A House Divided?
Analysing the 2005
Afghan Elections

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Executive Summary

On 18 September 2005, more than six million Afghans went to the polls to elect the lower house of the legislative National Assembly (Wolesi Jirga) and Provincial Councils. These elections marked the end of the transitional political process outlined in the Bonn Agreement of December 2001, and the beginning for Afghanistan's first democratically elected legislature in over 30 years.

The organisation and implementation of the elections were an impressive logistical and technical feat, especially given the tight timeframes and the difficult operating environment. Despite threats to disrupt the elections by Taliban insurgents, a major security operation by national and international forces contributed to a relatively peaceful election day. Elected candidates covered a wide political spectrum and represented all major ethnic and religious groups, demonstrating that pluralism is alive and well in Afghanistan. Of particular note was the strong performance of female candidates, nearly 30 percent of whom won their seats in their own right and not on the basis of the women's quota seats.

As the media were quick to report, however, significant problems marred the elections, including a sharp decline in voter turnout from the Presidential elections held a year earlier. There were also some allegations of intimidation and vote rigging on election day, and widespread reports of fraud during the ballot counting process. The elections were also a victim of Afghanistan's weak judicial institutions as well as a preference to accommodate rather than confront many candidates with the potential to cause trouble. The resulting lax candidate vetting process enabled many candidates with links to illegal armed groups, narcotics trafficking, criminal gangs, as well as some facing war crime allegations, to contest and win seats. These factors undermined the perceived credibility of the elections and tarnished the image of the new National Assembly in the eyes of many Afghans.

This paper presents a national-level analysis of the elections, including an in-depth look at who won, how they won, who voted and how Afghans perceived the elections. It also draws on field research in two specific provinces, Herat and Kandahar, to examine the campaign activities and strategies of candidates, as well as how religious and tribal groups organised themselves. The paper also looks at how female candidates fared, the perceptions and performance of political parties, and the expectations and misconceptions of many candidates and voters about the role and functions of the National Assembly and Provincial Councils.

One of the biggest political challenges confronting Afghanistan is whether the numerous potential divides in the fragmented National Assembly, and between the legislative and executive branches of government, can be sufficiently bridged to prevent governmental paralysis. The paper analyses some of the potential divisions–opposition vs. pro-government, conservatives vs. liberals, and ethnic divisions–in the National Assembly, and discusses the important need to strengthen political parties that could help aggregate and organise political interests and bridge divisions. The failure of past Afghan parliaments to bridge these divisions contributed to the business of government coming to a halt, and a shift from constitutional to unconstitutional means of governing, which in turn contributed to Afghanistan's subsequent tragic political history.

The challenge today is to learn from the past and to do whatever is possible to ensure that history does not repeat itself. Capacity building of individual parliament members to be effective legislators, strengthening political parties, managing the expectations of voters, and ensuring that the relationship between the executive and legislative branches of government is constructive rather than destructive are all important challenges that must be addressed in the coming months and years. Moreover, lessons from the recent elections should be used to improve future elections, including revising the current overwhelming electoral calendar and reducing the number of required elections, changing the existing electoral system to one that does not disadvantage political parties, building sustainable electoral institutions, creating an accurate voter registry, strengthening voter and civic education, and addressing issues of transitional justice to ensure more effective candidate vetting in future elections.

In January 2006, government representatives and members of the international community will meet in London to discuss the next phase in the "roadmap" for Afghanistan. This paper concludes with recommendations for how these representatives can use lessons from the elections and the Bonn political process to inform their discussions and decisions.

1. Introduction

On 18 September 2005, Afghanistan held its first legislative elections since the 1969 parliamentary elections. Approximately 6.4 million Afghans went to the polls to elect representatives to the lower house of the National Assembly and to 34 Provincial Councils (PCs). Afghanistan's National Assembly (NA) consists of a 249-member directly elected lower house–the Wolesi Jirga (WJ)–and an indirectly elected and appointed upper house, the Meshrano Jirga. The 102-member Meshrano Jirga has one third of its members elected from within each of the 34 PCs, one third from the District Councils, and one third appointed by the President. As district elections have not been held, and are unlikely to be held anytime soon, a presidential decree was signed authorising each PC to elect a transitional Meshrano Jirga member in addition to their regular member until district elections can be held. The PCs elected their 68 representatives to the Meshrano Jirga in late November, and on 10 December President Karzai announced his 34 appointments. This paved the way for the convening of Afghanistan's new National Assembly on 19 December.

The Joint Electoral Management Body (JEMB), which consisted of nine Afghan members and four international members plus the Chief Electoral Officer, who served as a non-voting member, had overall authority for the elections. Actual implementation of the elections was the responsibility of the JEMB Secretariat (JEMBS), headed by the Chief Electoral Officer, a UN appointee. The technical and logistical challenges of conducting the elections were formidable, and the fact that most of these were overcome within the short timeframe given to election planners and implementers was a remarkable achievement. A combination of international military forces as well as the Afghan National Army, the Afghan National Police and Afghanistan's intelligence agency, the National Security Directorate, provided election security. Despite the Taliban-led insurgency in the south and southeast regions of the country, and their threats and efforts to disrupt the elections, election day generally proved to be peaceful.

Yet the September elections were not without controversy. The Electoral Complaints Commission (ECC)—the official, independent body established by the electoral law to handle electoral grievances—was inundated with 5,397 registered complaints, which delayed the announcement of the final election results until mid-November.[1] Most of the allegations were not sufficiently substantiated to be considered by the ECC, and the JEMB did not believe that the level of fraud affected "the integrity of the elections".[2] However, the research conducted for this study, and interviews of voters and candidates appearing in the press, suggest that public perceptions of these elections are considerably less positive than the JEMB's assessment.

The elections and the convening of the NA mark the end of the political process outlined in the Bonn Agreement. Signed by most of the major Afghan political factions in December 2001 following the defeat of the Taliban regime by US-led Coalition Forces, the Bonn Agreement outlined the roadmap for an internationally supported four-year political process that included the holding of an Emergency Loya Jirga (grand council) in June 2002 to elect an interim President to lead a transitional government, a Constitutional Loya Jirga in December 2003 to ratify a new Constitution, a Presidential election in October 2004, and the legislative elections in September 2005.

This paper presents the findings of research regarding the 2005 WJ elections, but also covers some aspects of the PC elections. Considerable work has already gone into learning from the experiences of recent elections to inform future Afghan elections.[3] Most of this work focused on technical recommendations regarding future legal and institutional frameworks, including the electoral calendar, voting systems and electoral legislation. Very little publicly available research has focused on less technical and more political analysis of the elections, including

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[1] ECC, 10 November 2005, "Complaints Process Promotes Rule of Law," Press Release, Kabul.
[2] AFP, 16 October 2005, "First Results Finalized After Afghanistan Vote, More Protests".
[3] This effort has been led by the Post Election Strategy Group (PESG). See the PESG "Progress Report," 27 September 2005. See also the OSCE Election Support Team to Afghanistan, "Recommendations on 2005 Parliamentary Elections," 6 October 2005.

analysis of who won the elections and how.[4] Furthermore, as Afghanistan has not held legislative elections for the past 35 years, there is little historical information about the nature of electoral politics. This paper is an initial effort to help address this gap in our knowledge.

The main data sources for this analysis are the JEMB certified election results, candidate biographical information, and qualitative data collected through 53 in-depth interviews conducted in Herat and Kandahar between 14 September and 8 October 2005. These include 22 interviews with WJ candidates, ten of whom won seats, and nine PC candidates, four of whom won seats. Other information sources included candidate campaign posters, media reports, and candidates' stated goals and objectives as presented in candidate biographical data booklets for each province produced by the Foundation for Culture and Civil Society.[5] The data sources allow national-level analysis of election results to be complemented by more in-depth case study material from Herat and Kandahar that add texture to the discussion.

The following sections of this paper highlight:

- **Who won.** Section 2 analyses the WJ election results and some of the potential divisions that may occur in the NA. These include divisions between pro-government and opposition members, ideological divisions between religious conservatives and left-leaning members, and potential divisions along ethnic lines. The section then analyses the results of political parties, female candidates, and the large number of unsavoury candidates who won seats in the NA.
- **How they won.** Section 3 describes how candidates mobilised voters, in particular how religious and tribal networks were used to mobilise votes in Kandahar and Herat. It then describes the main election campaign activities, the main campaign issues, and the challenges faced by female candidates.
- **Who voted (and who did not).** Section 4 examines the sharp decline in voter turnout from 70 percent in the Presidential elections to 50 percent in the WJ and PC elections.
- **Perceptions of the elections.** Section 5 discusses many of the perceived problems with the elections, especially the counting process, which damaged the credibility of the elections in the eyes of many Afghans.
- **Managing expectations.** Section 6 examines how Afghans perceive the roles of their newly elected WJ and PC members, and how successful candidates will (or will not) be able to manage the rather heavy expectations their constituents have of them to be providers of services and patronage. It concludes with a brief analysis of the PC elections and the specific perceptions Afghans have of the PCs' role.
- **Looking to the future.** The final section begins by looking at past experiences with parliamentary democracy in Afghanistan to identify potential future problems that the new NA might encounter. One major risk for the future is that the NA, if not sensitively managed, could have a paralysing effect on government. The public's high expectations and misconceptions about the role of the NA and its members as a source of patronage is another danger confronting the new NA. The paper then discusses some of the lessons learned from these elections that can inform future elections. It concludes with some recommendations for post-Bonn political processes.

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[4] Some interesting research has been conducted recently on elections to the village level community development councils that are part of the government's National Solidarity Programme. See I. W. Boesen, August 2004, *From Subjects to Citizen: Local Participation in the National Solidarity Programme*, Kabul: AREU.
[5] *Da Afghanistan da Wolesi Jirge da tultakano da kandidano pezand pana = Ma'arifi namah kandidahai Wolesi Jirga Afghanistan: Wolayat Herat and Kandahar.* Kabul: Bunyad-i Farhang wa Jamia'a-i Madani, 1384.

2. Who Won: Implications for Parliamentary Politics

This section looks at the composition of the newly elected WJ and discusses possible political alignments and divisions in the lower house of the new legislative assembly. In Afghanistan, this type of analysis is notoriously tricky, as allegiances and alliances are constantly shifting. Individuals may be allied to more than one group at any given point in time, and a top layer of alliances may hide multiple lower levels of complex relationships and allegiances. Labels such "pro-government" and "opposition", or "conservative" and "liberal" are imprecise and potentially misleading, but in the absence of better alternatives they are still used. The following analysis must therefore be read with these caveats in mind, and should be understood as an attempt to present a snapshot of what appears to be the current political alignment of candidates. These will undoubtedly soon shift and evolve, especially within the context of parliamentary politics. In the words of one WJ candidate in Herat: "In parliament new groups will form around different issues. For every issue the groups will be different."[6]

2.1 Potential sources of political division

2.1.1 Pro-government versus opposition

The newly elected WJ will be a highly fragmented institution. This was widely expected due to the nature of Afghan politics and the absence of strong and effective political parties, compounded by the political decision to adopt a voting system that benefited independent candidates at the expense of political parties.[7] Table 1 provides an estimate of political party or factional alignments in the new parliament based on a detailed analysis of the backgrounds of the 249 elected candidates.[8] Based on this assessment, the NA will consist of members who are either independent or belong to or are affiliated with 33 political parties. These can be relatively evenly divided into three loosely defined categories:

- **Pro-government:** 81 members belong to or are aligned with 13 different parties or factions (plus independents) that can be categorised as "pro-government".
- **Pro-opposition:** 84 members belong to or are aligned with nine different parties or factions (plus independents) that can be categorised as "pro-opposition".
- **Non-aligned or no clear alignment:** 84 members can be classified as "non-aligned" or with "no clear factional alignment". These include 15 members who belong to or are aligned with 11 primarily left/democratic parties or factions, plus 69 independent candidates who are non-aligned or have no clear factional alignments.

The fragmented nature of the NA will make forming and maintaining a legislative majority a challenging and time-consuming task, not to mention a potentially expensive one in an environment with high levels of graft and patronage expectations. Nevertheless, it should still be possible for the government to use its powers of persuasion and patronage to get the backing of a majority of delegates when required. One WJ candidate in Kandahar provided the following somewhat cynical assessment:

> Jihadis *are winners percentage-wise. We can convince* jihadis *but not the communists. Warlords and* jihadis *can be influenced – on any sensitive issue $10 million can make the difference.*[9]

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[6] Interview with WJ Candidate, Herat, 26 September 2005.
[7] The single non-transferable vote (SNTV) system used in the election only allowed voters to vote for individuals rather than for political parties. For a more detailed discussion of SNTV and possible alternatives, see A. Reynolds and A. Wilder, September 2004, *Free, Fair or Flawed: Challenges to Legitimate Elections in Afghanistan*, Kabul: AREU.
[8] The analysis of candidate backgrounds and party and factional affiliations here and elsewhere in this paper is based primarily on candidate biographical data provided by Thomas Ruttig and Michael Semple. Additional candidate biographical data was provided by interviewees, as well as by Abdul Aziz Samiem and Nasrullah Durrani from the NDI offices in Herat and Kandahar.
[9] Interview with WJ candidate, Kandahar, 4 October 2005.

Table 1. Estimates of factional alignments in the Wolesi Jirga

POLITICAL PARTY OR FACTION	LEADER	SEATS
Pro-Government Parties/Factions/Individuals		
- Jamiat-e Islami – Rabbani faction	Rabbani	10
- Other Jamiat/Nahzat-e-Milli Factions	Ismail Khan, Atta, Ahmad Wali Masood	12
- Mahaz-e Milli Islami Afghanistan	Pir Sayed Ahmed Gailani	10
- Afghan Millat Party	Anwar ul-Haq Ahadi	7
- Tanzim Dawat-e-Islami-e-Afghanistan	Abdul Rab Rasoul Sayaf	7
- Hazara/Shi'a factions (Hezbi Wahdat, Harakat Islami, Others)	Khalili, Anwari	5
- Tanzeem-e Jabha-ye Milli Nijat-e Afghanistan	Sebghatullah Mujededi	4
- Nuzhat Hambastagee Milli Afghanistan	Sayed Ishaq Gailani	3
- Hezb-e Hambastagee Milli Jawana-ye Afghanistan	Jamil Karzai	1
- Other pro-Karzai/pro-government individuals		22
Total Pro-Government		81
Pro-Opposition Parties/Factions/Individuals		
- Hezbe-Afghanistan Naween	Younas Qanooni	25
- Hezbe-Junbesh-e-Milli Afghanistan	Dostum/Sayed Noorullah	20
- Hezbe Wahdat (Mardom)	Mohammad Mohaqeq	18
- Hezb-i-Islami factions	Farooqi, Sabawun, Gulbuddin	12
- Other Shi'a Factions (Hezbe Wahdat, Harakat, Eqtedar)	Akbari, Jawed, Kazemi	7
- Others		2
Total Pro-Opposition		84
Non-Aligned Parties/Factions/Individuals		
- Jabha-ye Democratic-e Milli (14 party alliance)	Baktash, Ehsas, Kohistani, Naseri, Nemat, Piroz	7
- Left parties	Ulomi, Aryan, Ranjbar, Tanai	6
- Hezbe Paiwand-e-Milli (Ismaili Party)	Sayed Mansur Nadiri	2
Total No Clear Factional Alignment		69
Total Non-aligned or no clear factional alignment		84
TOTAL		**249**

Source: compiled using candidate biographical data.

President Karzai's skill at being all things to all people – to appear relatively moderate or liberal to the liberals, respectful of the *jihad* to the Islamic conservatives, and to have at least some support from within most ethnic groups – will certainly help in this regard. However, the time and resources needed to achieve and maintain a parliamentary majority, especially with so many individuals and small factions to please, will inevitably make the task of legislating slow and difficult. Furthermore, an environment of constant deal making and horse-trading could diminish the image and reputation of the NA in the eyes of many Afghans.

Another dynamic that is likely to develop are attempts to form third party groups that hold the balance of power between the pro- and anti-government factions. In Kandahar, for example, several interviewees mentioned that this was the ambition of Arif Noorzai, the former Minister of Border and Tribal Affairs.[10] Mohaqeq's Hezb-e Wahdat party and Dostum's Junbesh party, which each command sizeable blocs of votes, could also try to play this role on certain issues. Female WJ members, with 27 percent of the seats, could also try to strategically position themselves on some issues to be the third party that holds the balance of power. However, many of the female candidates are affiliated with parties across the political spectrum so it is unlikely that they will function on a regular basis as a coherent political group.

In such a fragmented assembly, the politics of building coalitions between different groups will be one of the major activities and one of the most important skills required of the newly elected parliamentarians. Several candidates mentioned their plans to build alliances within the NA:

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[10] This was the explanation given for reports that Arif Noorzai supported the campaigns of several other candidates in Kandahar who were not from his Noorzai tribe, including several female PC and WJ candidates.

The mujaheddin *aren't united. It's possible that more liberal* mujaheddin *might ally themselves with technocrats. I will try to do this. There are two kinds of* mujaheddin – *liberals and fundamentalists – and two kinds of technocrats – liberals and conservatives. It might be possible to have an alliance between liberal* mujaheddin *and liberal technocrats. We will have a good parliament if the liberals ally together. If fundamentalists gain control then we will have another disaster.*[11]

In the words of the successful WJ candidate and leader of the Hezb-e Mutahid-e Milli (National United Party), Noorulhaq Ulomi, "We will need to form a coalition in parliament – without a coalition we will be nothing."[12]

2.1.2 "Conservatives" versus "liberals"

Not surprisingly, a predominately conservative society has elected a predominately conservative parliament. Several religious scholars and leaders were elected, including Professor Rabbani and Professor Sayaf, and 17 other candidates have religious titles such as *mawlawi*, *mullah*, *Qazi* and *Qari* attached to their names. Approximately 133 of the 249 WJ members fought in the *jihad*, which suggests but does not guarantee a conservative outlook, and about 113 belong to or are affiliated with parties that could be classified as conservative/fundamentalist or moderate/traditionalist Islamic parties. With this membership it is likely that the NA will push a more conservative social agenda than the government, which for the past four years has been heavily influenced by western governments and agendas.

Given the bitter conflict between the *mujaheddin* and the Soviet-backed People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) regime in the eighties and early nineties, the election of approximately 23 candidates with leftist or communist backgrounds, including 15 who were formerly affiliated with the PDPA, surprised many observers. Most notable were the victories of two former senior PDPA officials – Sayed Mohammad Gulabzoi, who won the top position in Khost, and Noorulhaq Ulomi, who won the second highest number of votes in Kandahar.

One unintended consequence of the provision to have a quota of 68 women's seats in the WJ was that it provided an avenue through which not only women, but also some of the more recently established small liberal and left-oriented parties, could enter the NA. Of the 13 seats won by candidates affiliated with these parties, eight were won by women. One of the major political divides in the new parliament, especially on social, cultural and religious matters, is likely to be between the religious conservatives and these liberal and left-leaning members, allied with some independents and members from the more secular, ethnic-based nationalist parties.

The strong performance of what are commonly referred to as *jihadis* by their detractors and *mujaheddin* by their supporters will ensure that they will be a force to be reckoned with in the WJ. These terms are not very useful analytically, as those who fought in the *jihad* are not a homogeneous or united political group, as the anarchy and civil war of the 1990s all too vividly revealed. Many of those who did fight against the Soviet-backed communist regimes in Afghanistan were not religious fundamentalists, and many believed that the *jihad* ended following the collapse of the Najibullah government in 1992. The terms *mujaheddin* or *jihadi* are now used to describe those *jihad* party leaders and their commanders and supporters who still politically and ideologically closely associate themselves with the *jihad*. They generally share a conservative outlook on social, cultural and religious affairs, and many have a shared objective of "defending the *jihad*" and establishing a more conservative Islamic state governed by Islamic laws. Qazi Nazeer Ahmed, a former Jamiat-e Islami commander and close associate of Ismail Khan, and the second highest vote winner in the Herat WJ elections, belongs to this group. He described his parliamentary agenda as follows:

It's not clear yet what kind of people will go to parliament. But the top candidates are mujaheddin *from every province. We will work for security, services for people, and a good Islamic government. If the government is opposed to this we will work against them.*

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[11] Interview with WJ candidate, Herat, 26 September 2005.
[12] Interview with Noorulhaq Ulomi, WJ candidate and leader of the National United Party of Afghanistan, Kandahar, 3 October 2005.

The measurement and unit for us is jihad…*Those of us who participated in the* jihad *will stick together.*[13]

Debates on social, cultural and religious issues are likely to generate some of the most heated and divisive discussions in the NA. The freedom of the press and what can be aired on TV will be one area of intense debate,[14] as will the role of women in society. One former *jihad* commander and winner of a Herat WJ seat, had a very straightforward analysis of the political divide in parliament:

Parliament won't divide into many groups – only two: secularists and Muslims. Secularists support freedom – for example, women not being veiled – whereas Muslims want to live like in the past – where women should wear veils.[15]

While parliamentary politics will certainly be more complex than this, statements like these do indicate the potential for social, cultural and religious issues to divide the NA into conservative and liberal blocs, with the moderates in the middle holding the balance of power.

Table 2 breaks down the different parties and factions into "conservative/fundamentalist", "moderate/traditionalist" and "liberal/left" categories, and ranks them from most conservative to most liberal. As mentioned earlier, these labels can be quite misleading in the Afghan context and should not be interpreted too literally. Political parties are generally very weak institutions and the political orientations of their members often vary tremendously. For example, some parties like Jamiat-e Islami and its numerous factions, whose origins were as a strongly Islamic fundamentalist party with links to the Muslim Brotherhood, now include members from the left of the political spectrum. Similarly, the secular Uzbek nationalist party, Junbesh-e Milli, now also includes members who are Islamic fundamentalists. This is in part due to the impact of electoral politics and the imperative of winning seats. Categorising the Shi'a parties on a conservative to liberal scale is particularly difficult, as members of conservative

Table 2. Categorisation of political parties from most conservative to most liberal

CONSERVATIVE/FUNDAMENTALIST	66 SEATS
- Dawat-e Islami-ye Afghanistan (Sayaf)	7
- Hezb-e Islami factions (Farooqi, Sabawun)	12
- Jamiat-e Islami/Nozhat factions (Rabbani, etc.)	22
- Hezb-e Afghanistan-e Naween (Qanooni)	25
MODERATE/TRADITIONALIST	**47 SEATS**
- Tanzeem-e Jabha-ye Milli Nijat-e Afghanistan (Mojadaddi)	4
- Mahaz-e Milli Islami Afghanistan (Pir Gailani)	10
- Nuzhat Hambastagee Milli Afghanistan (Ishaq Gailani)	3
- Hezb-e Wahdat (Mohaqeq)	18
- Other Hazara/Shi'a parties	12
LIBERAL/LEFT	**43 SEATS**
- Hezb-e Paiwand-e Milli (Nadiri)	2
- Hezb-e Hambastagee Milli Jawana-ye Afghanistan (Jamil Karzai)	1
- Afghan Millat Party (Ahadi)	7
- Hezb-e Junbesh-e Milli Afghanistan (Dostum)	20
- Jabha-ye Democratic-e Milli	7
- Left parties	6
INDEPENDENTS	**93**
TOTAL	**249**

Source: compiled using candidate biographical data.

Sunni and Shi'a Islamic parties may agree on some conservative social issues, but may strongly disagree on a conservative religious agenda due to differing interpretations of Islam.

Bearing in mind these caveats, this categorisation of parties does illustrate that when the NA debates legislation related to social, cultural and religious issues, the political divides within the NA are likely to differ significantly from the pro-government, pro-opposition and non-

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[13] Interview with Qazi Nazeer Ahmad, Herat, 27 September 2005.
[14] This is illustrated by the recent decision of the Supreme Court, which is dominated by religious conservatives, to imprison the editor of a women's rights magazine for an article analysing the Islamic concept of apostasy. There have also been several attempts by courts at the central and provincial levels to close down or curb television stations and cable television operators.
[15] Interview with successful WJ candidate, Herat, 28 September 2005.

aligned divisions discussed earlier. For example, the secular nationalist parties like the Uzbek nationalist Junbesh party and the Pashtun nationalist Afghan Millat Party, which are currently pro-opposition and pro-government respectively, could join forces with other liberal/left parties against conservative policy agendas. Similarly the conservative members in Rabbani's Jamiat-e Islami and Qanooni's Hezb-e Afghanistan-e-Naween, currently split into pro-government and opposition camps, could join forces to support conservative social policy agendas.

The balance of power in these policy debates will be held by the Shi'a parties and the moderate/traditionalist Islamic parties like Tanzeem-e Jabha-ye Milli Nijat-e Afghanistan, Mahaz-e Milli Islami Afghanistan and Nuzhat Hambastagee Milli Afghanistan, as well as the nearly 100 independent members not directly affiliated with these parties (and therefore not included in the list above). Twenty-seven of these independent members are women, many of whom are likely to oppose the passage of a conservative social agenda, especially measures that would restrict the rights of women. On the other hand, the conservative group of Islamic parties would benefit from being better organised and better resourced than the newly formed parties that are more liberally inclined. Several interviewees expected the *jihadis* to be the best-organised and most effective legislative force in parliament, and that the less well-organised and resourced liberal parties would struggle to resist the push to the right by conservative forces.

2.1.3   Ethnic composition of the Wolesi Jirga

Another potential source of political division within the NA will be ethnicity. Table 3 provides a breakdown of the 249 WJ members by ethnic group and, in the case of the non-Hazara Shi'a and Ismailis, by religious group. Several interviewees expressed concern that on some issues the Assembly could divide along ethnic lines. While President Karzai himself would be very unlikely to play the ethnic card, some interviewees expressed concern that others around him could try to use the 47 percent of Pashtun members to forward their legislative agendas. They pointed to the example of the Constitutional Loya Jirga, which on certain issues, especially those related to the use of national languages, divided along Pashtun and non-Pashtun lines.

Table 3. Ethnic/religious groups in the Wolesi Jirga

Ethnic/Religious Groups	WJ seats	Percent
Pashtun	118	47.4%
Tajik & Aimaq	53	21.3%
Hazara	30	12.0%
Uzbek	20	8.0%
Non-Hazara Shi'a	11	4.4%
Turkmen	5	2.0%
Arab	5	2.0%
Ismaili	3	1.2%
Pashai	2	0.8%
Baloch	1	0.4%
Nuristani	1	0.4%
TOTAL	**249**	**100%**

Source: compiled using candidate biographical data.

The fact that no one ethnic group controls more than 50 percent of the seats will help serve as a check against blatant attempts to promote narrow ethnic agendas in the NA. In interviews in Herat and Kandahar candidates emphasised the importance of national unity and how they did not use ethnic or tribal appeals in their campaigns. Most, however, went on to accuse their opponents of doing so. Nevertheless, despite ethnic and tribal dynamics permeating Afghan politics, the fact that these are generally viewed negatively, and at times denied altogether, will serve as a disincentive against the overt use of ethnic politics in the parliament. One interviewee expressed hope that the media would play a positive role in minimising ethnic-based politics "because on national TV people won't want to talk about ethnicity. A culture of tolerance is coming due to the media."[16]

Table 4 shows that there are considerable differences in political alignments based on ethnicity. While 40 percent of Pashtun and Tajik/Aimaq members are aligned with the government, no Uzbek members and only 19.5 percent of Hazara members support the government. Only 13.6 percent of members affiliated with the opposition are Pashtun, leaving nearly half of all Pashtun members non-aligned.

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[16] Interview with UN national staff member, Kandahar, 3 October 2005.

Table 4. Candidate alignment by major ethnic group

ETHNIC GROUP	GOVERNMENT #	GOVERNMENT %	OPPOSITION #	OPPOSITION %	NON-ALIGNED #	NON-ALIGNED %
Pashtun	47	39.8	16	13.6	55	46.6
Tajik/Aimaq	21	39.6	16	30.2	16	30.2
Hazara/Shi'a	8	19.5	28	68.3	5	12.2
Uzbek	0	0.0	19	95.0	1	5.0
Others	5	29.4	5	29.4	7	41.2
TOTAL	**81**	**32.5**	**84**	**33.7**	**84**	**33.7**

Source: compiled using candidate biographical data.

2.2   The surprising performance of political parties

The challenges of developing and strengthening an effective political party system in Afghanistan are great.[17] Most political parties presently have little to offer in the way of incentives to prospective members. Most have very few resources, and even less power and influence, and therefore provide few opportunities for patronage. Political parties are also actively discouraged by President Karzai's government, which is best illustrated by the selection of a voting system that made an already difficult situation for political parties even worse. But by far the biggest challenge confronting political parties in Afghanistan is their major image problem among Afghans, who associate them with the various communist or *jihad*-era political parties that have played such a negative role in Afghanistan's tragic history. A focus group study conducted in the spring of 2005 on the knowledge and opinions of Afghans on the elections found the reaction of participants throughout the country to be "overwhelmingly negative" on the topic of political parties:

> *Not only are parties associated with ethnic division and factionalism, parties are frequently associated with foreign influence or manipulation…The most common definition in the north was that parties were groups of people aligned on an ethnic basis in order to conspire against others. In the Pashtun areas of the south and southeast, the most common answer was that parties were groups of self-interested individuals organised to serve their own interests.*[18]

Another characteristic of most political parties in Afghanistan is their personalised and therefore factionalised nature. Individual personalities tend to dominate political parties rather than particular ideologies or policy agendas, and it is usually these individuals who win votes for parties, not parties that win votes for candidates. Parties often have difficulty accommodating many strong personalities, which contributes to the proliferation of party factions and splinter groups. Jamiat-e Islami, the largest political party in Afghanistan, is a good case in point. In the WJ elections candidates affiliated informally and formally with the original Jamiat party won 47 seats, more than double the amount of any other party. These seats, however, were divided between approximately ten different factions of the party and new parties that have split off from Jamiat, which were relatively evenly distributed between those that either opposed or supported the government.

Anti-party sentiment was widely shared by many of those interviewed in Herat and Kandahar. In the words of one PC candidate in Herat, "The word 'parties' is hated by Afghans. People keep themselves away from parties. People think parties are the same as in the past."[19] Partly in recognition of the political liability of being associated with parties in many areas of Afghanistan, the vast majority of candidates, even those who were affiliated with political parties, registered as independent candidates. Of the 5,800 candidates who contested the WJ and PC elections only 741, or 12.8 percent, were officially affiliated with a registered political party.[20] Many of those that were formally affiliated with a party often hid this fact, or certainly did not advertise it in their campaigns and posters. In Herat, even leading political personalities like Qazi Nazeer Ahmad and Sayed Shafiq, both closely associated in the past

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[17] For a recent analysis of political parties in Afghanistan see International Crisis Group, 2 June 2005, "Political Parties in Afghanistan," Asia Briefing No. 39, Kabul/Brussels: ICG.
[18] Altai Consultaing, The Asia Foundation and USAID. 2005. "Formative Research for Civic Education Programs on Elections: Focus Group Discussions in the North, West, Southeast, and South of Afghanistan," Kabul: TAF, p. 25.
[19] Interview with PC candidate, Pashtun Zarghun District, Herat, 19 September 2005.
[20] Figures from JEMB external relations department provided by NDI, Kabul, 15 November 2005.

with Ismail Khan and the dominant political party, Jamiat-e Islami, both ran as independents and in interviews stated that they had left Jamiat.

Given the unpopularity of political parties, candidates officially affiliated with a registered party did remarkably well in the elections. Of the 249 candidates elected to the WJ, 88 (35 percent) were officially members of political parties.[21] These figures, however, do not include the nearly one third of candidates who had some affiliations with political parties or factions but who registered as independents, in many cases due to the unpopularity of parties.[22] Thus, while political parties may be unpopular, with approximately two thirds of all WJ members having formal or informal affiliations with them, parties still play a much more important behind-the-scenes role than is generally acknowledged.

This is particularly true for ethnic minority groups for whom political parties seem to play a much more important political role than for Pashtun candidates. Table 5 illustrates how winning WJ candidates who were Tajik/Aimaq, Hazara/Shi'a, or Uzbek/Turkmen were more likely to be affiliated with a political party than the winning Pashtun candidates. All 20 Uzbeks elected to the WJ had a party affiliation. This is also illustrated by the description given by one interviewee of the political parties in Herat: "There are 20 Tajik parties, five Hazara parties, and only one Pashtun party – the Afghan Millat Party."[23] There are clear regional implications for political parties, as only 32 percent of candidates in the south were affiliated with political parties compared with 79 percent in the north and 88 percent in the central highlands.

Table 5. Ethnic and regional breakdown of WJ members affiliated with political parties

ETHNIC GROUP	TOTAL SEATS	PARTY AFFILIATED
Pashtun	118	49%
Tajik/Aimaq	53	70%
Hazara/Shi'a	41	80%
Uzbek	20	100%
REGION	TOTAL SEATS	PERCENTAGE AFFILIATED
North	34	79%
Northeast	35	69%
Central	54	70%
East	24	63%
Southeast	25	72%
South	25	32%
West	34	50%
Central Highlands	8	88%
Kuchis	10	20%
TOTAL	249	63%

Source: compiled using candidate biographical data.

The main way political parties in Afghanistan today have to mobilise support, other than through intimidation or financial incentives, is through appeals along religious or ethnic lines (although in some primarily urban areas secular ideological appeals are also used). Because most of the main political parties in Afghanistan today that existed prior to 2001 were established and resourced to fight the Islamic *jihad* against communist governments and their Soviet backers, Islam plays an important role in their histories and ideologies (and often their names). With the exception of the Afghan Millat Party, most of the major parties dominated by Pashtuns are generally referred to as "Islamic parties". With the exception of the secular Uzbek nationalist Junbesh party, Islam is also an important part of the identity of most of the older non-Pashtun parties. This is certainly the case for the Hazara parties for whom the Shi'a sect of Islam is an important part of their identity, but also for the Tajik-dominated Jamiat-e Islami party, which historically has had close ties to the Muslim Brotherhood and been a strong proponent of fundamentalist Islam. Nevertheless, these parties are still more commonly identified in ethnic terms as "Hazara parties" or "Tajik parties" or "Uzbek parties". It was very common, for example, for interviewees in this study to equate being a Tajik with being a member of Jamiat-e Islami – e.g., "Sayed Ahmed belongs to Jamiat and Khalq [a faction of the former PDPA communist party] – because he is Tajik he belongs to Jamiat but ideologically he belongs to PDPA".[24]

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[21] Personal communication with Peter Dimitroff, NDI Kabul, 15 November 2005.
[22] Another reason why some candidates registered as independents was due to uncertainty as to whether the Ministry of Justice would register some of the major parties such as Jamiat-e Islami, Junbesh-e Milli and Hezb-e Afghanistan-e Naween. Personal communication with Peter Dimitroff, NDI Kabul, 15 November 2005.
[23] Interview with NGO election worker, Herat, 21 September 2005.
[24] Interview with WJ candidate, Kandahar, 4 October 2005.

For the Pashtuns, especially in Pashtun majority areas where their interests are not threatened, tribal identity is a stronger political mobilising force than ethnic identity. Most candidates in these areas viewed political parties as a liability with no added value, and recognised the need to mobilise voters directly along tribal lines. As one WJ candidate in Kandahar explained:

> People have bad memories – it will take at least a decade before people are educated and understand and support political parties…I would love to have a political party but it would have harmed me in this election. Tribe is our political party.[25]

This confounds political parties in Pashtun areas with a dilemma of how to appeal to voters across tribal lines. Historically, the Afghan Millat Party has been the main Pashtun nationalist party that has tried to do this by making Pashtun ethnic-based appeals rather than individual tribal appeals. The case study in Box 1 illustrates some of the difficulties of a more secular Pashtun nationalist party trying to win elections in the highly tribalised environment of Kandahar. While the party did generate some support among educated urban voters, it had to resort (unsuccessfully) to using candidates with tribal support to win voters in rural areas.

With the limited effectiveness of ethnic appeals in areas or at times when the Pashtuns do not feel collectively threatened, political parties have used religious appeals as the most common method in Pashtun areas to appeal across tribal lines. The predominately Pashtun factions of Hezb-e Islami, or Sayyaf's Dawat-e Islami party, for example, still make appeals along religious lines to win support, and position themselves more as "Islamic parties" than "Pashtun parties". Although not a political party, the Taliban in the mid-nineties showed quite spectacularly their ability to generate support across tribal lines in Pashtun areas. In addition, of course, to benefiting from considerable external military and financial support, they were able to generate support using a potent mixture of puritanical Islam and the promise to restore order out of the anarchic environment created by rapacious commanders and warring factions. Even they, however, appealed more to some tribal groups, such as the Ghilzai, than to others.

In the 2005 elections secular ideological appeals also had some success in appealing across tribal lines in Pashtun areas, although primarily in urban areas. Eleven of the 13 members elected to the WJ who belong to or are affiliated with liberal or leftist political parties are Pashtun. The most prominent examples are former senior communist party officials like Sayed Mohammad Gulabzoi in Khost and Noorulhaq Ulomi in Kandahar, who came in first and second respectively in conservative Pashtun areas. For both, tribal support was an important element in their victories, however, it is very likely that these were supplemented by some ideological votes that crossed tribal lines.

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[25] Interview with successful WJ candidate, Kandahar, 3 October 2005.

> **Box 1. The Afghan Millat Party in Kandahar**

Finance Minister Anwar-ul Haq Ahadi heads the Afghan Millat Party (also known as the Afghan Social Democratic Party). It has historically been the main secular Pashtun nationalist party and was well known for promoting Pashtun causes such as advocating against the Durand Line, which delineates the border between Pakistan and Afghanistan, and for promoting the use of Pashto as the national language. In recent years the party has sought to downplay its Pashtun nationalism in order to have a more mainstream appeal.

The Afghan Millat Party was the most active political party in Kandahar Province during the election campaign and its campaign illustrates some of the challenges parties currently face in electoral politics. For starters, the party became a victim of the personality-based politics and resulting factionalism that characterises Afghan party politics. The party has two *shuras* (councils) in Kandahar – a provincial *shura* that was headed by Azizullah Ishaqzai and a city *shura* headed by Dr. Abdul Rahman Jameel. Factional infighting, however, led to a split in the party at the provincial level. According to one party member:

> *There was lots of conflict in the Provincial Council. Abdul Ali Areemal, a WJ candidate, had a big conflict with Azizullah Ishaqzai. Areemal wanted to bring ex-Khalqis into the party and Ishaqzai opposed. A meeting was called and Ahadi's deputy came down from Kabul to solve the problem but the negotiations failed and the party divided into two groups with two offices. As a result Azizullah and I resigned from the party. All of this happened when candidates were enrolling their names. This is why Millat ended up with six WJ and four PC candidates.*[1]

This split resulted in both factions putting up their own WJ and PC candidates, with an initial total of three WJ and four PC candidates, a suicidal electoral move with a voting system that strongly punishes split voting. To further complicate matters, three other WJ candidates who were not Millat party members were also given Millat party tickets. Apparently the imperatives of Kandahar's tribal politics forced the party into accepting these additional candidates. According to PC candidate Bismillah Afghanmaal:

> *We were compelled due to the tribal system having so much influence to let others compete as Millat candidates. To gain votes from every tribe we had to have candidates from every tribe, but they didn't do well.*[2]

Indeed, they did not do well – the combined vote of all three candidates was only 1,012 out of 171,470 votes.

This highlights another challenge confronting political parties, especially in Pashtun areas of Afghanistan. A party can nominate tribally powerful candidates who can win based on their tribal rather than party vote, which Afghan Millat tried but failed to do in Kandahar. But if it is candidates who are winning votes for parties, and not vice versa, there is little to keep the winning candidate loyal to the party. Alternatively, the party can try to make more political or ideological appeals to educated urban voters for whom tribe may be a less important determinant of voting behavior. This was the strategy adopted by the only successful Afghan Millat Party PC candidate, Bismillah Afghanmaal, who is from the politically and numerically very weak Momand tribe in Kandahar. As he explained:

> *I was the only one without tribal support so I was selected to run from the city. Tribalism plays a major role in Kandahar and dominates politics. I have received 4,037 votes by this morning – these were not votes for tribe but votes by open-minded people. But it is difficult to compete with big tribal leaders who spent lots of money."*[3]

According to Afghanmaal, the party in Kandahar had been relatively successful in building its reputation and status among educated voters, but had been much less successful generating support among uneducated voters. Given the limited number of educated voters in Kandahar it was not surprising that of its six WJ and four PC candidates, only one PC candidate won a seat.

[1] Interview with Afghan Millat Party member, Kandahar, 6 October 2005.
[2] Interview with Bismillah Afghanmaal, Afghan Millat Party PC candidate, Kandahar, 6 October 2005
[3] Ibid.

2.3   The strong performance of female candidates

One of the unexpected results of the election was the strong performance of female candidates. The Afghan Constitution guarantees that "from each province on average at least

two female delegates shall have membership to the Wolesi Jirga",[26] therefore guaranteeing women 68 seats (27 percent) in the 249 member WJ. Similarly, the Afghan election law contains a provision that at least 25 percent of seats in the PCs must be reserved for women. A surprising number of women, however, won their seats in their own right and ended up not needing the quota provisions of the Constitution and election law.

Table 6 lists by region the 19 WJ and 29 PC female candidates who won their seats irrespective of the reserved seats for women. In Herat, Fauzia Gailani impressively topped the polls in the WJ election against a strong list of opponents, several of whom were reportedly backed by Ismail Khan. In Farah Province, Malalai Joya, the young woman who famously spoke out against warlords at the Constitutional Loya Jirga, won second place in the WJ elections. The other second place female winner was Samia Azizi Sadat in Parwan, who was disqualified prior to the elections for not resigning from her government post. She was subsequently reinstated following the questionable intervention of the President and the Supreme Court, which undermined the independence of the ECC. The publicity and sympathy vote generated by this fiasco may well have benefited her campaign.

Table 6. Female candidates who won WJ and PC seats without the benefit of women's quota provisions

REGION	WOLESI JIRGA	PROVINCIAL COUNCIL
North		*Balkh* – Zuhra Sahil #1 of 19 *Jowzjan* – Firoza Quraishi #6 of 9
Northeast	*Badakhshan* – Fawzia Kofi #8 of 9 *Kunduz* – Ustad Shukria Paikan Ahmadi #4 of 9 *Takhar* – Habiba Danish #4 of 9	*Baghlan* – Nooria Hameedi #12 of 15 *Kunduz* – Aisha Bik #1 of 15 *Takhar* – Maria #3 of 15, Karima Farangzad #5 of 15, Sohaila Joya #9 of 15
Central	*Kabul* – Malalai Shinwari #10 of 33, Fatima Nazry #23 of 33, Shukria Barakzai #24 of 33, Shinkai Zahine Karukhel #28 of 33, Shahla Atta #29 of 33, Qudriya Ibrahim Yazdan Parast #32 of 33 *Parwan* – Samia Azizi Sadat #2 of 6 *Wardak* – Sediqa Mubariz #4 of 5	*Kabul* – Huwaida Bawari #2 of 29, Nasrin Parsa #4 of 29, Amina Rasooli #6 of 29, Torpekai Zia #8 of 29, Rahima Mushakhas #10 of 29, Malalai Hamid Pashtoon #11 of 29, Anisa Maqsudi #15 of 29, Malim Ruqiya #17 of 29, Hirma Alokozai #23 of 29, Kamela Saifi #26 of 29 *Kapisa* – Zahida Kohistani #7 of 9 *Parwan* – Nazifa #15 of 15 *Wardak* – Kubra Mustafwi #6 of 9
East	*Nangarhar* – Safia Sidiqi #3 of 14, Nurziya Atmar #13 of 14	*Nangarhar* – Muhtarma #11 of 19
Southeast		*Ghazni* – Engineer Nafisa Azimi #1 of 19
South	*Uruzgan* – Sona Niloofar #3 of 3	*Kandahar* – Shakiba Ahmadi #13 of 15
West	*Badghis* – Azita Rafat #3 of 4 *Farah* – Malalai Joya #2 of 5 *Herat* – Fauzia Gailani #1 of 17, Shahnaz Hemati #14 of 17	*Herat* – Jahanteb Taheri #8 of 19, Shahnaz Ghawsi #12 of 19, Basirah Mohammadi #17 of 19, Karima Azizyar Jamshidi #18 of 19
Central Highlands	*Daikundi* – Shirin Mohsini #4 of 4	*Daikundi* – Fatima Hashemi #2 of 9, Raihana Azad #4 of 9
TOTAL	19	29

Source: Calculated from JEMB certified election results.

Even more impressive than the performance of female candidates in the WJ elections was their performance in the PC elections. In Balkh, Ghazni and Kunduz female candidates were the highest vote winners. The best result of female candidates was in the Kabul PC elections, where women won six of the top 11 seats and ended up winning 10 seats. This was two more seats than the women's quota of eight seats, and was the only case where the strong performance of female candidates resulted in an increase in the number of seats for women.

Another surprising aspect of this strong performance was that it was not as geographically focused as expected. Women won seats in their own right in 18 provinces representing every region of Afghanistan. Even in the more conservative Pashtun provinces of the east, southeast and south, some female candidates were able to win non-quota seats, although these were fewer in number than in other regions.

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[26] The Constitution of Afghanistan, Chapter 5, Article 83.

Zabul was the province with the poorest female election results, but this province also registered a female voter turnout rate of only 3.7 percent. The winning candidate defeated the only other female candidate by 751 to 577 votes. This was the only case where a WJ candidate won a seat with fewer than 1,000 votes, whereas prior to the election there was a concern that many women would get elected on the basis of the quota system with only a few hundred votes. In the Zabul PC elections, only two women contested for the three seats reserved for women, and therefore won with 213 and 203 votes respectively (a total of 13 female candidates out of a total of 121 won PC seats with fewer than 1,000 votes). In Uruzgan the only two female candidates to contest the WJ elections both did well, winning the third and fourth places (although only one won a seat), however, no female candidates contested the PC elections so the three female seats will remain vacant until the next election.

How did Fauzia Gailani, a politically unknown individual who ran a gym for women in Herat, defeat 161 other WJ candidates, many of whom had the strong political and financial backing of the powerful *jihad*-era commander, former Herat Governor, and now Cabinet Minister, Ismail Khan? How did women end up as the top vote winners in the PC election contests in Balkh, Ghazni and Kunduz? There are several possible explanations. One common explanation given in interviews as well as in the media for the success of some female candidates was the glamorous photos on their campaign posters. This, however, is clearly an insufficient explanation, as the strong performance of women was not a one-off occurrence but part of a discernible trend throughout the country. Another explanation is that Fauzia Gailani, like many other female candidates including Safia Sidiqi in Nangarhar, Malalai Joya in Farah, and Hawa Nuristani in Nuristan, ran very energetic and effective election campaigns. However, most female candidates were at a serious disadvantage in campaigning due to cultural constraints and security concerns that limited mobility, and financial constraints that in most cases were much greater than those faced by leading male candidates. The effectiveness of electoral campaigns, therefore, also does not seem to be a sufficient explanation. A more convincing explanation was that voting for female candidates was a protest vote against many of the unsavoury male candidates. Many interviewees expressed dismay at the number of well-known militia commanders, drug smugglers and criminals who had passed through the candidate vetting process and were allowed to contest the elections. Voting for female candidates may have been a subtle way of rejecting some of the male candidates who many Afghans hold responsible for the tragic conflict of the past 25 years.

For women to occupy one quarter of the seats in any legislature is impressive, let alone in a country where four years previously under Taliban rule women were not allowed to work out of their homes except in the health sector. Even more impressive is that many of these women won seats in their own right and cannot be accused of simply being in the WJ or PCs due to a quota system. This strong showing of female candidates will help allay the pre-election concern that the legitimacy of female WJ and PC members would be undermined by the fact that they had all been elected with much smaller numbers of votes than men.

2.4   Law makers or law breakers?

The unsavoury reputations of a large number of newly elected WJ members are tarnishing the image of the WJ before it has even convened. The international and national press have published numerous stories on the warlords, drug lords, human rights violators or plain criminals that won seats in the new National Assembly. According to one well-informed analysis, the newly elected NA will include 40 commanders still associated with armed groups, 24 members who belong to criminal gangs, 17 drug traffickers, and 19 members who face serious allegations of war crimes and human rights violations.[27] An even more pessimistic assessment was given by the Deputy Head of the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission, who stated that "more than 80 percent of winning candidates in the provinces and more than 60 percent in the capital Kabul have links to armed groups".[28]

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[27] Personal communication with international official, Kabul, 10 November 2005.
[28] IRIN News, 18 October 2005, "Rights body warns of warlords' success in elections",

The ECC did disqualify 17 candidates during the candidate challenge process, and 37 more who actually appeared on the ballots. Of these 54 candidates, 34 were disqualified for having links to illegal armed groups, 12 for holding a prohibited government position, five for having insufficient valid signatures to support their candidacies, and three for violating the election Code of Conduct or law.[29] However, the vetting of candidates was not always a transparent process or one that was uniformly applied. In Ghor Province, for example, considerable evidence existed to disqualify a candidate with well-known ongoing links to an illegal armed group. However, the name of the candidate was reportedly not submitted to the ECC as there were concerns that his disqualification would be "destabilising".[30] These political considerations help explain why, according to one election official's estimate, 207 candidates with links to illegal armed groups made it through the vetting process.[31]

It is clear that electoral bodies like the ECC should not be expected to take on the role of courts and make decisions on crimes against humanity and links to armed groups.[32] However, the diminished reputation, moral authority and legitimacy of the WJ could be one of the many consequences of the inattention to transitional justice issues by the government and the international community for the past four years. Several interviewees expressed their concern that the prestige that was previously associated with being a member of the NA would be lost due to the bad reputations of so many of the newly elected members. A WJ candidate from Kandahar questioned the return that will be given on the major investment in elections at this point in time:

> There will be three groups in parliament – smugglers, commanders and educated people. It will be a parliament with lots of fighting but little problem solving…They should not have spent this much on elections. They should have just selected some people from the provinces and districts. Now we've spent lots of money only to send warlords and criminals to the parliament. Human rights organisations in other countries are taking war criminals to court, but in Afghanistan war criminals…are being allowed to contest and win elections. Elections shouldn't have been held yet – people are still scared of warlords and couldn't vote freely.[33]

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http://www.irinnews.org/report.asp?ReportID=49623&SelectRegion=Asia&SelectCountry=AFGHANISTAN (accessed 28 November 2005).
[29] ECC Press Release, 10 November 2005, "Complaints Process Promotes Rule of Law," Kabul: ECC.
[30] Interview, Herat, 26 September 2005.
[31] "Afghanistan votes: A Glass Half Full, An Opportunity Wasted," *The Economist*, 15 September 2005.
[32] See the recommendations on transitional justice and the electoral system in the report of the OSCE, 6 October 2005, "Election Support Team to Afghanistan: Recommendations on 2005 Parliamentary Elections," pp. 9-11.
[33] Interview with WJ candidate, Kandahar, 6 October 2005.

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3.   How They Won: The Election Campaign

The 2005 election campaign period officially began on 17 August and ended on 15 September. Many candidates, however, unofficially launched their campaigns one or two months earlier and continued their activities until the polls closed on election day, and in some cases until the ballot counting process ended. The focus of these campaigns was on the individual candidates rather than issues. This was not surprising, as 5,800 individuals were competing against each other to get elected and it was not a competition between political parties and their platforms. The main campaign priorities of candidates were to identify and mobilise voter networks, and to familiarise voters with their names, faces, election symbols and how to vote.

One of the major challenges candidates faced was how to campaign and mobilise voters in province-wide constituencies when the influence of many candidates was more localised at the district level or below in rural areas, or within specific urban constituencies. Especially in large provinces with many districts, unless a candidate was very dominant in district politics, competing against rivals and dividing votes in district-level politics was usually insufficient to get elected. Successful candidates needed to mobilise networks that reached into several districts, or covered both a major urban centre as well as some rural areas.

The voter education dimension to the campaign was another challenge in an environment where the majority of voters are illiterate and have only had one prior experience voting in a national election. The limited time and investment in civic and voter education activities by the government and international community before the elections meant that candidates had to invest some of their campaign time and resources not just on teaching voters who to vote for but also on how to vote. The complexity of the ballot added to the challenge of candidates trying to make sure their supporters could find their name, face or symbol on the ballots.[34] In Kabul Province, which had nearly 400 WJ candidates, voters had to search through seven pages of a tabloid newspaper-sized ballot to find the candidate of their choice. Several candidates in Herat highlighted the problems caused by lack of voter education:

> *The biggest problem on election day was voters not knowing how to vote. Most of my supporters could not find my picture. My neighbours wanted to vote for me and asked for help from election staff, but no one helped and their ballots were cancelled because they didn't know how to vote.*[35]

For some candidates security issues were a major factor restricting campaign activities and, in some cases, the ability to campaign at all. Seven candidates were killed during the campaign period (and two elected WJ members have been killed since). Many candidates still had links to illegal armed groups and in some cases used these links to intimidate rival candidates and their supporters. In southern provinces the Taliban insurgency and their threats against both candidates and voters severely restricted campaign activities:

> *I belong to one of the major tribes from Panjwai, but due to the lack of security I couldn't carry on my campaign. I was threatened that I would be killed if I contested. I didn't formally withdraw but the people who wanted to vote for me were given life threats. But as an Afghan youth I thought it was my duty to participate in the elections to help rebuild and bring peace to Afghanistan. But I couldn't campaign freely. The big candidates have*

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[34] The large number of symbols needed for so many candidates added to the confusion, as did the duplication of the same symbol used for different candidates. For example, one candidate could have a symbol of one car or horse, while his/her competitor in the same race might have a symbol of two cars or horses. Likewise, a candidate for WJ could have the same symbol as a candidate for PC (with the only difference being a circle or square around the symbol to indicate which legislative body the candidate was running for). Some voters were not familiar with some of the assigned symbols, such as binoculars. The symbol of a pest exterminator spray can assigned to Ismail Khan's son in Herat was one of the more interesting symbol choices.
[35] Interview with PC candidate, Pashtun Zarghun District, Herat, 19 September 2005.

relations with government and with Taliban and used both against me. The Taliban sent me warning letters and sent people to tell me to withdraw or else I would be killed.[36]

Despite the challenges, 2,775 WJ candidates (including 328 women) and 3,025 PC candidates (including 247 women) campaigned in 69 different races[37] to win 249 WJ seats and 420 PC seats.[38] Never before has Afghanistan experienced such a far-reaching election campaign that, as one candidate observed, will have an impact regardless of the election results:

The elections have helped people see that they are important. Candidates have had to go to voters and ask for their votes. Candidates have had to treat people well if they want to get their vote, and if they want to get re-elected.[39]

3.1 Mobilising voter networks

The starting point in the election campaigns of most candidates was identifying and mobilising networks of voters. The first network of support candidates turned to were those closest to home – family, friends and neighbours. Beyond this inner circle the focus of candidate campaigns turned towards winning the support of local influentials who could deliver blocs of votes based primarily on religious or kinship grounds. According to a WJ candidate in Kandahar, "I started my campaign one month before the official campaign period by developing relations with tribal leaders in all 14 districts and 10 city wards."[40]

Candidates lobbied local influentials, including village leaders or *arbabs*, village elders, the local mullah, school teachers, district officials, district *shura* members and tribal elders. Group leaders often tried to use their blocs of votes to leverage promises out of candidates for support. For example, the internally displaced persons (IDPs) living in temporary camps outside of Kandahar City reportedly sent their representatives to candidates to promise the combined support of IDPs in exchange for promises of land.[41] The promises of support that local influentials gave candidates could not always be counted on, as one candidate complained: "The most important campaign activity was meeting with tribal elders. But the biggest problem is that the tribal elders make promises of support to everyone."[42]

Candidates also used professional networks to win the support of voters.[43] Some candidates who were doctors mentioned the support they hoped to receive from patients: "Because I'm a doctor people come to see me from all groups. I treat everyone and will therefore get support from all groups."[44] Many of the female candidates in particular had been teachers for many years and several cited the support they expected to receive from these teacher–student networks: "Many of my students and the families of my students will vote for me."[45] Some former government employees were counting on their networks of government colleagues in the various departments or ministries where they had worked.

Professional networks were more important in urban areas, but some rural districts had such examples as well. In Ghorian District of Herat Province, for example, the successful WJ candidate, Dr. Saleh Seljuki, ran a well-regarded clinic in the district centre. As the only non-Pashtun candidate from the district, he was expected to win all the non-Pashtun votes.

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[36] Interview with PC candidate, Kandahar, 6 October 2005. One of the more creative tales heard of alleged election dirty tricks was of a tribal leader candidate who had some of his tribesmen dress up as Taliban and go to the homes of supporters of his opponents on the eve of the elections and warn them not to leave their houses to vote on election day.
[37] There were WJ and PC contests in each of Afghanistan's 34 provinces, plus one separate electoral contest for 10 reserved seats for the country's nomadic population known as *kuchis*.
[38] JEMB Secretariat, 15 September 2005, "Background Briefing, Wolesi Jirga and Provincial Council Elections 2005," http://www.jemb.org/eng/electoral_system/jembs_background_briefing.pdf (accessed 28 November 2005).
[39] Interview with community development worker, Kandahar, 3 October 2005.
[40] Interview with successful WJ candidate, Kandahar, 3 October 2005.
[41] Interview with PC candidate, Kandahar, 7 October 2005.
[42] Interview with PC candidate, Pashtun Zarghun District, Herat, 19 September 2005.
[43] It was common for candidates to highlight their professional titles of "doctor", "engineer" or "ustad" (teacher) alongside their names on their posters and on the ballots.
[44] Interview with WJ candidate, Herat, 24 September 2005.
[45] Interview with female WJ candidate, Herat, 22 September 2005.

However, he was also expected to win some votes from grateful Pashtun patients. As one teacher from Ghorian noted:

> *Dr. Saleh will win all non-Pashtun votes plus some Pashtun votes because he is a doctor. Dr. Saleh is a very honest man and all the women like him. Other doctors won't see patients without money, but he doesn't take money from teachers or from the poor. I saw Kuchi women come and ask where to find Dr. Saleh on the ballot.*[46]

Despite the unpopularity of political parties in Afghanistan, they played a more important role in providing networks of supports for candidates than is generally acknowledged or understood. This was particularly true in non-Pashtun areas, where a high percentage of winning candidates were affiliated with political parties. In Herat, for example, the visit from Kabul of Hazara Hezb-i Wahdat leader Mohammad Mohaqeq, and his endorsement of one WJ and one PC candidate, reportedly played a major role in these candidates winning their seats. Political parties also supported some candidates by providing party workers who served as candidate agents, as well as some financial support. In Herat, Ismail Khan reportedly backed a total of 11 male and four female candidates, and according to one unconfirmed report provided $10,000 in financial support for the candidate election campaigns.[47]

Campaign alliances between WJ and PC candidates were another tactic adopted by some candidates to mobilise additional voter networks. There was considerable variation in the use of campaign alliances in the elections. In Kandahar, as described in greater detail later, most tribes went through a process of selecting and endorsing WJ and PC candidates, although the selected candidates did not always campaign as a team. In Herat the use of campaign alliances was less common, except among the Shi'a and Hazara minority groups. For some candidates there were very good reasons not to form an alliance:

> *I didn't create any alliances with Provincial Council candidates. It would have been risky to support one candidate as many were representing tribes. If a Wolesi Jirga candidate backed a Provincial Council candidate from one tribe they would risk alienating supporters of candidates from other tribes.*[48]

3.1.1 The role of religion in mobilising voter networks

Religion and the support of religious leaders was reportedly an important factor in mobilising support from some voters in Herat Province, especially in non-Pashtun areas:

> *In Pashtun areas tribe is most important. In non-Pashtun areas religious leaders are more important – especially Sayeds and Pirs but not mullahs. For example, Sayed Shafiq is respected because he is a Sayed – he would have less respect if he was "Mullah Shafiq". Names related to the war like "mullahs" are not liked by the people.*[49]

Several interviewees mentioned the advantage of being a Sayed, a group that traces its lineage back to the Prophet Mohammad and is therefore respected by all ethnic and religious groups. Among the WJ candidates, 14 used the title of "Sayed" or "Saadat" in their name on the ballot. One female WJ candidate complained about this:

> *I am a Sayed but I did not use this in my campaign. Fauzia Gailani did use this as it plays a very strong role. Her first poster just said "Fauzia Gailani", but her next poster said "Fauzia Gailani Saadat", highlighting that she is a Sayed. I didn't use tribe, religion or money in my campaign. Chances are higher for those people who used negative issues like tribe, religion and money.*[50]

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[46] Interview with teacher, Ghorian District, Herat, 24 September 2005.
[47] Interview with official in Herat, 26 September 2005.
[48] Interview with WJ candidate, Ghorian District, Herat, 24 September 2005.
[49] Interview with WJ candidate, Ghorian District, Herat, 24 September 2005.
[50] Interview with WJ candidate, Herat, 21 September 2005.

In Kandahar several interviewees reported that the most religious people did not participate in the elections. This was explained by some in terms of the messages communicated by the Taliban that if you participated in the elections you were against Islam.[51] Another reported that some religious leaders did not think that a secret ballot was Islamic because in Islam voting should be open and public and not secret.[52]

The support of religious leaders was important for followers of some of the Sufi religious orders such as the Naqshbandi, led by Sebghatollah Mujaddidi, or the Qadiriya, led by Pir Sayed Ahmad Gailani. One candidate from Karokh District of Herat explained how the followers of another WJ candidate in that district who was a religious leader from one of the Sufi orders would "vote for George Bush if their religious leader tells them to".[53]

Herati Shi'a and the use of religion

Herat Province has a sizeable Shi'a minority population that live primarily in and around Herat City. The Herati Shi'a can be divided into two groups – the Tajik Shi'a who have inhabited Herat for centuries (an estimated 10 percent of the population), and the Hazara Shi'a who migrated to the city during the past two decades (an estimated five percent of the population).[54] There was a strong perception from the non-Shi'a that the Shi'a were very well-organised politically to contest the elections, well-resourced by Iran, and had reduced the number of candidates and organised which areas would vote for which candidates. The perception of Shi'a candidates who were interviewed, however, was that they had failed to organise effectively for the elections.

From the Shi'a community 17 candidates registered to contest the WJ election and 21 to contest the PC election. One Shi'a PC candidate described the efforts made to reduce the number of candidates in order not to divide the community's votes:

> *Before the deadline to withdraw names we met five or six times to discuss* [reducing candidate numbers]*, but we could not get more than 25 candidates to attend the meetings because some wanted to avoid being pressured into stepping down. Some said we know we won't win but we want to use this opportunity to become known, so they didn't agree to step down. Religious leaders agreed to reduce the number of candidates to 10–12. We suggested that they ask from the Shi'a community and get their ideas, and choose five candidates (three men and two women) for the PC and WJ elections. But the 38 candidates didn't agree because people didn't know them and they knew they wouldn't be selected using this process. I said that if people don't know you then they won't vote for you, but they didn't agree. Also, 5–10 on the list belonged to Iran so they didn't want to step down.*[55]

The main Shi'a mosque in Herat, the Sadiqia Mosque, reportedly played a role in selecting and endorsing Shi'a candidates. However, the main organisation that tried to organise the Shi'a community for the elections was the Majma-e Madani (Civil Society). Majma-e Madani was formed in 2001 by Shi'a from Herat, partly as an effort to promote greater unity between the Tajik and Hazara Shi'a of Herat. Registered in Kabul in 2004, Majma-e Madani, according to some of its members, actively campaigned for President Karzai during the 2004 Presidential election.

In an effort to reduce the numbers of Shi'a candidates, a 14-member commission was formed and meetings held at Sadiqia Mosque and Majma-e Madani, but ultimately only two or three PC candidates stepped down. Majma-e Madani therefore proceeded with selecting its own list of six WJ candidates and six PC candidates representing both Tajik and Hazara Shi'a communities, and printed a poster with the 12 candidates. Twelve WJ and PC candidates, however, was a highly unrealistic number to be put forward by one faction from the small Shi'a community and was an example of how even relatively well organised minority

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[51] Interview with NGO worker, Kandahar, 5 October 2005.
[52] Interview with UN national staff member, Kandahar, 3 October 2005.
[53] Interview with WJ candidate, Herat, 22 September 2005.
[54] A. Giustozzi. 2005. *The Politics of Provincial Administration in Afghanistan*. Unpublished paper. Kabul: AREU.
[55] Interview with PC candidate, Herat, 26 September 2005. See next page for explanation of the allegations related to candidates being supported by Iran.

communities struggled to reduce candidate numbers to strategic levels. In the end, only one male and one female candidate from Majma-e Madani won seats in the WJ, and only one in the PC.

The Majma-e Madani electoral alliance met with considerable opposition from other Shi'a candidates not included on the list. There were also rumours and a popular perception that Majma-e Madani was supported by Iran. At one point in the campaign a document was published in the press that allegedly originated from the Iranian consulate in Herat listing the candidates supported by Iran, including several of the Majma-e Madani candidates.

One of the interesting features of the campaign in Herat was the rhetoric of Iranian involvement and the strong anti-Iranian sentiment expressed by Shi'a and non-Shi'a alike. In the words of one Shi'a candidate, "80–90 percent of the Shi'a think Iran is bad. Refugees to Iran were not treated well and could not go to university."[56] The favourite insult in Herat seemed to be that someone was backed by Iran. Every Shi'a candidate accused every other Shi'a candidate of being backed by Iran, and nearly all non-Shi'a accused all the Shi'a of being backed by Iran. As one of the Shi'a candidates affiliated with Majma-e Madani complained:

> *Ahmed Behzad, who is a friend of Mohaqeq (and opposed to Karzai), said in his speeches that Majma-e Madani belongs to Iran and follows the orders of Iran and gets money from Iran. He said that the list of 12 candidates came from the Iranian consulate. This baseless propaganda against Majma-e Madani was successful and reduced the number of votes for Majma-e Madani candidates. But Behzad and Mohaqeq are supported by Iran – they spent $45,000 on their campaign. This came as a surprise that he accused us of being supported by Iran when he is supported by Iran. Without this propaganda we would have had the highest votes in Herat, but now people are suspicious and our result is much lower.*[57]

Box 2. The Hazaras of Herat

The Hazara Shi'a of Herat also failed to organise themselves effectively for the elections, as they ended up with five Hazara WJ and 12 PC candidates. The main electoral contest between Hazara Shi'a divided along factional lines between the Hezb-i Wahdat faction aligned with Vice President Khalili, which put up one Hazara WJ candidate and six PC candidates, and the faction aligned with Mohammad Mohaqeq, which put up one WJ and one PC candidate. The tensions between these two groups grew in Herat during the Presidential elections, when the Khalili faction supported President Karzai and the Mohaqeq faction supported Mohaqeq.

Musa Rezayee, a Hazara originally from Ghazni and a former commander with Hezb-i Wahdat, was the head of the Khalili faction in Herat and one of the few candidates in Herat who ran on a party ticket. He was also one of the founding members of the Majma-e Madani. Strongly opposed to Rezayee was Ahmed Behzad, a former journalist with Radio Azadi, who ran as an independent candidate. Rezayee was apparently the front-runner in the elections until Mohaqeq visited Herat before the elections and endorsed Behzad for the WJ election and Ghulam Ali Zaray Haqjoo for the PC elections. Both Behzad and Haqjoo won their seats. Rezayee won more than 6,000 votes but failed to win a seat. If the Hazara community in Herat had not been divided along factional lines it is likely that they could have doubled the number of seats won to two WJ and two PC seats.

3.1.2 The role of tribe in mobilising voter networks

Most candidates interviewed for this study spoke disapprovingly of the use of tribal and ethnic appeals in electoral politics but went on to acknowledge their importance. While they often emphasised how they had not resorted to using ethnicity or tribe in their campaigns they accused their opponents of doing so. Use of tribal and ethnic appeals was often attributed to illiteracy and ignorance, especially in rural areas, and contrasted with educated urban voters who selected candidates based on their educational qualifications and professional experience: "Educated people look at candidates' qualifications – who is well-educated and

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[56] Interview with PC candidate, Herat, 26 September 2005.
[57] Interview with WJ candidate, Herat, 26 September 2005.

could be a good representative. In the districts tribe, money and religion are most important."[58]

Herat: In Herat Province the Pashtuns are a majority in many of the rural districts, especially in the south of the province, whereas non-Pashtun ethnic groups are a majority in Herat City and in some of the western districts bordering Iran. While reliable population data do not exist, some estimates place the Pashtun population of Herat at approximately 40 percent.[59] In the elections, however, only four of the 17 winning candidates were Pashtun. A major contributing factor to this poor showing of Pashtun candidates in Herat Province was that most Pashtun votes were divided along tribal lines at the district level. Few of the Pashtun tribes succeeded in organising their votes at a provincial or multi-district level. For example, from the predominately Pashtun district of Pashtun Zarghun, there were nine different candidates for the WJ election alone. Four Pashtun tribes – Achakzai, Alokozai, Barakzai and Noorzai – all put up candidates (some more than one), with the remaining candidates being either Tajik or Arab Sayeds.

In Herat Province, the Barakzais were one of the only Pashtun tribes that succeeded in organising at the provincial level. As explained by a Barakzai tribal leader below, prior to the elections the elders of the Barakzai tribe throughout the province met and decided to only support one candidate for the WJ election and one candidate for the PC election, both of whom ended up winning seats:

> About nine months ago we had a gathering of Barakzai from 15 districts of Herat Province and 10 wards of the city here in my house. About 70–80 people attended the meeting. This is the first time the Barakzais have met in a more formalised way. The purpose of the first meeting was to gather our tribe, to reclaim our rights and to have an acceptable position in the political affairs of Herat. First we build the Barakzai tribe, then the Pashtun tribe, then Afghanistan. The other tribes did not get organised. We told the other tribes that they could do like us. The Popalzais and Nurzais tried – they met at the Park Hotel – but they were not successful. Someone from Kabul came – a Popalzai – to try to get the Popalzais to only support one candidate but they failed…

> We continued having these gatherings and as the elections grew closer the discussions grew hotter. On 21 July 2005, about two months ago, we had a Barakzai meeting on the topic of "Parliamentary Affairs". We met from 8 am to 4 pm in this room. We decided to appoint a commission of five people and two advisors who were engineers – learned people – to decide which candidates to support. We first had five candidates but we decided to only support one Barakzai – Abdulsalam Qazizada.

> After that we started the campaign. In Pashtun Zarghun and Obeh Districts we invited 2,000 people and 150–200 from the city to a public meeting. One hundred motorcycles came out to welcome us with Afghan flags and escorted us to a big garden. First Abdulsalam Qazizada spoke. Then we provided a big lunch – nan, pilau, Pepsi, meat (we killed 20 sheep). We also had a public meeting in Ghorian but not as big.

> Pashtun Zarghun District has the most Barakzais, then Shindand, Guzara, Obeh and Injil. Our main strategy was to gather people and tell them that the tribal elders had appointed Qazizada as the Barakzai candidate. We had to refer to our tribe because people didn't know Abdulsalam outside Ghorian. Most voting was tribal – we received 80 percent of our votes from Barakzai…[60]

Kandahar: In Herat the use of tribal identity to mobilise votes was often a liability for Pashtun candidates because tribes organised and competed against each other at a district level and not at the provincial level necessary to win a seat. In Kandahar, however, the influence of the major tribes and major tribal leaders extended across several districts and tribal identity was

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[58] Interview with government official, Herat, 21 September 2005.
[59] A. Giustozzi, 2005, *The Politics of Provincial Administration in Afghanistan*.
[60] Interview with Asif Barakzai, Barakzai Tribal Leader in Herat, 27 September 2005.

therefore the most effective means to mobilise votes and win seats.[61] Because tribal identity was the most important determinant of voting behaviour, the real decision left to most voters was which candidate within the tribe to vote for. As a result, intra-tribal competition among candidates was in many ways greater than inter-tribal competition, as illustrated by the bitter competition between Barakzai candidates in Kandahar.

There are no reliable population figures that provide a breakdown of Kandahar's population along tribal lines. According to one source, the three largest Pashtun tribes in Kandahar are the Popalzais, Barakzais and Alokozais, followed by the Noorzais, Achakzais and Alizais.[62] As described below, the major Pashtun tribes in the province all made an effort to reduce the number of candidates from their tribe in order not to divide their votes. While some were successful in this regard, most were not.

The elections in Kandahar demonstrated that while tribal identity is still very strong and dominated voting behaviour, the tribal system has been seriously eroded during the past 25 years of conflict in Afghanistan. That tribe alone does not ensure electoral success is demonstrated by the case of the Alokozai tribe, which did not win any WJ seats despite being one of the strongest tribes in Kandahar. The fact that the Alokozai WJ candidate selected by the tribal elders failed to win a seat indicates that many voters do not always vote the way they are told to by tribal elders. The weakening authority of tribal elders is also supported by the fact that in most cases the candidates not selected by the respective tribal *shuras* refused to step down. The weakening of tribal systems was an observation made by several interviewees:

> Some tribal elders tried to organise but even their own tribes didn't trust them…No candidates would agree to give up their seat to another tribesman. As political parties have broken down so have tribes broken down. Thirty years ago people voted for their tribal leaders but not today. My father was a leader of the tribe all the way to Herat. The tribe used to be strong but not anymore.[63]

> The traditional tribal system is breaking down. The tribal economy doesn't exist anymore. Ownership of land and water systems was the basis for control and many of those systems have broken down.[64]

Despite this weakening, tribal identity is still alive and well and was widely perceived to be the decisive determinant of voting behaviour in Kandahar. All the male WJ candidates who won seats in Kandahar did so with significant tribal support. As one candidate who had returned from a western country to contest the WJ elections admitted, "I've learned a lot about tribal issues. As an educated person I put tribe second, but I learned a lot about it and realise that it's the most important thing."[65]

Tribal identity, however, is much stronger in rural than in urban areas, which did provide opportunities for candidates to win some city votes based on issues or ideologies other than tribe. One interviewee noted, "Rural areas are stronger politically because tribal politics are stronger. Tribalism is weakened by education, civic affairs and some ideological interests in urban areas."[66] The strong second place finish in the WJ elections of the former PDPA official, Noorulhaq Ulomi, was explained by most interviewees as being due to both strong support from his Barakzai tribe as well as support from some left-leaning educated voters and former government officials. The victory in the PC elections of the Afghan Millat Party candidate, Bismillah Afghanmaal, who had little tribal support, is another example of non-tribal voting in Kandahar City. However, as pointed out by a successful WJ candidate, "It's hard to win votes just from the city – most successful candidates have roots in rural areas."[67]

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[61] For example, the Popalzai tribe of President Karzai have a significant presence in at least seven districts, and the influence of Popalzai leaders like Ameer Lalai and Ahmad Wali Karzai are not confined to the Popalzais in just one district.
[62] Interview with government official, Kandahar, 1 October 2005.
[63] Interview with WJ candidate, Kandahar, 2 October 2005.
[64] Interview with Afghan NGO worker, Kandahar, 2 October 2005.
[65] Interview with WJ candidate, Kandahar, 4 October 2005.
[66] Interview with Afghan official, Kandahar, 1 October 2005.
[67] Interview with successful WJ candidate, Kandahar, 3 October 2005.

Organising the Popalzai votes

In Kandahar the Popalzais were the best organised tribe for the elections and understood how to use the single non-transferable voting system to their advantage. President Karzai's brother, Ahmed Wali Karzai, was able to use his influence to reduce the number of Popalzai candidates and to organise the tribe to primarily support two WJ candidates – his brother Qayoom Karzai, and Ameer Lalai, a Popalzai tribal leader and former *jihad* commander (see Box 3 for Ahmed Wali Karzai's description of this process). Popalzais put up four PC candidates, including Ahmed Wali Karzai. They ended up with the best election result of all the tribes, with Qayoom Karzai securing the top position in the WJ elections, and Ameer Lalai winning a seat in fifth position. Ahmed Wali Karzai was the top vote winner in the PC elections, and Sayyed Jan Khakrezwal won a seat by placing seventh.

Box 3. Ahmed Wali Karzai explains Popalzai voter mobilisation

Three months ago when the candidate registration was started we had a meeting with 700 Popalzai elders from each village. There were 19 Popalzais who wanted to contest the Wolesi Jirga elections and 21 for the Provincial Council. I said, "Let them all campaign and 15–20 days before the election we'll have another meeting." [At the next meeting]…all the candidates went on stage and gave their speeches. The whole tribe then decided that I should choose which candidates should contest but I said, "No – each district should give four elders for a total of about 30 elders." We went into a separate room and voted – 24 voted for Qayoom and Lalai…We then adopted a similar procedure for the PC candidates and I was selected with three others.

My strategy was to get two Popalzais elected for the Wolesi Jirga and four for the Provincial Council. We divided areas and decided which areas would vote for which candidate. For example, Daman is 95 percent Popalzai with about 15,000 votes so we decided Daman and Shahwalikot [Ameer Lalai's home district] *would vote for Ameer Lalai…Nesh, Gorak, Kakrez, Dand, Arghestan and the city would vote for Qayoom.*

Source: interview with Ahmed Wali Karzai, Kandahar, 7 October 2005

An important factor in why the Popalzais were successful was that they were able to hide some of their intra-tribal tensions and campaign in a relatively united manner. The potential for divisions within the tribe certainly existed, as several people reported that relations were not good between the Karzais and the somewhat marginalised Popalzai leader Ameer Lalai. However, because Ameer Lalai controlled Shahwalikot and lives in Daman, two districts with large numbers of Popalzais, the Karzais had to reach an accommodation with him. On the other hand, as one interviewee explained, Lalai also needed a deal with the Karzais:

> *Lalai was DDRed* [disarmed] *and as a result he lost his* jihadi *position. But he still has lots of enemies so he needed a government position for protection…Shahwalikot is 70 percent Popalzai and there were two Popalzai candidates from this area – Ameer Lalai and Dr. Hayatullah...Lalai reached a compromise with Qayoom to support him in Shahwalikot against Hayatullah, and Lalai would support Qayoom in his area. Hayatullah also tried to reach a similar compromise with Qayoom to defeat Lalai.*[68]

Barakzai intra-tribal competition

The Barakzai are among the three largest Pashtun tribes in Kandahar Province, but since the fall of the Taliban they have been the most powerful tribe due to the role and influence of Gul Agha Sherzai. Other than a brief stint as the Minister for Urban Affairs in 2004, Sherzai was Governor of Kandahar from the fall of the Taliban until his transfer to Nangarhar Province as Governor in June 2005. As a result, Barakzais dominated the key government posts at the provincial and district levels and many benefited from Gul Agha's direct patronage. A major contributing factor to the successful WJ campaign of the Barakzai candidate Khalid Pashtoon, who previously had served as Sherzai's official spokesperson, was the strong backing provided by Gul Agha.

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[68] Interview, Kandahar, 1 October 2005.

The Barakzais provide a good example of how intra-tribal competition was at times greater than inter-tribal competition. Prior to the elections, efforts were made to reduce the number of Barakzai candidates, which according to some reports included Barakzai candidates offering money to other candidates to withdraw from the race. Gul Agha Sherzai also visited Kandahar from Nangarhar before the elections to help organise his tribe. Unlike the Popalzais, however, these efforts failed to unite the tribe around an agreed upon slate of candidates, and ultimately 12 Barakzai candidates contested the WJ election. Despite the fierce intra-tribal competition within the Barakzais, the tribe still succeeded in equalling the Popalzai result of two WJ and two PC candidates winning seats.

The Barakzais generally divided into pro- and anti-Gul Agha factions. Some explained this division as one between the Nusrat and Nooruddin branches of the Barakzai tribe, others as a conflict between traditional Barakzai tribal families opposed to the entry of new tribal leaders like Gul Agha, and still others on the merits and demerits of the respective Barakzai candidates. The Barakzai factional politics became personified in a bitterly contested competition between Khalid Pashtoon, closely allied with Gul Agha Sherzai, and Noorulhaq Ulomi, the leader of the Hezb-e Mutahid-e Milli and a former senior PDPA government official and Governor General of the southern zone during the Najibullah era.

Khalid Pashtoon is not a traditional Barakzai tribal leader nor was he active during the *jihad* years. He returned to Afghanistan during the final days of the Taliban and became Gul Agha's spokesperson when the latter joined forces with the US Coalition to oust the Taliban from Kandahar. After Gul Agha was appointed Governor of Kandahar, Khalid Pashtoon became the head of the Department of Foreign Affairs in Kandahar and the liaison officer between the Coalition Forces and the government. These positions gave him high visibility and influence, an important electoral asset for voters looking for access to government and patronage opportunities.

Noorulhaq Ulomi was one of the most senior communist era officials contesting the 2005 elections, and as such his candidacy generated considerable controversy in Kandahar. Opponents accused him of being a communist with blood on his hands and supporters contrasted him with jihadi commanders who they claimed had blood on their hands. The fact that he nearly secured the top position in Kandahar, narrowly losing to the President's brother Qayoom Karzai, indicates that for many voters his communist past was not a big issue. According to interviewees, Ulomi had the advantage of being able to attract voters from three different groups. First, were the votes of Barakzais who were opposed to Gul Agha Sherzai and Khalid Pashtoon. Second were the more ideological votes of those still sympathetic with the left, including many former communists still in government positions. Some observers also mentioned that many Achakzai voters with links to the leftist Pashtun nationalist Pakhtunkhwa party in Pakistan also voted for him. Finally, many educated voters from the city were reported to have supported Ulomi, who they preferred over other candidates with reputations for being warlords or drug traffickers.

Another dynamic within the Barakzais was the attempt by the traditional Barakzai tribal leaders to use the elections to regain some power back from Gul Agha Sherzai, who now presents himself as the leader of the Barakzai tribe. Sherzai had humble origins and was not from one of the families who had traditionally served as the leaders of the tribe. As one opponent explained, this was one cause of opposition to Gul Agha from within the tribe:

> Gul Agha Sherzai is trying to enforce his role as leader of the Barakzais. We have a problem because he has power and is using his government position, but the old Barakzai leaders don't accept him. The old leaders are trying to regain some influence. His removal to Jalalabad helped reduce his control over the Barakzais.[69]

Alokozais – the tribal losers

The Alokozais were the least successful of the major tribes in Kandahar Province in the WJ elections. Despite being one of the largest tribes they failed to win a single WJ seat, and won

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[69] Interview with WJ candidate, Kandahar, 4 October 2005.

only one PC seat. As described in Box 4 below, the Alokozai tribal elders went through a process similar to the Popalzais of selecting which candidates the tribe would support. From 18 Alokozai WJ candidates they selected Haji Shahkaka, a tribal elder from Arghandab who had been active in the *jihad* and in recent years served as District Governor of Arghandab. They selected three individuals, including Agha Lalai Dastgeeri, an influential former commander and leader of the Panjwai Shura, as their PC candidates.

Box 4. Agha Lalai Dastgeeri, PC candidate, explains Alokozai voter organisation

One month prior to the elections, the elders of the Alokozai tribe met at the house of Mullah Naqib [the current leader of the Alokozais in Kandahar]. *All the candidates gave their speeches highlighting their aims and policies. Some tribal elders, including Mullah Naqib, were then selected and given the authority to choose the candidates on behalf of the tribe. They went to a separate room and selected one Wolesi Jirga candidate and three Provincial Council candidates. But some of the candidates did not agree with the decision of the tribe…Thirty years of war has destroyed the old tribal system. Before there were very few tribal elders – now there are many and there are many divisions between children. They are not unified. Many* jihadi *groups and political parties have also divided people and have weakened the tribal system.*

Source: Interview with Agha Lalai Dastgeeri, Kandahar, 8 October 2005

The frequently heard statement that "people voted according to how they were told to vote by the tribal elders" did not prove to be true in the case of the Alokozais. The endorsement of the Alokozai tribal elders, including the tribal leader Mullah Naqib, clearly did not result in most Alokozais voting for Haji Shahkaka, who ended up in fifteenth place in the WJ contest. Different explanations were given for this poor showing. Some felt that the choice of candidates was the problem, as Haji Shahkaka, although a respected tribal elder, was quite old and not very powerful or influential. The theme that voters wanted powerful and influential representatives who would be effective in delivering patronage and resolving their problems emerged in many interviews. There had been a stronger Alokozai candidate, Izzatullah Wasefi, who belongs to an influential Alokozai family from Kandahar. However, following his appointment by President Karzai as Governor of Farah Province, he withdrew as a candidate.

Some blamed weak tribal leadership for the Alokozais' poor performance. Mullah Naqib, other than hosting the meeting where the candidates were selected, largely remained disengaged from the election campaign. Unlike many other tribal leaders, Mullah Naqib chose not to contest the elections, reportedly preferring instead to focus on his business interests. Furthermore, Khan Mohammad, the powerful former Alokozai militia commander and head of the Kandahar Garrison, had lost influence in Kandahar since his appointment as the Chief of Police in Balkh Province. As one interviewee noted, the Alokozais failed to organise because "Wasefi didn't campaign, Mullah Naqib sat back and did not actively participate, and Khan Mohammad is in Mazar."[70]

3.2 Campaign activities

Voter mobilisation based on religion or tribe was only one strategy candidates employed to gain votes. Candidates also utilised a number of other outreach activities during the month-long campaign period which sought to make their names memorable to the public on election day, as discussed below.

3.2.1 Poster mania

The most visible signs of the election campaign were the hundreds of thousands of colourful election posters that competed for space on the walls, windows and trees of Afghanistan's cities and towns. In a country where the majority of voters are illiterate, and where there was little time for voter education, campaign posters played an important role in educating voters about the candidate's names, faces and election symbols. This was the essential information voters needed on election day to help them identify their preferred candidates on the

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[70] Interview with UN staff member, Kandahar, 3 October 2005.

extremely complicated ballots. Several candidates also mentioned that campaign posters were an important way to introduce themselves to voters in districts other than their own.

As the examples in Box 5 illustrate, candidates adopted a variety of strategies to make their posters appeal to voters. Some favoured the modern technocratic look and wore suits and ties, while others preferred a traditional look and put on their tribal turbans. Some opted for glamour and the "Bollywood" film star look, and others adopted a religious pose. Some included the photos of important historical figures in Afghanistan while others included the photo of their party leaders. One tactic reportedly used by several female candidates was to use photos for their posters that were taken a decade or two earlier. Several posters in Kandahar included a photo of President Karzai next to the candidate's photo. According to some, this was a deliberate attempt to communicate a message that this candidate was officially endorsed by President Karzai. This played into a widely held conspiracy theory that this was a "selection, not an election", and that the President's office had created a list of candidates that were approved to win and whose victory would be assured by means fair or foul. In the words of one WJ candidate from Kandahar:

Box 5. Sample campaign posters from Herat and Kandahar

> *There's a widely held theory that the elections are a show and that those they want elected will be elected. This is one of the reasons voter turnout is low. Voters didn't respond to us because they don't trust the system.*[71]

One candidate in Kandahar is reported to have told voters that because he was on the list of candidates selected to win, they should not waste their votes on others.[72]

Many posters simply carried the name of the candidate, a photo, the candidate's election symbol and ballot number, which one interviewee cited as an example of de-politicisation in Afghanistan.[73] Another explanation was that in a largely illiterate society too much writing would simply detract from the most important purpose of a poster, which was to educate voters about a candidate's name, appearance and voter symbol. Some posters did include a short slogan or the key manifesto issues of the candidates while others highlighted the candidate's qualifications, experience and goals and objectives if elected. Following are two typical poster examples from Kandahar:

Alhaj Nasrullah Khan Barakzai
Independent candidate for the Wolesi Jirga
Islam, freedom, national unity, territorial integrity, reconstruction
Vote for Alhaj Nasrullah Barakzai to provide water from the cup of justice to people who are thirsty for peace and security

Ahmadullah Nazuk
Independent candidate for the Wolesi Jirga
The young candidate Ahmadullah Nazuk
with your votes will raise your voice in the upcoming parliament,
and will make efforts to open closed doors to solve your problems.
Get to know the sign of the "elephant" and vote for Ahmadullah Nazuk

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[71] Interview with WJ candidate, Kandahar, 4 October 2005.
[72] Interview with Afghan independent election observer, Kandahar, 3 October 2005.
[73] Interview with government official, Kandahar, 1 October 2005.

In addition to posters, many candidates also printed up business cards with their picture, name and symbol to help voters identify them on the ballots on election day. Several observers witnessed female voters in particular using these cards in the ballot booths to identify the candidates they wanted to (or had been instructed to) vote for.

Large campaign rallies or big public gatherings were not a major part of the Afghan election campaign. While some wealthy candidates and some of the major political party leaders like Younas Qanooni and Mohammad Mohaqeq did hold some larger public meetings, most campaign events were held in mosques or people's homes. People cited mosques as a particularly important venue for male candidates to introduce themselves and to present their views to the male members of local communities. One successful WJ candidate proudly described attending one such event and giving a speech that was 7.5 hours long.[74] Several candidates mentioned that they had used videos and CDs of their public meetings and campaign speeches to disseminate their views more widely. One mentioned that these were an effective way to reach women who were generally not able to attend public meetings.

While the media played an important role in the broader voter education effort, with the exception of a few female candidates, most candidates interviewed in Herat and Kandahar did not identify the media as an important aspect of their campaign strategy. During the 28-day official campaign period all WJ candidates were offered a free five-minute radio slot or a two-minute television slot that would be broadcast twice. PC candidates were offered a four-minute radio slot or a two-minute television slot that would be broadcast once.[75] This provided an opportunity for candidates to introduce themselves and their manifestos to voters; however, few felt these broadcasts had much or any effect on influencing voter behaviour. In the evenings before election day when these two-minute slots ran on TV, few Afghans were observed taking much interest. As one interviewee noted, "I didn't listen much to the candidate's speeches. No one believed the two-minute TV spots. Mullahs had an advantage in TV appearances as they knew how to speak publicly."[76] The effectiveness of these TV slots was indeed hampered by the fact that few candidates had appeared on TV before, and with little or no media experience or training often read their speeches in monotones at high speed.

While these free slots were not viewed as effective, some female candidates did highlight the importance of their television and radio appearances on news and talk shows. Restrictions on female mobility are likely to have increased the relative importance of the broadcast media for female candidates who had fewer opportunities than males to communicate with voters. It is likely that the success of several male and female journalists in the elections was also due to the name and face recognition that their profession provided them.

3.2.2 Money matters

As in elections anywhere in the world, money mattered. Some of the campaign activities requiring financial resources that interviewees highlighted were:

- **Printing posters and other campaign materials.** Interviewed candidates reported that they printed between 1,000–20,000 posters at a cost of approximately $1,000 for 5,000 colour posters. Candidates who could not afford colour posters opted for simpler black and white posters on cheaper paper. According to one observer, however, although people complained about the amount of money wasted on expensive colour posters, "Cheap black and white posters made people think he's not rich and powerful enough to do much for me."[77]
- **Campaign offices.** Candidates with resources opened up campaign offices in different parts of the provinces. A successful WJ candidate in Herat who is a wealthy businessman, for example, opened up two campaign offices in Herat City and nine in

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[74] This could be an ominous sign for the efficiency of parliamentary proceedings.
[75] The JEMB reported that of the 5,800 candidates, 3,330 took advantage of this offer, including 78 percent of female candidates and 67 percent of male candidates. JEMB, "Preliminary Executive Summary to the Final Report on the Afghan Elections 2005," e-mail distribution on 4 December 2005.
[76] Interview with independent Afghan election observer, Herat, 21 September 2005.
[77] Interview with independent Afghan election observer, Herat, 21 September 2005.

different districts of the province. A WJ and PC candidate from the Herati Shi'a community formed an electoral alliance and opened up an office in all ten of the wards of Herat City, where the Shi'a population is based, but did not open any in the rural districts.

- **Candidate agents.** Candidates hired agents to help campaign, provide voter education, observe the polls and monitor the counting process. As observed on election day, these agents often played an important role in assisting and, at times, pressuring voters to vote for their candidates. While some candidates reported that they could not afford any agents, and only had a few family and friends volunteering some help, other candidates like Noorulhaq Ulomi reported that he had 300 agents in Kandahar Province alone, and Musa Rezayee reported that he had 360 agents in Herat. As one candidate noted, "Those without money for agents were at a big disadvantage."[78]
- **Entertainment.** Entertaining guests, hosting meals and parties and providing endless cups of green tea was an important campaign activity, especially as part of the effort to win the support of local notables.
- **Transportation.** Providing voters with transport to the polling centres on election day was another important campaign activity for those that could afford it. This was especially important to get female voters and the elderly to the polls.
- **Buying votes.** Although difficult to substantiate, many candidates and observers mentioned incidents of vote buying before the elections and on election day, sometimes of tribal elders who could deliver groups of voters, but also of voters directly. This sometimes involved cash, but also the distribution of food and other items. One candidate in Kandahar is reported to have distributed tins of edible oil with his picture pasted to them. As a sign of the times in Afghanistan, mobile phones were also reported to be popular gifts to win the support of local notables. After election day there were widespread reports of candidates buying votes by bribing JEMB counting staff.[79]

According to the election law, WJ candidates could spend up to a maximum of 750,000 Afghanis (approximately $15,000) on election campaigns, and PC candidates half that amount. This spending limit was not enforced, however, and there is a widespread perception that lots of candidates spent many times more than these limits. Several people noted that the importance of money in running effective campaigns disproportionately hurt educated and qualified candidates and benefited rich candidates, most of whom are widely perceived to have made their money through illegal means: "Some of the best qualified candidates didn't have resources to campaign in the districts. Some of the richest candidates weren't qualified but had an advantage over educated candidates."[80]

In Kandahar in particular, drug money was widely perceived to have played an important role in the campaign. This was not only to fund the campaigns of drug traffickers, but also to fund the campaigns of candidates without resources who would then be required to repay through political favours and protection.

Wealth was not only important in terms of paying for campaign-related expenses, but also for giving the impression that a candidate is rich and influential and therefore more likely to be able to assist voters. As one interviewee noted, "People vote for people who have money because they will be useful and helpful and more influential."[81]

3.2.3 Campaign issues

Both the WJ and PC election campaigns focused more on personalities than on policies, but there were some notable exceptions. The best example of this was the very issues-based campaign of Ramazan Bashardost, who contested and won a WJ seat from Kabul Province. Bashardost is a Hazara who lived and studied in France for many years before returning to join Karzai's government, first in the Foreign Ministry and subsequently as Minister for

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[78] Interview with PC candidate, Herat, 26 September 2005.
[79] Interview with WJ candidate, Kandahar, 4 October 2005; interview with PC candidate, Kandahar, 6 October 2005.
[80] Interview with human rights worker, Herat, 21 September 2005.
[81] Interview, Herat, 21 September 2005.

Planning. In this role he became famous for his vocal critique of how international assistance was being used, particularly by NGOs. He was eventually pushed out of the Cabinet, after which he became an even more vocal critic of NGOs and international assistance, but also of the government. Bashardost established his campaign headquarters in a tent in a park in the heart of Kabul, where he served tea and met with voters. His populist campaign focused on the issues of corruption and the misuse of aid, issues which clearly resonated with many voters. With no traditional powerbase he ended up in third place in the election with an impressive 30,794 votes, a full 20,860 votes more than the fourth placed winner.

While Bashardost's issues-based campaign was clearly an exception, most other candidates were able to articulate what their top policy objectives would be if elected. In some cases, these were outlined on campaign posters. Most candidates also filled out a form circulated by the Foundation for Culture and Civil Society that, among other things, asked candidates to state their goals and objectives if elected. Table 7 includes an analysis of what candidates thought were the key issues, or what they thought voters considered key issues, based on the stated goals and objectives of 50 percent of the WJ candidates in Herat Province.[82]

Table 7. Candidate goals and objectives if elected

Reconstruction & development, social services - Total	134
- Education & fighting illiteracy	58
- Agriculture & livestock	25
- Reconstruction & development	17
- Health	16
- Water, electricity & dams	11
- Roads	8
Social justice/human rights - Total	**101**
- Women's rights ("in accordance with Islam")	28
- Social justice	27
- Human rights	20
- Youth and children rights & activities	16
- Teachers, govt. employees' rights	10
Social welfare - Total	**68**
- Help poor & fight poverty	20
- Support families of martyred & disabled	20
- Provide jobs and fight unemployment	17
- Social welfare	11
Other	
Promote peace & security, disarmament, strengthen ANA & ANP	43
Defend Islam, implement Islamic laws, defend jihad	43
Implement Constitution & national laws	30
Promote national unity and fight against ethnic & tribal discrimination	29
Fight corruption	27
Protect national interests, sovereignty & independence of Afghanistan	26
Economy – support business, industry, foreign investment, mines & minerals	25
Administrative reform & merit-based recruitment	18
Eradicate narcotics and smuggling	17
Support democracy	16
Cultural – protect heritage, build cultural centres, respect customs and traditions	10

Source: Compiled using FCCS candidate biographical data

The top stated priorities of the candidates were reconstruction and development issues, and in particular promoting education and fighting illiteracy, which 58 out of 81 candidates identified as a priority. Social justice/human rights issues were the next most frequently cited priorities. Women's rights were prioritised by 28 candidates, usually qualified by the phrase "in accordance with Islam". Social welfare issues, and in particular helping the poor and the families of the martyred and disabled, were the third most frequently cited priorities. These

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[82] *Da Afghanistan da Wolesi Jirge da tultakano da kandidano pezand pana = Ma'arifi namah kandidahai Wolesi Jirga Afghanistan: Wolayat Herat and Kandahar*. Kabul: Bunyad-i Farhang wa Jamia'a-i Madani, 1384.

were followed by security and disarmament issues, and defending Islam and implementing Islamic laws. The goals related to Islam varied in wording from respecting Islam and its laws, to creating an Islamic state based on Shari'a law. In Herat, several of the candidates reported to be linked with Ismail Khan cited "defending the *jihad*" or "appreciation of the *mujaheddin*" as policy objectives. A few candidates raised the issue of the presence of foreign troops in Afghanistan as a campaign issue. One successful WJ candidate who is a close ally of Ismail Khan in Herat called for a timetable for the withdrawal of foreign troops.[83] Sometimes this issue was expressed less directly by candidates calling for the strengthening of the police and Afghan National Army so that there would be no more need to rely on foreign troops.

3.3   Female campaign challenges

The campaign challenges for female candidates were much greater than for males, which makes the very strong electoral performance of many of them even more impressive. While they were able to campaign more openly in relatively liberal and secure environments like Kabul, women were much more constrained in most other parts of the country. Social conservatism, security concerns and resource constraints made it difficult for female candidates to campaign in rural areas in particular as well as to hold public meetings. They were more likely to hold meetings at their own homes or to be invited to the homes of friends and relatives to introduce themselves and present their views to invited guests. A female WJ candidate described her campaign as follows:

> *I followed all the Islamic rules and only went to the house of my relatives. I didn't go anywhere else…I went to Kharok, my home district, but no other districts…The elders met many times and asked candidates to come together and cooperate and choose one or two candidates, but they failed. As a woman, I couldn't participate in these meetings – people would think I wasn't a good woman. A relative attended on my behalf.[84]*

Box 6. Fariba Ahmadi Kakar, successful WJ candidate, discusses campaigning in Kandahar

People in different areas gathered groups and I was invited to give speeches…Local meetings were the most important campaign activity. I didn't run a big campaign like men. Men could be more active than women. Men also had more money to spend on their campaigns – on vehicles and posters. Due to poor security I could only campaign in the city. I did send some representatives to the districts with posters…

People didn't want to vote for women as much as men. Mothers-in-law and daughters-in-law had to vote as they were told by men. They could not vote freely. I asked a lot of women to vote for me but on election day women appeared with cards of candidates and said that this was the person they had been told to vote for…

The Shi'a community in Kandahar is very poor and small and could only get one person elected, but there were five or six Wolesi Jirga candidates from the community. There were discussions every other day in the community that someone should step down but no one agreed. One day prior to the election the community leaders sat together and decided that I should be the one to go ahead. Mohammad Yunas Hosseini was selected for the PC elections and also supported me. I was selected because I was a woman and more likely to win a women's seat. The community elders and shura *tried to convince the other candidates to step down but none of the other candidates stepped down. Just before the elections the elders of the* shura *announced in every prayer in the mosques that they wanted me to be elected but that everyone had the right to vote for the candidate they wanted.*

Source: Interview with Fariba Ahmadi Kakar, Kandahar, 4 October 2005

In an environment where women are less likely to have independent sources of income or to control household finances, it was not surprising that female candidates highlighted financial constraints more regularly than male candidates as a problem for their campaigns. Security concerns were a major concern in some areas. Many female candidates reported receiving death threats and there were several reported attacks on female candidates. One of the most

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[83] Interview with successful WJ candidate, Herat, 27 September 2005.
[84] Interview with WJ candidate, Herat, 22 September 2005.

serious was just four days before the elections in Nuristan Province where a female candidate, who went on to win a seat in the election, narrowly survived an attack in which she was shot four times.[85]

Mobility constraints and the difficulty of directly interacting with many voters increased the importance of campaign posters for female candidates. Posters provided a way for male and female voters to see the faces of female candidates in a manner that was generally viewed as culturally acceptable. Indeed, it is somewhat surprising that more complaints were not raised by conservative elements about female campaign posters given the battles that had to be fought by the JEMB with religious and tribal leaders in some conservative areas, like Khost Province, to agree to allow the faces of female candidates on the ballot. During the campaign period the town of Khost was plastered in posters of female candidates, including one candidate's poster that was perceived to be so attractive that it was soon being sold in the town's streets and shops.[86] One result of the various electoral events of the past few years, and in particular the campaigning of so many female candidates in the WJ and PC elections, is that the large-scale participation of women as both voters and candidates may break down some of the cultural taboos against female participation in public political life.

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[85] F. Jalalzai and R. Synovitz, 16 September 2005, "Shooting Highlights Threat to Country's Female Candidates," Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, www.rferl.org (accessed 28 November 2005).
[86] Recounted by Carlotta Gall, *New York Times* Correspondent, in presentation at conference organised by the Swedish Committee for Afghanistan, 19 November 2005.

4. Who Voted (and Who Did Not)

On September 18 approximately 6.4 million Afghans turned out to vote. This represented about 50 percent of registered voters, a sharp decline from the 70 percent who voted in the Presidential elections a year earlier. The lower turnout rate combined with the voting system that encouraged large numbers of independent candidates to contest, means that the 249 elected members of the WJ received the votes of only 16 percent of Afghanistan's nearly 13 million registered voters.[87] The JEMB sought to downplay the significance of the voter turnout decline by stating that turnout usually declines in elections held in post-conflict countries.[88] While this may be the case, a significant aspect of this decline is not that 50 percent is an unacceptably low turnout rate for an Afghan election, but that most people interviewed for this study, as well as many quoted in the print and broadcast media,[89] attributed the decline to growing frustration and disillusionment with President Karzai and his government (see quotes from voters in Box 7). These criticisms reflect a significant shift away from Afghans blaming their problems on warlords, commanders and foreign interference, to Afghans blaming President Karzai and his government for their problems.

Box 7. Voters blame low turnout on performance of Karzai's government

Karzai did not deliver on his promises. People now have low expectations and did not take an interest in the Provincial Council and Wolesi Jirga elections. They think the candidates are just making false promises like Karzai. (WJ candidate, Herat)

What hurts me is that so many Afghans didn't participate in the elections. In the Presidential elections people actively participated in large numbers. The only reason that comes to mind is the failure of the government – people are disappointed that nothing has been done after the Presidential elections. (WJ candidate, Kandahar)

People are disappointed in Karzai. He promised he would change people, have a strong government with no coalitions or alliances, no compromise, but he didn't do any of this. The more he compromises the more time is lost and the more trust is lost – I don't trust him. (UN national staff member)

People are demoralised and hopeless and angry with the government and Karzai. (government official in Kandahar)

In the past election we didn't campaign much and people came out to vote but in this election we campaigned a lot and very few people came out to vote. The reason is that Karzai and other candidates promised a lot but didn't do what they promised. People aren't satisfied. (tribal elder, Herat)

Voters were confused because Karzai's promises were not realised… Karzai is a good talker but he consistently supports jihadi *parties and gunmen, not educated people… All the current government employees are those who have looted the people. In the day they are police and at night they are thieves. If there's not a big change people will go back to the Taliban.* (WJ candidate, Kandahar)

Source: Interviews in Herat and Kandahar

Another reason given for low turnout was the large number of notorious commanders, human rights violators and drug traffickers who were contesting the elections. Many of the well-known candidates were, in fact, infamous. According to this theory, voters stayed at home because they did not want to vote for the candidates whose (negative) notoriety they knew and, from among the confusing array of other candidates (in many provinces numbering in the hundreds), they did not want to vote for those whose reputation they did not know.

Security concerns are another explanation given to explain low turnout. Poor security is certainly the best explanation for why the southern region, where the Taliban-led insurgency is the strongest, had the lowest turnout in the country of just under 29 percent (see Table 8

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[87] Calculated from voter registration figures and the certified election results given on the JEMB website, www.jemb.org, accessed 13 November 2005.
[88] Quoted in A. Tarzi, 14 October 2005, "The Message of Lower Voter Turnout," Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, http://www.rferl.org/reports/afghan-report/default.asp.
[89] Ibid.

for a comparison of turnout rates by region for the Presidential, WJ and PC elections). The two most insecure provinces, Zabul and Uruzgan, had the lowest voter turnout figures of 20.2 percent and 23.4 percent.[90] However, while the poor security situation helps explain why the south has the lowest turnout rates of any region in Afghanistan, it does not explain the sharp drop in turnout rates in the southern region. During the Presidential elections security was also worst in the southern region, and voter turnout rates similarly were the lowest in the country. But the security situation has not deteriorated to such an extent to result in a drop in voter turnout from nearly 55 percent in the Presidential elections to 29 percent in the WJ and PC elections. Furthermore, the security situation does not explain the declines in other regions where anti-government insurgency activities are minimal and where the overall security situation is not dramatically different than at the time of the Presidential elections.

Table 8. Comparison of Voter Turnout in Wolesi Jirga, Provincial Council and Presidential Elections

REGION	REGISTERED VOTERS	VOTER TURNOUT		PRESIDENTIAL TURNOUT	TURNOUT DIFFERENCE*
		WJ	PC		
North	1,587,669	58.8	58.7	77.5	-18.7
Northeast	1,608,522	60.9	60.8	70.3	-9.4
Central	2,221,653	35.9	35.7	59.6	-23.7
East	1,434,629	47.2	47.1	54.8	-7.6
Southeast	1,976,573	54.8	54.7	87.4	-32.6
South	1,526,636	28.7	28.8	53.4	-24.7
West	1,657,952	61.3	61.3	88.2	-26.9
Highlands	429,597	65.9	65.8	60.4	+5.5
Kuchi	534,105	38.3	N/A	N/A	N/A
TOTAL	**12,977,336**	**49.4**	**49.8**	**69.2**	**-19.8**

* Difference in turnout between Presidential and Wolesi Jirga elections
Source: Compiled from JEMB certified elections results for Presidential, WJ and PC elections and provincial voter registration figures as given on the JEMB website.

One positive feature in the voter turnout figures was that the percentage of female voters who turned out in this election was 43 percent, compared to the already impressive figure of 41 percent that turned out in the Presidential elections.[91] This figure would have been even more impressive if there had not been so many reports of men voting on behalf of women, or in some cases stuffing ballot boxes using female voter registration cards (a practice politely referred to as "proxy voting"). Many candidates interviewed in Kandahar noted that on election day they or their agents observed very few female voters voting outside of Kandahar City, and in some cases no women voting, but then the ballot boxes from the female voting centres came back full.

Stuffing ballot boxes using female voter registration cards seems to have been most widespread in Paktia and Paktika, and subsequently became the subject of an ECC inquiry. Quite unbelievably, the percentage of female voters in Paktia was nearly 60 percent (the JEMB website does not even give a figure for Paktika because it was so suspiciously high).[92] To highlight the suspiciousness of these figures, Paktika borders Zabul Province, where the percentage of female voters was 3.7 percent and male voters 96.3 percent. Due to this apparent stuffing of ballot boxes actual voter turnout in some provinces was undoubtedly lower than is reflected in the figures. As the WJ candidate Noorulhaq Ulomi quipped in Kandahar, "Voter turnout was even lower than is being said. In many places voter cards participated more than voters."[93]

Table 8 illustrates that there was considerable regional variation in voter turnout rates. The turnout rates were highest in the central highlands region, which is primarily inhabited by the Hazara minority ethnic group. This was the only region where turnout rates increased from the Presidential elections. Bamyan Province had the highest turnout rates of 71.8 and 71.5 in the WJ and PC elections. The strong performance of Hazara candidates in many provinces

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[90] Calculated from JEMB certified election results.
[91] A. Tarzi, "The Message of Lower Voter Turnout."
[92] In addition to Paktia and Paktika, there were higher percentages of female voters than males in Daikundi (52.8), Faryab (52.2), Ghazni (54.8), Nuristan (53.0), and Panjsher (58.6). While some of these figures are suspiciously high, high rates of male labour migration from some provinces would partly explain the high percentages of female voters.
[93] Interview with Noorulhaq Ulomi, successful WJ candidate, Kandahar, 3 October 2005.

lends plausibility to these high turnout rates, and illustrates the effectiveness of this minority community in mobilising voters. One example of this was Haji Mohammad Mohaqeq, the Hazara leader of the main faction of the Hezb-e Wahdat party, who was the top WJ vote winner throughout the country with 52,686 votes.

The western, northern and northeastern regions of Afghanistan also had relatively high turnout figures of around 60 percent. But these were still down considerably from the Presidential elections, especially in the west, where turnout declined by nearly 27 percent. As in the Presidential elections, the southeast had a suspiciously high turnout rate of 54.8 percent in the WJ elections given the poor security situation and conservative culture that ordinarily would have resulted in fewer women voting.

The central region dominated by Kabul had turnout rates of just 36 percent in the WJ and PC elections, and Kabul Province only 33 percent. These figures are down dramatically from the 60 percent in the central region who voted in the Presidential elections. Of the 33 percent who did vote in Kabul Province, fewer than 30 percent were female voters. This places Kabul Province along with the conservative and insecure southern provinces of Kandahar, Helmand, Zabul and Uruzgan as the only provinces where women comprised less than 30 percent of the electorate. The low female turnout rate in Kabul, combined with the strong performance of female candidates, suggests that many male voters voted for female candidates. One explanation for Kabul's low turnout rates is that as the most urbanised province it suffered the most from a widely reported tendency for turnout rates to be much higher in rural than in urban areas.

5. Perceptions of the Elections

There is a saying "one can deceive a few people forever, many people for some time, but one cannot deceive all the people all the time". At last, the final results of the elections were announced in our country under the shadow of guns, money and fraud despite the widespread objection of all the people nationwide. There might not have been such injustice and fraud in elections of the most corrupt country of the world. The Afghan government, the Western world, and the electoral commission had no other objective but to have a parliament for the country no matter of what standards. (Text of editorial entitled "Imposed parliament" published by Afghan weekly *Rozgaran* on 23 November 2005)

In view of the daunting logistical, political and security challenges confronting election organisers, the 2005 elections were a remarkable organisational feat. Nearly 180,000 JEMB national staff, 541 international staff and 60,000 security officials worked within an extremely tight timeframe, often in insecure environments, to ensure that on election day voting could take place at 6,267 different locations throughout the country. The JEMB acknowledged that as in many countries emerging from conflict there were irregularities that should not be overlooked and addressed in future elections. As a result of clear indications of fraud "ballots from 672 polling stations and 74 additional ballot boxes were excluded from the count". The JEMB concluded, however, that the elections represent "a credible and accepted electoral event," and that "the results reflect the will of the voters".[94] This assessment generally reflects the views of the Afghan government as well as members of the international community working in Afghanistan, many of whom (like the United States) congratulated Afghanistan on the success of the elections.[95]

It is much less clear, however, the extent to which this relatively positive assessment reflects the views of the majority of Afghans. While reliable public opinion polling data do not exist, the interviews conducted for this study as well as local media reporting illustrated by the editorial quote above, suggest that there is a widespread perception among Afghans that the 2005 elections were marred by weak candidate vetting, fraud and intimidation. In one interview with a tribal leader and former commander in Kandahar, a PC candidate sitting in the room said only half jokingly: "I know that there was lots of cheating in this election because I cheated. And what I learned from this election is that if you want to win you have to cheat, and that it's very easy to cheat."[96]

The JEMB rightly noted that claims of fraud by many unsuccessful candidates looking for face-saving ways to justify their defeats amplified the perception of fraud. One senior election official noted that the SNTV voting system exacerbated this problem:

[When] candidates run as independents and not under party banners, losing becomes much more of a personal loss of face within their respective communities…[U]nder a PR [proportional representation] type system at least the candidates could say that the "party" was rejected and therefore they suffered as a result. With SNTV there is no such "political cover" available.[97]

The JEMB is also correct in pointing out that "the vast majority of allegations of fraud proved to be unsubstantiated once investigated by the JEMB".[98] However, in an insecure environment with widespread illiteracy and large numbers of candidates still affiliated with illegal armed groups, that fraud claims were not being adequately documented or substantiated to meet the JEMB's or ECC's requirements should not necessarily be equated

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[94] JEMB, "Preliminary Executive Summary to the Final Report on the Afghan Elections 2005," received electronically on 3 December 2005.
[95] See Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, 12 October 2005, "Rice Hails Afghanistan's 'March toward Democracy'", http://www.rferl.org/featuresarticle/2005/10/b83624eb-86ac-45d6-8abc-467df46617a3.html (accessed 4 December 2005)
[96] Interview, Kandahar, 7 October 2005.
[97] Personal communication with Grant Kippen, ECC Chairman and former Country Director for NDI in Afghanistan, 16 October 2005.
[98] JEMB, "Preliminary Executive Summary to the Final Report on the Afghan Elections 2005," received electronically on 3 December 2005, p. 3.

with these claims not being true. Furthermore, regardless of how true or false the fraud claims were, many Afghans believed them.

The perceptions of fraud, combined with the weak candidate vetting process, undermined the perceived credibility of the elections in the eyes of many Afghans. These perceptions, however, were much stronger in some provinces than in others. During field research in Herat, most voters on election day seemed happy with the organisation and conduct of the polling. There were relatively few observations or allegations of fraud and intimidation except for some voters being paid for their votes, and for partisan JEMB staff and party agents trying to influence the decisions of confused voters in polling booths. Most of the complaints about the electoral process in Herat were made during the weeks following the election and focused on the counting process. In Kandahar, however, which the JEMB acknowledged was one of the most problematic provinces, there were widespread complaints of electoral crimes committed on election day, especially in rural areas, as well as of gross irregularities during the counting process.

Some examples of the numerous election day irregularities that were given primarily by successful WJ and PC candidates and neutral observers (i.e., not losing candidates looking for excuses) included:

- **Intimidation by armed groups.** *"In Shorabak 50 armed men occupied a polling centre and no one else could enter."* (successful PC candidate)
- **Partisan local government officials.** *"The district governor of Reg said the security situation wasn't good so he didn't open up polling centres in areas that would vote against his brother who was a candidate."* (national election observer)
- **Partisan and corrupt JEMB staff.** "*Some JEMB staff have relationships with candidates and some staff are paid by candidates. Someone offered to find me someone on JEMB staff who could help me."* (PC candidate)
- **Inappropriate location of polling centres.** *"The brother of the governor in* [a southern province] *had a polling centre in his house despite being a candidate."* (WJ candidate)
- **Polling stations captured by candidates.** *"In Hazarjuft, a WJ candidate…who was a commander took control of the polling centre for two hours. I've signed complaint letters but nothing happened."* (WJ candidate)
- **Purchase of votes.** *"One of my relatives…saw agents from different candidates giving 100 or 150 Afghanis to voters.*" (WJ candidate)
- **Multiple registration cards and multiple voting.** *"Lots of election cards were bought. Some were bought and used and some were bought to prevent voters from voting for other candidates."* (successful WJ candidate)
- **Proxy voting using female voter cards.** *"The government claims 40–50 percent of women participated but no women participated out of the city. Our agents didn't see any female voters, but in Riwani village there were four boxes of women's votes… One man brought 5–10 cards of women and used them all to vote. No one stopped him because people thought they had the right to do it. No one told them they couldn't."* (successful WJ candidate)
- **Stuffing ballot boxes.** *"Some candidates took boxes into their houses and filled them – 32 boxes were filled in Spin Boldak…In some places the doors of the polling centre were locked while they stuffed the ballot boxes. And this is where we had our agent – I can't imagine what happened in the places where we had no agents."* (successful WJ candidate)

While there were certainly problems as described above in some areas on election day, the real damage to the credibility of the elections was caused during the ballot counting process. With each passing day the rising chorus of fraud claims and discontent grew at counting centres throughout the country. The main allegations raised in interviews in Herat and Kandahar about the counting process were as follows:

- **Partisan and corrupt JEMB staff.** "*We caught staff at the counting centre cheating and adding votes to the candidates they support or who pay them, or reducing the number of votes for other candidates."* (successful PC candidate)

- **Partisan Provincial Election Commission (PEC) staff.** *"JEMB told me to complain to the PEC, but I'm not sure anything will happen because the PEC members are also connected to candidates."* (WJ candidate)
- **Marking of blank ballots.**[99] *"Supervisors and JEMB staff are able to mark blank ballots and fill them in for the candidates they like…We caught people marking ballots during evening prayers and reported it but nothing happened."* (successful WJ candidate)
- **Changing candidate vote totals on counting sheets.** *"The JEMB person writing numbers has every power to change numbers – we've bribed and intimidated JEMB staff to test the system. JEMB has created an environment for wrong-doing."* (WJ candidate)
- **Weak JEMB management.** *"JEMB management was very weak and couldn't control their staff."* (successful WJ candidate)
- **Poor communication and unresponsiveness of JEMB.** *"Agents and observers were kept in the dark by JEMB and treated like children…When complaints are made no actions are taken. I observed many mistakes but JEMB officials did nothing. Nobody is well informed…Whether true or false JEMB should try to address accusations."* (national election observer)

These allegations are supported by the statements of several other independent monitoring groups who observed election day proceedings and the subsequent count. The Asian Network for Free Elections (ANFREL), for example, documented significant impropriety by counting centre staff across the provinces, including changing vote totals, marking blank ballots and disregarding requests to quarantine suspicious ballot boxes.[100]

As mentioned above, it is likely that perceptions of fraud are greater than actual fraud, and that actual fraud was greater in some provinces and regions than others. One possible way to get a rough indication of fraud levels by province or region that is not based on subjective perceptions is to see if provinces had suspiciously high percentages of female turnout and suspiciously low percentages of invalid and blank ballots.[101] Table 9 gives a breakdown by region of the number of valid, invalid and blank ballots. Invalid ballots included ballots that had been marked in a manner so that the intent of the voter was not clear (e.g., by voting for more than one candidate), or where voters had voted for candidates who were on the ballots but who had been disqualified prior to the elections.[102] Votes that during the counting process were determined by the ECC to be fraudulent were also declared invalid.

In a country where the majority of the population are illiterate, have little experience or knowledge of how to vote, and where the ballot was one of the most complicated ever used in an election, it was not surprising that some voters were observed getting confused and simply not marking their ballots or marking them incorrectly.[103] During the counting process many unmarked ballots were seen, as well as ballots marked several times, and one ballot in which all the boxes of female candidates had been marked. It was generally assumed that there would be more blank and invalid ballots in provinces that were primarily rural, with higher levels of illiteracy and less exposure to voter education efforts. Very low levels of blank and invalid votes in these more remote and insecure provinces could indicate that a few well

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[99] One of the common allegations of fraud made by candidates during the counting process was that JEMB staff were marking the unmarked ballots for candidates with whom they were related or affiliated in some way, or in return for a bribe, or adding marks to marked ballots to invalidate them. This led to the termination of some JEMB staff, in one reported case for marking the ballots with a stick of lipstick and in another with a mascara stick. See W. Amani and S. Y. Ibrahimi, 5 October 2005, "Poll Fraud Claims: Stories of ballot-rigging emerge at vote-counting centres across the country," IWPR ARR No. 191, http://www.iwpr.net/index.php?apc_state=hen&s=o&o=archive/arr/ arr_200510_191_1_eng.txt (accessed 26 November 2005).
[100] ANFREL, "Summary of ANFREL's Post Election Field Reports from 11 Long-Term Observer Teams in 11 Provinces," 30 September 2005.
[101] Interview with Michael Semple, Office of the European Special Representative, Kabul, 12 October 2005.
[102] The most notable example of this was in Helmand Province, where the top WJ vote winner was the brother of the governor, despite his disqualification the day before the elections for being affiliated with an armed group. Provinces like Helmand where a large numbers of votes were cast for disqualified candidates should not be included in this type of analysis, which assumes most blank and invalid ballots were a result of confusion.
[103] On two occasions frustrated voters were heard asking for help from polling centre staff how to find the picture of President Karzai on the ballot.

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informed voters filled out many ballots and stuffed ballot boxes, and that blank ballots were marked during the counting process.

There was a surprisingly high variance in the number of blank and invalid votes between the provinces and regions. It was particularly surprising and suspicious to see some of the lowest levels of invalid and blank ballots in some of the most rural, inaccessible and insecure provinces of the country. The lowest percentages of invalid and blank ballots were in Nuristan (0.5%), Paktika (0.7%), Paktia (1.6%) and Khost (2.8%).[104] In provinces like Kabul and Herat, with the highest literacy levels and probably the greatest exposure to voter education, the respective percentages were 4.8 and 8.4 percent. The highest percentages of invalid and blank ballots by region were in the northeast, where seven percent of WJ votes and 8.8 percent of PC votes fell into these categories. The lowest were in the southeast where only 1.4 percent of WJ and 1.8 percent of PC votes were invalid or blank. If these regional figures are compared with the female turnout figures, which show the highest female turnout rates in the southeastern provinces, the election results of the southeast region stand out as particularly suspicious.

Table 9: Comparison of Valid, Invalid and Blank Ballots by Region

REGION	REGISTERED VOTERS	VALID		INVALID		BLANK	
		WJ	PC	WJ	PC	WJ	PC
North	1,587,669	93.8	92.4	3.6	4.2	2.7	3.4
Northeast	1,608,522	93.0	91.2	3.5	4.1	3.5	4.7
Central	2,221,653	96.1	94.5	2.2	1.8	1.6	3.8
East	1,434,629	96.3	95.7	1.7	1.6	2.0	2.7
Southeast	1,976,573	98.5	98.2	0.7	0.7	0.7	1.1
South	1,526,636	91.6	94.4	5.9	2.5	2.5	3.1
West	1,657,952	93.8	92.4	3.7	3.6	2.5	4.0
Highlands	429,597	94.3	94.7	4.3	1.9	1.4	3.4
Kuchi	534,105	97.8	N/A	1.4	N/A	0.9	N/A
TOTAL	**12,977,336**	**95.0**	**94.1**	**2.9**	**2.7**	**2.1**	**2.1**

Source: Compiled from JEMB certified election results

In concluding this discussion of the perceptions of the elections, it is important to note that while many Afghans were critical of aspects of the election, some also emphasised what a remarkable achievement they were considering where Afghanistan was only a few years ago. According to one PC candidate:

> *Elections are very important, as we have lived in extremes of left and right for 25 years. Elections, whether good or bad, are important because the process helps create open-mindedness. During the one-month official campaign, and the two to three months of unofficial campaign, hundreds of thousands heard about the process and some will have learned. Three million Afghans hearing about elections and democracy, and some of them learning, will have an impact.[105]*

Furthermore, as the elections disappear from the headlines, it is likely that the performance of the elected members in the National Assembly will soon be playing more of a role in determining their perceived legitimacy in the eyes of the Afghan public than how they were elected.

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[104] Valid, invalid and blank votes statistics are taken from the certified election results for each province listed on the JEMB website. http://results.jemb.org/reports.asp
[105] Interview with PC candidate, Herat, 26 September 2005.

6.   Managing Expectations and Correcting Misconceptions

6.1   Voter expectations

Interviews with Afghan voters and candidates, as well as media reports, highlighted that Afghan voters have very high expectations – perhaps unrealistically high – of what their newly elected WJ and PC representatives can do for them. They also have very little understanding of the role of the NA and the PCs. As one successful WJ candidate from Kandahar explained:

> Voters are very naïve – they think they will have a representative in the central government who will solve their problems. They don't understand the role of parliament. I tried to explain the role of parliament but there are high expectations for service delivery.[106]

The expectations of voters can be summed up by the word *khidmat* or "service", which was used repeatedly in interviews to describe what voters wanted from the WJ and PC members. While the word was sometimes used in a more elevated manner to refer to noble service to one's country, it was also used more specifically to refer to representatives using their influence to deliver infrastructure and jobs to their constituents. In response to the question, "What do you think the person you voted for will do for you?" voters in Herat answered:

- *I hope the candidates will bring peace, and also build culverts and roads.* (farmer in Pashtun Zarghun District of Herat Province)
- *People hope representatives will make the road from Ghorian to Herat and build a bridge over the river from Islam Qala road. They want the salt mine developed, but their top hope is that the road to Herat will be asphalted.* (teacher in Ghorian District of Herat Province)
- *Expectations are that candidates will help make schools, health facilities, roads, electricity, water and promote the craft industry.* (District Governor of Ghorian District of Herat Province)

The expectation of what the NA and PC members would do were often stated in the context of what the President and his government had not done:

- *This government has done nothing for us so we hope these people we've elected will serve us.* (voter in Obeh District of Herat Province)
- *The promises of the Presidential elections have not been fulfilled. Now people want the parliament to solve their problems.* (PC candidate in Kandahar Province)
- *Day by day the government is losing its credibility. [President Karzai's] installation of governors has lost him lots of credibility. Common people now expect nothing from government and instead have high expectations of parliament.* (government official in Kandahar Province)

While a few candidates referred to the legislative role of the NA, voters did not identify this as a function of members elected to the WJ. A focus group study conducted in 12 provinces from April to June 2005 had the following finding on the perceived function of the WJ:

> … virtually no respondent associated the National Assembly with a legislative body, or mentioned any law making capacity. Additionally, most Afghans held the belief that a primary function of the National Assembly would be to communicate local or provincial problems to the national government, and the representative would serve as a spokesman for the province to direct government resources back to the home constituency.[107]

Many WJ and PC candidates emphasised in their interviews that they knew that their role was not to deliver the schools, clinics, roads, mosques and jobs that their voters wanted. But while denying making promises themselves, many accused the other candidates of making too

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[106] Interview with successful WJ candidate, Kandahar, 3 October 2005.
[107] Altai et al., "Formative Research for Civic Education Progams on Elections," p. 17.

many promises: "One candidate would promise a road or a school and the next candidate would offer two roads and two schools."[108] Some candidates deliberately highlighted their connections in government and effectiveness at delivering services to voters in their campaigns: "I took some tribal chiefs to the governor to give the impression that we would support them to help solve their problems."[109] The analysis of candidates' goals and objectives if elected, discussed earlier in the paper, shows that the issues candidates identified most frequently as their priorities were to address reconstruction, development, human rights and social welfare issues. These priorities were often communicated through posters and campaign speeches, so it is not surprising that many voters view the main role of those who are elected to deliver on these promises.

If *khidmat* in the form of tangible patronage and services is what voters wanted most from their candidates, presumably they voted for those who they thought would be the most effective at delivering services to their constituencies. Being the best educated or qualified candidate may therefore have been less important than being perceived as the candidate with the most influence to pressure the government bureaucracy into action on behalf of the candidate's constituency. As explained in one interview:

> *People vote for people who have money because they will be useful and helpful and more influential. But most rich people are rich illegally, like drug smugglers and commanders…Even some ministers are warlords and supporting local candidates, but the government doesn't want to remove them. People assume warlords will win and go to parliament so they might as well vote for them in order to get some benefit.*[110]

A frustrated PC candidate who ran a clinic in a rural district of Herat blamed this factor for his defeat:

> *The best candidate is one who serves the people, solves their problems, and hasn't done bad things. But this is not found in this area – people don't vote for who is the best candidate or the most knowledgeable, but for those with the most power and wealth.*[111]

There is a risk that the disappointment and disillusionment that many voters expressed with the lack of tangible progress following the Presidential elections, will also set in once they realise that their representatives in the WJ and PCs are also not able to deliver the tangible services that they so desire. Several candidates expressed this concern and emphasised the need to educate voters about the real role of the NA and PCs.

Managing high expectations and correcting misconceptions will require an effective communications strategy to educate both members and the public on the role and functions of the NA, PCs and their members. These messages need to highlight the importance of the legislative function of the NA, the primarily consultative function of PCs, and clarify that their representative function of NA and PC members should not be equated with providing patronage to constituents. If National Assembly members see their main task as providers of patronage, they will prioritise spending their time in government ministries and departments accessing patronage rather than legislating. Furthermore, voters will judge their representatives not on their effectiveness as legislators but on their ability to access patronage. In resource poor countries like Afghanistan, trying to base political support on patronage is often a losing electoral strategy and contributes to political instability, as there is never enough patronage to disburse. Incumbency becomes a disadvantage, as the voters who received something are often unhappy they did not receive more, and most are extremely unhappy because they received nothing.[112]

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[108] Interview with successful WJ candidate, Herat, 26 September 2005.
[109] Interview with successful WJ candidate, Kandahar, 3 October 2005.
[110] Interview, Herat, 21 September 2005.
[111] Interview with PC candidate, Pashtun Zarghun District, Herat, 19 September 2005.
[112] For an illustration of the destabilizing impact of patronage politics in neighboring Pakistan, see chapter 8 in A. Wilder, 1999, *The Pakistani Voter: Electoral Politics and Voting Behaviour in the Punjab*," Karachi: Oxford University Press.

6.2   The role of Provincial Councils

The PC elections raise interesting questions about why candidates contested the elections and whether those who succeeded can manage voters' expectations. A total of 3,025 candidates, including 247 women, contested the elections for 420 PC seats. Many invested considerable amounts of time and money to win a seat in a body whose role few candidates, and even fewer voters, understood. The Provincial Council law, which defines a very limited role for PCs, was not passed until one month before the elections. In interviews conducted the three weeks after the elections few candidates were aware that a Provincial Council law existed, let alone what it had to say about the role of PCs.

Several different explanations were given for why people contested the PC elections. One was that having an official position as a PC member would help provide protection from the authorities against past and future criminal activity such as narcotics trafficking. Some contested "to become known". Others reportedly ran for reasons of tribe and social prestige – local tribal leaders or prominent personalities could highlight their power and authority by winning a seat. Some reportedly ran to get rich, as there were rumours reported in Herat that PC members would get a car, house and a salary of $25,000. One interviewee was told by a candidate, "I will invest $20,000 but will get this back in one month."[113]

Another possible explanation is that candidates did not understand the role of PCs and assumed that there would be a greater role than that envisioned by the drafters and approvers of the PC law in Kabul. Several interviewees expressed concerns that this lack of understanding about the role of PCs (as well as the WJ) will cause problems in the future.

> *Most people don't know what Provincial Councils are for – only a few know their authority. Unfortunately, many candidates didn't know the role of Provincial Councils and the Wolesi Jirga and promised more than the authority of the Provincial Councils and Wolesi Jirga. People will lose trust in them if they don't fulfil their promises.* (NGO health worker, Ghorian District, Herat Province)

> *Most voters focused on the candidates who promised a lot – schools, roads, mosques – and not on the role of the Provincial Council. I don't have the authority to promise a school but people didn't understand this.* (PC Candidate, Pashtun Zarghun District, Herat Province)

Some candidates described a limited role for the PCs as "transferring the problems of the people to the government," and being a "bridge" or a "link" between society and government. One candidate mentioned that the PCs would have as much authority as they are given by government, and that "the government might not give them much authority".[114] Most of those interviewed, however, had more ambitious understandings of the role of PCs:

> *The government with the help of the international community has planned that future development will be conducted through the PCs…We expect that the government, UN and NGOs will coordinate their work with the PCs.* (successful PC candidate, Kandahar)

> *It's a new organisation so we don't know, but I'm sure it can do a lot. Prior to the election and during the campaign I promised to serve the people to the extent that I can. But the people have high expectations because very little has been done for Panjwai so far. They think my being in the PC will help them get hospitals, schools, irrigation systems, drinking water – these are the kinds of things I will try to do.* (successful PC candidate, Kandahar)

> *The PC has more authority than the governor.* (PC candidate, Herat)

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[113] Interview with Abdul Aziz Samiem, NDI Office Manager, Herat, 21 September 2005.
[114] Interview with WJ candidate, Kandahar, 6 October 2005.

PCs are like a parliament at the provincial level – they will control the activities of government and help solve the problems of government. (successful WJ candidate, Herat)

One thing that seems likely is that the PCs will be variable in authority, depending on their composition and leadership, but that in general they will end up with more power than envisioned in the current PC law. It is highly unlikely that powerful and well-connected individuals like the President's brother, Ahmed Wali Karzai in Kandahar, or Ismail Khan's son, Mir Mohammad Yasir Saadiq in Herat – both the top PC vote winners in their provinces – will sit back and accept a purely advisory function for the PCs. For the past couple of years Ahmed Wali Karzai has headed the *Islahi Shura* (Reform Council) in Kandahar, which held its last meeting just prior to the elections. He clearly recognises that these elections will enhance his already considerable power and authority in the politics of Kandahar: "Before the government said you just claim to be the head of the *shura*, but now we will be elected and legitimate." He also clearly envisions more than just an advisory role: "There are lots of things we can do. For example, reconstruction money – how is it spent, who get its – or security, dealing with corrupt police."[115] At a minimum, PCs are likely to serve as a check on the powers of governors although they are formally dependent on the governor's offices for their meagre operating expenses. In addition, they will inevitably demand a greater say in how resources are spent at the provincial level, as well as a say in provincial-level appointments.

While the formal powers of the PCs may be limited, the informal powers derived from being the only elected institution at the provincial level could increase the power of the PCs in unexpected ways. "Decentralisation" is still a highly sensitive and unpopular word with a Kabul government that has been struggling for the past four years to re-centralise authority following the de facto decentralisation of power during the years of civil war.[116] While the Constitution precludes much in the way of decentralisation of power, the presence of legitimately elected institutions at the provincial level, combined with what hopefully will be more attention to the pressing needs of strengthening governance institutions at the subnational level, may increase pressures for the de-concentration of some governmental functions to the provincial level.

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[115] Interview with Ahmed Wali Karzai, successful PC candidate, Kandahar, 7 October 2005.
[116] See S. Lister and A. Wilder, 2005, "Strengthening Subnational Administration in Afghanistan: Technical Reform or State-Building?" *Public Administration and Development*, 25: 1-10.

7. Lessons for the Future

The final section of this paper briefly reviews some of Afghanistan's previous experiments with parliamentary democracy, and identifies lessons from the past that could still be relevant for today's National Assembly. One of these lessons is the danger that parliaments can have a paralysing effect on government if not skilfully managed and organised, which is the single biggest risk confronting the new National Assembly. This discussion is followed by some recommendations for future elections based on lessons learned from the recent elections. The paper concludes by reflecting briefly on lessons that can be learned from the prioritisation of elections in the Bonn Agreement that should inform post-Bonn processes in Afghanistan.

7.1 Learning from the past

A look back at the last time Afghanistan had democratically elected parliaments, from 1965 to 1973, provides some useful insights into potential challenges that the newly elected National Assembly might face. As is the case today, previous parliaments were highly fragmented bodies. The absence of effective political parties or alternative organised interest groups to help aggregate political opinions and interests, combined with what Louis Dupree characterised as "the intransigent individualism of the Afghan *wakil* [member of parliament]",[117] led to "parliamentary anarchy":

> *The Wolesi Jirgah, in effect, houses 216 distinct parties – one for each member. Aside from the occasional regional cooperation among legislators, and the unity of a few ideologues, the chamber is largely unorganised and unled.*[118]

The absence of effective political parties to help structure and guide parliamentary activities and politics had several results. One was the inability to impose any discipline on *wakils* that, among other things, contributed to major problems achieving a parliamentary quorum. Between November 1969 and mid-May 1970, for example, the Wolesi Jirga was only able to muster a quorum to hold four out of 32 scheduled plenary sessions.[119] A parliament of individuals also contributed to much time being wasted in repetitive speech-making:

> *Virtually every deputy insists that his constituency cannot be served unless its case is separately presented. In truth, few members can resist being heard over Afghan radio…The result is a series of speeches redundantly enumerating social and economic grievances and lamenting an abused Constitution and Islamic heritage. In 1969, 204 members exhausted 14 consecutive days before approving the Etemadi government…Sorely missed from these proceedings were party leaders to assign spokesmen or to coordinate speeches in conformity with legislative programs.*[120]

More seriously, however, the absence of political parties to aggregate interests resulted in parliament and the government becoming the de facto political parties performing this function.[121] This contributed to an extremely adversarial relationship developing between the two with the deputies focusing their energies not on legislating but on attacking the government.[122] According to Dupree this, combined with quorum problems, "encouraged an active minority of *wakil* in the twelfth Parliament…to control (perhaps stultify would be a better word) government activity in all branches by launching a series of investigations of government activities by various committees of the House."[123] This was exacerbated by

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[117] Louis Dupree, "Afghanistan Continues its Experiment in Democracy: The Thirteenth Parliament is Elected," American University Field Service, South Asia Series Vol. XV, No. 3 (Afghanistan), July 1971, p. 6.
[118] M. G. Weinbaum, October 1972, "Afghanistan: Nonparty Parliamentary Democracy," in *The Journal of Developing Areas*, 7(1): 57-74.
[119] Ibid, 62.
[120] Ibid, 62-63.
[121] Ibid, 63.
[122] See Dupree's section on "The Thirteenth Parliament: A Study in Legislative Slow Motion," in *Parliament Versus the Executive in Afghanistan: 1969-1971*, American University Field Service, South Asia Series Vol. XV, No. 5 (Afghanistan), September 1971, pp. 6-9.
[123] Dupree, *Parliament versus the Executive*, 1. The recent verbal attack against the Minister for Rural Reconstruction and Development by the successful WJ candidate from Kabul, Ramazan Bashardost, even before the parliament has even been formed, may be a sign of things to come.

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wakils seeing their jobs as one of advocacy rather than compromise.[124] Furthermore, in the fragmented parliament of individuals it was difficult for the government to discern friend from foe:

> *Because political parties have no legal standing, the Afghan Prime Minister has no assured support in the Lower House. He and his Cabinet are the targets for attack from all sides, not only from the opposition as is the case in most parliamentary systems. As suggested by Senator Shamsuddin Majrooh: "A parliamentary democratic system without political parties resembles a vehicle without an engine."*[125]

7.2   Preventing paralysis

The most important challenge confronting the new NA will be to learn from past experiences and ensure that at this critical time in Afghanistan's history its powers are used to move the country forward rather than hold it back. This will be a difficult task in an Assembly with little legislative capacity or experience, numerous personal, factional, ideological and ethnic divisions, and few well-organised political parties or other interest groups to aggregate and organise interests. Paralysing divisions between the executive and legislative branches of government could also develop and widen if relations between the two are not handled sensitively.

The NA's powers to slow down the functioning of the state are considerable. As the experience from the sixties and seventies illustrates, legislators simply not showing up in the NA could make it difficult to achieve a quorum.[126] The constitutionally mandated powers of the Assembly, following a request by 20 percent of the members, to "interpellate" or interrupt parliamentary debates to question ministers, or to remove ministers with a vote of no confidence, could also have a paralysing effect if misused. One of the first responsibilities of the NA is to review and approve the current Cabinet members as well as all the presidential decrees to date, which will provide an early indication of the extent to which the new NA members will use these powers responsibly.

To increase the likelihood that the NA will pay a constructive rather than a destructive role, the government and donors should continue to invest heavily in capacity-building programs such as the Support to the Establishment of the Afghan Legislature (SEAL) project and the Afghanistan Parliament Assistance Project. Longer-term strategies and programmes to develop both the technical and political skill levels of the members and staff of the NA should supplement these projects, and adequate resources budgeted by the government and donors to ensure that the NA can function effectively.

The absence of strong and effective political parties to help organise the politics of the highly fragmented NA increases the likelihood of paralysis. There is a considerable body of research that shows that stable political party systems are a prerequisite for stability and democracy in post-conflict countries.[127] The experience of Afghan parliaments in the late sixties and early seventies illustrates the destabilising effect that the absence of political parties has already had on parliamentary democracy in Afghanistan. One of the major political challenges in Afghanistan during the coming years will be to develop effective and accountable political parties in a political context where the vast majority of Afghans, including President Karzai, strongly distrust and dislike them. It is understandable why most Afghans do not like political parties, based on their poor performance in the past, but the government's response of trying to keep them as weak and ineffective as possible in the future is short-sighted. While President Karzai and his advisors perhaps see weak parties as an effective way to keep the parliament weak and divided, and the presidency therefore more powerful, this zero-sum mentality will do a lot of damage to the longer-term cause of building a functioning

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[124] Weinbaum, "Nonparty Parliamentary Democracy," p. 63.
[125] Dupree, "Parliament versus the Executive," p. 10.
[126] Marvin Weinbaum has suggested linking the salaries of members, "at least in part, to their attendance at legislative sessions and (their assigned) commission meetings." "National Assembly Notes (Draft for Discussion), 20 November 2005.
[127] For a discussion on the importance of political parties in democracies see L. Diamond, 1999, *Developing Democracy: Toward Consolidation*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press; or L. Diamond and R. Gunther, eds., 2001, *Political Parties and Democracy*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

parliamentary democracy and political stability in Afghanistan. The international community must continue its efforts to convince the government of the important role of political parties in democratic politics, and continue to support programs to develop the effectiveness and accountability of political parties in Afghanistan.

Another priority will be managing the relationship between the executive and legislative branches of government, and ensuring that it remains constructive rather than confrontational. The executive branch must make sure that it does not treat the National Assembly simply as a rubber stamp. It must work closely and sensitively with the NA members to communicate and clarify legislative goals and priorities, and to mobilise a majority to get these approved. While deal-making will be important to form and maintain legislative majorities, it is important that outright vote-buying is avoided as this will create dangerous precedents and financially unsustainable expectations for the future, and will tarnish the reputation of both the executive and the legislature. NA members will also need to be aware that their future electoral prospects, as well as their legitimacy in the eyes of voters, will partly be based on perceptions of whether the NA is perceived to be promoting positive change or reinforcing the status quo.

7.3   Lessons for future elections

It is important that future elections in Afghanistan benefit from the lessons learned from organising and conducting the Presidential, WJ and PC elections. Other papers have focused on this topic in greater detail so this section will only outline some of the key points:[128]

- **Revise the electoral calendar.** The Constitution will need to be amended, as the current electoral calendar requires Presidential and WJ elections every five years, Provincial Council elections every 4 years, District and Village Council elections every three years, and municipality elections within an unspecified timeframe. This would require 38 elections in the next 60 years, which is neither politically wise nor financially sustainable (the cost of the 2004 and 2005 elections alone exceeded Afghanistan's total domestic revenues for fiscal year 2004-2005). The Post-Election Strategy Group (PESG) recommend that "presidential and legislative elections could be held together every five years, while provincial and municipal elections similarly would take place every five years, but offset two years from national elections."[129] If District and Village Council elections are held at all, it is likely that this will be done through indirect electoral mechanisms rather than direct voting.

- **Change the electoral system.** The single non-transferable vote (SNTV) system adopted for the 2005 elections is the wrong system for Afghanistan.[130] It was selected because it benefited independent candidates at the expense of political parties, and primarily for this reason should be replaced in future elections. While all electoral systems have advantages and disadvantages, some form of proportional representation (PR) system that would reward multi-ethnic political parties with national agendas rather than the more parochial interests of independent candidates would be preferable to the current SNTV system.

- **Create a sustainable voter registry.** There were widespread concerns about the accuracy of voter registration lists and numerous allegations of multiple registration and multiple voting in the elections. Donors and the government should support the PESG recommendations to conduct an independent review of the current voter lists, and finalise a plan to create a sustainable voter registry (the PESG recommends creating a joint national identification and voter card). Revised cards should contain sufficient information to link voters to districts and municipalities, in addition to

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[128] See in particular the Post-Election Strategy Group (PESG), "Progress Report," 27 September 2005, http://www.jemb.org/pdf/PESG_progress_report_27-09-05_eng.pdf (accessed 11 December 2005); and the OSCE, 6 October 2005, "Election Support Team to Afghanistan, Recommendations on 2005 Parliamentary Elections."
[129] PESG, "Progress Report", p. 4.
[130] For a more detailed discussion of SNTV and alternative voting systems, see A. Reynolds and A. Wilder, *Free, Fair or Flawed: Challenges for Legitimate Elections in Afghanistan*; and A. Reynolds, L. Jones and A. Wilder, August 2005, *A Guide to Parliamentary Elections in Afghanistan*, Kabul: AREU.

provinces, to enable voters to be assigned to more narrowly defined constituencies in the future.

- **Build sustainable electoral institutions.** Now that the elections are over the government and donors should not lose interest in elections altogether, but shift their focus from implementing elections to developing sustainable Afghan electoral institutions. Sufficient financial resources and capacity-building support should be provided now to ensure a smooth transition from the JEMB to the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC). Sufficient time should be budgeted for this exercise as rushing the process now will undermine the chances of creating a strong and independent IEC capable of playing the lead role in future elections.

- **Transitional justice and vetting.** The accommodationist approach adopted for candidate vetting in the 2005 elections has tarnished the image of the National Assembly in the eyes of many Afghans. More consistency and firmness should be shown in future elections in disqualifying candidates with proven links to armed groups. Furthermore, the government and donors must prioritise strengthening judicial institutions so that transitional justice issues are not so easily side-stepped in future elections. Meanwhile, parliamentary immunity should not be granted NA members indicted for serious crimes, including crimes against humanity, links to illegal armed groups and narcotics trafficking.[131]

- **Strengthen counting procedures.** The counting process was the most problematic aspect of the election both from an operational perspective as well as in terms of the allegations of fraud and the perceived legitimacy of the process. A review should be conducted of the counting process, and recommendations generated on ways to improve counting procedures in future elections.

- **Invest more in civic and voter education.** Despite the efforts that were made in civic and voter education, there were many voters on election day who still did not know how to vote or what they were voting for. Civic and voter education should be an ongoing initiative, through the media and school curricula for example, and not just something done prior to elections. Particular efforts must be made to reach rural voters and female voters.

7.4   After Bonn

The 2005 elections and the convening of the NA mark the end of the four-year political process outlined in the Bonn Agreement signed in December 2001. In January 2006 representatives from the government and international community will meet in London to agree on a post-Bonn compact. Three lessons related to the role of elections in the Bonn process should inform the discussion and decisions of the London meeting:

1) Prioritise and sequence what needs to be done as resources are scarce. There are many urgent and important priorities in Afghanistan but resources, especially skilled human resources, are extremely scarce. Tough choices must be made to prioritise and sequence needs and to allocate resources accordingly. In retrospect, it is questionable whether elections should have been given as high a priority in the Bonn process as they were. Afghans certainly did not consider them to be one of their high priority issues.[132] The time and resources spent on holding ELJ, CLJ, Presidential,WJ and PC elections were not matched by similarly well-resourced and focused efforts to engage in the more difficult but ultimately more important task of rebuilding and strengthening fundamental state institutions. Greater

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[131] OSCE, "Recommendations on 2005 Parliamentary Elections," p. 10.

[132] In a public opinion survey conducted in the spring of 2003, nearly 1,500 Afghans were asked "if you were the President of Afghanistan, what would you do first to help your country?" In response, 43 percent prioritised security rights, including disarmament and police training, 40 percent prioritised economic rights, including jobs, education and health services, and only seven percent prioritised political rights, including getting rid of corrupt politicians and ensuring representation of all ethnic groups in government (elections were not even mentioned). When specifically asked about elections, respondents were very positive and stated their intention to vote, but it was not high on their list of priorities. Human Rights Research and Advocacy Consortium, November 2003, *Speaking Out: Afghans Opinions on Rights and Responsibilities*, Kabul: HRRAC, p. 1.

attention should also have been given to sequencing priorities. For example, more progress should have been made on building and strengthening basic state institutions prior to holding elections because legitimately elected individuals will soon lose their popularity, and ultimately their legitimacy, if the institutions they lead are too weak and ineffective to do anything. Similarly, while there was a major effort to create a legitimate executive branch of government, and now a legislative branch, the judicial branch, critically important for the success of any democratic system of government, has largely been ignored. The drafters and approvers of the post-Bonn compact must be realistic in terms of what can be done especially in view of Afghanistan's serious human resource constraints. If tough choices to limit priorities are not made than all the priorities will be competing for the same finite pool of skilled human resources and undermining one another in the process.

2) Do not remain so focused on means that you lose sight of end objectives. The authors of the Bonn Agreement undoubtedly saw elections as a means to achieving the Agreement's overall objectives. However, the large investment of scarce financial and human resources in the determined and focused effort to hold all the elections mandated in the Bonn Agreement often gave the impression that holding elections had become not a means to an end but the end itself of Bonn. This impression was strengthened when these incredible organisational feats were accomplished under extremely difficult circumstances and tight timeframes, only to have the subsequent impressive electoral mandates squandered with marginal political gains. The imposition at the Emergency Loya Jirga in June 2002 of a Cabinet dominated by the widely discredited "old guard" of Afghan politics, the slow pace of reform following President Karzai's impressive election victory in October 2004, and the election in 2005 of a large number of known narcotics traffickers, crime bosses, war criminals and commanders linked to illegal armed groups, raise questions about how exactly these elections have or will contribute to achieving the overall objectives of the Bonn Agreement. During the implementation of the post-Bonn compact it will be important to make sure that means do not become the ends and overall objectives forgotten.

3) Have realistic timeframes. Louis Dupree, writing about the WJ elections held 40 years ago in Afghanistan, provides a useful cautionary note about formulaic approaches within unrealistic timeframes to achieving "instant democracy."

> *Take dry constitution, combine with fluid elections and stir, and voila, "instant democracy" – without the agony of generations of development.*[133]

The quality of the recent elections in Afghanistan were acceptable given the timeframes and the operating environment that planners and implementers were given. However, if the timeframes of the Bonn Agreement had been more realistic, fewer corners would have had to be cut and the quality of the elections could have been improved. Unrealistic timeframes often result in projects being conceived to fit within timeframes rather than to achieve an end objective. The more realistic the timeframes are for achieving objectives the greater the likelihood that the objectives will be achieved. Rebuilding and developing one of the poorest countries of the world that is just emerging from nearly three decades of conflict will take time and resources. While this is widely understood, this understanding is rarely factored into international agreements such as the Bonn Agreement. The London meeting provides an opportunity for the international community to agree on more realistic timeframes for achieving success in Afghanistan, and to commit to maintaining strong political and financial support for Afghanistan until the original objectives of the Bonn Agreement "to end the tragic conflict in Afghanistan and promote national reconciliation, lasting peace, stability and respect for human rights in the country" are achieved.

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[133] L. Dupree, 1980, *Afghanistan* , 3rd edition, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, p. 587.

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Appendix 1. List of Interviewees

HERAT: 29 interviews, 4 PC candidates, 12 WJ candidates (6 successful)

Qazi Nazeer Ahmed, successful WJ candidate
Abdul Qadir Alokozai, PC candidate
Asif Barakzai, Barakzai tribal leader
Engineer Noor Ahmed Barez, PC candidate
Ahmed Behzad, successful WJ candidate
Dr. Danish, Coordination of Humanitarian Assistance
Abu Diek, UNAMA
Dr. Hassan Fareed, PC candidate
Qazy Ghulam Nabi Hakak, Regional Programme Manager, Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission
Niamutullah Ibrahimi, London School of Economics Researcher
Dr. Noor Ahmed Khan Kamrani, WJ candidate
Mualim Abdul Hameed Karimi, PC candidate
Aziza Khairandesh, WJ candidate
Ahmed Rafi Khairi, Foundation for Culture and Civil Society
Masooda Kharoki, WJ candidate
Bashir Ahmed Malaika, WJ candidate
Mir Yaqub Mashoof, writer and political analyst
Haji Nasir Ahmad Mohammady, Ghorian Woluswal
Aziz Ahmed Nadim, successful WJ candidate
Haji Nooruddin, Regional Director of Afghan Red Crescent Society
Sultan Ahmad Paiman, teacher and shopkeeper
Abdulsalam Qazizada, successful WJ candidate
Mohammad Musa Rezayee, WJ candidate
Abdul Aziz Samiem, Herat Office Manager, National Democratic Institute
Dr. Saleh Seljuki, successful WJ candidate
Sayed Mohammad Shafiq, successful WJ candidate
Mohammad Rafiq Shahir, WJ candidate
Dr. Qadeer Timori, Management Science for Health
Engineer Waheed Waqfi, Coordination of Humanitarian Assistance

KANDAHAR: 24 interviews, 5 PC candidates, 10 WJ candidates (8 from Kandahar), 4 successful PC candidates and 4 successful WJ candidates

Bismillah Afghanmaal, successful PC candidate
Engineer Abdul Latif Ashna, WJ candidate
Farooq Frahmand, Governor's Office
Haji Sher Ahmed Haqyar, WJ candidate
Dr. Abdur Rahman Jameel, PC candidate
Fariba Ahmadi Kakar, successful WJ candidate
Ahmed Wali Karzai, successful PC candidate
Mohammad Saeed Khan, Save the Children
Agha Lalai Dastgeeri, successful PC candidate
Haji Ameer Lalai, successful WJ candidate
Talatbek Masadykov, UNAMA
Mullah Naquib, Alokozai tribal leader
Nasrullah Durrani, NDI
Niamutullah, successful PC candidate
Syed Abdul Hai Noory, UNAMA
Engineer Abdul Qadir Noorzai, WJ candidate (Helmand)
Noorulhaq Olomi, successful WJ candidate
Khalid Pashtoon, successful WJ candidate
Abdul Baqi Popal, UN Habitat
Ayub Rafiqi, WJ candidate
Fahim Sadiqullah, Oxfam

Senator Mohammad Umer Sate, WJ candidate (Farah)
Haji Shahkaka, WJ candidate
Dr. Sidiqullah, UNAMA

<u>KABUL</u>
Mir Ahmed Joyenda, successful WJ candidate
Shahmahmood Miakhel, UNAMA
Abdul Salam Rahimi, Coordination of Humanitarian Assistance
Thomas Ruttig, German Embassy
Naeem Salimi, Coordination of Afghan Relief
Michael Semple, Office of European Union Special Representative
Jon Summers, The Asia Foundation
Martine van Bijlert, Office of European Union Special Representative