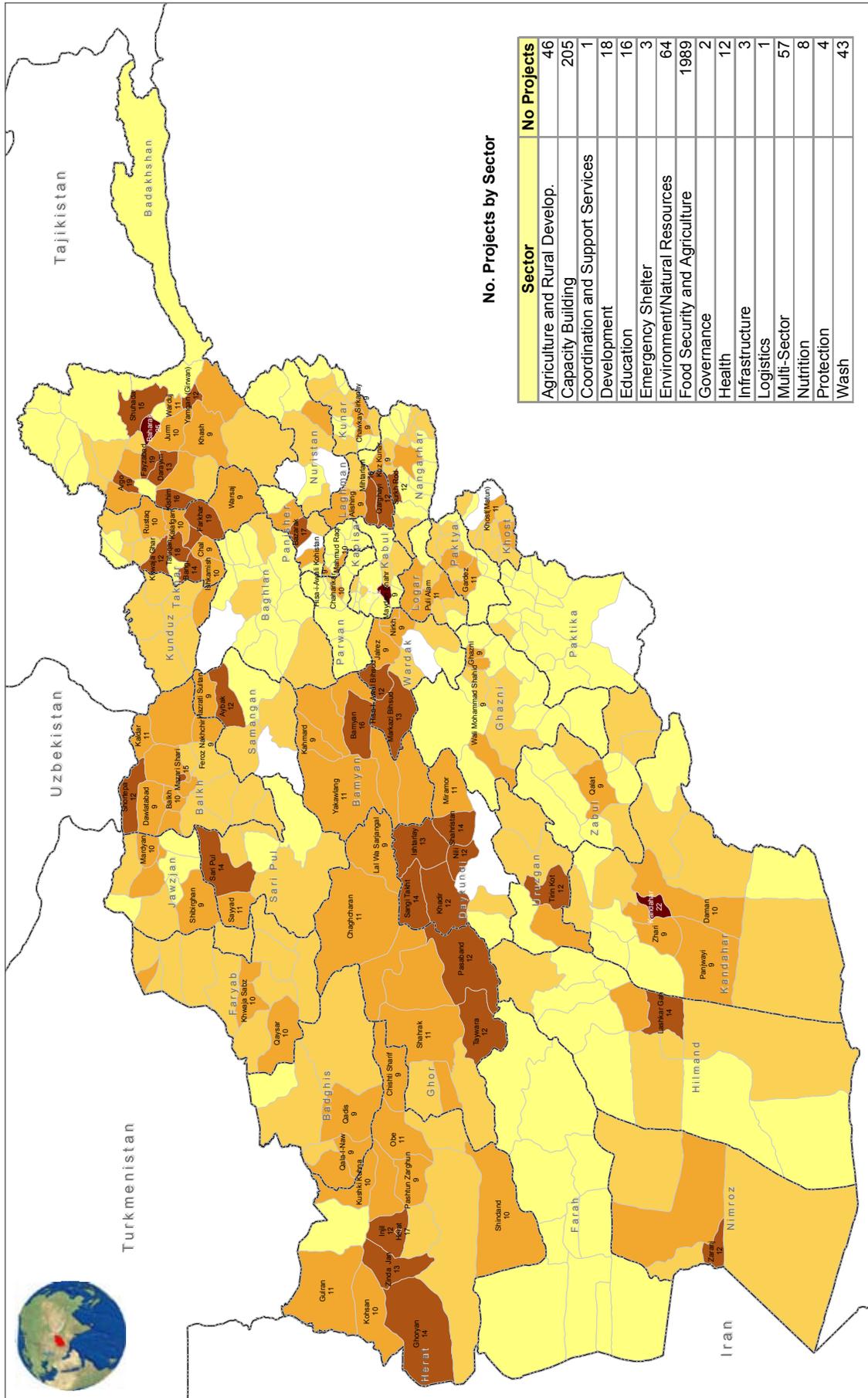
Opium poppy cultivation in Afghanistan, 2007 (at district level)



Source: MCN - UNODC Afghanistan Opium Survey 2007
 Note: The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.

Opium cultivation 2008 in Afghanistan

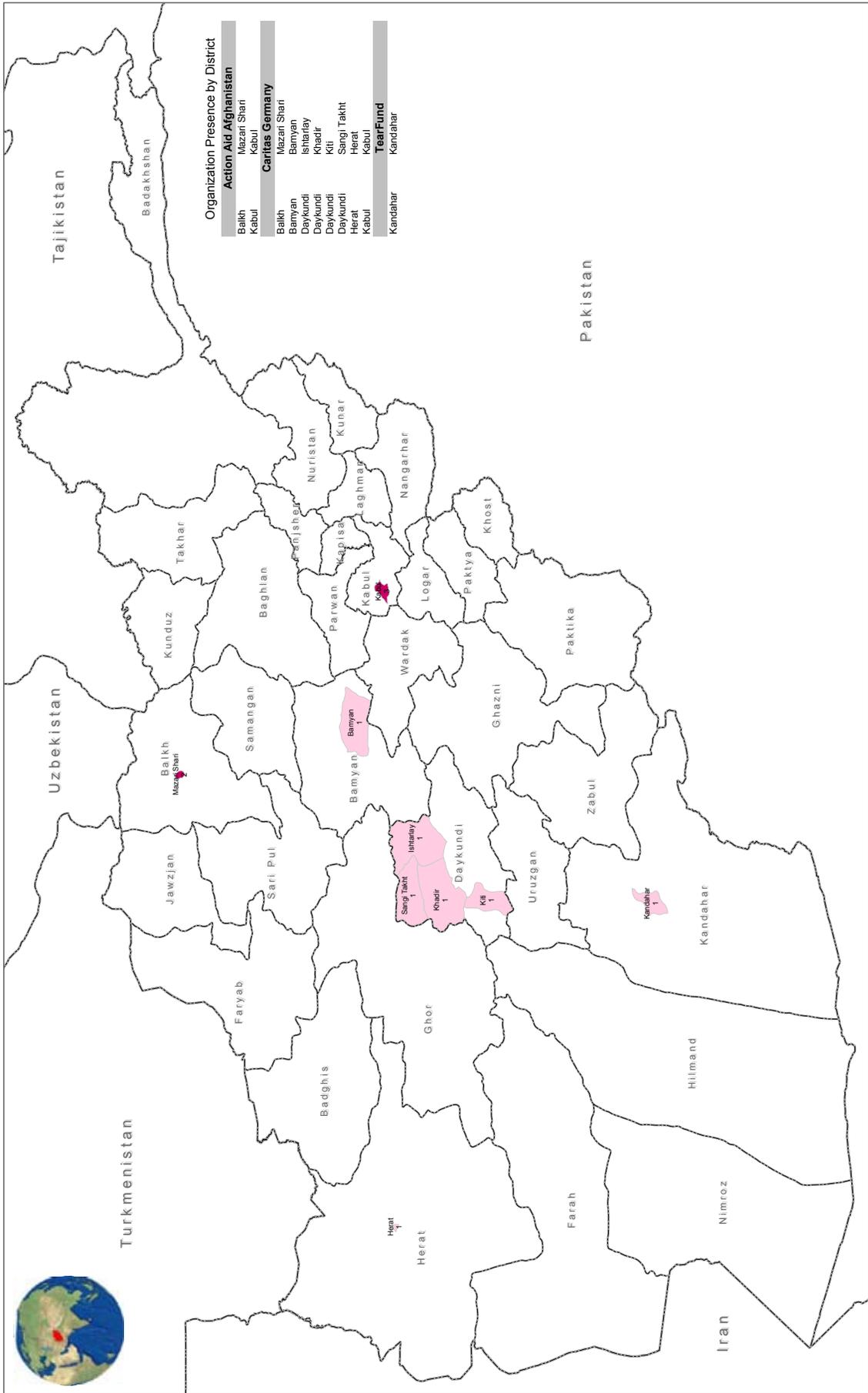




Who-What-Where Afghanistan
Organization Presence - Projects by District
 As of 10th August 2009

Prepared by: OCHA - IMU
 Data Source: Nat & Int NGOs, UN
 Geographic System: WGS84
 Email: ocha-afg@un.org

The boundaries, names and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.

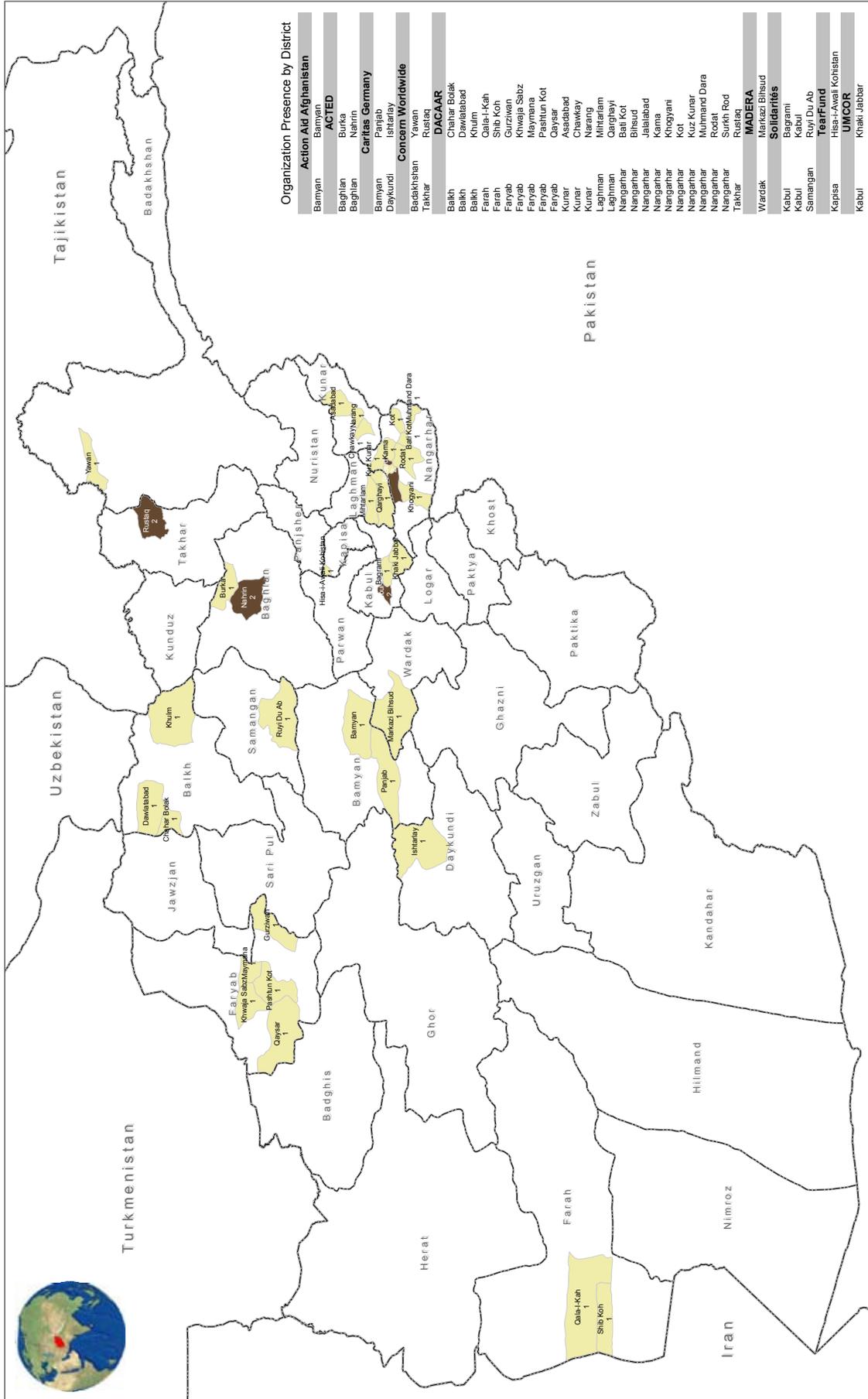


**Who-What-Where Afghanistan
Projects in Health
As of 10th August 2009**

Prepared by: OCHA - IMU
 Data Sources: Nat & Int NGOs, UN
 Geographic System: WGS84
 Email: ocha-afg@un.org

The boundaries, names and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.

Health
 1
 2-3

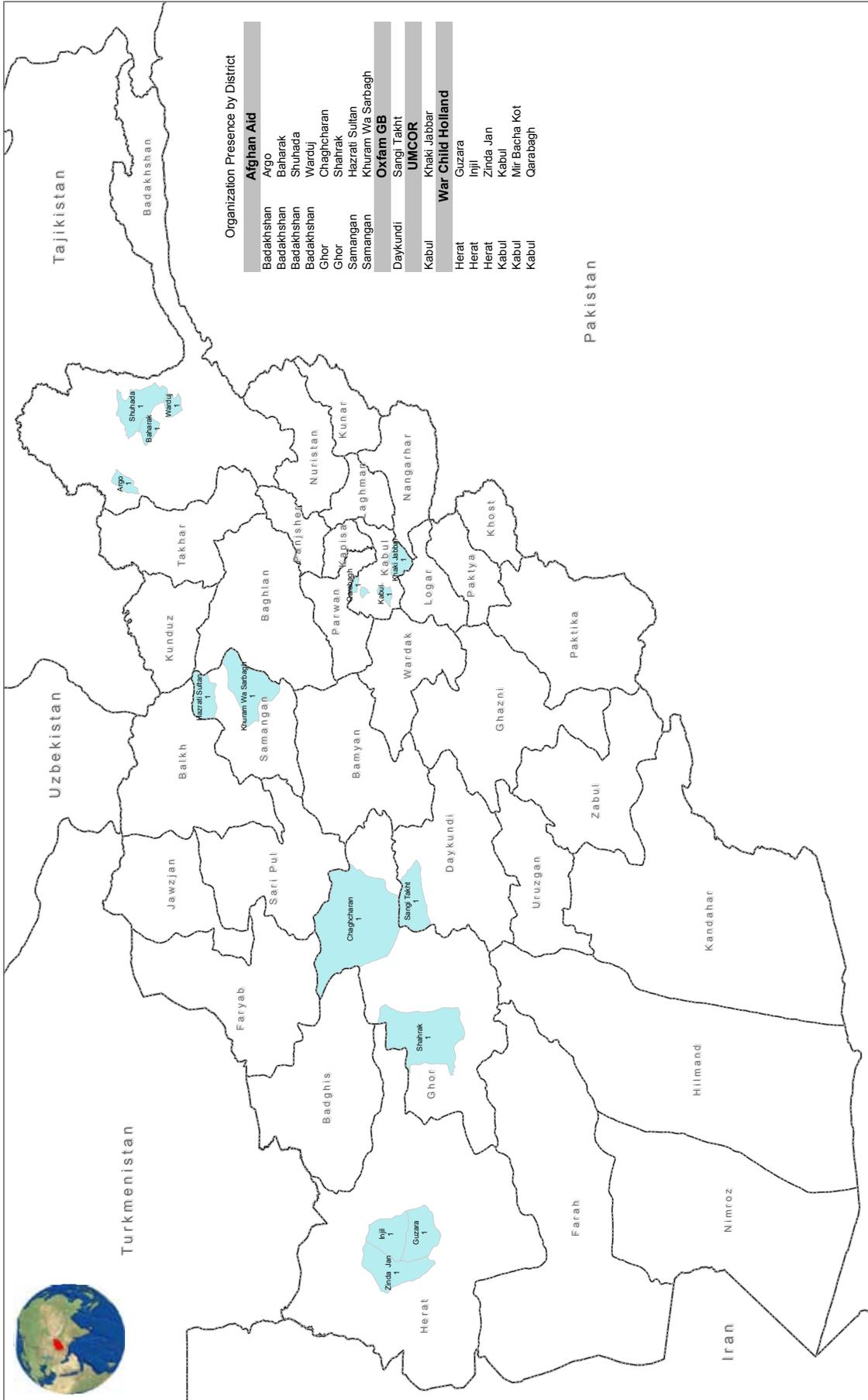


Who-What-Where Afghanistan
Projects in WASH
 As of 10th August 2009

Prepared by: OCHA - IMU
 Data Source: Nat & Int NGOs, UN
 Geographic System: WGS84
 Email: ocha-afg@un.org



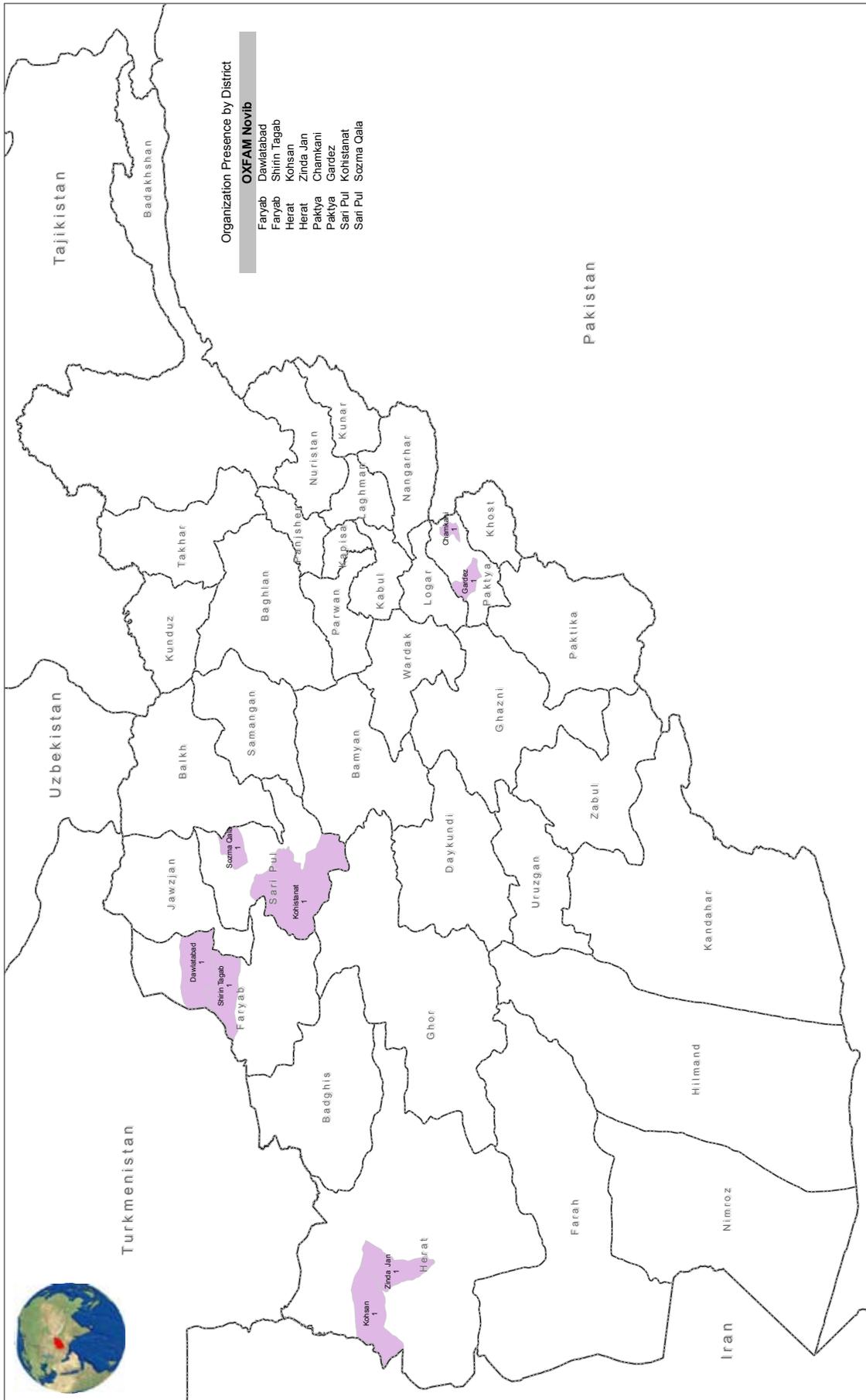
The boundaries, names and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.



Who-What-Where Afghanistan
Projects in Education
 As of 10th August 2009

Prepared by: OCHA - IMU
 Data Source: Net & Int' NGOs, UN
 Geographic System: WGS84
 Email: ocha-afg@un.org

The boundaries, names and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.

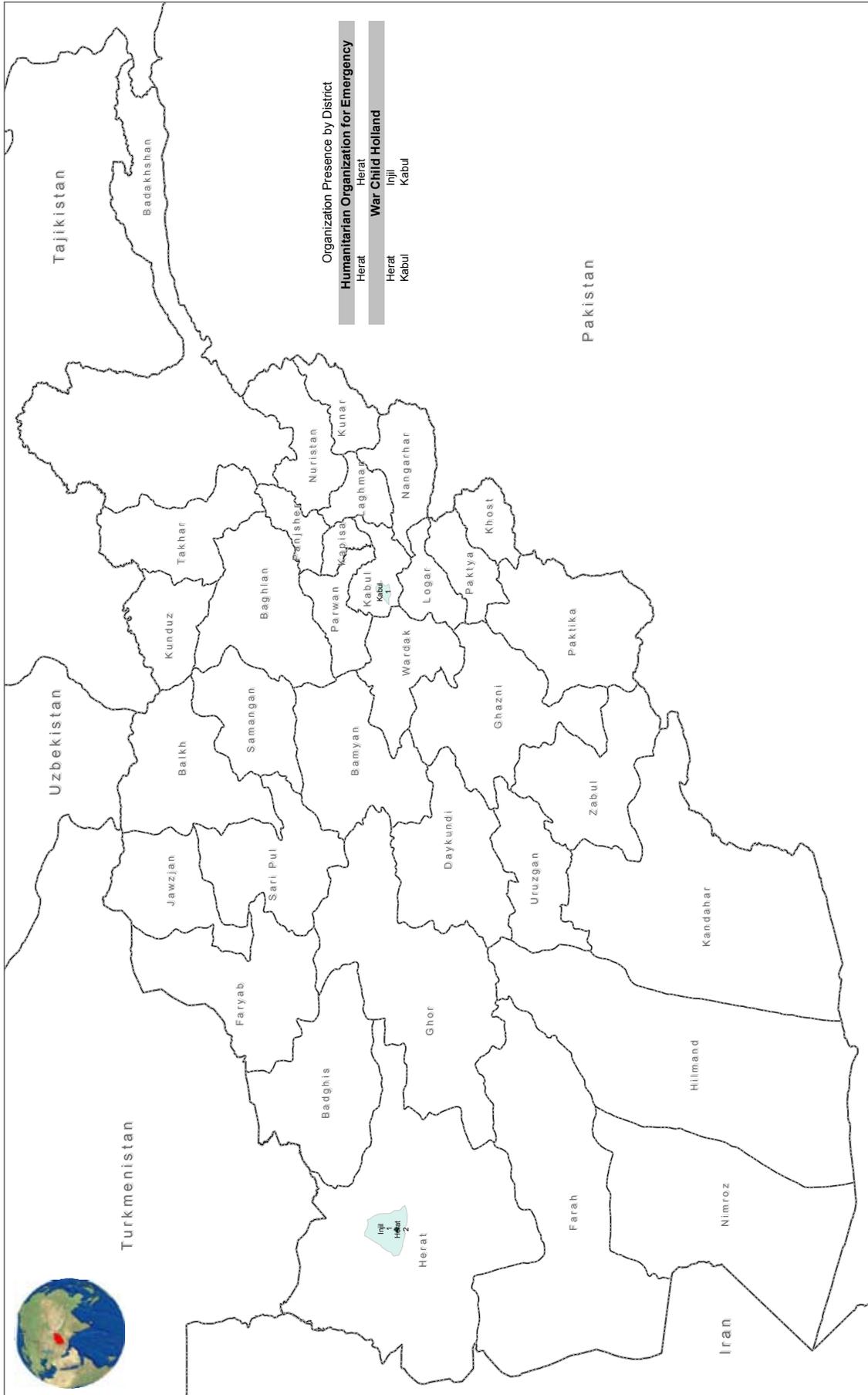


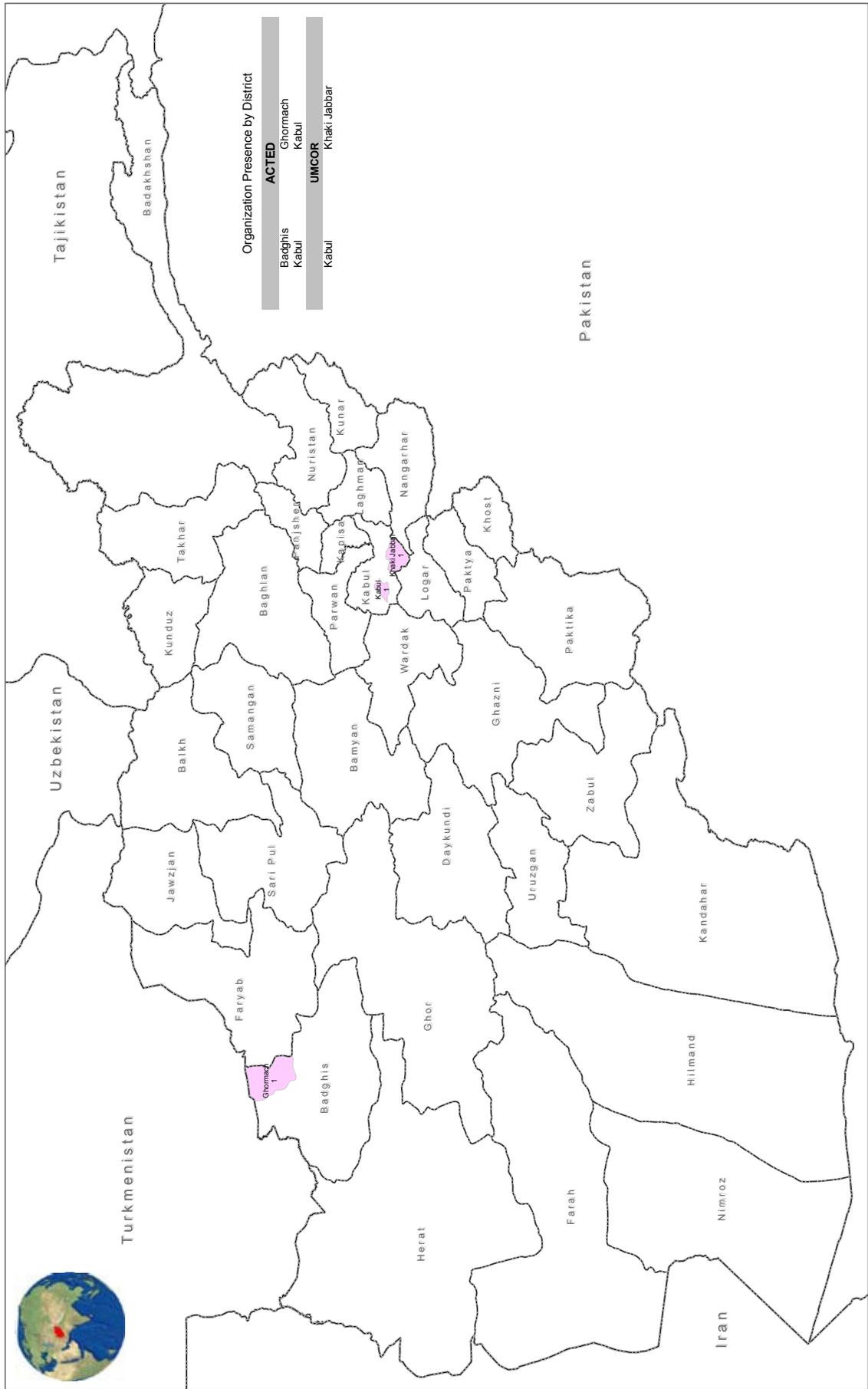
Who-What-Where Afghanistan
Projects in Nutrition
 As of 10th August 2009

Prepared by: OCHA - IMU
 Data Source: Nat & Int NGOs, UN
 Geographic System: WGS84
 Email: ocha-afg@un.org



The boundaries, names and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.





Who-What-Where Afghanistan
Projects in Emergency Shelter
 As of 10th Augusto 2009

Prepared by: OCHA - IMU
 Data Source: Nat & Int NGOs, UN
 Geographic System: WGS84
 Email: ocha-afg@un.org



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**From the pages of *The Middle East Journal's* “Chronology:”
Afghanistan, 1979**

Since it began publication in 1947, each issue of *The Middle East Journal* has contained a section chronologically detailing events of note in the region for the preceding three months. Today, this section is dubbed the “Chronology,” although in the earliest issues of the *Journal*, it was called “Developments of the Quarter.” The Chronology is organized by country and issue, with each section providing a day-by-day account of the relevant events and developments. Mirroring the *Journal*, the Chronology’s coverage of the region spans from North Africa in the west, to formerly Soviet Central Asia, to Pakistan in the east.

Given the longevity of *The Middle East Journal*, the Chronology is an indispensable resource to those interested in the politics and history of the modern Middle East — in the pages of the *Journal*, readers can essentially read a daily accounting of the events in a particular country from 1947 through today. Entries for the Chronology are written as they occur and represent a real-time window not only into the events of the region, but into the overall context of the time and place in which they occurred.

The following pages contain reproductions of the Chronology entries written for Afghanistan during 1979. They provide a unique and detailed look into a series of events that have left an indelible mark upon the region.

- respondents that was to be held by the Mayor of Hebron. [NYT]
- Feb. 2:* Israeli soldiers prevented West Bank mayors from attending a prayer meeting at the Tomb of the Patriarchs near Hebron. [NYT]
- Feb. 3:* Israeli Justice Minister Shmuel Tamir said Israel must not give up Sinai without guarantees of access to its oil. [NYT]
- Feb. 4:* Arab students clashed with Israeli soldiers in Halhul and other West Bank towns. [NYT]
- Feb. 5:* Arab high school students stoned 2 Israeli trucks carrying students in the West Bank. Armed Israelis stormed the high school and detained the principal. [NYT]
- Feb. 7:* *The Washington Post* cited US State Department cables from Jerusalem the previous May as raising the possibility that the use of "brutality" in Israel in the interrogation of Arab political prisoners was "a systematic practice." [WP]
- The New York Times* published excerpts from a State Department report on human rights which said that the "accumulation of reports, some from credible sources, makes it appear that instances of mistreatment have occurred" in the interrogation of Arab security suspects by Israel. [NYT]
- Israel denied that Arab political prisoners were being tortured in Jerusalem or the West Bank. [NYT]
- Feb. 8:* Israeli Justice Minister Tamir said the allegations of systematic torture were "libelous" and an attempt "to smear our country and way of life." [NYT]
- Egypt accepted a US invitation to resume peace negotiations at the ministerial level. [NYT]
- Feb. 11:* Israel accepted the US invitation to resume peace negotiations. [NYT]
- Feb. 13:* Dayan said that while the PLO was not a state, "we cannot deny their position or their value" in the Middle East conflict. [NYT]
- Feb. 14:* US Defense Secretary Harold Brown visited the West Bank to tour Israeli garrisons and border posts. [NYT]
- The UN Human Rights Commission voted to censure Israel for systematic torture of Arab prisoners in the occupied territories. [NYT]

General

1978

- Dec. 5:* A spokesman for the Polisario Front said that Mauritania had broken off peace talks with Polisario on Western Sahara. [JP]

1979

- Jan. 1:* Mauritanian Chief of State Mustafa Ould Mohamed Salek said Mauritania would "take all the necessary measures to definitely get out of the war" in Western Sahara if efforts to reach a general agreement remained "impracticable". [FBIS]

Petroleum Affairs

(See also, Iran, Iraq, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates)

1978

- Dec. 12:* The Ministerial Council of the Organization of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries (OAPEC) met in Abū Dhābī. [FBIS]
- Dec. 14:* Delegates arriving in Abū Dhābī for the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) Ministerial Conference said that OPEC members were in "complete agreement" that a rise in oil prices would be effected at the conference. [NYT]
- Dec. 16:* An OPEC Ministerial Conference opened in Abū Dhābī. [FBIS]
- Dec. 17:* OPEC decided to raise the price of oil by 14.5% in quarterly increments during 1979. An initial 5% would be imposed on the first day of 1979. [NYT]
- US President Jimmy Carter urged that the oil price rise be "reconsidered" before its implementation. [NYT]
- Saudi Arabian Oil Minister Shaykh Aḥmad Zakī Yamānī said that the world could "bet that we will have a freeze for the price of oil in December next year." [NYT]

1979

- Jan. 29:* *Middle East Economic Survey* reported that Saudi Arabia had decided to raise its ceiling on crude oil production by 1m barrels per day in the first quarter of 1979 in order to help alleviate the crude oil shortage resulting from the Iranian crisis. [MEES]
- Feb. 15:* The UAA raised the price of its light crude oils by up to 7%. [JP]

Afghanistan

(See also, Pakistan)

1978

- Nov. 22:* Cuban Foreign Minister Isidoro Malmierca Peoli met with Deputy Premier Hafizollah Amin in Kabul. [FBIS]
- Dec. 3:* President Nur Mohammad Taraki arrived in Moscow for talks with Soviet leaders. [NYT]
- Dec. 5:* Afghanistan and the Soviet Union signed a 20 year treaty of friendship and coöperation in Moscow. [NYT]

1979

- Jan. 14:* An energy and agricultural agreement with Yugoslavia was signed in Belgrade. [MEED]

Jan. 28: *The New York Times* reported that mountain tribesmen and guerrillas were fighting government troops in the eastern provinces bordering Pakistan. [NYT]

Feb. 14: US Ambassador to Afghanistan Adolph Dubs was taken hostage by terrorists in Kabul. Afghan forces rushed the building in which he was being held and he was slain. [NYT]

The US protested against the use of force by the Afghan government to free the US Ambassador. [NYT]

The US expressed its "shock" over the rôle played by Soviet advisers in the events which led to the assassination. [NYT]

Iraqi Foreign Minister Sa'dūn Ḥammādī met with President Taraki during a visit to Kabul. [FBIS]

Algeria

(See also, Morocco)

1978

Nov. 18: National television reported to the nation that President Houari Boumedienne was ill and under medical care. [NYT]

Nov. 25: A Swedish medical specialist arrived in Algiers to treat President Boumedienne for a rare blood disease. [NYT]

Dec. 3: In a statement to the nation, the 8 man Council of the Revolution called itself "a guarantor" of revolutionary continuity and stability. [NYT]

Dec. 18: The US Department of Energy said it had rejected a contract for importing Algerian natural gas by the US firm Tenneco. [NYT]

Dec. 21: The US Department of Energy rejected a proposal by El Paso Eastern Company to import natural gas from Algeria. [NYT]

Dec. 27: Boumedienne died in Algiers. [NYT]

The National Popular Assembly met in special session and named its Speaker, Rabah Bitar, interim President. [NYT]

Dec. 29: *The Jerusalem Post* reported that Morocco had sent an official letter of condolence to Algeria for the death of Boumedienne. [JP]

1979

Jan. 27: The congress of the National Liberation Front (NLF) announced that the Council of the Revolution had been disbanded. [AN]

Jan. 31: The NLF nominated Benjedid Chadli to the Presidency. [NYT]

The following were appointed to the Politbureau of the NLF:

Benjedid Chadli: *Secretary General*

Mohammad Salah Yahiaoui: *Executive Secretary*

Ahmad Draia: *Transport*

Mohammad Ben Ahmad Abdel-Ghani: *Interior*

Ahmad Ben Cherif: *Environment, Soil Improvement & Hydraulics*

Mohammad al-Taybi al-Arbi: *Agriculture & Agrarian Reform*

Abdallah Belhouchet: *Commander of First Military Region*

Abdel-Aziz Bouteflika: *Foreign Affairs*

Mohammad Amir: *Labor & Vocational Training*

Mohammad Ben Yahya: *Finance*

Dakhman Affane: *Party National Commissar in Tlemcen*

Mohammad Said Mazouzi: *War Veterans*

Ahmad Talib al-Ibrahimi: *Presidency Advisor*

Rabah Bitar: *National Popular Assembly Chairman*

Belaïd Abdel-Salam: *Light Industry*

Boualem Ben Hamouda: *Public Works*

Kasdi Merbah: *Head of Military Security* [MEED]

Feb. 7: Voters went to the polls to elect a new President. [NYT]

Feb. 8: It was announced that Chadli had been elected President in a turnout of 94.23%. [NYT]

Feb. 9: Chadli was sworn in as President. [FBIS]

Bahrain

1978

Dec. 8: Kuwaiti Crown Prince Shaykh Sa'd al-'Abdallāh Āl Ṣabāh met with Amir Shaykh 'Īsā bin Salmān Āl Khalīfah in Manama. [FBIS]

1979

Feb. 9: Omani Information Minister Fahd bin Maḥmūd Āl Bū Sa'īd met with Amir Shaykh 'Īsā in Bahrain. [FBIS]

Saudi Arabian Industry Minister Ghāzī al-Qusaybī met with Amir Shaykh 'Īsā. The bridge project to link Bahrain and Saudi Arabia was discussed. [FBIS]

Feb. 15: British Queen Elizabeth II arrived in Manama on a 3 day official visit to Bahrain. [FBIS]

Cyprus

1978

Nov. 25: Public Works Minister of the "self proclaimed" "Turkish Federated State of Cyprus" Erol Kâzım Andaç and Defense Minister Orhan Zihni Bilgehan resigned their posts. [MEED]

Nov. 27: The UN Security Council passed a resolution calling for the resumption of negotiations between the Greek and Turkish Cypriot communities. [AN]

Nov. 28: Premier of the "Turkish Federated State of Cyprus" Osman Örek confirmed that 7 Cabinet ministers had resigned. [TDN]

Afghanistan

1979

Feb. 17: The Soviet Union, responding to a US protest about a Soviet role in the assassination of the US Ambassador to Afghanistan on February 14, said they had "nothing to do with the decision of the Afghan authorities" in the incident. [NYT]

Feb. 19: Foreign Minister Hafizollah Amin rejected a US protest over the incident leading to the slaying of the US Ambassador as "completely baseless." [NYT]

Feb. 22: *The New York Times* reported that US President Jimmy Carter had ordered US aid to Afghanistan to be reduced. [NYT]

March 18: Afghanistan accused Iran of sending 7,000 troops to Afghanistan disguised as returning refugees to create trouble for the government in Kabul. [NYT]

March 21: *The New York Times* reported that the government had advised Embassies that communications had been cut with the city of Herat, where government troops had been fighting anti-government forces. [NYT]

March 23: A US spokesman said the US expected that the "principle of noninterference" in Afghanistan would be respected by all parties in the area "including the Soviet Union." [NYT]

March 27: Foreign Minister Amin was named Premier. [NYT]

April 1: The new government was announced:

Hafizollah Amin: *Premier and Foreign Affairs*

Shah Wali: *Deputy Premier and Health*

Saleh Mohammad Ziray: *Agriculture*

Dastagir Panjshiri: *Public Works*

Abdolkarim Misaq: *Finance*

Mahmud Suma: *Higher Education*

Aslam Watanjar: *Defense*

Abdourashid Jalili: *Education*

Abdolkhakim Sharai: *Justice and Attorney General*

Mahmud Hashemi: *Water & Power*

Maleq Katawazi: *Information & Culture*

Mohammad Esmail Danesh: *Mines & Industries*

Abdolqaddus Ghorbandi: *Commerce*

Hasan Bareq Shafii: *Transport*

Saheb Jan Sahrai: *Frontier Affairs* [FBIS]

April 8: Soviet Vice Minister of Defense Aleksey Yepishev met with President Nur Mohammad Taraki in Kabul. [FBIS]

The government accused Pakistani troops of attacking 4 Afghan police posts 2 days earlier. [NYT]

April 9: Pakistan called the Afghan accusations "preposterous". [NYT]

April 27: President Taraki charged that 2,700 Afghan nationals had been killed in Iran. [NYT]

April 30: Taraki said Pakistani President Muhammad Zia-ul-Haq was "involved" with attacks on border positions in eastern Afghanistan. [AN]

Algeria

(See also, Petroleum Affairs)

1979

March 8: A new Cabinet was announced:

Mohamed Ben Ahmed Abdelghani: *Premier and Interior*

Abdelaziz Bouteflika: *Minister Counsellor*

Ahmed Taleb Ibrahim: *Minister Counsellor*

Abdelmalek Benhabiles: *Secretary General to the Presidency*

Mohamed Seddik Benyahia: *Foreign Affairs*

Selim Saadi: *Agriculture*

Ahmed Ghozali: *Irrigation*

Ahmed Ali Ghozali: *Public Works*

Belkacem Nabi: *Energy & Petrochemicals*

Said Ait Messaoudene: *Light Industry*

Mohamed Liassine: *Heavy Industry*

Mohamed Hadj Yala: *Finance*

Abdelhamid Brahimi: *Planning*

Abderrazak Bouhara: *Health*

Abdelhaq Brehri: *Higher Education & Scientific Research*

Mohamed Kharroubi: *Primary & Secondary Education*

Mouloud Oumeziane: *Labor*

Abdelhani Arbi: *Commerce*

Mohamed Zerguini: *Posts & Telecommunications*

Abdelmagid Aouchiche: *Construction & Housing*

Cherif Messadia: *Former Combatants*

Baki Boualem: *Religious Affairs*

Djamal Houhou: *Sports*

Abdelmajid Allaoum: *Tourism*

Salah Goudzil: *Transport*

Lahcene Soufi: *Justice*

Abdelhamid Mehri: *Information & Culture*

Ahmed Houhab: *State for Fisheries*

Brahim Brahmia: *State for Afforestation*

Smail Hamdani: *Secretary General* [MEES]

March 26: Tunisian Premier Hedi Nouira met with President Chadli Benjedid in Algeria. [FBIS]

April 17: *Arab News* cited "official sources" as saying President Benjedid had pardoned 11 political dissidents who had tried to assassinate the late President Houari Boumedienne in the 1960's. [AN]

April 30: Spanish Premier Adolfo Suarez arrived in Algiers on a visit. [EN]

May 3: Nigerian Head of State Olusegun Obasanjo and Malian Head of State Moussa Traore arrived in Algiers to discuss the Sahara issue. [FBIS]

Aug. 5: Kuwaiti Oil Minister Shaykh 'Alī Khalīfah Al Šabāh said that Kuwait was considering a cut-back in oil production by 25%. [NYT]

Afghanistan

(See also, Pakistan)

1979

- June 12: Iranian Āyat Allāh Rūh Allāh Khumaynī told the Soviet Ambassador that Iran wanted the Soviet Union "to stop interfering in Afghanistan's affairs." [NYT]
- June 13: Afghanistan accused Pakistan of involvement in a rebellion against the Afghan government. [NYT]
- June 23: Kabul Radio reported that anti-government demonstrators in Kabul had been "annihilated and arrested" during the day. [FBIS]
- July 28: The Cabinet was reshuffled:
 Hafizullah Amin: *Premier and Vice President of the Revolutionary Council*
 Shah Wali: *Deputy Premier and Foreign Affairs*
 Mohammad Gulabzoi: *Posts & Telecommunications*
 Mohammad Aslam Watanjar: *Interior*
 Abdel Rashid Jalili: *Agriculture*
 Muhammad Sediq Alemyar: *Planning*
 Saleh Mohammad Zeiri: *Public Health*
 Mohammad Salem Massoudi: *Education*
 Kodouss Ghorbandi: *Trade*
 Mohammad Hasan Bareq Shafiee: *Transport*
 Dastagir Panjcheri: *Public Works*
 Abdel Hakim Sharai Janzjani: *Justice*
 Khayal Mohammad Katawazi: *Information & Culture*
 Sherjan Mazdooriyar: *Border Affairs*
 Mahmoud Souma: *Higher Education*
 Mohammad Ismail Danish: *Industry & Mines*
 Abdel Karim Messaq: *Finance*
 Mansour Hachemi: *Water & Electricity* [MEED]
- Aug. 5: Heavy fighting broke out in Kabul between loyal troops and a rebellious army unit at the Bala Hissar fort. The rebellion was crushed and a curfew was imposed on the city. [NYT]

Algeria

(See also, Petroleum Affairs, Jordan, Morocco, Syria)

1979

- May 20: South Yemeni Chairman of the Presidium 'Abd al-Fattāh Ismā'il arrived in Algiers on a 6 day visit. [FBIS]
- May 24: Libyan Head of State Mu'ammar al-Qadhdfāfi arrived in Algiers and met with President Chadli Benjedid. [FBIS]

- May 30: Yugoslav President Josip Broz Tito met with President Benjedid in Algiers. [FBIS]
- June 4: Jordanian King Ḥusayn arrived in Algeria and was welcomed by Benjedid. [FBIS]
- June 11: Yemeni Premier 'Abd al-'Azīz 'Abd al-Ghanī arrived in Algiers for talks with Algerian leaders. [FBIS]
- June 23: French Foreign Affairs Minister Jean François-Poncet began a 2 day visit to Algeria. [FBIS]
- July 1: The National Popular Assembly approved a constitutional amendment concerning the presidency. [FBIS]
- July 3: Syrian President Ḥāfiẓ al-Asad arrived in Algiers for talks with Algerian leaders. [FBIS]
- July 4: The government said that "measures concerning" former President Ahmed Ben Bella had been lifted. He had been under house arrest for 14 years. [NYT]
- July 14: Tanzanian President Julius Nyerere met with Benjedid in Algiers. [FBIS]
- July 22: Somali President Mohamed Siad Barre arrived in Algiers for talks with Algerian leaders. [FBIS]
- July 25: Cuban Vice President of the Councils of State and Ministers Carlos Rafael Rodriguez left Algiers at the end of a 2 day visit. [FBIS]
- Aug. 14: It was announced that Algeria and Mauritania had decided to resume diplomatic relations. [NYT]

Bahrain

1979

- June 1: Premier Shaykh Khalīfah bin Salmān Āl Khalīfah returned to Manama at the end of a 1 month visit to Europe. [FBIS]
- June 28: Deputy Amir Shaykh Ḥamad bin 'Īsā Āl Khalīfah returned to Manama from a 3 day visit to Saudi Arabia. [FBIS]
- July 1: Libyan Head of State Mu'ammar al-Qadhdfāfi arrived in Manama for talks with Bahraini leaders. [FBIS]
- July 2: British Premier Margaret Thatcher arrived in Manama and met with Premier Shaykh Khalīfah. [FBIS]
- July 4: Somali President Mohamed Siad Barre arrived in Manama for talks with Bahraini leaders. [FBIS]
- July 8: Bahrain announced a moratorium on the opening of new banks. [NYT]

Cyprus

1979

- May 17: UN Secretary General Kurt Waldheim arrived in Nicosia for discussions on the resumption of inter-communal talks. [NYT]

- of increased oil output with inflation in industrial countries and instabilities in exchange markets. [NYT]
- Oct. 9: *Algerie Presse Service* reported that Algeria would increase sales of refined petroleum products in 1980 to compensate for a cutback in exports of crude oil. [NYT]
- The New York Times* reported that Kuwait had raised the price of its oil by 10% to \$21.43 per barrel, retroactive to Oct. 1. [NYT]
- Oct. 16: *The New York Times* reported that Iran and Libya had increased the price of their oil by more than 10% the day before, breaching the price ceiling set by the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries. [NYT]
- Oct. 18: Iraq raised its oil prices by about 10%. [NYT]
- Oct. 25: Algeria announced a rise in its oil prices to \$26.27 per barrel, effective immediately. [NYT]
- Nov. 7: Oil industry sources reported that Iran stopped tanker loading at its major oil port, Kharg Island. Oil prices soared in the spot market. [NYT]
- Nov. 8: Libya announced that it would not replace US oil losses caused by Iran's halt in sales, nor would Libya halt its own sales to the US. [NYT]
- The New York Times* reported the following Cabinet appointments:
 Faqir Faqir: *Interior*
 Sahibjan Sahrayee: *Frontier Affairs* [NYT]
- Sept. 23: Amin said that former President Taraki was "alive but definitely sick." [NYT]
- Oct. 8: *The New York Times* reported that Amin had commuted death sentences on former Defense Minister Abdul Khadir and former Planning Minister Soltan Ali Keshtmand to 15 years imprisonment. [NYT]
- Rebel tribesmen said they had cut the road leading from Kabul to Gardez during fighting with government troops. [NYT]
- Oct. 9: Pakistan radio cited a broadcast from Kabul confirming that Taraki had died. [NYT]
- Oct. 14: Heavy fighting took place at Rishkour barracks southwest of Kabul. [MEED]
- Oct. 16: It was reported that the government had crushed an army mutiny near Kabul. [NYT]
- Oct. 21: Two British journalists were arrested by Afghan police. [NYT]
- Oct. 24: Radio Kabul announced that an 80 member Politburo had been installed the day before by Amin. [FBIS]
- Oct. 30: *The New York Times* cited a "rebel spokesman" as saying insurgents in Afghanistan had taken "three strategic districts" northeast of Kabul. [NYT]
- Nov. 9: It was reported that several ambush attacks had been launched on government troops near Kabul, killing 200 persons. [FBIS]

Afghanistan

1979

- Aug. 19: Premier Hafizullah Amin said there were "no more than 1,600 Soviet advisers" in Afghanistan. [NYT]
- Sept. 6: A spokesman for tribal insurgents said they had laid siege to the garrison town of Mukur, south of Kabul. [NYT]
- Sept. 7: Gunmen murdered 6 West Germans, including 2 children, east of Kabul. [NYT]
- Sept. 8: Afghan soldiers in Kabul detained a US diplomat and beat him. [NYT]
- Sept. 9: President Nur Mohammed Taraki arrived in Moscow on a visit. [FBIS]
- Gunmen opened fire on a tourist bus, killing a Canadian citizen. [NYT]
- Sept. 12: "Western diplomats" said that a Swiss tourist had been killed and an Australian wounded in the attack on the tourist bus 3 days earlier. [NYT]
- Sept. 15: Kabul radio reported that Interior Minister Aslam Watanjar and Frontier Affairs Minister Sherjan Mazdooriyar had been removed from their posts. [NYT]
- It was reported that gunfire and explosions had occurred in Kabul following the announcement of the Cabinet dismissals. [NYT]
- Sept. 16: The state radio reported that President Taraki had asked to be relieved of his government positions because of "bad health and nervous weakness." [NYT]
- Premier Amin assumed the additional post of President. [MEED]

Algeria

(See also, Arab Israeli Conflict, Petroleum Affairs, Libya)

1979

- Aug. 22: Politbureau Member Mohamed Saleh Yahiaoui returned to Algiers from Tripoli at the end of a tour of Iraq, Syria, South Yemen and Libya. [FBIS]
- Aug. 30: President Chadli Benjedid left Algiers for Libya to attend the anniversary of the First of September Revolution. [FBIS]
- Sept. 2: President Benjedid left Algiers for Havana to attend the Nonaligned Summit Conference. [FBIS]
- Sept. 15: Palestine Liberation Organization leader Yāsir 'Arafāt arrived in Algiers and met with Benjedid. [FBIS]
- Oct. 14: Hydraulics Minister Sid Ahmed Ghozali was dismissed from his post. [MEED]
- Oct. 29: A medium term loan agreement for \$20 million was signed with Spanish banks. [MEED]
- Oct. 31: US National Security Adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski arrived in Algiers on a visit. [NYT]
- Nov. 1: A military parade took place in Algiers to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the start of the Algerian revolution. [NYT]

Petroleum Affairs

(See also, Iran)

1979

- Nov. 26:* UAA Oil Minister Māni' Sa'id al-'Utaybah said that the UAA would reduce oil production by 5% at the beginning of 1980. [NYT]
- Dec. 4:* Oil Ministers from the Organization of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries met in Kuwait on technical cooperation in oil matters. [NYT]
- Dec. 13:* Saudi Arabia, the UAA, Qatar and Venezuela announced oil price increases. [NYT]
An explosion touched off a fire on an empty super-tanker off the coast of Oman. [NYT]
- Dec. 14:* Saudi Arabia announced that it would maintain oil production at 9.5m barrels a day through the following April at least. [NYT]
- Dec. 16:* Libyan Oil Minister 'Izz al-Dīn Mabruk said Libya had raised the price of its light crude oil by \$4 a barrel to \$30, retroactive to November 1. [NYT]
- Dec. 17:* A ministerial conference of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) opened in Caracas, Venezuela. [NYT]
Iranian Oil Minister 'Alī Akbar Mu'infar confirmed reports that Iran had raised its crude oil prices to \$28.50 a barrel. [NYT]
- Dec. 18:* OPEC Oil Ministers continued meetings in Caracas but were unable to reach a consensus on prices. [NYT]
- Dec. 20:* The OPEC ministerial conference ended without agreement on a uniform pricing structure. Venezuelan Energy Minister Humberto Calderón Berti said that each nation would be "free to set its own price." [NYT]
- Dec. 30:* Kuwait announced it was raising its crude oil prices by 19% to \$25.50 per barrel. [NYT]

1980

- Jan. 28:* Saudi Arabia notified the members of the Arabian American Oil Company that it had raised the price of Arabian light crude oil to \$26. [NYT]
- Jan. 29:* Iraq, Kuwait and the UAA raised oil prices by \$2 per barrel. [NYT]
- Feb. 3:* Algeria raised the price of its oil to \$34 per barrel. [NYT]

Afghanistan

(See also, General, Pakistan, Turkey)

1979

- Dec. 21:* US officials said that the Soviet Union had moved 3 army divisions to the border with Afghani-

stan and had sent about 1,500 combat soldiers to an air base near Kabul. [NYT]

Dec. 26: A US government spokesman said that in the past 24 hours there has been "a large-scale Soviet airlift" to Kabul, raising Soviet military involvement in Afghanistan to "a new threshold." [NYT]

Dec. 27: Fighting broke out in Kabul and President Hafizullah Amin was overthrown and executed. Former Deputy Premier Babrak Karmal assumed the post of President. [NYT]

It was reported that Soviet troops had taken part in the fighting in Kabul. [NYT]

Dec. 28: President Karmal said the Soviet Union had agreed to supply Afghanistan "urgent political, moral and economic aid, including military aid." [NYT]

US President Jimmy Carter called the Soviet military intervention "a grave threat to the peace" and a "blatant violation of accepted rules of international behavior." [NYT]

A Cabinet was formed as follows:

Babrak Karmal: *Premier, Chairman of the Revolutionary Council and Secretary General of the Central Committee*

Asadollah Sarwari: *Deputy Premier*

Soltan Ali Keshtmand: *Deputy Premier and Planning*

Mohammad Raḥa: *National Defense*

Said Mohammad Gulabzoi: *Interior*

Shah Mohammad Dost: *Foreign*

Dr. Anahita: *Education*

Abdol Wakil: *Finance*

Sherjan Mazdur Yar: *Transport*

Faiz Mohammad: *Borders & Tribes*

Mohammad Khan Jalala: *Trade* [FBIS]

Dec. 29: The US said that the number of Soviet combat troops in Afghanistan had reached "roughly 25,000 to 30,000." [NYT]

Dec. 30: Qatar and the UAA issued statements condemning "Soviet military intervention" in Afghanistan. [NYT]

Dec. 31: Heavy fighting broke out in Kabul during the night but ended by morning. [NYT]

Egypt condemned "the Soviet attempt to impose a Marxist regime" on Afghanistan. [NYT]

1980

Jan. 1: Afghanistan said it had invited Soviet troops into the country "in view of the present aggressive actions of the enemies of Afghanistan." [NYT]

Jan. 2: Karmal addressed government leaders near Kabul and called on the Afghan people to "come together and support our glorious revolution." [NYT]

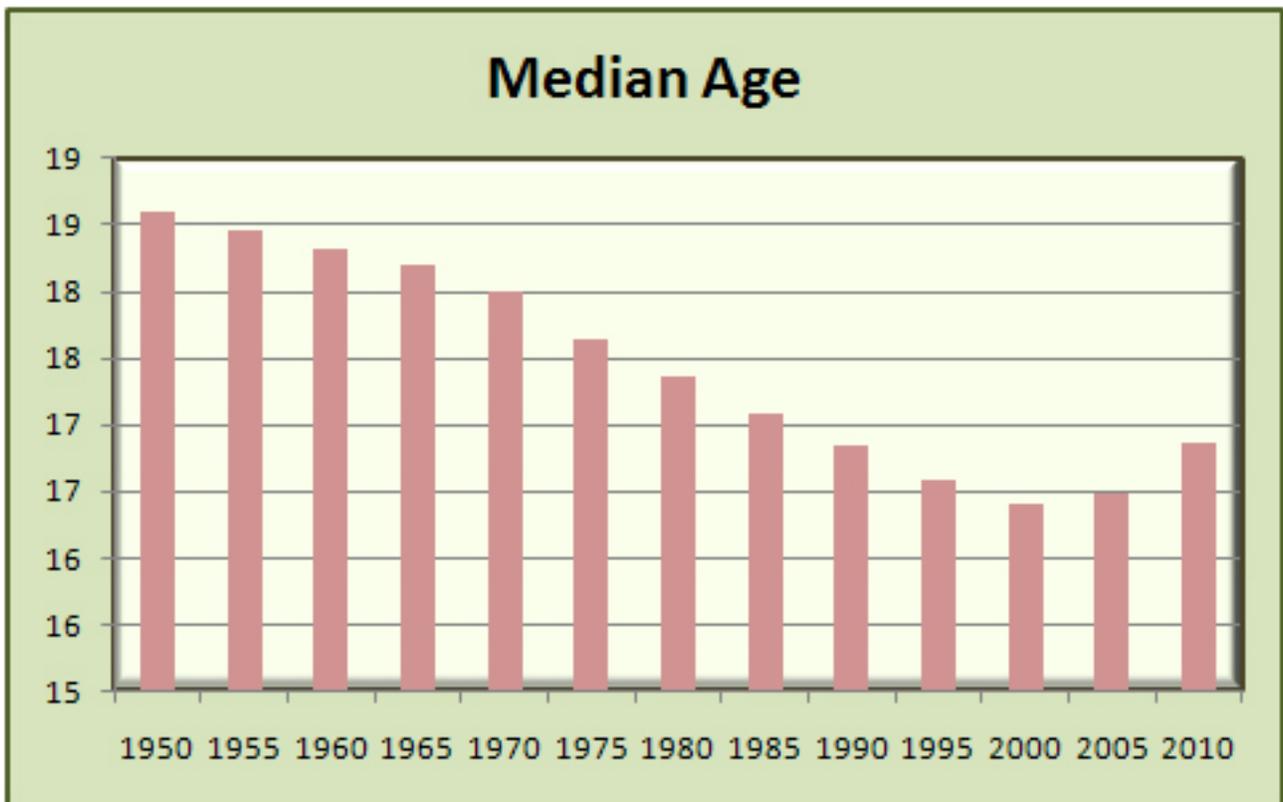
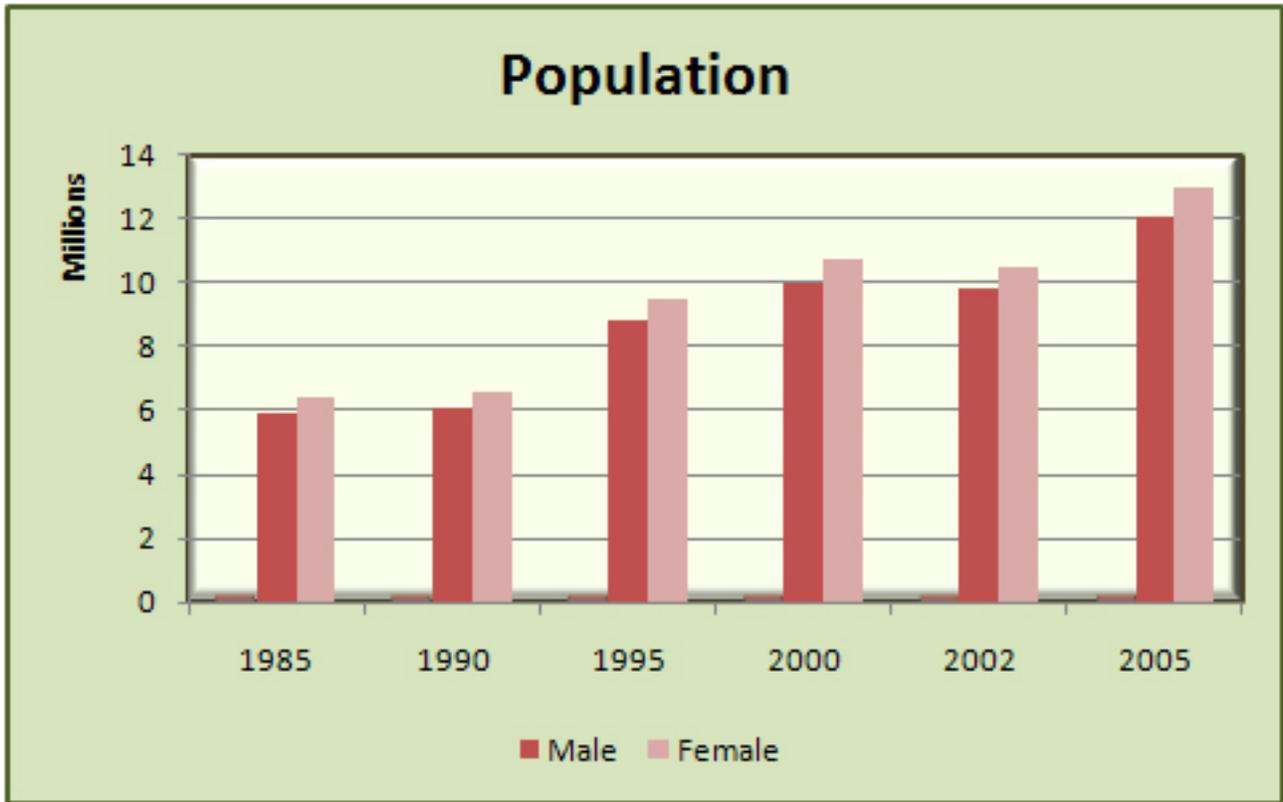
The New York Times cited "West European diplomatic sources" as saying that Soviet troops were encountering sharp resistance from Afghan insurgents in Bamian Province. [NYT]

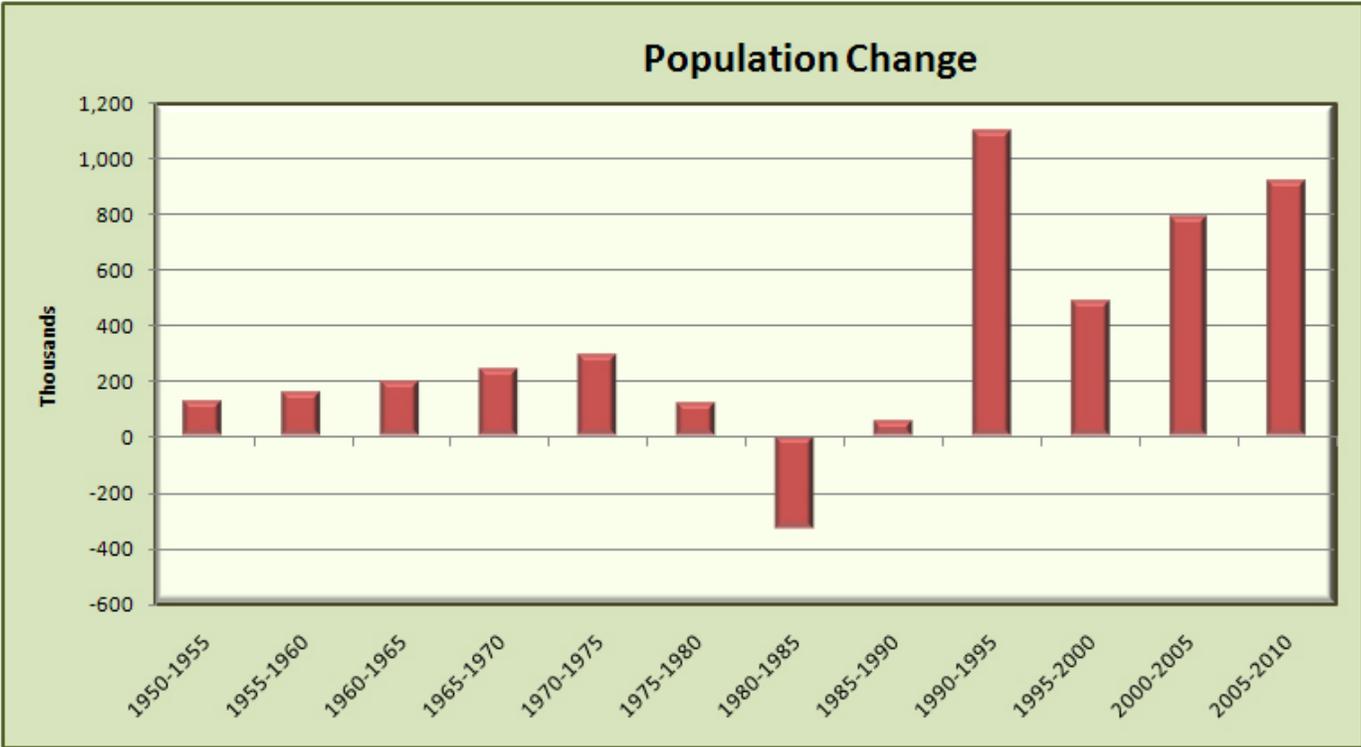
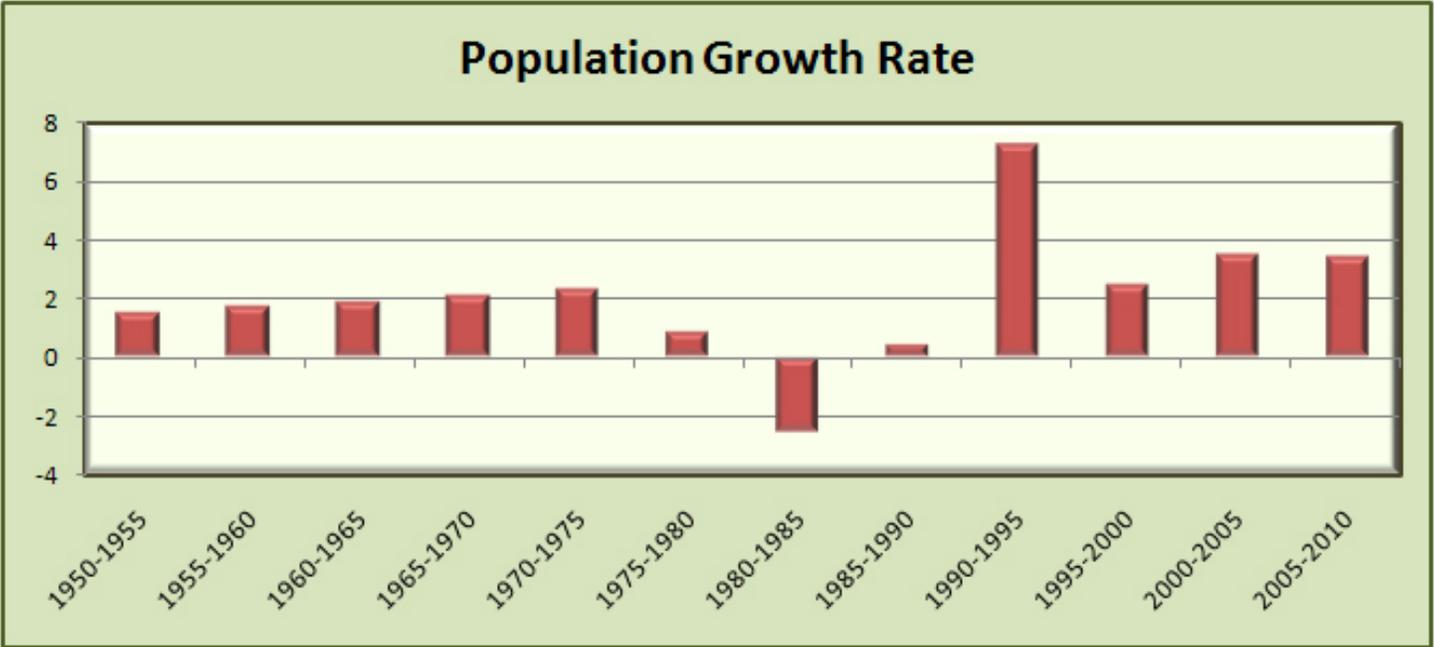
Afghan students occupied the Afghan Embassy in

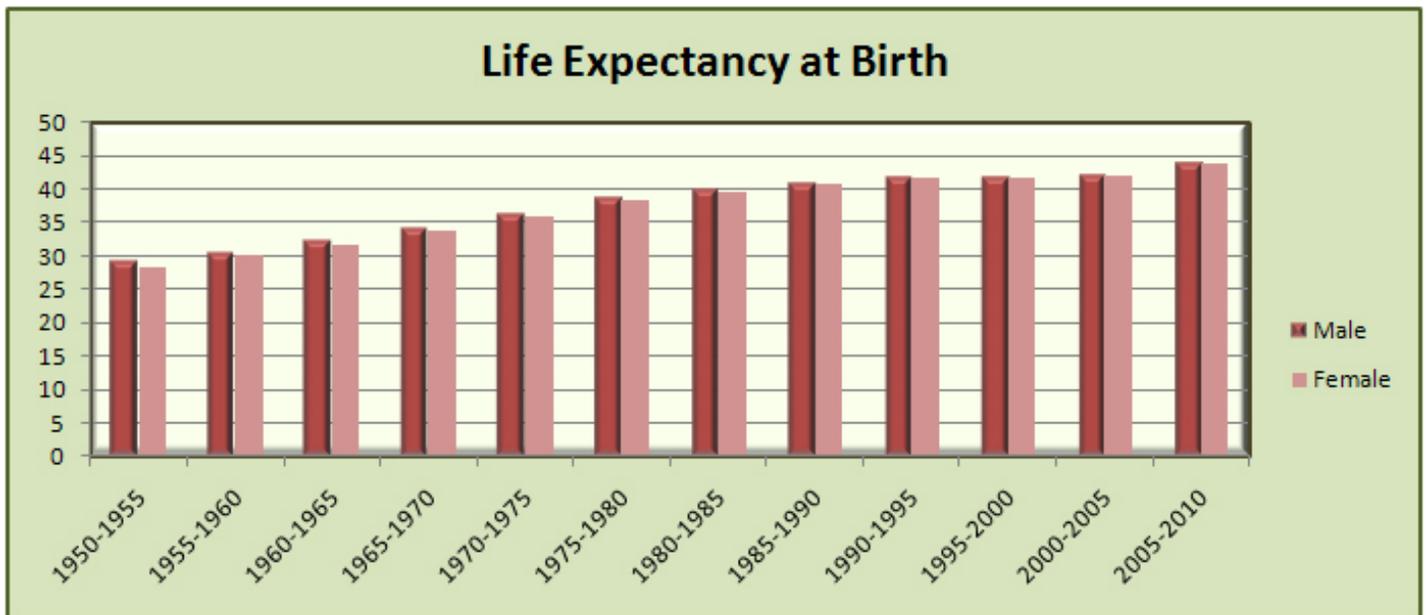
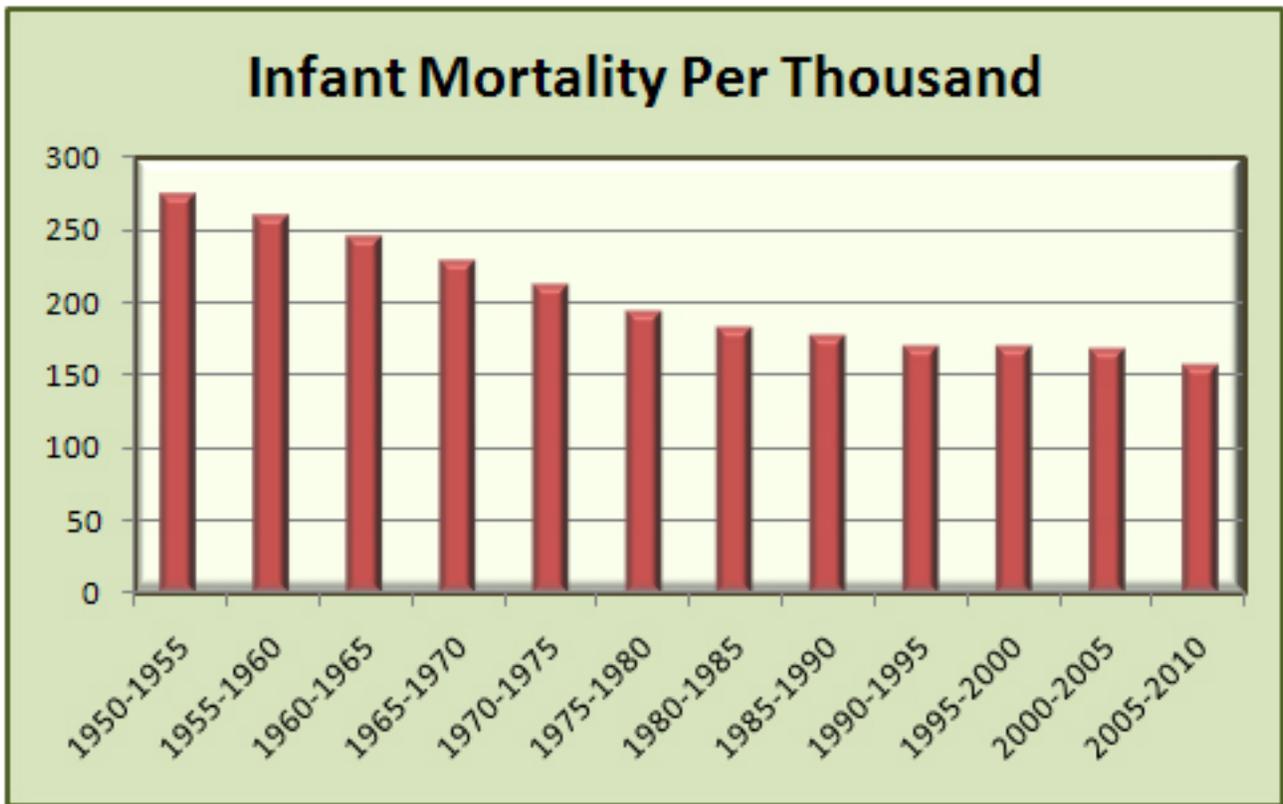
- New Delhi for 4 hours in "a symbolic protest" and then withdrew. [NYT]
- Jan. 3:* A UN Security Council meeting on Afghanistan was called for by 43 nations. [NYT]
The Soviet press agency *Tass* accused Carter of having been "wicked and malicious" when he referred to the Soviet military intervention of Afghanistan as an "invasion". [NYT]
- Jan. 5:* The Security Council opened debate on Afghanistan. Pakistan and Egypt condemned the Soviet intervention there. [NYT]
- Jan. 6:* About 65 Afghan residents in Tehran took over the Afghan Embassy for 5 hours to protest the presence of the "bloody Russian army" in Afghanistan. [NYT]
A UN spokesman said that an average of 1,000 refugees per day had fled from Afghanistan to Pakistan in the last 2 weeks of December. [NYT]
Iraqi President Ṣaddām Ḥusayn said the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan was "an erroneous and unjustified act." [NYT]
- Jan. 7:* The Soviet Union vetoed a UN resolution that called for the immediate withdrawal of "all foreign troops in Afghanistan." The vote was 13 to 2 in favor of the resolution. [NYT]
The US said the Soviet Union had raised its troop strength in Afghanistan to as many as 85,000 in "contemptuous rejection" of the demands of world leaders. [NYT]
The Soviet Communist Party newspaper *Pravda* said Pakistan was not acting in its own interest in allowing Afghan insurgents to use its territory as a "base for the preparation of imperialist aggression" against Afghanistan. [NYT]
- Jan. 9:* The Security Council voted by 12 to 2 with 1 abstention for a resolution to move the issue of Afghanistan to the General Assembly. [NYT]
- Jan. 10:* The Cabinet was expanded:
Mohammad Aslam Watanjar: *Communications*
Abdol Majid: *Information & Culture*
Abdorrashid Arian: *Justice*
Mohammad Esmail Danesh: *Mines & Industries*
Raz Mohammad Paktin: *Water & Power*
Gol Dad: *Higher Education*
Nazer Mohammad: *Public Works*
Mohammad Ebrahim Azim: *Public Health*
Fazl Rahim Mohamand: *Agriculture & Land Reform*
[FBIS]
- Jan. 11:* Karmal said at a news conference in Kabul that the estimates of the Soviet presence in Afghanistan were exaggerated by the US "propagandistic liar machinery." [NYT]
The Soviet Union said it had acted in Afghanistan to repel "armed intervention from outside." [NYT]
More than 800 Afghans awaiting release of prisoners stormed a jail and allowed some prisoners to escape. One Afghan soldier and 1 civilian were killed in the riot. [NYT]
The British Foreign Office said that the British Ambassador to Afghanistan had been recalled "for consultation." [NYT]
- Jan. 14:* The General Assembly voted by 104 to 18 with 18 abstentions for a resolution which "strongly deplored" the "recent armed intervention" in Afghanistan and called for the "total withdrawal of foreign troops" from the country. [NYT]
Spanish Premier Adolfo Suárez met with Carter in Washington. Later a US statement said the 2 leaders had agreed that the Soviet action in Afghanistan was "a most serious threat to international peace." [NYT]
- Jan. 15:* *Tass* said that the General Assembly resolution constituted "clear intervention" in Afghanistan's affairs. [NYT]
- Jan. 16:* British Foreign Secretary Lord Carrington met with Indian Premier Indira Gandhi in India on the situation in Afghanistan. Later Gandhi said that she did not think that "any country" was "justified in entering another country." [NYT]
Tass quoted a high Afghan official as saying that evidence of former President Amin's recruitment by the CIA "mounts from day to day." [NYT]
- Jan. 17:* The government ordered all American news correspondents to leave the country, accusing them of biased reporting and "interference in the country's internal affairs." [NYT]
- Jan. 19:* Journalists with US passports were expelled from the country. They had been under house arrest for 2 days. [NYT]
- Jan. 27:* A conference of Islamic Foreign Ministers opened in Islamabad to consider the situation in Afghanistan. [NYT]
- Jan. 29:* The conference in Islamabad adopted a resolution which: condemned "the Soviet military aggression against the Afghan people"; demanded the "unconditional withdrawal of all Soviet troops"; suspended the membership of Afghanistan in the Organization of the Islamic Conference, urged support for the Afghan people and called upon members to "envisage" the nonparticipation in the Olympic Games. [NYT]
- Feb. 4:* *The New York Times* reported that Soviet tanks had reinforced Afghan army units around Spinbaldak, near the Pakistani border. [NYT]
Iranian Āyat Allāh Rūh Allāh Khumaynī condemned the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan and pledged "unconditional support" for Muslim insurgents in Afghanistan. [NYT]
The New York Times reported that the Soviet Union had announced the start of operations at a new natural gas field at Jarquduq, in northern Afghanistan. [NYT]
- Feb. 13:* Egyptian Defense Minister Kamāl Ḥasan 'Alī said that Egypt was providing assistance to Afghan rebels and was "training some of them." [NYT]
- Feb. 14:* The UN Human Rights Commission voted by 27 to 8 with 6 abstentions to condemn the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan as "an aggression against human rights." [NYT]
- Feb. 15:* *The New York Times* cited "White House officials" as saying the US had begun an operation to supply light infantry weapons to Afghan insurgent groups. [NYT]

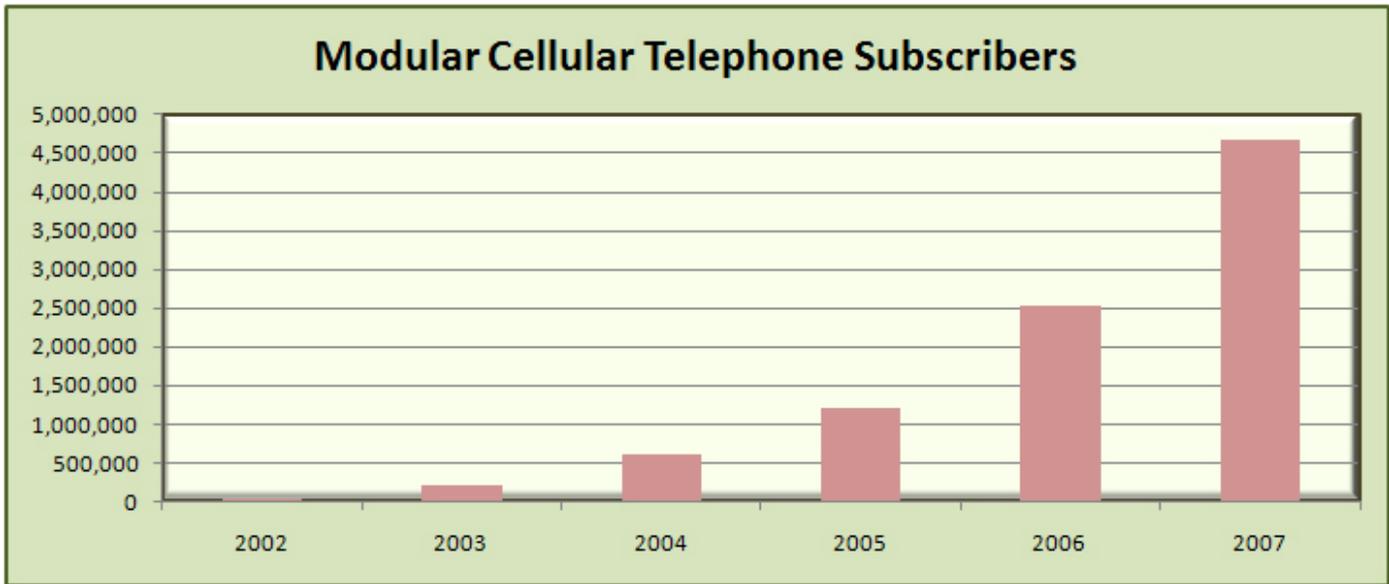
Statistics

Demographics

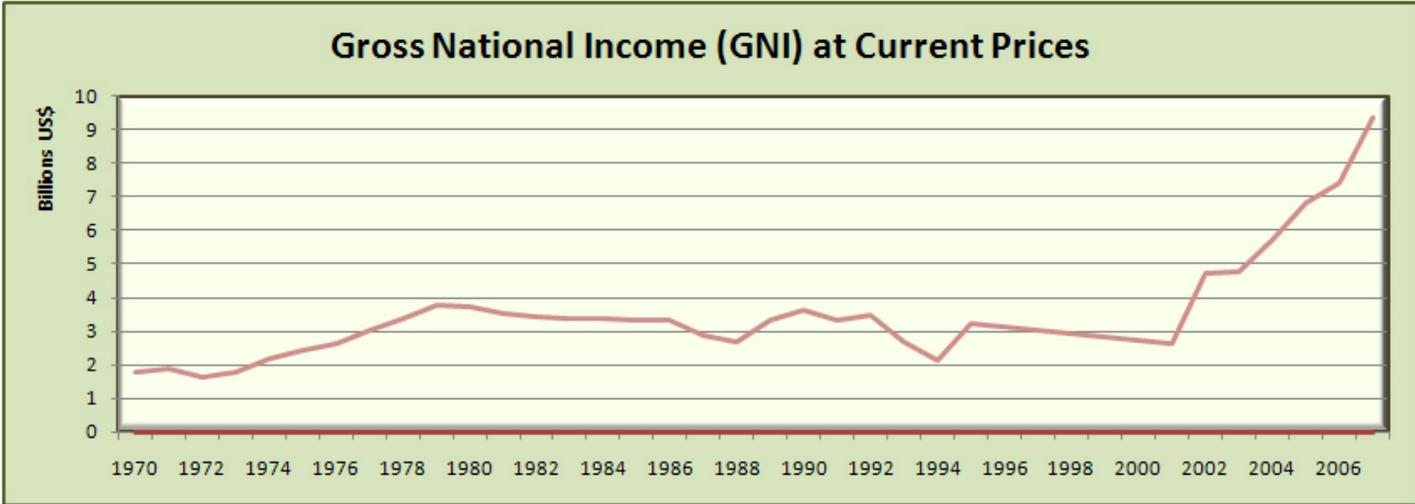
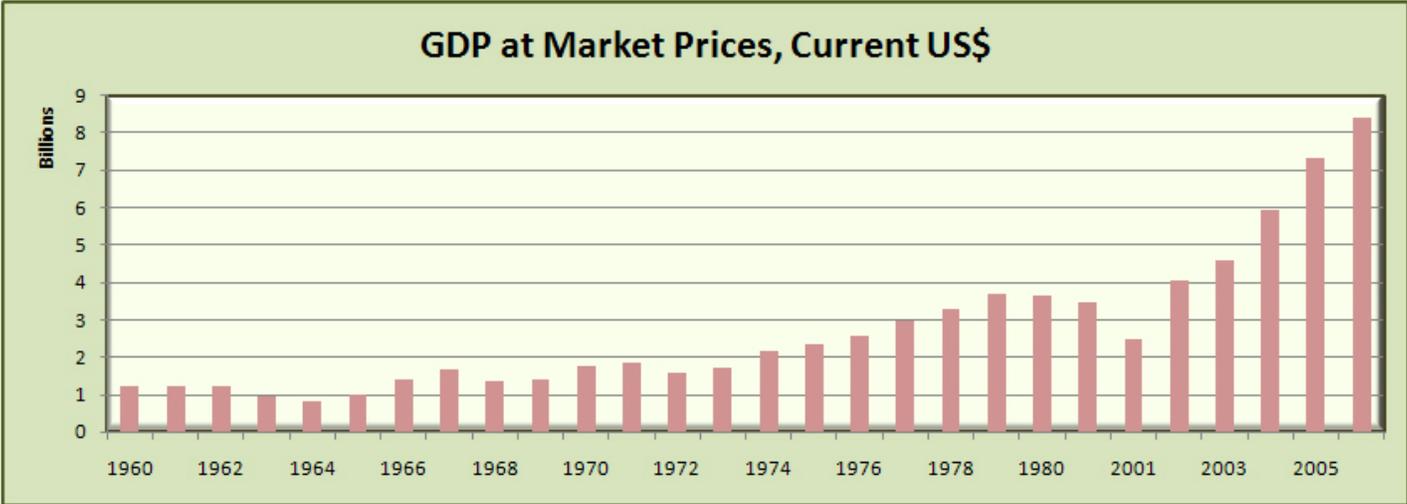




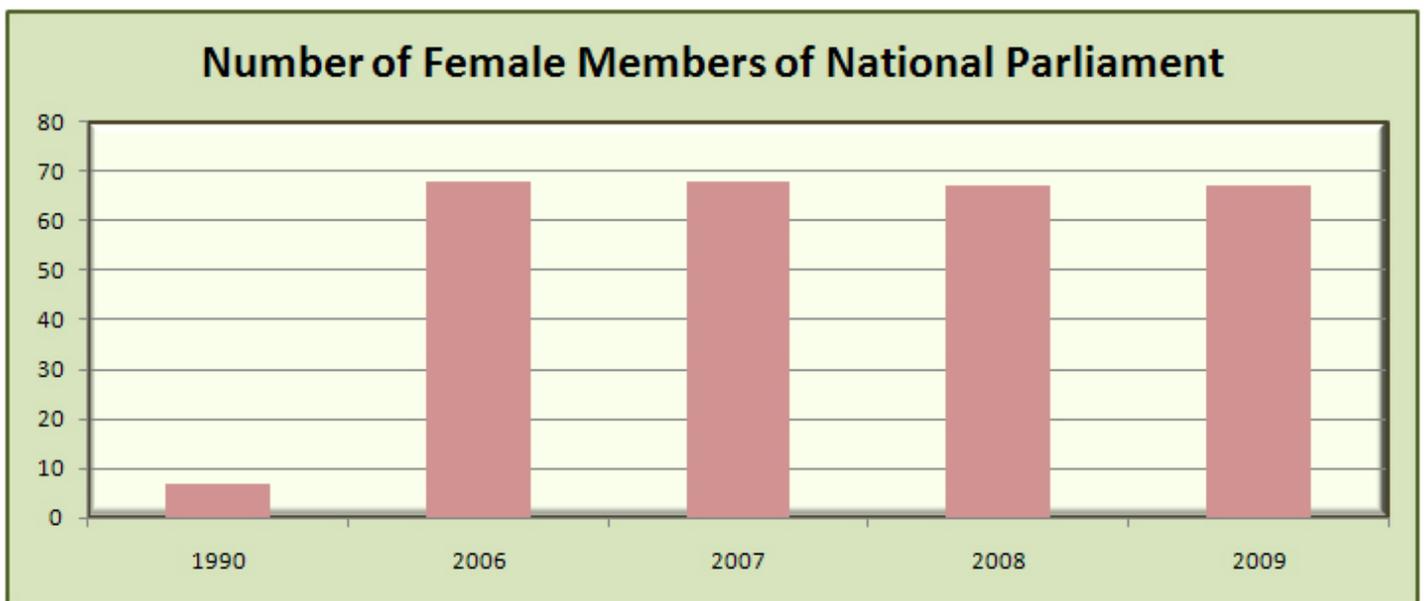
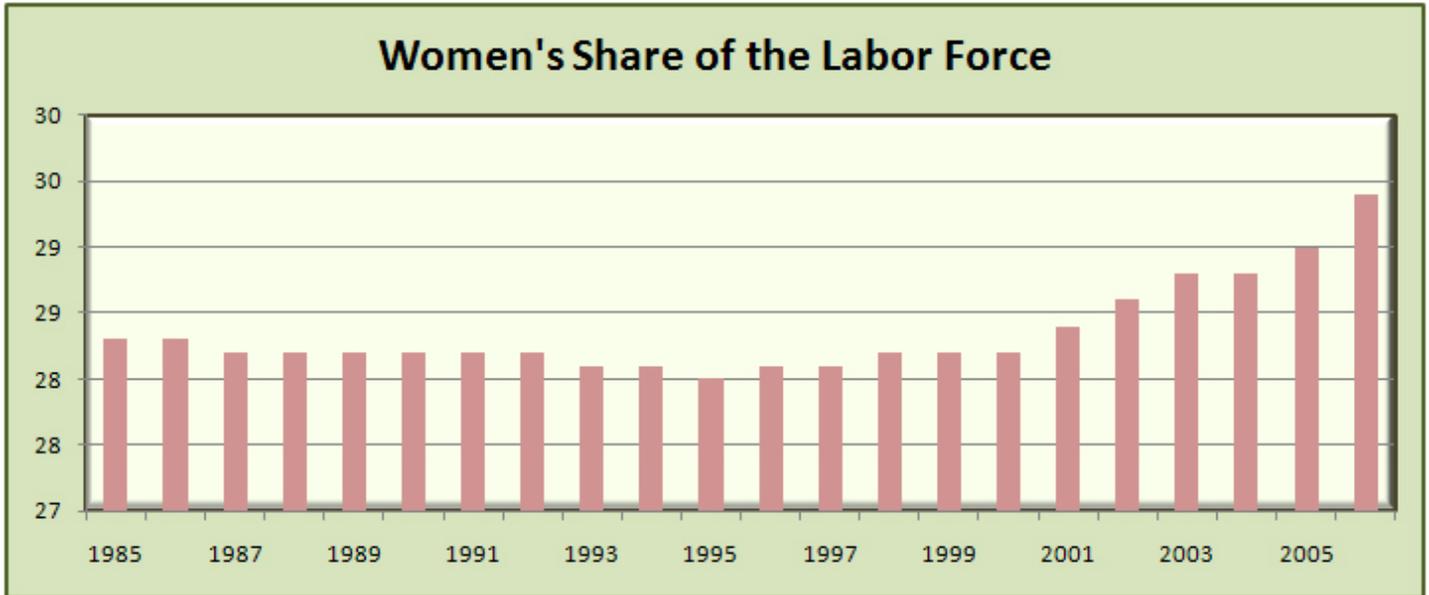




Economy



Gender



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- Afghan Solidarity: <http://www.afghansolidarity.com/>
- Afghan Women's Education Center (AWEC): <http://www.awec.info/>
- Afghan Women's Network: <http://www.afghanwomensnetwork.org/>
- Afghan Women's International: <http://www.awai.org/>
- Afghanistan Human Rights Organization: <http://www.ahro.af/English%201.htm>
- Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC): <http://www.aihrc.org.af/English/>
- Afghanistan Public Policy Research Organization: <http://www.appro.org.af/>
- Afghanistan Relief Organization (ARO): <http://www.afghanrelief.org/>
- Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit (AREU) <http://www.areu.org.af/>
- Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit: <http://www.areu.org.af/>
- Afghanistan Street Working Children and New Approach (ASCHIANA): <http://www.tdhafghanistan.org/aschiana.htm>
- Afghanistan Youth* National and Social Organization (AYNSO)
- Afghanistan Watch: <http://www.watchafghanistan.org/index.html>
- Afghanistan-America Foundation: <http://afghanistanfoundation.org/hc3.asp>
- Afghanistan's Health, Education, and Reconstruction Organization (AHERO): <http://www.ahero.org/en/index.html>
- Aga Kahn Foundation – Afghanistan: <http://www.akdn.org/afghanistan>
- Agency Coordinating Body for Afghan Relief: <http://www.acbar.org/>
- Aid to Afghan Women and Children (AAWC)
- Democratic Youth Organization of Afghanistan
- Development and Ability Organization: <http://www.daoafghanistan.org/adu.htm>
- FINCA Afghanistan: <http://www.villagebanking.org/site/c.erKPI2PCIoE/b.2676443/k.86C5/Afghanistan.htm>
- Help Afghan Women: <http://www.helpafghanwomen.com/>
- Help the Afghan Children (HTAC): <http://www.helptheafghanchildren.org/>
- Humanitarian Assistance for the Women and Children of Afghanistan (HAWCA): <http://www.hawca.org/main/index.php>
- International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies – Afghanistan: <http://www.ifrc.org/where/country/cn6.asp?countryid=14>
- International Labor Organization (ILO) in Afghanistan: <http://www.ilo.org/public/english/region/asro/newdelhi/countries/afghanistan.htm>
- Mercy Corps: <http://www.mercycorps.org/>
- Network for Good in Afghanistan: <http://www.networkforgood.org/topics/international/afghanrefugees/>
- North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in Afghanistan: http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/topics_8189.htm
- PARSA Afghanistan: <http://www.afghanistan-parsa.org/>
- Revolutionary Association of the Women of Afghanistan (RAWA): <http://www.rawa.org/index.php>
- Richard Strand's Nuristan Site, 1997-present: <http://users.sedona.net/~strand>
- Rights & Democracy in Afghanistan: http://www.dd-rd.ca/site/what_we_do/index.php?id=2243&subsection=where_we_work&subsubsection=country_documents

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The Afghan Civil Society Forum (ACSF): <http://www.acsf.af/English/index.htm>

The Afghan Women's Mission: <http://afghanwomensmission.org/index.php>

The Children of War: <http://thechildrenofwar.org/web1/>

UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) in Afghanistan: <http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/afghanistan.html>

UN Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) in Afghanistan: <http://afghanistan.unifem.org/index.php>

UN Development Program (UNDP) in Afghanistan: <http://www.undp.org.af/>

UN Environment Program (UNEP) in Afghanistan: http://www.unep.org/pdf/UNEP_in_Afghanistan.pdf

UN High Commission on Refugees (UNHCR) in Afghanistan: <http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/page?page=49e486eb6>

UN Settlements Program (UN-HABITAT) in Afghanistan: <http://www.unhabitat.org/categories.asp?catid=245>

UN Volunteers (UNV) in Afghanistan: <http://www.unv.org/what-we-do/countries/afghanistan.html>

Women Against War – Afghanistan Project: http://www.womenagainstarwar.org/women_against_war_afghanistan_pr.htm

Women for Women International: <http://www.womenforwomen.org/>

Women's Alliance for Peace and Human Rights in Afghanistan: <http://www.wapha.org/>

World Food Program (WFP) in Afghanistan: <http://www.wfp.org/node/3191>

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2003 Constitution of Afghanistan: <http://www.nps.edu/Programs/CCs/Docs/Elections/Constitution.pdf>

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2009: <http://www.asiafoundation.org/resources/pdfs/Afghanistanin2009.pdf>

2008: <http://www.asiafoundation.org/resources/pdfs/Afghanistanin2008.pdf>

2007: <http://www.asiafoundation.org/resources/pdfs/AGsurvey07.pdf>

UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA): <http://unama.unmissions.org/Default.aspx?tabid=1741>

North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO): http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/topics_8189.htm

US Department of State: <http://www.state.gov/p/sca/ci/af/>

Afghanistan Newspapers and News Media — National and Foreign

Broadcast News Media

National	Ariana Television Network http://www.arianatelevision.com/	ENG	TV
National	Lemar TV http://www.lemar.tv/	DAR	TV Also PUS
National	RTA http://www.rta.org.af/	DAR	Radio TV Also PUS
National	RTA http://www.rta.org.af/en/	ENG	Radio TV
National	Tolo TV http://www.tolo.tv/	DAR	TV Also PUS
Foreign	Azadi Radio http://da.azadiradio.com/	DAR	Radio
Foreign	Azadi Radio http://pa.azadiradio.com/	PUS	Radio
Foreign	BBC http://www.bbcpashto.com/	PUS	Radio
Foreign	Deutsche Welle http://www.dw-world.de/dari/	DAR	Radio
Foreign	Deutsche Welle http://www.dw-world.de/pashto/	PUS	Radio
Foreign	IRIB http://dari.irib.ir/	DAR	Radio
Foreign	IRIB http://pashtu.irib.ir/	PUS	Radio
Foreign	Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty http://www.voanews.com/dari/	ENG	Radio
Foreign	VOA http://www.voanews.com/dari/	DAR	Radio
Foreign	VOA http://www.voanews.com/pashto/	PUS	Radio

Internet News Media

National	Afghanistan News Center http://www.afghanistannewscenter.com/	ENG	
National	Benawa http://www.benawa.com/	PUS	
National	Killid http://www.killid.com/	DAR	Also PUS
Foreign	1st Headlines http://www.1stheadlines.com/afghanistan.htm	ENG	
Foreign	Afghan Daily http://www.afghandaily.com/	ENG	
Foreign	Afghan German Online http://www.afghan-german.de/af/	DAR	Also PUS
Foreign	Afghan German Online http://www.afghan-german.de/	DEU	
Foreign	Afghan Links http://www.afghanlinks.org/	ENG	
Foreign	Afghan News http://www.afghannews.net/	ENG	
Foreign	Afghan News Channel http://www.afghan-network.net/News/	ENG	
Foreign	Afghan Observer http://www.afghanobserver.com/	ENG	Also DAR PUS
Foreign	Afghan Online Press http://www.aopnews.com/	ENG	
Foreign	Afghanistan http://en.afghanistan.ru/	ENG	
Foreign	Afghanistan http://www.afghanistan.ru/	RUS	
Foreign	Afghanistan Alive http://www.afghanistanalive.com/	ENG	Also DAR PUS
Foreign	Afghanistan Conflict Monitor http://www.afghanconflictmonitor.org/	ENG	
Foreign	Afghanistan Information Network http://www.afghanpaper.com/	DAR	
Foreign	Afghanistan Monitor http://www.afghanistanmonitor.com/	ENG	
Foreign	Afghanistan News http://www.afghanistannews.net/	ENG	
Foreign	Afghanistan Peace Organization http://www.afghanistannews.net/	ENG	
Foreign	Afghanistan Sun http://www.afghanistansun.com/	ENG	

Foreign	Afghanistan's Web Site http://www.afghanistans.com/	ENG	
Foreign	Asia Observer http://www.asiaobserver.com/afghanistan/	ENG	
Foreign	Bassirat http://www.bassirat.net/	FRA	
Foreign	Big News Net http://www.bignewsnetwork.com/index.php/cat/6e1d5c8e1f98f17c/	ENG	
Foreign	E Ariana http://www.e-ariana.com/	ENG	
Foreign	EIN News http://www.einnews.com/afghanistan/	ENG	
Foreign	Eurasia Net http://www.eurasianet.org/resource/afghanistan/	ENG	
Foreign	Eurasia Net http://www.eurasianet.org/russian/resource/afghanistan/	RUS	
Foreign	Farsi http://www.farsi.ru/	DAR	
Foreign	Fasic http://www.fasicp.com/	ENG	
Foreign	Haqiqat http://biphpost.spray.se/haqiqat.darinews/	DAR	Also PUS
Foreign	Index Mundi http://www.indexmundi.com/news.aspx?country=Afghanistan	ENG	
Foreign	Inside Aghanistan http://www.insideworld.com/afghanistan/	ENG	
Foreign	Institute for War and Peace Reporting http://www.iwpr.net/?apc_state=henparr&l=dr	DAR	
Foreign	Institute for War and Peace Reporting http://www.iwpr.net/?apc_state=hdrparr&l=en	ENG	
Foreign	Institute for War and Peace Reporting http://www.iwpr.net/?apc_state=henparr&l=ps	ENG	
Foreign	IRIN http://www.irinnews.org/Asia-Country.aspx?Country=AFG		
Foreign	Moreover http://p.moreover.com/cgi-local/page?c=Afghanistan%20news	PUS	
Foreign	My Afghan http://www.myafghan.com/		
Foreign	National Islamic Movement of Afghanistan http://www.junbesh.net/	ENG	
Foreign	News Now http://www.newsnow.co.uk/h/World+News/Asia/Afghanistan/	ENG	
Foreign	One World http://us.oneworld.net/places/afghanistan/	ENG	
Foreign	RAWA http://www.rawa.org/report.htm	DAR	
Foreign	Relief Web http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/dbc.nsf/doc104?OpenForm&rc=3&cc=afg		
Foreign	Sabawoon http://www.sabawoon.com/	ENG	
Foreign	South Asian Media Net http://www.southasianmedia.net/News_today.cfm?category=frontend&country=Afghanistan	ENG	
Foreign	Topix http://www.topix.com/world/afghanistan/	ENG	
Foreign	World News Map http://www.mapreport.com/countries/afghanistan.html	ENG	
Foreign	Yahoo http://news.yahoo.com/topics/afghanistan/	ENG	Also PUS
Foreign	Yahoo http://fr.news.yahoo.com/fc/afghanistan.html	ENG	

Magazine News Media

Foreign	Lemar Aftaab http://www.afghanmagazine.com/	ENG
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Newspaper News Media

National	Daily Afghanistan	http://www.dailyafghanistan.com/index2.php	DAR	Also PUS
National	Kabul Weekly	http://www.kw.af/	DAR	Also PUS
National	Kabul Weekly	http://www.kw.af/english/	ENG	
Foreign	Times of Central Asia	http://www.timesca-europe.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=blogsection&id=13&Itemid=18&country=Afghanistan	ENG	

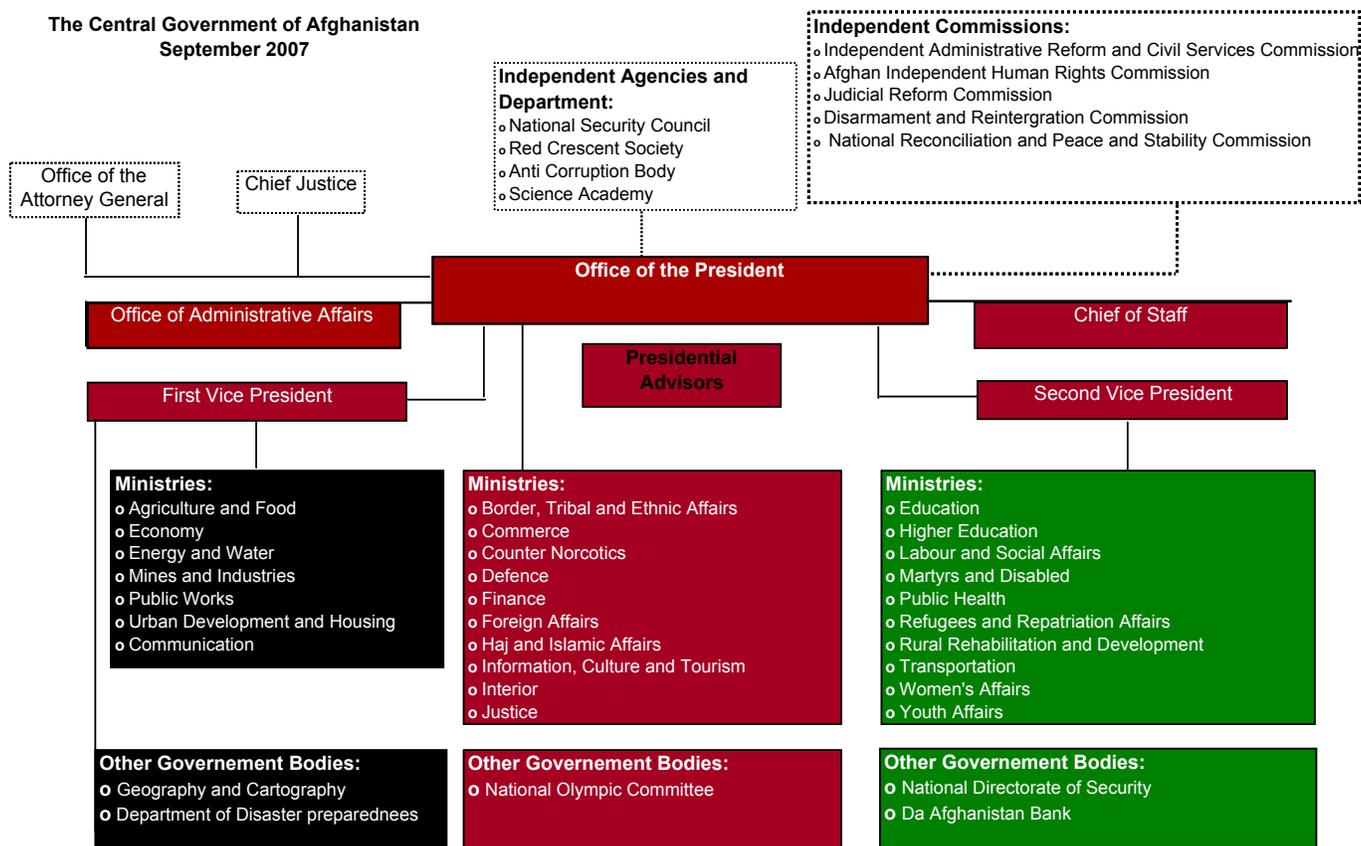
Press Agency News Media

National	Bakhtar	http://www.bakhtarnews.com.af/?Lang=D	DAR	
National	Bakhtar	http://www.bakhtarnews.com.af/?Lang=E	ENG	
National	Bakhtar	http://www.bakhtarnews.com.af/?Lang=P	PUS	
National	Kabul Press	http://www.kabulpress.org/my/	DAR	
National	Kabul Press	http://kabulpress.org/my/spip.php?rubrique60	ENG	
National	Pajhwok	http://www.pajhwak.com/index.asp?lng=dar	DAR	
National	Pajhwok	http://www.pajhwak.com/index.asp?lng=eng	ENG	
National	Pajhwok	http://www.pajhwak.com/index.asp?lng=pas	PUS	
Foreign	Afghan Islamic Press	http://www.afghanislamicpress.com/site/default.asp?lang=en	ENG	
	Afghan Islamic Press	http://www.afghanislamicpress.com/site/default.asp?lang=po	PUS	
Foreign	Ferghana	http://enews.ferghana.ru/index.php?cid=7	ENG	
	Ferghana	http://www.ferghana.ru/index.php?cid=7	RUS	
Foreign	Ferghana	http://uzbek.ferghana.ru/index.php?cid=7	UZB	

Newspapers and News Media — Local

Herat	Ava e No	http://www.neginasia.com/	DAR	
Kabul	8 AM	http://www.8am.af/	DAR	
Kabul	Cheragh Daily	http://www.cheraghdaily.af/dari/	DAR	
Kabul	Cheragh Daily	http://www.cheraghdaily.af/english/	ENG	
Kabul	Daily Afghanistan	http://www.dailyafghanistan.com/	DAR	Also PUS
Kabul	Daily Afghanistan	http://www.dailyafghanistan.com/index2.php	DAR	Also PUS
Kabul	Daily Outlook Afghanistan	http://www.outlookafghanistan.net/index2.html	ENG	
Kabul	Kabul Weekly	http://www.kw.af/	DAR	Also PUS
Kabul	Kabul Weekly	http://www.kw.af/english/	ENG	
Kabul	Outlook Afghanistan	http://www.outlookafghanistan.net/	ENG	
Kabul	Payam e Mojahed	http://www.payamemojahed.com/	DAR	

**The Central Government of Afghanistan
September 2007**



Source: Office of Administrative Affairs, Office of the President
A to Z Guide 2005

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