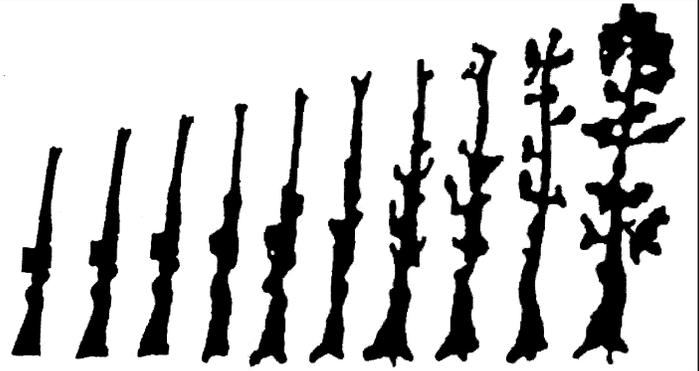
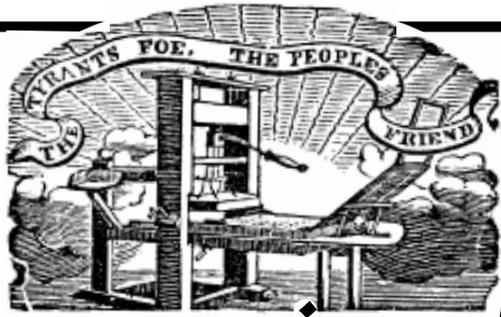


# Press for Conversion!



Issue #59 September 2006

\$8.00

## *The New Face of Terror in Afghanistan: How so-called "Democracy" Empowered our Allies; the Fundamentalists, Warlords and Drug Barons*



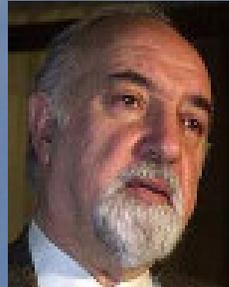
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Ahmadzai



Al-Mas



Arsala



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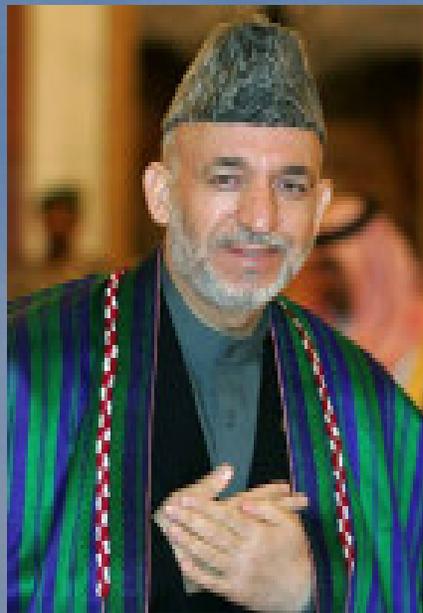
Fahim



Hekmatyar



Khalili



Karzai



Khan



Massoud



Mohaqqiq



Mojaddedi



Muhsini



Qadir



Qanooni



Rabbani



"Rocketi"



Sayyaf



Sherzai



Shinwari

# Press for Conversion!

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## Acknowledgements

**Research, Editing, Design, Layout:**  
Richard Sanders

**Mailing issue #58:** Nick Aplin, Hanna Clemann, Susan Fisher, June & Johnny Johnson, Peter Mix, Rosalie Reynolds, Arthur & Richard Sanders, Peggy Tyson & Drina Wethey.

**Computer support:** Paul Gross

**Proofreading:** Jennifer Tsun

**Website:** Richard Sanders

**Union Liaison:** Len Bush, NUPGE

Extra Special thanks  
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## Power Politics

The December-2001, *Press for Conversion!* (subtitled, “Oil, Terror and the War Against Afghanistan”) examined some of the real economic and geopolitical reasons for the Afghan war. One reason this war was fought—and why it was necessary to establish a “stable,” internationally-palatable government in Afghanistan—was to secure a much-coveted, pipeline route. The trans-Afghan pipeline will transport the multibillion dollar, oil/gas resources from the Caspian Sea to the Persian Gulf for shipment to Asian markets. Afghanistan will also serve as a staging ground for future wars to be fought to control the region’s strategic resources, and to counter nations that rival U.S. interests.

# The New Face of Terror in Afghanistan

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ORDER BACK ISSUES

Much has happened since issue #46 was published. A phoney democracy—dominated by warlords and drug barons—has now been imposed upon Afghanistan by the major western powers, including Canada. The current issue of *Press for Conversion!* (#59) outlines the key steps in that supposedly “democratic” process. Thanks to our military, financial and diplomatic efforts Afghanistan’s most violent and dreaded terrorists are now in power.

See the back-cover coupon for bulk prices and other details.

# The "New" Face of Terror in Afghanistan

By Richard Sanders, coordinator, Coalition to Oppose the Arms Trade, and editor of *Press for Conversion!*

**A**fghanistan is once again being ruled by a government dominated by warlords and drug barons. In fact, many of the most powerful religious fundamentalists in the current regime are the self-same warlords who stalked Afghanistan's halls of power during the horrendous reign of terror that devastated the country between 1992 and 1996. These warlords have been returned to power thanks in very large part to financial, logistical, diplomatic and "moral support" provided by the governments of Western Europe and North America.

Military backing from NATO and individual warfighting nations, including—most significantly—the U.S., Canada and Britain, has been essential in securing this regime change and in helping to ensure that the new government can retain and increase its control over the entire country.

Perhaps the biggest difference between this current collection of ruling warlords and previous ones, is the phoney aura of respectability given to them by western governments and the corporate media. The trappings of western-style democracy are now being used to cloak Afghanistan's most nefarious warlords.

The goal of this *Press for Conversion!* is to expose the Big Lie about Afghan "democracy" spouted by our governments and repeated ad nauseum under the slick guise of objective news.

Before providing details about how *real* progressive change has been thwarted at every stage of the supposed "democratic process" that has been imposed on Afghanistan since the U.S. began bombing the country five years ago, it would be useful to present some historical background.

## A Fledgling Socialist Regime

In 1973, Afghan's monarch—King Zahir Shah, who had ruled the country for forty years—was finally overthrown. The new government, led by Mohammad Daoud—one of the king's cousins—was supported by leftist organizations and political parties, such as the People's Democratic Party (PDP).

The U.S. government quickly pressured Daoud to sever all ties with the Soviet Union, offered \$2 billion in aid and urged Afghanistan to become an American client state, like Iran, Pakistan and Turkey. The Daoud regime began moving into the U.S. orbit by killing a PDP leader, arresting many others and purging hundreds of PDP sympathizers from government positions. In April 1978, the PDP, with military support, deposed Daoud. The stated goal of this "April revolu-

tion" was to drag Afghanistan out of its feudal existence.

In his classic book on CIA wars, *Killing Hope* (2001), former U.S. State Department official, William Blum, outlined some of the actions of this fledgling, socialist government:

"[It] declared a commitment to Islam within a secular state, and to non-alignment in foreign affairs.... They pushed radical reforms, they talked about class struggle, they used anti-imperialist rhetoric, they supported Cuba, they signed a friendship treaty and other cooperative agreements with the Soviets and they increased the number of Soviet civilian and military advisers in Afghanistan.... In May 1979, British political scientist Fred Halliday said 'probably more has changed in the countryside over the last year than in the two centuries since the state was established.'"

Some of their more significant initiatives were to:

- ✓ cancel the debts of peasants to their landlords,
- ✓ build hundreds of schools and medical clinics,
- ✓ outlaw child marriage,
- ✓ outlaw the exchange of women for money/commodities,
- ✓ legalize the formation and work of trade unions, and
- ✓ promote women's literacy and education.



**By early 1979, the U.S. was aiding various bands of fundamentalist, Afghan terrorists in a deliberate effort to draw the Soviets into the war to help their besieged allies.**



Zbigniew Brzezinski

## The CIA's Biggest Covert War Ever

The U.S. was determined to crush this socialist experiment, and allied itself with large landowners, tribal chiefs, businessmen and royalty. Within two months, the new government was under violent attack by various ultraconservative groups of Islamist guerillas, called the mujahideen.

William Blum cites a classified, U.S. State Department report (August 1979) which said that America's

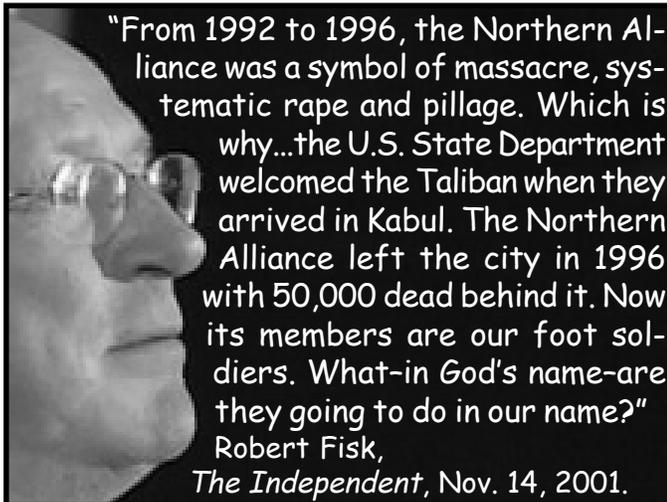
"larger interests would be served by the demise of the regime, despite whatever setbacks this might mean for future social and economic reforms in Afghanistan."

In 1998, Jimmy Carter's National Security Advisor, Zbigniew Brzezinski, revealed in a *Le Nouvel Observateur* interview (Jan. 15) that the president had signed an agreement to arm the mujahideen at least six months *before* the Soviet invasion in late 1979. In fact, since at least early 1979, the U.S. had been meeting with mujahideen warlords, assisting their terrorist efforts and using them as cold-war pawns.

According to Brzezinski, the purpose of covertly aiding these contras (as their drug-smuggling, counter-revolutionary equivalents in Nicaragua were called) was to provoke the Soviets into sending troops to support their besieged, Afghan-government allies. Brzezinski proudly defended this strategy saying:

"What is most important to the history of the world? The Taliban or the collapse of the Soviet empire? Some stirred-

## Background



"From 1992 to 1996, the Northern Alliance was a symbol of massacre, systematic rape and pillage. Which is why...the U.S. State Department welcomed the Taliban when they arrived in Kabul. The Northern Alliance left the city in 1996 with 50,000 dead behind it. Now its members are our foot soldiers. What-in God's name-are they going to do in our name?"  
Robert Fisk,  
*The Independent*, Nov. 14, 2001.



Kabul photo: Didier Lefevre, Panos Pictures

up Muslims or the liberation of Central Europe and the end of the cold war?"

Supplying these "stirred up Moslems" became the largest CIA covert war in history. The U.S. spent untold billions arming, training and supplying various ethnically-diverse bands of fundamentalist fighters who hated each other almost as much as they hated the schools, health clinics, co-ops and other government facilities that they attacked.

Just as the CIA, during its covert operations in south-east Asia and Latin America, had helped fund their dirty wars with hidden profits from the multibillion-dollar drug trade, America's mujahideen footsoldiers were on the frontline of opium production for export. Opium poppies provide the raw material for the manufacture of heroin, of which 90% of the world's supply now comes from the Afghanistan.

### Soviet Occupation and Mujahideen War

Carter's administration was finally successful in drawing Soviet troops into the Afghan theatre. They entered the fray in late-December 1979, and a Vietnam-like quagmire ensued. A U.S.-led media campaign quickly turned world opinion against this Soviet intervention. But, in a typical example of double standards, the U.S. escaped criticism for its role in building up the other side in that war; the various factions of right-wing, mujahideen terrorists, like Osama bin Laden.

The war was also successful, from the U.S. standpoint, in depleting Soviet finances (bled almost dry by the decades-long U.S. arms race and, before that, by their costly war against fascism). The Soviet's Afghan war also created strong internal dissent, thus further aiding America's goal.

After Soviet forces withdrew in 1989, the Afghan regime of President Mohammad Najibullah held on for three more years, fighting the foreign-backed, terrorists on their own.

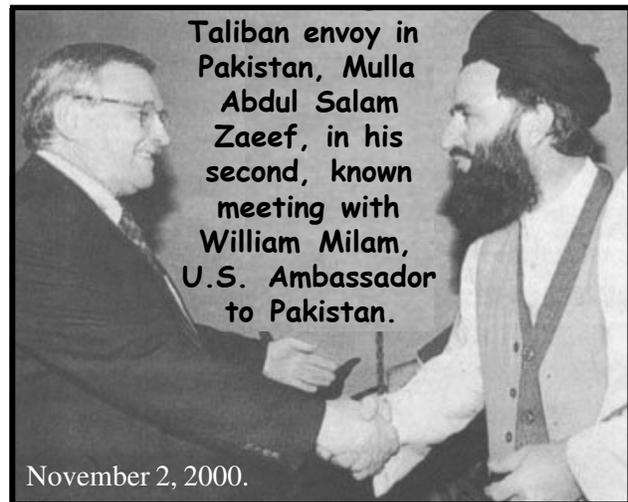
### Fundamentalist Infighting and the ISA

After the fall of Najibullah's government, the various fundamentalist militias and their leaders, or warlords, became locked in a brutal war against each other. As they vied to see who would control Afghanistan, its people and resources, much of Kabul was reduced to rubble and some 50,000 innocent civilians were massacred in the indiscriminate crossfire.

The fundamentalist regime that these mujahideen fighters finally established in 1992, was called the Islamic State of Afghanistan (ISA). Many of the warlords now sit-

ting in the Afghan parliament, and holding top cabinet posts, are battle-hardened mujahideen fighters once tied to the ISA.

It was during this horrendous, four-year reign of terror, that the ISA's president, Burhanuddin Rabbani, welcomed Osama bin Laden and his network of jihadists into Afghanistan. They were given safe refuge for their military/terrorist training camps, which had begun under U.S. tutelage.



Taliban envoy in Pakistan, Mulla Abdul Salam Zaeef, in his second, known meeting with William Milam, U.S. Ambassador to Pakistan.

November 2, 2000.

### Taliban, the Ultra-Fundamentalists

In response to the ISA's much-despised, warlord-based regime, the Taliban movement spread like wildfire across Afghanistan. To defend themselves from the Taliban, the besieged ISA government relied on a network of militias called the National Islamic United Front for the Salvation of Afghanistan, now simply called the Northern Alliance. Based largely in Afghanistan's north, these warring fundamentalist groups were unsuccessful in protecting Rabbani's ISA.

In 1996, when the Taliban seized control, many—including the U.S. government—welcomed their victory. One of their first acts was to overrun the UN compound and hang former-president Najibullah, who had taken refuge there.

The Taliban were then quick to establish a strong, central government and military, to rule the country under their own strict, Islamist interpretation of sharia law. Being open to U.S. business, they made a much-coveted deal with America's Unocal to build a trans-Afghan oil/gas pipeline, to help connect Caspian Sea reserves to the Arabian Gulf.

America's top man in Afghanistan, president Hamid

Karzai, is a former, oil-industry consultant and was the Taliban's foreign minister in 1996. And, a Unocal consultant, Zalmay Khalilzad, who was America's ambassador to Afghanistan (2003-2005), is now the U.S. ambassador in Iraq. He was an unabashed apologist for the Taliban until the U.S. tide finally turned against them after September 11, 2001.

However, despite their closeness to U.S. power brokers, the Taliban soon became a liability to American interests. In the eyes of global public opinion, the Taliban were pariahs. Their misogynist treatment of women was especially offensive and was the target of many international campaigns. In what was perhaps a futile effort to clean up their image, the U.S. funded a Taliban effort in 2000 which virtually eradicated the country's opium crop. But it was too little, too late. With the so many people around the world rejecting the Taliban, and with the international PR onslaught against them gaining momentum, the U.S. turned course in midstream and rejected their new allies in Afghanistan. A newly minted batch of Afghan warlords was then needed, and they needed international "legitimacy."

The 9/11 attacks of 2001, conveniently supplied the U.S. administration with a pretext to falsely justify their invasion of Afghanistan. Catching bin Laden, stopping the Taliban's flagrant violations of human rights (especially their abuse of women) and building democracy in Afghanistan, never were—and still aren't—the real reasons for this war.

U.S. warplanes started bombing Afghanistan on October 6, 2001, and by March 2002, their relentless attacks had killed 3,000-3,400 innocent civilians. By mid-November 2001, America's proxy warriors—the terrorist Northern Alliance—with much support from the U.S. military had taken Kabul and were the defacto rulers of Afghanistan, again.

All that remained was to make their reign seem democratic. That was done over the next five years, in a multi-stage process outlined in this *Press for Conversion!*

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# Meet our Afghan Allies, the Northern Alliance

In 1996, when the Taliban captured Kabul, groups opposed to the Taliban formed an alliance called the National Islamic United Front for the Salvation of Afghanistan. It was then commonly known as the United Front [Editor's note: It is now usually referred to as the Northern Alliance].

The Northern Alliance supported the government that was ousted by the Taliban, the Islamic State of Afghanistan (ISA). The ISA's president, Burhanuddin Rabbani, remains the titular head of the Northern Alliance. His headquarters was established in the northern town of Faizabad. The real power was, until his assassination on September 9, 2001, the Northern Alliance's military leader, Ahmad Shah Massoud, the ISA's Minister of Defense.

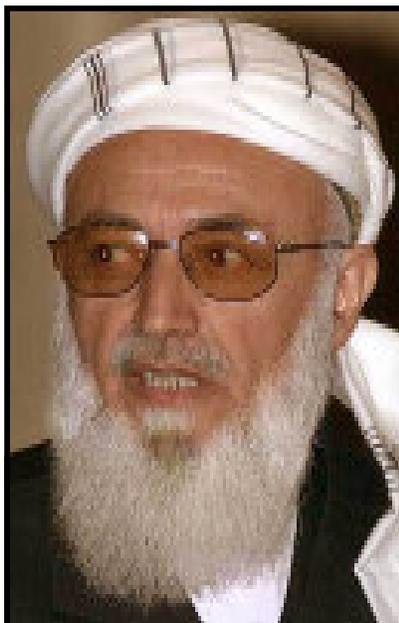
### Human Rights Record

Throughout the civil war in Afghanistan, the major factions on all sides repeatedly committed serious human rights abuses and violations of international humanitarian law, including killings, indiscriminate aerial bombardment and shelling, direct attacks on civilians, summary executions, rape, persecution on the basis of religion or ethnicity, the recruitment and use of children as soldiers, and the use of anti-personnel landmines. Many of these violations were "widespread or systematic," a criterion of crimes against humanity. Violations involving indiscriminate attacks, or direct attacks on civilians, are increasingly recognized internationally as war crimes.

Abuses committed by factions of the Northern Alliance are well documented. Many violations of international humanitarian law committed by their forces date to 1996-1998 when they controlled most of the north and were within artillery range of Kabul.

The Northern Alliance was then pushed back into defensive positions in northeastern and central Afghanistan. There were reports of abuses in areas held by Northern Alliance factions, including summary executions, burning of houses and looting, principally targeting ethnic Pashtuns and others suspected of supporting the

Taliban. Children, including those under the age of fifteen, were recruited as soldiers to fight against Taliban forces. The Northern Alliance amassed a deplorable record of attacks on civilians between the fall of the Najibullah regime in 1992 and the Taliban's capture of Kabul in 1996.



Burhanuddin Rabbani

### Violations of International Humanitarian Law include:

**Late 1999 - early 2000:** Internally displaced persons fleeing villages in and around Sangcharak district recounted summary executions, burning of houses and widespread looting. Several executions were reportedly carried out in front of victims' family members.

**September 20-21, 1998:** Several volleys of rockets fired at northern Kabul. One hit a crowded market. Estimates of people killed range from 76 to 180. The attacks were generally believed to be carried out by Massoud's forces. The Red Cross (September 23, 1998) described the attacks as indiscriminate and the deadliest in three years.

**Late May 1997:** Some 3,000 captured Taliban soldiers were executed in and around Mazar-i Sharif by Junbish forces under Gen. Abdul Malik Pahlawan.

**January 5, 1997:** Junbish planes dropped cluster munitions and other bombs on residential areas of Kabul. Several civilians were killed and others wounded in this indiscriminate air raid.?

**March 1995:** Commander Massoud's forces, the Jamiat-i Islami, captured Kabul's Karte Seh neighborhood and according to the U.S. State Department's human rights report, "went on a rampage, systematically looting whole streets and raping women."?

**February 11, 1993:** Forces of Jamiat-i Islami and Abdul Rasul Sayyaf's Ittihad-i Islami, raided west Kabul, killing ethnic Hazara civilians and committing widespread rape. Estimates of those killed range from 70 to 100+.

Northern Alliance factions committed other serious human rights violations. In 1994 alone, an estimated 25,000 were killed in Kabul, most of them civilians killed in rocket and artillery attacks. One-third of the city was reduced to rubble, and much of the rest was seriously damaged.

There was virtually no rule of law in Northern Alliance-controlled areas. In Kabul, Jamiat-i Islami, Ittihad and Hizb-i Wahdat forces engaged in rape, summary executions, arbitrary arrest, torture and "disappearances."

In Bamiyan, Hizb-i Wahdat commanders routinely tortured detainees for extortion purposes.

### Accountability and the Cycle of Impunity

Not a single Afghan commander has been held accountable for violations of international humanitarian law. Nor has the Northern Alliance indicated any willingness to bring to justice any of its commanders. To the contrary, the representative of the ISA (and the Northern Alliance) in the U.S., Mohammad Eshaq, remarked in Washington, D.C., on October 2, 2001, that Northern Alliance atrocities have been "exaggerated," and while

"criminals should answer to a court...it should not be a demand that all the heads of the United Front [i.e., Northern Alliance] should be taken to court."

This, he said, would not be "practical."

This failure to hold its commanders to account for past atrocities raises the prospect that if its political fortunes turn, with U.S. or other external support, their past record of abuse and impunity gives no reason to believe that

abusive commanders will feel discouraged from committing further abuses.

The provision of unqualified material and political assistance under such circumstances, rather than sending a signal that human rights abuse is

not condoned, would embolden these very same commanders. Such support may feed rather than break the lethal cycle of impunity that has brought so much suffering to Afghanistan.

The U.S, Russia, Iran—and other

states assisting the Afghan opposition—must take responsibility for how this assistance is used. Failure to do so would entail complicity in abuses committed, and they should be held accountable for these abuses.

## The Northern Alliance includes:



**Ahmad S. Massoud**

### Islamic Party of Afghanistan

The *Jamiat-i Islami-yi Afghanistan* was established in the 1970s by Kabul University students whose leader, Burhanuddin Rabbani, was a lecturer in the Islamic Law Faculty. Although Rabbani remains official head of *Jamiat-i Islami*, the party's most powerful figure was Ahmad Shah Massoud. [He was assassinated on Sept. 9, 2001.]



**Abdul Rashid Dostum**

### National Islamic Movement of Afghanistan

*Junbish-i Milli-yi Islami-yi Afghanistan* brought together northern, mostly ethnic Uzbek, former militias of the communist regime who mutinied against President Najibullah in early 1992. It also included mainly Persian-speaking former leaders and administrators of the old regime from various other ethnic groups, and some ethnic Uzbek guerrilla commanders. In 1998, it lost the territory under its control and many of its commanders defected to the Taliban.

Its founder and principal leader was Abdul Rashid Dostum, who rose from security guard to leader of Najibullah's most powerful militia.

This group took control of the important northern city of Mazar-i Sharif in early 1992. A coalition of militias, the *Junbish* was the strongest force in the north from 1992 to 1997, but was riven by internal disputes.



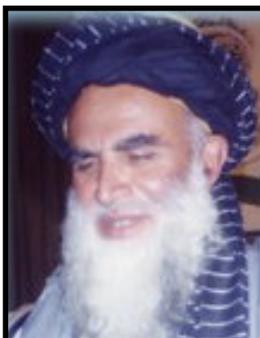
**Haji M. Mohaqiq**



**M. Karim Khalili**

### Islamic Unity Party of Afghanistan

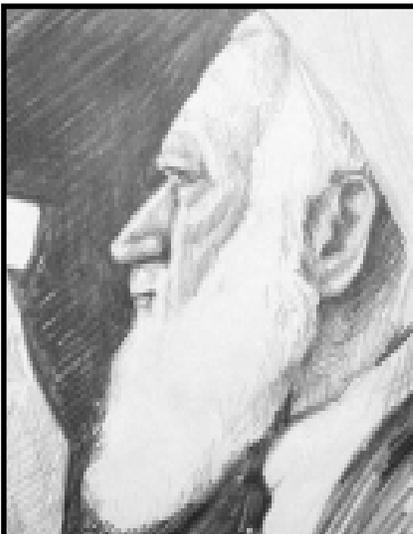
Afghanistan's principal Shi'a party, *Hizb-i Wahdat-i Islami-yi Afghanistan*, supported mainly by the Hazara ethnic community, was formed to unite eight Shi'a parties before the collapse of the communist government. Its current leader is Muhammad Karim Khalili. The leader of its Executive Council of the North, Haji Muhammad Mohaqiq, commanded the party's forces in Mazar-i Sharif in 1997.



**Abdul Sayyaf**

### Islamic Union for the Liberation of Afghanistan

This party, the *Ittihad-i Islami Bara-yi Azadi Afghanistan*, is headed by Abdul Rasul Sayyaf. During the war against the Soviet occupation, Sayyaf obtained considerable assistance from Saudi Arabia. Arab volunteers supported by Saudi entrepreneurs fought with Sayyaf's forces.



**Muhammad Asif Muhsini**

### Islamic Movement of Afghanistan

This Shi'a party, the *Harakat-i Islami-yi Afghanistan*, which never joined *Hizb-i Wahdat*, is led by Ayatollah Muhammad Asif Muhsini. It was allied with *Jamiat-i Islami* in 1993-1995. Its leadership is mostly non-Hazara Shi'a.

Source: Human Rights Watch, October 5, 2001. [www.hrw.org/backgrounder/asia/afghan-bck1005.pdf](http://www.hrw.org/backgrounder/asia/afghan-bck1005.pdf)

## Major Powers Pulled the Strings at Talks in Bonn



The Bonn conference was not meant to meet the democratic aspirations of Afghanis but to satisfy the requirements of major powers, above all the U.S. The whole affair was reminiscent of the gatherings of political stooges staged from time to time by European powers in the 19th century to give their colonial rule an air of legitimacy.

By Peter Symonds

The UN-sponsored talks on the political future of Afghanistan opened on November 27, 2001, in the Petersberg Castle, a luxury hotel just outside Bonn, Germany.

The gathering was billed as an opportunity for Afghanis to decide their own fate. UN officials have repeatedly stressed that a solution would not be imposed on Afghanistan from outside.

The whole affair is reminiscent of the gatherings of political stooges staged from time to time by European powers in the 19th century to give their colonial rule an air of legitimacy. The Bonn conference is not to meet the democratic aspirations of Afghanis but to satisfy the requirements of major powers, above all the U.S.. Who could attend, the size and composition of the delegations, the agenda, timing and even location were all dictated by Washington and its allies.

None of the four Afghani factions taking part have any popular mandate. They are loose alliances of tribal leaders, militia commanders, warlords and exiles, who are based on ethnic and religious loyalties and completely reliant on foreign backers. The real decisions have been taken already in the flurry of preconference diplomatic activity, or will be made by “foreign observers” watching over their proxies.

The Northern Alliance (NA), which provided the foot soldiers for the

U.S. war in Afghanistan, is in the strongest position. Following the Taliban’s collapse, NA troops seized large swathes of territory in the north and west, including Kabul. Headed by Burhanuddin Rabbani, the NA consolidated its grip on power, set up a Kabul police force, took over ministries and doled out official positions.

The delegations present include the so-called Rome Group—representing the 87-year-old former king, Zahir Shah, exiled in Italy since 1973.

There are two other much smaller delegations: the Pakistani-backed Peshawar group and the Cyprus group, reportedly supported by Iran. The Peshawar group was formed only a month earlier at a Pakistani meeting of about 700 Pashtuns—mullahs, former Mujahideen fighters and tribal leaders. Pompously titled “a Conference for Peace and National Unity,” it was nominally convened by Pir Sayed Ahmed Gailani, a religious and tribal leader, businessman and supporter of the king, who like Rabbani and others was armed and funded by the CIA in the 1980s to fight the Soviet-backed regime. The meeting was so obviously staged by the powerful Pakistani military intelligence agency, that the king declined to send any representative lest he be tarred with the same brush.

Having been instrumental in creating and backing the Taliban since its formation in 1994, Pakistan now finds itself without any substantial means of

influence in Afghanistan. Islamabad has been desperate to prevent the NA, backed by its arch-rival India, from gaining a dominant position. It has therefore backed U.S. moves for a “broad-based” administration and an international “peacekeeping” force in Kabul.

The CIA has been actively attempting to recruit allies among the Pashtuns. In the midst of the opening sessions of the Bonn conference, the organisers broadcast a live call via satellite phone from Hamid Karzai who declared that the conference was “the path to salvation.” Karzai was unable to attend because he was collaborating with the U.S. military and CIA in orchestrating the fall of Kandahar, the Taliban’s last remaining stronghold.

Afghanistan’s political future has already been mapped out by the UN Security Council and UN envoy Brahimi. An interim administration will be established. It will, over the next six months, convene a hand-picked assembly (loya jirga) of several hundred to choose a quasi-legislative body of about 120 to 150. It will establish another interim regime and draw up a constitution for elections—possibly in two years time.

All that is left for the Bonn meeting is to rubber-stamp the process and haggle over who will fill the positions. They have three to five days to decide Afghanistan’s political fate and to form an interim administration. It is hardly enough time in any vaguely democratic



body to decide on the agenda and to begin to discuss the complex issues of a country ravaged by more than two decades of war. But it should be long enough for the major powers to bully their Afghani surrogates into agreeing to the plan's outlines.

The main sticking point reported so far is NA opposition to having a so-called international peacekeeping force in Afghanistan. Clearly, the NA would prefer to maintain a position where its militia are the only sizeably-armed force within the country.

The NA is under considerable pressure to fall in line. The U.S. and its allies have warned that US\$6-\$10 billion in reconstruction aid is contingent on agreement to the UN plan.

If economic blackmail is not enough, then other methods will be used. A *Washington Post* editorial recently spelt out a blunt warning:

"The prospect of international reconstruction aid can be used as leverage; so can eventual Western and UN recognition for an Afghan government, which is something the Taliban never achieved."

The *Post* went on to insist, however, that the NA had to:

"accept the political primacy of the southern Pashtuns, while retaining a significant role in the national government... It's worth giving our Afghan allies that chance to be reasonable. Yet...if reason fails, stronger steps should not be ruled out."

It does not take much imagination to work out what "stronger steps" the paper is referring to. The ruthlessness with which the Bush administration has ousted the Taliban is meant to serve as a warning that the same methods will be used against anyone who stands in the way of U.S. interests in Afghanistan or internationally.

Just as the Bonn conference was about to begin, the U.S. military landed more than 1,000 marines and seized control of Kandahar airport. This delivered a clear message to the delegates: we will do what we like in Afghanistan, whether you agree or not.

**Source:** World Socialist Web Site, November 29, 2001.  
[www.wsws.org/articles/2001/nov2001/afgh-n29.shtml](http://www.wsws.org/articles/2001/nov2001/afgh-n29.shtml)



## 'The House Should be Pleased'

"The agreement reached...in Bonn...is very important.... It opens the way for a transition to a new government that is representative in nature. It includes women, which is one of the issues that members of the House [of Commons] have been raising with concern.... This is one of the first items of good news in that poor

country in a long time and the House should be pleased."

**John Manley, Foreign Affairs Minister and Deputy PM**

**Source:** *Hansard*, Canada's House of Commons, December 10, 2001.

[www.parl.gc.ca/37/1/parlbus/chambus/house/debates/128\\_2001-12-10/han128\\_1440-E.htm](http://www.parl.gc.ca/37/1/parlbus/chambus/house/debates/128_2001-12-10/han128_1440-E.htm)

## Warlords, not Women, Dominate New Regime

By Richard Sanders, COAT coordinator, and editor of *Press for Conversion!*

**A**lthough, Afghan representatives, handpicked by Western powers for the Bonn meeting, included almost no women (see photo opposite), John Manley and the Canadian government proudly vested great import in the Bonn Accord's stipulation that women be included in Afghanistan's transitional government. *Who were they kidding?*

The men who crafted this agreement did indeed stipulate that women be included in the interim authority, two to be exact. And that is exactly what Karzai—their man in Kabul—delivered. His administration of 30 ministers, included Suhaila Seddiqi (Public Health) and Sima Samar (Women's Affairs).

Samar was charged with blasphemy by Supreme Court Chief Justice, Fazul Hadi Shinwari for saying she didn't believe in Islam's sharia law. The Afghan penalty for this can be death. Within three months, Samar resigned.

### Warlords and more Warlords

At least 18 members of Karzai's interim government were men with close affiliations with Northern Alliance warlords. Indeed, the most important of these positions were filled by the brutal warlords themselves.

### Vice Presidents

**Hedayat Arsala:** Much of his adult life was spent in the U.S. where he worked for the World Bank (1969-1987). After returning to fight the Soviet-backed Afghan government, he was a senior advisor/member of the Supreme Council of the Afghan Unity of Mujahideen

and held top posts in King Zahir Shah's government in exile. (Arsala can be seen in the Bonn photo opposite: fourth from the left, in the back row.)

**Mohammad Qasim Fahim:** This senior military commander of the Northern Alliance, continued to command his own personal militia until late 2003. In 2004, Fahim was elevated to Marshal, for life, the highest rank in the Afghan military. In 2006, Karzai brought him back into government as an advisor.

**Abdul Karim Khalili:** As a warlord in the military party, Hizb-e-Wahdat Islami Afghanistan, Khalili commanded a militia estimated at between 15,000 to 30,000 war-hardened fighters. He was the Economic Minister (1993-1995) during Burhanuddin Rabbani's repressive, fundamentalist regime.

### Security Advisor

**Younis Qanooni:** This warlord joined the mujahideen in 1979 and was a close advisor to Ahmad Massoud. Qanooni was the joint defence minister in the brutal mujahideen-led government of president Burhanuddin Rabbani. When it fell to the Taliban in 1996, Qanooni helped found the Northern Alliance.

### Ministers

Karzai appointed various warlords as interim government ministers, including the following, who will be discussed in this issue of *Press for Conversion!*:

- Defense:** Mohammad Qasim Fahim
- Deputy Defense:** Abdul Rahid Dostum
- Foreign Affairs:** Abdullah
- Interior:** Younis Qanooni
- Planning:** Muhammad Mohaqiq
- Urban Development:** Haji Abdul Qadir

## Top Warlords Controlled the Emergency Loya Jirga

**U**nder the Bonn Agreement, a special commission of the Interim Authority was set up in to convene a loya jirga—or grand council—in June, 2002. The loya jirga was to choose a head of state for a second interim government, approve proposals for this government, and appoint key ministers.

### Selection Process

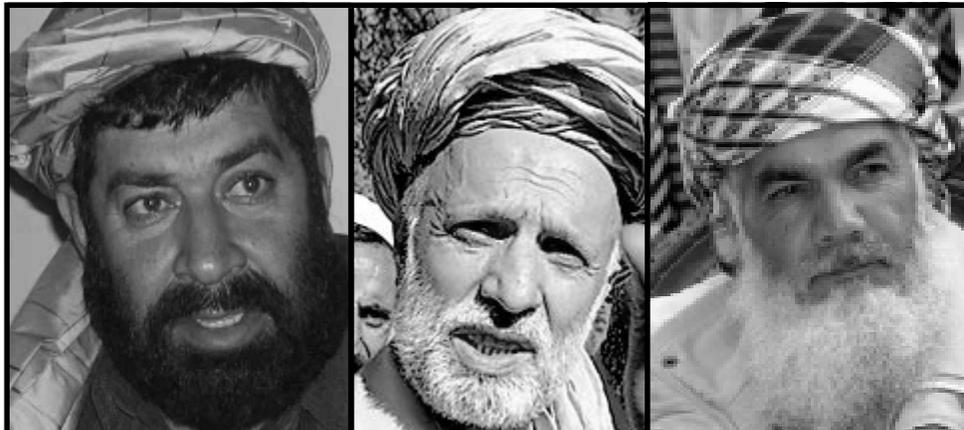
The selection process for the loya jirga took place in May and June. Local authorities were to choose a set of candidates, using a “traditional manner” (i.e., local councils known as shuras).

Then, these candidates travelled to regional centers to vote for a smaller group of final representatives (from among themselves) who would attend the loya jirga in Kabul.

These stages were to be seen as “free and fair” by regional Loya Jirga Commission observers; otherwise it could void the elections and appoint delegates themselves. All concerned parties agreed that the overall aim of the loya jirga was to create a “broad-based, multi-ethnic and fully representative” Afghan government.

The loya jirga selection process and the meeting itself (June 10-21) were marred by manipulations and abuses by Afghan warlords, who interfered with the decision-making of more legitimate representatives. During the early stages of the selection process, Human Rights Watch (HRW) documented several cases in which local warlords imposed themselves into decision-making and voting processes, directly or indirectly intimidating voters and delegates through threats and the heavy presence of armed troops. Many loya-jirga delegates were little more than puppets of local commanders, while legitimate representatives of Afghan society were in many cases afraid to speak or vote freely during the loya jirga.

In almost every western province, warlord Ismail Khan intimidated, arrested or beat loya jirga candidates



Gul Agha Sherzai Haji Abdul Qadir Ismail Khan

**These Warlord Governors Manipulated the Loya Jirga Process** Zalmay Khalilzad (U.S. special envoy to Afghanistan) and Lakhdar Brahimi (UN representative), pressured the Loya Jirga Commission to allow regional governors and military commanders to attend.

and their supporters. Pashtun representatives from several areas accused Khan of arresting Pashtuns standing for election to the loya jirga, threatening and beating most of them. Supporters of the former king—Zahir Shah—were also intimidated. Just before the loya jirga, Khan arrested Rafiq Shahir, a prominent member of the Herat professional shura, a local civil society group comprised of doctors, teachers, artists and intellectuals, holding him for several days, inflicting severe beatings and threatening him not to participate. In another province under Khan’s control, three candidates were killed during the selection process. HRW confirmed that one of these killings was carried out by commanders loyal to Khan.

In the south, HRW also documented a pattern of intimidation by local leaders that resulted in several cancelled elections and led to some delegates withdrawing their nominations.

Throughout the country, warlords and regional military commanders were selected for the loya jirga. General Rashid Dostum, the deputy defense minister in the interim authority and regional leader of northern Afghanistan, had himself elected to the loya jirga despite the fact he was serving as a military commander and was accused of complicity in human rights violations. Both factors made him ineligible for the loya jirga under the agreed-upon pro-

cedures. Other governors also attended, in violation of loya jirga procedures, including the governor of Kandahar, Gul Agha Sherzai, the governor of Nangahar, Haji Abdul Qadir, and Herat’s governor, Ismail Khan.

Zalmay Khalilzad, the U.S. special envoy to Afghanistan, and Lakhdar Brahimi, the special representative of U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan, pressured the Afghan Loya Jirga Commission to allow regional governors and military commanders to attend.

Many delegates and participants in the loya jirga process were so afraid of local warlords that they refused to speak openly with HRW researchers. UN observers confirmed that a climate of fear was pervasive throughout the elections.

### At the Loya Jirga

There were more problems at the loya jirga itself, including:

- a widespread and systematic pattern of intimidation and threats by warlords and regional leaders,
- covert and overt surveillance by intelligence agents allied with certain parties and
- a general failure by the Loya Jirga Commission, UN officials and other international actors to enforce Bonn Agreement provisions and loya jirga procedures meant to sideline military leaders and those with records of se-

rious human rights abuses.

Numerous delegates complained of explicit threats from warlords warning them not to vote in certain ways or interfere with their backdoor political dealings. One was threatened for a speech about women's rights in the Koran. The husband of the only female presidential candidate was threatened by intelligence agents allied with the Jamiat party. There were many instances of intelligence agents threatening delegates who wished to speak in debate, and many instances of agents taking photographs and writing the names of delegates who spoke openly about

their frustrations with the process.

In addition, a general sense of chaos and poor management marred the loya jirga. Voting for Hamid Karzai's presidency proceeded by secret ballot and was largely uncontroversial. Some delegates were disappointed by the seemingly U.S.-imposed arrangement to have the former Afghan king, Zahir Shah, withdraw as a candidate.

Votes taken on the arrangement of the transitional government and its key personnel, were highly irregular. There was no debate or proper vote on the composition of the next transitional government. Instead, Karzai nominated

a cabinet which was approved by a vague "voice" vote. And, the loya jirga never approved any plan or proposal for the design of the government.

The loya jirga chair, Mohammad Ismail Qasimyar, failed to exercise effective control over the proceedings, and the UN failed to assist the Loya Jirga Commission in preparing for a more orderly meeting. Warlords were handily able to manipulate the process and, as a result, most legitimate participants were thoroughly disillusioned with it.

**Source:** *World Report* 2003. Human Rights Watch. [hrw.org/wr2k3/asia1.html](http://hrw.org/wr2k3/asia1.html)

## Fundamentalists Emerge More Powerful than Ever

By Vikram Parekh

**A**fghanistan's warlords emerged from the emergency loya jirga with greater power and a new claim to legitimacy.

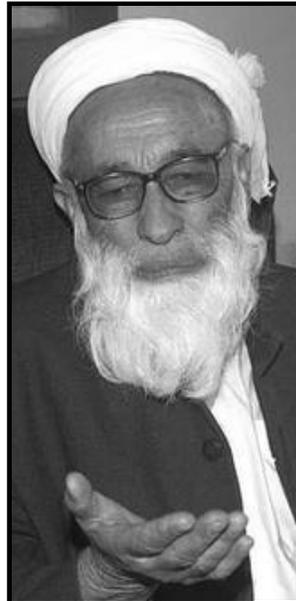
Many delegates representing civil society said they were excluded from any real decision-making. As the loya jirga neared its end, they expressed fears about the resurgent power of the warlords who were active and abusive participants in the loya jirga process.

"Afghanistan's warlords are stronger today than they were before the loya jirga started," said Saman Zia-Zarifi, senior researcher for Human Rights Watch (HRW). "Short term political expediency has clearly triumphed over human rights."

The cabinet named by Hamid Karzai, head of the transitional government, differs only slightly from that of the interim administration. The predominantly Tajik Jamiat-e Islami party holds three key cabinet posts while the Shi'a Hazara party, Hizb-e Wahdat, gained a seat. Both have been implicated in attacks on Pashtun civilians in the north following the Taliban's collapse. Jamiat has also been involved in an ongoing conflict with General Abdul Rashid Dostum's Junbish party in northern Afghanistan, where the fighting and general insecurity has imperiled humanitarian aid operations.

The appointment of Fazul Hadi Shinwari to the post of Chief Justice of the Supreme Court also raises serious human rights concerns. Shinwari was quoted in press interviews in January 2002 saying that Shari'a punishments including stoning and amputation would be retained, albeit with stricter due process guarantees than under the Taliban. His position contradicted Karzai's assertion during a U.S. visit that Shari'a punishments could only be imposed in societies where social justice and freedom from hunger prevail.

The framers of the Bonn agreement decided that Afghanistan's interim administration, established immediately



President Karzai named Fazul Hadi Shinwari, chief justice of the Supreme Court, a post he held under the fundamentalist regime of the mid-1990s.

Shinwari has said that under the legal system of the new government:

- ✓ adulterers would be stoned to death,
- ✓ the hands of thieves amputated,
- ✓ consumers of alcohol given 80 lashes,
- ✓ Christians could be threatened, expelled or, as a last resort, beheaded.

Decorating his office are two grisly symbols of harsh sharia justice that were left there by the Taliban, a sword and a leather lash for flogging.

after the collapse of the Taliban, would include warlords who had reestablished their authorities in most of the country during the fight against the Taliban. However, the transitional government to lead Afghanistan during reconstruction, selected by delegates of the emergency loya jirga, was supposed to reflect the voice of civilians, not warlords.

HRW's Zia-Zarifi said:

"Instead of creating the space for civilian leadership to emerge during the six-month interval...warlords used that time to rebuild their military and political networks."

A delegate from Kabul said

"Warlords who bombed Kabul are not supposed to be here in the loya jirga. People who are contaminated with the blood of Afghans should not be elected as ministers."

One group of delegates planned to submit a slate of candidates at the loya jirga who were not warlords, or affiliated with them. However, before they could do so, at least three members of the group received death threats.

**Source:** June 20, 2002.

[hrw.org/english/docs/2002/06/20/afghan4051\\_txt.htm](http://hrw.org/english/docs/2002/06/20/afghan4051_txt.htm)

## The Loya Jirga was a Joke

By Gary Leupp, associate professor, History, Tufts University and coordinator, Asian Studies Program.

On November 12, 2001, barely a month after the U.S. started its bombing campaign, the Northern Alliance took Kabul. The U.S. power structure seemed genuinely surprised at the lightening success of "Operation Enduring Freedom" and the weakness of the Taliban resistance.

While the U.S. (and Pakistan) had opposed the Alliance forces' entry into Kabul before a nationwide conference could determine the nature of the post-Taliban government, their Tajik-dominated militia forces occupied the capital, to the dismay of most of its inhabitants, and reestablished the hated Burhanuddin Rabbani regime. The Russians and Iranians immediately embraced the warlord clique, but the Bush regime withheld diplomatic recognition, in part to avoid antagonizing the Pakistanis who have, since November 1994 (when they broke ties to CIA Frankenstein Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, blamed for some 50,000 civilian deaths, in favor of the Taliban), been on hostile terms with the Northern Alliance.

With some help from Russia and Iran, the U.S. orchestrated the meeting in Bonn (Nov. 27-Dec. 4, 2001) that produced a bogus new government dominated by the Panjshiri Valley thugs. (Of the 30 government members, 18 were from the Northern Alliance.) The chairman of the interim administration, Hamid Karzai, an English-speaking, longtime U.S. resident, is a Pashtun who had been a deputy foreign minister in Rabbani's government in the mid-1990s. (And, although it's probably impolite to bring it up now, Karzai was the Taliban's foreign minister in 1996.)

The Bonn meeting resulted in an agreement that a loya jirga (Grand Council) would be held in June to determine the composition of a more permanent government structure. The term "loya jirga" has such an exotic sound to it. There have been loya jirgas for centuries—gatherings involving wise and powerful men from all the tribes and clans, engaged (or at least this has been the mainstream press spin) in

crude, New England Town Meeting-style, democratic debate about the future of the Afghan nation. So this particular loya jirga, the mother of loya jirgas, was closely followed by western news agencies from beginning to end (June 11-19). It was designed to legitimize Karzai's administration, was itself accorded in western reportage the legitimacy of native tradition.

In fact there was little traditional or legitimate about it. The warlords currently enjoying U.S. support largely determined the selection of delegates. Lakhdar Brahimi, UN envoy to Afghanistan, told reporters that:

"Voting for the loya jirga has been plagued by violence and vote-buying. There were attempts at violence, manipulation, unfortunately. Money was used, threats were used." (ABC, June 12).



**Warlord Younis Qanooni became Education Minister**

Disproportionate representation was given Uzbek and Tajik regions controlled by the Northern Alliance (*The Nation*, May 11). At the meeting, the U.S. was much in evidence, and calling all the shots. Afghan-American, Big Oil man Zalmay Khalilzad, the State Department's chief envoy to Kabul and Donald Rumsfeld intimate, was on the



**Lakhdar Brahimi, UN envoy to Afghanistan**

**"Voting for the loya jirga has been plagued by violence and vote-buying."**

ground coaching Karzai throughout.

Zalmay Khalilzad. This is the gentleman who, while employed by Unocal and involved in oil pipeline negotiations with the Taliban, argued as recently as 1998 in a *Washington Post* op-ed piece that

"The Taliban does not practice the anti-U.S. style of fundamentalism practiced by Iran. We should...be willing to offer recognition and humanitarian assistance and to promote international economic reconstruction. It is time for the U.S. to reengage [the Afghan regime]."

Then he wrote a book about Afghanistan as a "rogue state." A real man of principle, here. So, what were his contributions to Afghan nation-building? (1) He pronounced a U.S. veto on the appointment of Zahir Shah, the former king, as head of state and (2) he obliged Karzai to seek loya jirga approval of at least some of his cabinet appointments.

On June 9, between 800 and 900 of the 1600 delegates assembled in Kabul signed a petition asking that Zahir Shah serve as head of state.

Mohammed Fahim, an ethnic Tajik and the defense minister, fearing that a major role for the Pashtun former king would undercut his own faction's position, warned Karzai late that day that delegates representing the Northern Alliance would withdraw from the loya jirga unless Zahir Shah agreed to seek no political post. He also threatened to place his troops on alert (*New York Times*, June 12). Since the Alliance is the dominant military presence in the

capital, these were serious threats.

The U.S. position in Afghanistan is thoroughly dependent on its alliance with the Northern Alliance. So one-time Taliban apologist Khalilzad resolved the situation, pressuring the aging, former monarch to bow out, while softening the blow by persuading the interior minister, Tajik warlord Younis Qanooni, to step down in favor of the Pashtun, Taji Mohammed Wardak. As the meeting opened belatedly, under a grand tent on June 11, delegates learning of the backdoor deal expressed outrage. "This is not a democracy, it is a rubber stamp," declared Minister of Women's Affairs Sima Samar. "Everything has already been decided by the powerful ones."

Another delegate, Asella Wardak, protested,

"Everything seems to have been decided. We don't need anyone to decide for us. We have had enough of foreign interference in our country."

Confusion reigned as Karzai misinterpreted his nomination as president as confirmation. (The Americans,



**"This is not a democracy, it is a rubber stamp," declared Sima Samar, the Minister of Women's Affairs. She was forced to resign after receiving death threats from fanatical fundamentalists, including Afghanistan's Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, Fazul Hadi Shinwari. He had her charged her with blasphemy, a crime that can result in execution.**

after all, had already told him he was president). He was indeed elected on June 13th, overwhelmingly, challenged only by two little-known candidates, one of them a woman ridiculed and threatened by the fundamentalists.

The puppet's legitimacy was thus assured. We will probably be told time and again that he was the clear choice of the Afghan people in this Grand Council. Even so, his position is shaky. "If the president does not follow the Islamic values," warned warlord Abdulrab Rassoul Sayyaf, "then the Prophet advises us to follow him anywhere, to oppose, protest and strike against him."

The next item of business was to select the new cabinet, and in this, the dreaded warlords had final say. Sitting in the front seats, they weren't even supposed to be there. "We were told that this loya jirga would not include all the people who had blood on their hands," complained one delegate, Safar Mohammed, to his fellows, drawing applause:

"But we see these people everywhere. I don't know whether this is a loya jirga or a [military] commanders' council." (*Independent*, June 13).

Even in the loya jirga's intimidating atmosphere, Karzai was unable to win ready acceptance of his cabinet nominees, and on June 17, half of the delegates walked out, some protesting foreign manipulation of the proceedings and warlord intimidation.

Karzai announced he would select a cabinet without loya jirga approval, but, outside the grand tent Khalilzad informed him that the Bonn agreement of 2001 specified that loya jirga approval was required.

Two days later, the loya jirga concluded, its delegates having approved Karzai's cabinet choices for most cabinet positions. Mohammad Fahim remains Defense Minister, and is appointed deputy president.

Meanwhile, warlords Haji Qadir and Karim Khalili were also named deputy presidents.

Qanooni after some hesitation and a threat to form an opposi-



**Mohammad Fahim remained Defence Minister and became Deputy President.**

tion party has accepted the Minister of Education portfolio and (perhaps more significantly) has agreed to serve as internal security advisor. (His successor as Interior Minister, Taji Mohammed Wardak, has met with violent opposition from Qanooni's thugs while merely attempting to settle into his office.)

A son of Herat's warlord Ismail Khan was brought into the administration. The suave, English-speaking Abdullah, remains Foreign Minister.

Mulavi Fazal Hadi Shinwari was appointed Chief Justice; an earnest proponent of sharia punishments (including stoning and amputation). He's a fan of Gulbuddin Hekmatyar.

In a word, the loya jirga has empowered monsters, while excluding the more progressive forces; Sima Samar was intimidated into resigning as Minister of Women's Affairs. As Ahmed Rashid said in *Eurasia Insight* (June 24):

"Afghan President Hamid Karzai's new cabinet configuration should yield even greater political and military powers to the already dominating faction of Tajiks from the Panjshir Valley, as well as to other warlords."

Assadallah Wolwaliji, a member of the independent commission overseeing the conference with UN assistance, said: "We cannot say this was a democratic loya jirga."

It was, in any case, clearly a betrayal of the expectations of the Afghan people, a joke of a jirga achieved under U.S. auspices.

**Source:** *Counterpunch*, June 27, 2002 [www.counterpunch.org/leupp0627.html](http://www.counterpunch.org/leupp0627.html)

# Stifled in the Loya Jirga

By Omar Zakhilwal

I am a member of the loya jirga's silent majority—or rather, silenced majority—who came to Afghanistan's capital expecting to shape our nation's future but instead find ourselves being dragged back into the past.

We came from all parts of the country to claim our freedom and democracy. Instead, we are being met with systematic threats and intimidation. We came strengthened by international declarations on human rights, but now are facing international complicity in the denial of our rights. We came to represent the diverse interests of the entire nation, 1,500 delegates for 25 million people, but are being pressured to support the narrow agenda of warlords and their foreign sponsors. We came to inaugurate an inclusive and professional transitional government, but instead are being compelled to rubber-stamp the Bonn Agreement's unjust power-sharing arrangements.

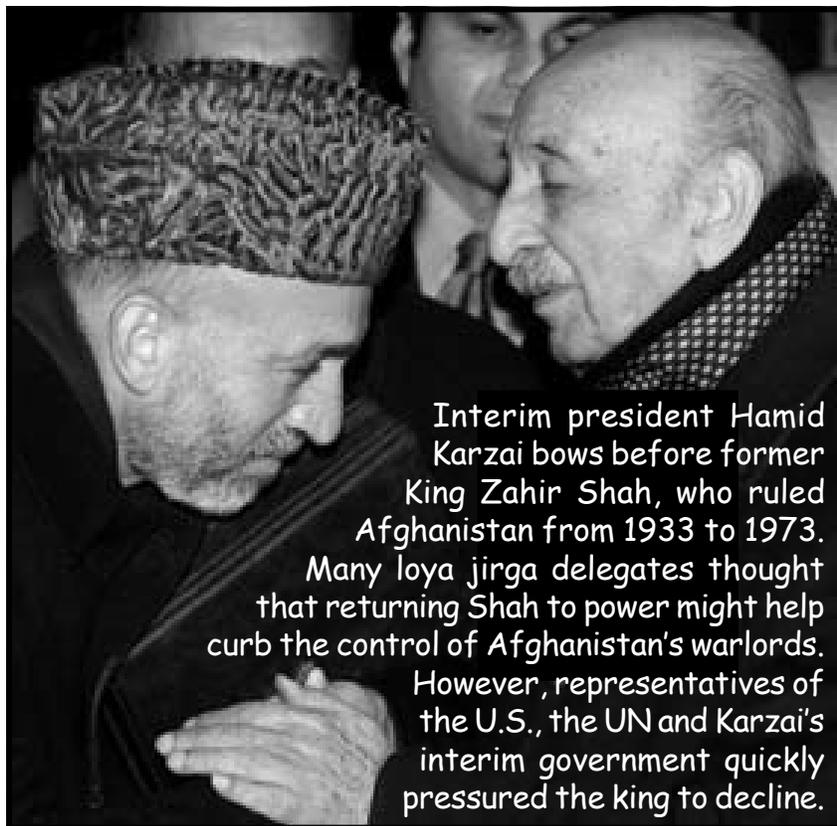
The fundamental question we face is this: Will the new government be dominated by the same warlords and factional politics responsible for two decades of violence and impunity, or can we break with this legacy and begin to establish a system of law and professional governance?

The Afghan people have spoken clearly on this issue. I participated in a U.N.-commissioned assessment mission by the Center for Economic and Social Rights. Our report documents

widespread agreement among all Afghans, from urban professionals to landless farmers, that there should be no role for warlords in the country's future, and that international aid will be wasted unless the underlying conditions of peace and security are first es-



King Zahir Shah



Interim president Hamid Karzai bows before former King Zahir Shah, who ruled Afghanistan from 1933 to 1973. Many loya jirga delegates thought that returning Shah to power might help curb the control of Afghanistan's warlords. However, representatives of the U.S., the UN and Karzai's interim government quickly pressured the king to decline.

tablished.

The same consensus holds in the loya jirga. At least 80% of delegates favor excluding all warlords from government. The 200 women delegates are especially outspoken on this. In a spontaneous display of democracy, they publicly rebuked two powerful symbols of Afghanistan's violent past—Burhanuddin Rabbani, president of the mujaheddin government from 1992 to 1996, and General Mohammed Fahim, former intelligence chief and defense minister in the interim government.

But because of behind-the-scenes pressure, our voices are being silenced and the warlords empowered.

When the loya jirga opened, support for the former king, Mohammed Zahir Shah, was extremely strong.

Rather than address the issue democratically, almost two days of the six-day loya jirga were wasted while a parade of high-level officials from the interim government, the UN and U.S. visited Zahir Shah and "persuaded" him to renounce his political ambitions.

When the loya jirga recommenced, the delegates were surprised to be greeted by Afghanistan's 30 provincial governors, none of whom was elected to the grand assembly. They served as arm-twisters for the interim government, which is dominated by Northern Alliance warlords. The governors leveraged their local military and financial power to pressure delegates from their provinces to support hand-picked candidates allied to the Northern Alliance. At a gathering I attended,

"When I complained about our restricted role, a top UN political adviser told me in no uncertain terms that the loya jirga was not intended to bring about fundamental political change, such as ridding the government of warlords."  
Omar Zakhilwal, loya jirga delegate



one governor made his threat explicit:

“You are all with me. You will do what I tell you to do. If you dare disobey, we all go back to our province after this, don’t we?”

Such threats are enhanced by scores of Interior Ministry agents circulating in the loya jirga compound and openly intimidating outspoken delegates.

Equally discouraging is the role played by international organizations. When I complained about our restricted role, a top U.N. political adviser told me in no uncertain terms that the loya jirga was not intended to bring about fundamental political change, such as ridding the government of warlords. Meanwhile, Zalmay Khalilzad, U.S. special envoy on Afghanistan, has caused disappointment in the loya jirga through pressure tactics to undermine popular support for Zahir Shah.

In reality, the loya jirga is being treated as a ratification tool for back-room political deals. The media have reported on the “voluntary” decision of Interior Minister Younis Qanooni to drop his candidacy. But it is reporting that he may become prime minister in the new government, or that his intended replacement is also member of Qanooni’s Northern Alliance faction.

I asked a taxi driver what he thought of the loya jirga. He shrugged his shoulders and pointed at Kabul’s ruined landscape: “The same people who destroyed these buildings are sitting in the front row of the loya jirga.”

On the loya jirga’s first day, we were filled with hope and enthusiasm. Most of us stayed up past midnight in spirited debates about the country’s future. By the third day, a palpable demoralization had set in. Our time is being wasted on trivial procedural matters. We feel manipulated and harassed. Our historic responsibility to the Afghan nation is becoming a charade.

We are in Kabul because we believe that participation and democracy are more than words on paper. We are not asking for much, after all: simply the right to determine our own government and future in accordance with the human rights ideals so loudly trumpeted by the international community.

**Source:** *Washington Post*, June 16, 2002. [www.rawa.org/loyajirga2.htm](http://www.rawa.org/loyajirga2.htm)

## Under the Shadow of Guns

The majority of our wounded and bewildered people, who have borne the constant blows of the past ten years, look at the loya jirga with disappointed eyes. It was convened under the patronage of guns, threats and the corruption of fundamentalists. At least eight candidates for the loya jirga were killed during the election process.

According to the Loya Jirga Commission, those involved in war crimes and human rights violations were not qualified for membership in the loya jirga. Many well-respected candidates who were clean of the shame of affiliation with any fundamentalist party were rounded up and pushed aside. Such displays of power were more pronounced in Herat under the domination of warlord Ismail Khan.

The composition of the Loya Jirga Commission is itself unfair. How could Musa Tawana, a leader of Jamiat-e Islami, with close ties to Rabbani, think of anything other than infusing more of his band of traitors into the loya jirga? He and others like him could only have been real members of the Commission if they had exposed the whole truth about the crimes and treasons of insane fundamentalist gangs and cut off affiliations with them.

Meanwhile, the so-called Chief Justice Mulavi Fazal Hadi Shinwari, who runs a madrasa (fundamentalist school) in Dara Adam Khil, has said this:

“Gulbaddin Hekmatyar and his supporters played a great role in the Afghanistan jihad and therefore deserve to be considered in the coming government. Neither Gulbaddin nor any other body committed crimes and hence there is no reason to impose restrictions on them.”

Thus, from this Chief Justice’s point of view, the killings of 50,000 people—in Kabul alone between 1992 and 1996—must have been done by birds in the sky!

When the Chief Justice of a ruined country so shamelessly ignores the shedding of blood by Gulbaddin and Co.; when fundamentalist bandits use guns and money to ruthlessly repress people; when the UN envoy is encircled by vile-minded and biased ad-

When violence against women and girls ends, I will...



### Revolutionary Association of the Women of Afghanistan

visors and there is no effective UN peacekeeping force, how can we expect that the loya jirga would be comprised of well-respected, democratic, anti-jihadi and anti-Taliban people?

It is undoubtedly clear that the loya jirga has been polluted by the filth of the fundamentalists. By no means is it what our people were hoping for.

As the Revolutionary Association of the Women of Afghanistan (RAWA) has reiterated, unless the pathogen of fundamentalism is eliminated from the government, no development, no institutions and no decisions will be untainted.

Despite all these bitter facts, some are of the opinion that the participation of democratic and anti-fundamentalist forces is still possible. We hope it would be so. The importance of their presence will be most felt when they strongly expose the real nature of the fundamentalists with whom they sit and who want only to give legal status to their heinous crimes.

RAWA will be in agreement with loya jirga members who confirm their loyalty to democracy by taking a staunch stand against all the jihadi and Taliban bandits.

**Source:** Revolutionary Association of the Women of Afghanistan, June 9, 2002. [www.rawa.org/loyajirga-en.htm](http://www.rawa.org/loyajirga-en.htm)

## The Warlords Win!

By Prof. Omar Zakhilwal, Economics, University of Ottawa and Adeena Niazi, Afghan Women's Assoc. of Ontario.

**O**n the final night of the emergency loya jirga, more than 1,500 delegates gathered for the unveiling of the new cabinet. Our hearts sank when we heard President Hamid Karzai pronounce one name after another. A woman activist turned to us in disbelief saying it was:

“worse than our worst expectations.

The warlords have been promoted and the professionals kicked out.

Who calls this democracy?”

Interim government ministers with civilian rather than military credentials were dismissed. The key minis-

tries of defense and foreign affairs remained with Muhammad Qasim Fahim and Abdullah, both from the Northern Alliance. Younis Qanooni, of the same faction, was switched from the interior ministry to education. The powerful Northern Alliance commanders—Fahim, Haji Abdul Qadir and Karim Khalili—became vice presidents. These are the very forces responsible for countless brutalities under the former mujahideen government.

As the loya jirga folded its tent, we met with frustration and anger in the streets. “Why did you legitimize an illegitimate government?” one Kabul

Abdullah, who joined the mujahideen in 1986, was an advisor to Ahmad Shah Massoud, and became the Northern Alliance foreign minister in 1998. He was Karzai's Foreign Minister (2001-2006).



resident asked us.

While the Bonn Agreement and the rules of the loya jirga entitled us to choose the next government freely, we delegates were denied anything more than a symbolic role in the selection process. A small group of Northern Alliance chieftains decided everything behind closed doors and then dispatched Karzai to give us the bad news.

This is not what we expected when we gathered to participate in one of the most extraordinary events in Afghan history. Delegates from all backgrounds—Pashtuns, Tajiks, Hazaras and Uzbeks; urban and rural; Sunni and Shiite—sat together as if we belonged to a single village. Men and women mingled openly and comfortably. In tolerant and lively exchanges, we discussed the compatibility of women's rights with Islamic traditions. Women played a leading role. We were living proof against stereotypes that Afghans are divided by ethnic hatreds, that we are backward and not ready for democracy or equality.

Within a day we had developed a common wish list focused on national

## Warlords had Front Seats at Loya Jirga



Tajwar Kakar, a loya jirga delegate

“I was amazed to see in the first and second rows those so-called warlords sitting together.”

Klaus-Peter Klaiber, European Union special representative. *Agence France Presse*, June 13, 2002.



“I told the country these men are responsible for the destruction of the country, for the widows and orphans who have nothing to eat. They should be in jail, not sitting in the front seat in the loya jirga.”

Tajwar Kakar, the deputy minister of women's affairs, was a delegate at the emergency loya jirga where she stood up to powerful warlords and called for their removal. Many of the warlords now in control of the provinces are the mujahideen (or so called “freedom fighters”) who fought against the Soviets [and, later, each other]. Some are now fighting hard to subjugate women.

Source: Fariba Nawa, *WEnews.com*, June 30, 2002.

### Loya Jirga Quotes

“When I heard [Karzai's] speech I realised he can't solve the problems of Afghanistan. He only mentioned the leaders of the armed factions. They all support him. If you see who has destroyed Kabul, killed tens of thousands of people, how can it be possible for them to be in power again?”

Mir Mohammed, a loya jirga delegate from Kabul *The Independent*, June 14, 2002.

“The Northern Alliance are the ones now warning us not to forget to wear our burqas.... They threaten to throw acid in our faces if we don't.”

Shahla Mahindost, a loya jirga delegate from Badakhshan *Scotsman.com*, June 16, 2002.

unity, peace and security. We also emphasized access to food, education and health services in neglected rural areas. The one issue uniting delegates above all others was the urgency of reducing the power of warlords and establishing a truly representative government.

After the former king, Mohammed Zahir Shah, was strong-armed into renouncing any meaningful role in the government, the atmosphere at the loya jirga changed radically. The gathering was now teeming with intelligence agents who openly threatened reform-minded delegates, especially women. Access to the microphone was controlled so that supporters of the interim government dominated the proceedings. Fundamentalist leaders branded critics of the warlords as traitors to Islam and circulated a petition denouncing Women's Affairs Minister Samar as "Afghanistan's Salman Rushdie."

Aware that in our country political intimidation can turn quickly into violence, many delegates lost the will to demand their democratic rights. A leading activist for women's rights, who prefers to remain anonymous due to these threats, explained:

"Today we are loya jirga delegates, but tomorrow we go home as individuals. Who will protect us if we continue to express our views and fight for our rights?"

Of course we are discouraged that our experiment in grass-roots democracy was suppressed. We are disappointed that our leaders are not willing to recognize women's rightful participation. Above all, we regret that they and the international community abandoned any commitment to democratic rights as soon as we sought to exercise those rights.

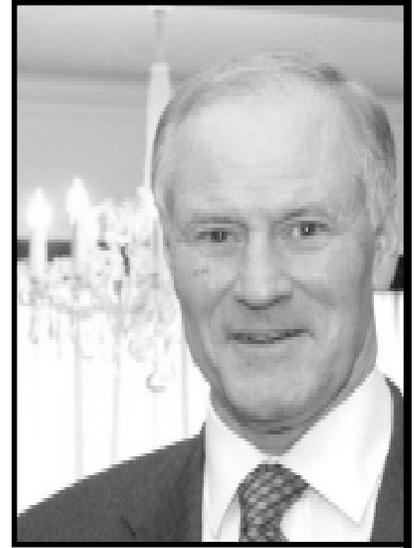
The course of the loya jirga demonstrated that powerful forces inside and outside the country remain categorically opposed to democratic accountability. The dangers of challenging the power of the gun, especially in the absence of genuine international support for the rule of law, are substantial. But the reactions we saw on the streets of Kabul showed that the popular will of Afghans will not tolerate a retreat into the past.

**Source:** *New York Times*, June 21, 2002. [www.rawa.org/loyajirga2.htm](http://www.rawa.org/loyajirga2.htm)

## "Strong Support" and "Congratulations"



"We expressed our strong support for the emergency loya jirga currently underway in Afghanistan, and offered our congratulations to Hamid Karzai for his election today in Kabul. We commend Chairman Karzai, his cabinet and the Afghan people for the extraordinary progress they have made in the last months in rebuilding the Afghan state. The loya jirga is a vital step in the creation of a representative, inclusive and effective transitional authority and a critical step towards democratic elections due in 2004."



Bill Graham,  
Foreign Affairs Minister  
(2002-2004)

**Source:** Statement at the G8 Foreign Ministers Meeting, Whistler, B.C., June 12-13, 2002. [www.dfait-maeci.gc.ca/g8fimm-g8rmae/chair\\_statement-en.asp](http://www.dfait-maeci.gc.ca/g8fimm-g8rmae/chair_statement-en.asp)

## Human Rights Watch Statement

Several delegates, including some women, reported threats when they complained about the warlords' participation in the grand national assembly. Others reported alarm at the heavy presence of agents from the Afghan Intelligence Service.

Senior researcher for Human Rights Watch, Zia-Zarifi, said:

"After subverting the voting process in many regions... the warlords are now trying to hijack the loya jirga

itself.... If the warlords succeed in their nefarious quests, the security of the Afghan people will be put squarely in the hands of those most likely to threaten it."

According to some delegates, a number of the most prominent warlords gathered on the evening of June 10 to divide power in the next government.

Several women delegates complained publicly about the presence of figures widely held responsible for Afghanistan's devastating decade of civil war and ensuing atrocities.

Rules governing the loya jirga state clearly that delegates:

"should not have been involved in ... abuse of human rights, war crimes, looting of public property... [or] involved indirectly or directly in the killing of innocent human beings."

A woman delegate, who asked to remain anonymous, said "We are hostages of the people who destroyed Afghanistan." As a result of a public complaint, she was threatened by men associated with one of the warlords.

Other delegates were troubled

**After subverting the voting process in many regions... the warlords are now trying to hijack the loya jirga.**

by the intrusive presence of Afghan intelligence service agents and their obvious efforts to monitor discussions. This spy agency is widely believed to be dominated by a party founded by former president Burhanuddin Rabbani and the late Northern Alliance leader Ahmad Shah Massoud. Their party holds the key cabinet posts of defense, interior and foreign affairs.

**Source:** "Afghanistan: Loya Jirga Off to Shaky Start: Delegates Coerced, Threatened, Spied On," June 13, 2002. [hrw.org/english/docs/2002/06/13/afghan4039.htm](http://hrw.org/english/docs/2002/06/13/afghan4039.htm)

## Rubber-Stamping an Anti-Democratic Constitution

By Peter Symonds

The loya jirga, or grand tribal council, is a thoroughly cynical political exercise. For all the hype about consulting the Afghan people, a select group of 500 delegates has been convened to endorse an undemocratic constitution and to consolidate the position of Washington's political puppet-President Hamid Karzai.

The gathering is taking place in a large tent in the grounds of Kabul Polytechnic Institute, heavily guarded by army units with tanks and machine gun posts. Soldiers from the 5,500-strong International Security Assistance Force are patrolling nearby hills to prevent rocket attacks.

The loya jirga was postponed for a day and opened on December 14, 2003. Karzai and his backers used the time to consolidate support for his choice of chairman—Segbatullah Mojaddedi—and for the proposed constitution that concentrates enormous

editor and Karzai critic, 251 votes to 154.

From the outset, the entire process was carried out behind the backs of Afghans. The framework was decided at a UN-sponsored conference in Bonn, Germany, in December 2001, shortly after the collapse of the Taliban regime. While the UN organised the affair, it was the Bush administration that called the shots, insisting Karzai be installed as interim president.

The hand-picked delegates in Bonn also rubber-stamped the procedure for drawing up and approving a constitution and for national elections. Whatever their factional differences, all present traced their origins to the various right-wing Mujaheddin militia that were financed, trained and equipped by the CIA in the 1980s to fight the Soviet-backed regime in Kabul. Karzai developed an especially close relationship with Washington when he ran the Pakistani office of the group headed by Segbatullah Mojaddedi.

In June 2002, to provide a demo-



Karzai's choice to chair the constitutional loya jirga was Segbatullah Mojaddedi. He had led the Afghan National Liberation Front and was the founder and first president of the fundamentalist regime of feuding warlords and drug barons that ruled Afghanistan from 1992 to 1996.



This loya jirga rubber-stamped a new constitution that gave extraordinary powers to Afghanistan's President.

power in the hands of the president.

Former president Burhanuddin Rabbani, a key Northern Alliance leader, has been one of the main figures criticising the proposed constitution. On Saturday after a flurry of high profile visitors, including Karzai, U.S. ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad and UN special envoy Lakhdar Brahimi, Rabbani indicated that he would accept a presidential system "with certain checks."

The behind-the-scenes deal making was evident on the first day when Mojaddedi was elected chair, defeating Abdul Mansoor, a newspaper

cratic veneer for the arrangements made in Bonn, an emergency loya jirga was convened in Kabul. Some 1,600 heavily-screened delegates were bullied, threatened and bribed into approving Karzai as president as well as his proposals for three vice-presidents, the chief justice and cabinet. Even at this stage-managed affair, there was bitter criticism of the standover tactics, particularly those used by Zalmay Khalilzad, the U.S. special envoy to Afghanistan [Editor's note: Khalilzad is now the U.S. ambassador to Iraq.]

Karzai and his transitional ad-

ministration applied the same anti-democratic methods to the constitution. A carefully-selected committee drafted it in secret. The much-vaunted public consultative process, which involved stage-managed discussions with "focus groups," began in June and was completed in late July 2002, before the draft constitution was even available. When it was finally published on November 3, 2002, it clearly reflected the desire of Karzai—and Washington—for an autocratic presidency.

The final draft eliminated a proposal, contained in earlier versions, for establishing a prime minister as head of government. Instead, the president will have extensive powers, including the appointment and dismissal of ministers, the attorney general, the central bank governor, judges, officers of the armed forces, police and national security, diplomats and other high ranking officials. The president will also appoint one third of the members of the upper house of the national assembly.

The president will be the designated commander-in-chief of the armed forces, with the power to declare war or a state of emergency and to dispatch troops to foreign countries. He or she

will preside over the government as chairperson of the cabinet and have the power to issue decrees. The president will be able to convene loya jirgas—declared to be “the highest manifestation of the will of the people of Afghanistan”—that will have the power to amend the constitution and override the national assembly. He or she will also be able to call a referendum, which can be used to sidestep parliament.

The two houses of the national assembly will have very limited means to constrain the president. While both will have to approve laws, they will not be able to delay government bills indefinitely. The lower house may question and impeach ministers, but presidential impeachment needs a two-thirds vote in the lower house to convene a loya jirga, a two-thirds loya-jirga vote, and approval of a special court, making such an eventuality all but impossible.

The draft constitution is dressed up with a list of fundamental rights for citizens. All of these are routinely flouted, not only by warlords, military commanders and tribal chiefs who control most of the country outside Kabul, but by the U.S. military. U.S. troops conduct operations, often with terrible consequences for civilians, free of any constraints. Whatever the loya jirga decides, it is certain that basic constitutional rights will not apply to prisoners held indefinitely without charge or trial, interrogated and tortured at U.S.-run detention centres in Afghanistan.

The U.S. actions have generated widespread opposition to its occupation of the country. In the leadup to the loya jirga, the U.S. military conducted a massive sweep involving 2,000 U.S. troops along the border with Pakistan, in part to preempt attacks on the assembly in Kabul. Washington’s tenuous position in Afghanistan is the prime reason it has insisted that the constitution concentrate power in the hands of its stooge Karzai, even at the expense of the Northern Alliance, its main military ally in ousting the Taliban.

For his part, Karzai is completely dependent on the U.S.—politically, financially and militarily. He has no significant base outside a limited one among his own Pashtun tribe. So precarious is his position that the U.S. is providing a special guard to protect him

from his nominal allies as well as his enemies. Until now, he has had to coexist with a cabinet in which the Northern Alliance—composed of ethnic Tajiks, Uzbeks and Hazaras—holds the key posts of foreign affairs and defence.

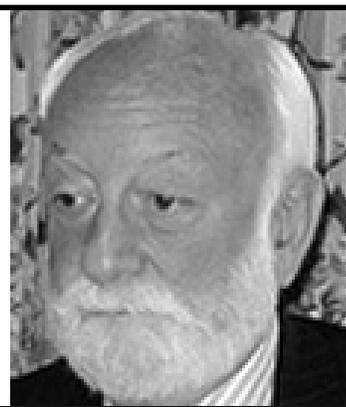
Under the new constitution, the president will have significantly more powers than any of his ministers, including the right to dismiss them. This is the main reason for the opposition from Rabbani and sections of the Northern Alliance, who view the proposed constitution as a threat to their own power bases. Their criticisms also appear to have behind-the-scenes support from the European Union, whose representative Francesco Vendrell, argued that the regional warlords had to be given a parliamentary avenue in order to convince them to disband their military forces.

The only other opposition inside the loya jirga to the draft constitution came from fundamentalists who insist that it does not go far enough to entrench reactionary Islamic law. They demand restrictions on the basic rights of women and a form of retributive justice that is not so different from that imposed by the Taliban regime before the U.S. ousted it.

Whatever the factional differ-

ences between the delegates, it is highly likely that a majority will approve the draft constitution with minor amendments. In part, this reflects the fact that those present have either been appointed directly by the president or have been “elected” by carefully vetted groups of district representatives. It is also a product of the enormous clout that Washington wields behind the scenes. On December 13, 2003, Karzai insisted that he would only stand in next year’s presidential election if the presidential powers were passed intact. His statement only carried any political weight because all the powerbrokers in Kabul were well aware

**The European Union representative, Francesco Vendrell, said Afghan warlords had to be allowed into parliament so they might disband their military forces.**



that behind the non-entity Karzai stands the Bush administration.

**Source:** World Socialist Web Site, December 18, 2003.  
[www.wsws.org/articles/2003/dec2003/afgh-d18\\_prn.shtml](http://www.wsws.org/articles/2003/dec2003/afgh-d18_prn.shtml)



## Canadians “Central” to the Process

“When we were pursuing the Bonn agenda.... we had to... ensure that the country hosted the loya jirga to fashion a new constitution - Canadians were central to that.” Chris Alexander, Canada’s Ambassador to Afghanistan (2003-2005)



**O**n September 27, 2003, shortly before the constitutional loya jirga, Afghan interim president Hamid Karzai (and his Foreign Minister, Abdullah) did some photo ops in Ottawa at the invitation of Prime Minister Jean Chrétien.

**Source:** [www.dfait-maeci.gc.ca/departement/focus/karzai\\_visits\\_canada-en.asp](http://www.dfait-maeci.gc.ca/departement/focus/karzai_visits_canada-en.asp)



**PM Chrétien meets Karzai in Ottawa**

## Chretien in Central Asia

**A** year later, on September 3, 2004, former-PM Chrétien, then-“Special Advisor on International Relations” to Calgary’s PetroKazakhstan Inc., met with Turkmenistan’s notoriously authoritarian president Saparmurat Niyazov, to discuss a multibillion dollar trans-Afghan pipeline, needed to transport Turkmenistan’s vast Caspian Sea oil and gas reserves to South Asian markets.

# Malalai Joya, Afghanistan's Youngest Revolutionary

By Sonali Kolhatkar

**O**n December 17, 2003, a 26-year-old woman named Malalai Joya joined hundreds of others in a large tent in Kabul, Afghanistan, to adopt a new constitution for their war-torn nation. The traditional gathering, called a loya jirga (grand assembly), was dominated by U.S.-backed warlords responsible for mass slaughter and violence in the 1980s and early 1990s. Malalai Joya was present as an elected delegate from Farah province in western Afghanistan.

Like the rest of the independent delegates in the tent, she despised the warlords. When Joya was granted permission to address the assembly, she did what no one expected by publicly and unequivocally denouncing them:

“My criticism on all my compatriots is: Why are they allowing the legitimacy and legality of this loya jirga to come under question with the presence of those felons who brought our country to this state?... The chairman of every committee is already selected. Why do you not take all these criminals to one committee so that we see what they want for this nation? These [men] turned our country into the nucleus of national and international wars. They were the most anti-women people in the society . . . who brought our country to this state, and they intend to do the same again. I believe that it is a mistake to test those already being tested. They should be taken to national and international court. If they are forgiven by our people, the bare-footed Afghan people, our history will never forgive them. They are all recorded in the history of our country.”

Her microphone was cut off before she could finish, but the two-minute speech changed Malalai Joya's life. She became a heroine of the Afghan people and a target of the warlords' wrath. Since 2003, she has had her home and office ransacked by warlord supporters, and has survived four assassination attempts. The BBC has called her “the most famous woman in Afghanistan.”



## An Interview with Malalai

In February 2005, Sonali Kolhatkar interviewed Malalai Joya at her office in Farah City, Afghanistan:

**Kolhatkar:** When you were at the loya jirga in 2003, did you plan on saying the words you said?

**Joya:** I wanted to ask our government and the countries that helped Afghanistan, especially the U.S., “Why did you replace the Taliban with the Northern Alliance?” They destroyed our country from 1992 to 1996.

When I went to the loya jirga, I saw the situation becoming worse each day. This was not a democratic situation. I finally went to the chief of the loya jirga, Mojadeddi, and told him that I wanted to make a speech on behalf of the young generation of Afghanistan.

Before the loya jirga, I made a speech in Farah. Some told me, “Your speech is very dangerous. The warlords are in power and they will kill you.” I said, “I will never be afraid. Because I spoke the truth and I'm sure that if they kill me, my people are with me.”

**Kolhatkar:** What kind of threats did you receive?

**Joya:** After the loya jirga my life completely changed. That night the National Army escorted me because they knew I was not safe. All of the criminals were very emotional. They attacked the place where I was staying, the special place for women at the loya jirga.

They said some things against me. For example, “Die Malalai, she is not telling the truth,” “We are against Malalai.” They called me a prostitute, an infidel, a communist, etc.

I promise that while I am alive and have energy, I have decided to work more and more for my people and struggle until we achieve rights for the women of Afghanistan.

**Kolhatkar:** How did people of Afghanistan show their support for you?

**Joya:** I am honored and proud. I received a lot of warm messages. I am a servant of my people. Now I accept this risk because of my people.

They [warlords] killed a lot of democratic people. Maybe one day they will kill me. But I will never be afraid.

**Kolhatkar:** What did you think about the clause in the constitution that makes Islamic Sharia law the supreme law of the land?

**Joya:** The warlords are using the name of Islam for their own benefit. They are not real jihadis. They are the enemies of our countries that used Islam for about 25 years of war. After the Russian puppet regime they committed all kinds of crimes under the name of Islam. Now our people know very well that they are not Muslim. But the people are afraid of them. They have to obey them.

**Kolhatkar:** After the loya jirga, the

then U.S. ambassador to Afghanistan, Zalmay Khalilzad, wrote in the *Washington Post* that the fact that you were able to make that speech at the loya jirga was an example of democracy. How do you respond to that?

**Joya:** Why didn't he say what happened after the speech? Now, nobody knows! Now what kind of life does Malalai have? Every step of my life is a risk of death. Now I have to be in the house with bodyguards! I hate guns! The guns destroyed our country. But now I have to wear a burqa! I have to take care of my security

I want you to tell the American people, "Why don't you ask why they attacked this girl in the loya jirga? Does it mean democracy? Does it mean wom-

en's rights?"

**Kolhatkar:** George Bush and his administration have told Americans that Afghanistan has been liberated, that Afghan women are now free and that there is democracy and elections. How do you respond to these claims?

**Joya:** It's just a slogan. There is no fundamental change in Afghanistan. In the capital, it's true that women can have jobs and go to school. But in faraway provinces they have many health and educational problems. They have local warlords that have ideas against women and girls.

We have two kinds of problems. Our country is a male-dominated. But the other problem, which is even more important, is warlords. Some of these men

now wear a "suit of democracy." They have learned to speak about democracy. Some of them are now in the new cabinet of Afghanistan. Our people are afraid even of their shadow.

Also, our people requested of the government of Afghanistan, "Please change these policies—do not make compromises with the warlords." In the presidential elections, our people once again trusted Mr. Karzai because they wanted to show their hatred for warlords. He promised: "I will never compromise with warlords." I met with Mr. Karzai. He also promised me that he wouldn't work with the warlords but he appointed them to his cabinet.

**Source:** *Clamor*, June 10, 2006.

## Hat Trick: Selling "Brand Karzai"

By Marc W. Herold

The centrality of image over substance as regards Karzai was revealed in the first weeks after the Taliban was bombed out of power in December 2001. Besides being a known and compliant asset of the West, Hamid Karzai could be marketed to the general public as a man of taste, chic and aristocratic heritage. Within a month after the Taliban had abandoned Kandahar, the western press was promoting Af-



The pre-makeover Karzai

ghanistan's "Mr. Chic." Karzai was said by the poised BBC to have, "broken new sartorial ground by marrying classic tailoring with ethnic fashions.... Mr. Karzai has a knack for combining classic and ethnic. One of his trademarks is to layer Nehru-collar shirts, waistcoat and jacket. He is also well known for sporting Astrakhan hats."<sup>1</sup>

By January 2002, the press was

reporting that Karzai was pleased with his fame as a "fashion plate."<sup>2</sup> Georgie Anne Geyer added,

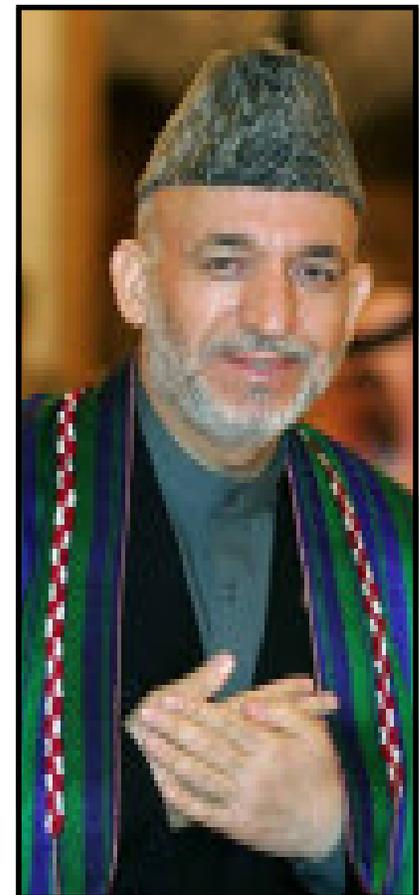
"The *Washington Post's* congenitally snippy Style Section went furthest in falling all over itself, when writer Robin Givhan wrote breathlessly of Karzai, 'there is a lot of Hollywood' in the man. 'Many are captivated by his signature hat and billowing cloaks in vivid shades of emerald green or exuberant ribbon stripes,' she went on. 'They like his flowing shirt with its banded collar... Karzai is an alpha male with a peacock's flamboyance. Might other men follow? Designers can only dream.'"<sup>3</sup>

By mid-2002, he was touring Western capitals establishing himself "as a well-educated, westernized and stylish [leader]...He won...praise from the Gucci fashion house for his trademark green-and-white traditional Uzbek coat and his ceremonial karakul hat."<sup>4</sup>

The western press had successfully leveraged Karzai's fashion style into statesmanship. But many Afghans well knew that "Karzai is not the president of Afghanistan, B-52 is president."

### Endnotes:

1. See "Picture Gallery: Afghanistan's 'Mr. Chic,'" BBC News, January 17, 2002.
2. "Aghan's Karzai Aims to be More than a 'Fashion Plate,'" Reuters, Jan. 21, 2002.
3. "Karzai's Colorful Clothes Show More



Gucci's creative director Tom Ford calls Karzai the world's "most chic man."

than Good Fashion Sense," Uexpress.com, February 1, 2002.

4. "Hamid Karzai: Shrewd Statesman," BBC News, June 14, 2002.

**Source:** "Hat Trick: Selling Brand Karzai," March 10, 2006. [www.cursor.org/stories/emptyspace3.html](http://www.cursor.org/stories/emptyspace3.html)

## Structural Problems with the Election

*Human Rights Watch (HRW) uncovered significant shortcomings in the registration and election administration process, as well as with international monitoring efforts.*

### Registration

The registration of voters in Afghanistan is being widely touted as a success, as up to 11 million people are expected to register by election day, including refugees in Iran and Pakistan. But overall numbers are almost certainly inaccurate. As the Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit noted in a recent report, the number of registered voters in several provinces is significantly larger than the estimated population of known eligible voters.<sup>1</sup>

While population estimates in Afghanistan are a source of controversy, the phenomenon of over-regis-

tration has occurred in several different areas in Afghanistan and exists even when measured against the highest population estimates for those areas. No data is yet available to estimate the number of multiple registered voters, but many officials in UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), the Joint Electoral Management Body (JEMB), the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC), and Afghan and international NGOs told HRW that they believe the overall number of registered voters is vastly inflated. Several election officials in Kabul told HRW that the number of Afghans expected to vote could be as low as 5 to 7 million.<sup>2</sup>

HRW, as well as other observers and journalists, have found that in most provinces it is easy to find men and women who admit they have registered more than once. UNAMA, JEMB and AIHRC had numerous complaints of people registering multiple times believing they could sell their cards to political parties, who would then presumably photocopy them for nominating candidates (potential presidential candidates need 10,000 photocopied voter cards; parliamentary candidates need 500).

The Afghan government has publicly underplayed the problem. When asked about multiple registration at a press conference with U.S. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld in Kabul on August 11, 2004, Karzai said:

“As a matter of fact, it doesn’t bother me. If Afghans have two registration cards and if they would like to vote



**“If Afghans have two registration cards and if they would like to vote twice, well, welcome. This is an exercise in democracy. Let them exercise it twice.... If somebody gives me three cards, I will take it and will go and vote... We are beginning an exercise. We cannot be perfect.”**

twice, well, welcome. This is an exercise in democracy. Let them exercise it twice. But it will not have an impact

on the elections. If somebody gives me three cards, I will take it and will go and vote. But my choice in voting will be the same. We are beginning an exercise. We cannot be perfect.”

At the end of the same press conference, he correctly noted that voters’ hands would be marked with an indelible ink when they voted, and that persons with ink on their hands would not be allowed to vote again.

It is not clear how much multiple voting may occur on election day. Voter registration is one safeguard against voter fraud, and the voting card one of the tools. But now the only remaining safeguard left against multiple

voting will be the marking of voters’ hands with indelible ink when they vote. There may be ways around this safeguard as well—from bribing officials to allow voters with marked hands to vote again to various methods allegedly available to remove the ink from voters’ hands. [Editor’s note: See pp. 27, 28, 29 and 37 for information about “indelible” ink that was easily washed off.]

### Monitoring and Election Administration

The presidential election is going forward with inadequate international election monitoring and staffing for polling sites. The election is certain to be affected by a serious shortfall in staffing for the approximately 5,000 polling sites. It was originally estimated that 125,000 staff would need to be hired. As of a month before the elections, almost 100,000 poll workers still had to be hired and trained—an essentially impossible task.

One senior international NGO official working on election monitoring issues told HRW in late August:

“We are 100,000 staff short. The elections are only six weeks away and there is no polling manual. It is a poor process. You need knowledgeable officials in the polling stations. If they get a challenge, will they have the knowledge and authority to resolve it? Lots of people are complaining that their voter registration cards were taken from them.... 10 million voters registered, how many will show up? 8 million, 4 million? We don’t know.... Are these elections really legitimate?”<sup>3</sup>

By late September, hiring had accelerated, but election officials admitted to HRW that it was likely that significantly fewer staff would be hired than the planned 125,000.<sup>4</sup>

There are certain to be serious problems at all polling sites that are understaffed or have poorly-trained staff. The staffing problem is especially acute with women. Each polling site is supposed to have separate stations for women, staffed by female poll workers. In September, the JEMB gave up on the goal of recruiting the adequate numbers of female staff (half of whom must

be literate under election laws), and are now training and appointing elderly men to serve at some of the voting sites for women, on the theory that sensitivities about women mingling with men, in more conservative areas, will thereby be assuaged. Nevertheless, given those same sensitivities, the shortfall in female staff could seriously undermine women's ability to exercise their right to vote and participate equally in the election.

Monitoring efforts are also anemic. UNAMA and AIHRC launched a project for "verification of political rights" and will monitor the political process through the October 9 election and next year's parliamentary elections. This project is not comprehensive, it involves less than one hundred staff.

The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), which was asked by the Kabul government to help monitor the elections, decided in late July that it could not send an observation team. An OSCE Exploratory Mission Report by the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) concluded that the "present conditions...are significantly below the minimum regarded by OSCE/ODIHR as necessary for credible election observation."

Remarkably, the report recommended that the OSCE should avoid observing the election because it was likely that the monitoring process would uncover substantial flaws and "challenge public and international confidence in the process." In essence, the OSCE concluded in advance that it would be critical of the process and therefore decided not to send a monitoring team because the criticism might not be "fair, helpful or constructive."<sup>5</sup>

The European Union also decided against sending monitors for the elections, although it will, like the OSCE, send a smaller representative team to observe a few posts in urban areas, and not make a comprehensive report.

There is a lack of will and leadership by the JEMB, UNAMA and among U.S. and international actors in Kabul, to take the lead on organizing a monitoring and observation effort. In October, the final monitoring effort will consist of a patchwork of international observers sponsored by the Asia Foun-

ation, various NGO observers, and representatives sent by various foreign embassies in Kabul. Afghan observers from registered political parties will also monitor polling sites. A coalition of Afghanistan-based NGOs are also attempting to organize and train hundreds of domestic poll-watchers. In any case, the observers can only cover about 10 to 20% of the approximately 5,000 polling sites and 25,000 polling stations. The majority of stations will not be observed by independent monitors—Afghan or international. Thus, the overall international election-monitoring effort will be severely shorthanded, and none of the monitoring teams will be able to make a comprehensive evaluation.

A senior JEMB official said: "There will be major flaws in the process, and everyone knows it. The context of this election means that if a real up-to-snuff election observing mission were...monitor, this election would be seen as flawed."<sup>6</sup>

The implications of this lack of monitoring are clear: In the absence of a proper evaluation, the election may be seen—erroneously—as a success. No election in a country in transition, with such an international profile and so much international involvement—such as in Cambodia, El Salvador, South Africa—has ever had such an anemic monitoring effort.

## Endnotes

1. Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit, "Free, Fair or Flawed: Challenges for Legitimate Elections in Afghanistan," September 2004.
2. HRW interviews with UNAMA and NGO observation team officials, Kabul, September 22 and 23, 2004.
3. HRW interview with D.L., Aug. 26, 2004.
4. HRW interview with JEMB officials, Kabul, September 21 and 22, 2004.
5. Report of the OSCE/ODIHR Exploratory Mission to Afghanistan, July 21, 2004, on file with Human Rights Watch.
6. HRW interview with senior JEMB official, Kabul.

**Source:** "The Rule of the Gun: Human Rights Abuses and Political Repression in the Run-up to Afghanistan's Presidential Election," HRW Briefing Paper, September 2004.

[www.hrw.org/background/asia/afghanistan0904/afghanistan0904.pdf](http://www.hrw.org/background/asia/afghanistan0904/afghanistan0904.pdf)

## The Great Gamble

By Christina Bennett, Shawna Wakefield and Andrew Wilder, Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit.

**J**ust as elections have the potential to be a catalyst for positive change, there is also significant risk that if held before key conditions are in place, they will actually do more harm than good. There is a real danger that the enormous, human and financial resources spent on getting a president elected will be at the expense of the more important task of reforming and strengthening state institutions.

In the absence of effective measures to disarm local militia commanders and regional warlords throughout the country, as well as to tackle the narcotics trade, it seems likely that elections will be won by candidates with the most power to intimidate or buy voters.

It will indeed be a cruel irony for Afghans if their first experience of casting a ballot in national elections is being forced to vote for those who have been responsible for so much of their misery during the past two decades.

There are real risks in allowing foreign agendas to become the driving force pushing for elections within a timeframe that may jeopardise Afghanistan's future. At present, the U.S. is one of the strongest advocates (and the largest donor) for the 2004 elections.

There is a widely-held perception that this enthusiasm for the election is a result of the Bush administration's need for a foreign policy and "war-on-terror" success ahead of the U.S. presidential elections in November 2004, particularly as Iraq appears to be less of a success by the day.

Afghan elections could well legitimise the very individuals deemed to be the most illegitimate by the majority of Afghans.

**Source:** "Afghan Elections: The Great Gamble," Briefing Paper of the Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit, November 2003.

[www.areas.org.af/publications/areas%20elections%20brief.pdf](http://www.areas.org.af/publications/areas%20elections%20brief.pdf)

## Recipe for Electoral Fraud

By Andrew Reynolds and Andrew Wilder, Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit.

Local police and particularly their “deputised” substitutes (who are often militia or former militia members), are open to both manipulating the vote and themselves being manipulated by powerful local or regional commanders—some of whom are presidential candidates.

In many areas, it is likely that hastily-recruited polling staff from local villages will be guarded by local police and observed by local monitors (if there are any monitors at all), all under the watchful eye of the local warlord. This is a recipe for electoral fraud.

At this late date, the security plan for protecting marked ballots and moving them from polling stations to regional counting centres remains unclear. The safe and secure movement of marked ballots, and stringent security measures during the counting of the ballots, must be made a top priority.

In the lead up to presidential elections, the UN Assistance Mission to Afghanistan was outspoken on the need for disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration of combatants as a precondition for free and fair elections. While some progress was made, much more remains to be done.

### Election Observation and Monitoring

An important way to minimise the worst incidents of election fraud and intimidation, not to mention being able to ascertain the legitimacy of the result, is to flood a post-conflict election with international and domestic observers for the campaign period, vote and count. This strategy was used in Cambodia, South Africa, East Timor, Haiti, Bosnia, Mozambique and Namibia, and for many other post-conflict elections.

Because of security considerations, and more dubious issues of political will, the Afgan presidential elections will not be adequately observed by independent groups. The lack of credible and comprehensive observation is a serious threat to a legitimate electoral process in Afghanistan. It

leaves considerable scope for the manipulation of ballots and the intimidation of voters.

Doubts about the Afghan electoral process meeting international standards have created a dilemma for international organisations that usually send substantial electoral monitoring missions to observe and judge the quality of elections. For example, the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), in the July 2004 Mission Report of its Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, stated its concern that the election process might be so flawed that

“scrutiny of the election could challenge public and international confidence in the process, in the event that observation identifies substantial failings, as conditions described in the report could envisage.”

The report goes on to note that

“election observation can only lend credibility to an election process if indeed the process is a credible one.”

Based on this concern, the OSCE will not send a “monitoring and observation” team, but a small “support team” of between 35-45 individuals. Similarly, the European Union will send a “Democracy and Electoral Support Mission” consisting of 25 individuals. There will also be 36 observers from the Southeast Asia-based Asian Network for Free Elections supported by The Asia Foundation. Recently, the UN put out a call requesting volunteers to assist in elections monitoring across the country, but it is unlikely that at this late stage many internationals will be able to be engaged. This means that the total international observer presence for the presidential elections will be less than 150.

The position of international observer missions, all of whom have made clear that they will not be issuing public statements on the quality of the election process or the legitimacy of the final results, amounts to nothing less than a damning vote of no confidence in the electoral process. All have apparently adopted the position that if you can't say anything nice, don't say anything at all. Of course, an un-stated reason for not making a pronouncement



Warlord Abdul Rashid Dostum, Minister of Defense, voting for himself in the presidential elections.

on the elections could be that it would leave western governments and institutions in the awkward position of having to question the credibility of the electoral process they have pushed, and potentially undermine the victory of the candidate they would like to see win. The apparent lack of interest and importance being given to monitoring the elections, however, risks sending a message that the international community is not actually interested in the quality of the process, only having an end result. This could prove to be tragically short-sighted if it ends up detracting from the long-term credibility of electoral politics in Afghanistan.

The Free and Fair Elections Foundation of Afghanistan initially planned to observe 60% of polling stations, but with limited resources and capacity it now estimates it will be able to observe only 12%. These will only be in Kabul city and Kabul province, as well as in the 33 other provincial capitals. Most of Afghanistan's approximately 400 districts will therefore have no independent monitors.

**Source:** “Free, Fair or Flawed: Challenges for Legitimate Elections in Afghanistan,” Briefing Paper Series, Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit, September 2004.

[www.reliefweb.int/library/documents/2004/aeru-afg-13sep.pdf](http://www.reliefweb.int/library/documents/2004/aeru-afg-13sep.pdf)

## The Motions of Democracy



The only woman candidate in the presidential elections was Dr. Masooda Jalal, a paediatrician.

She refused to cast her vote saying that the election was massively rigged and that people could "vote ten times."

In December 2004, she was appointed Minister of Women's Affairs.

By John Cherian

From all available indications, the 2004 presidential election in Afghanistan was deeply flawed, though U.S. President George W. Bush claims it as one of his more notable foreign policy successes.

The only woman candidate running for the election, Masooda Jalal, refused to cast her vote saying that the election was massively rigged. She said that the ink could be rubbed off people's hands in a minute and that people could "vote ten times." She said that the Bush administration's support for

Karzai made a mockery of the election as it "denied a level playing field" for all the candidates.

Another candidate [Abdul Latif Pedram] told the media that October 9, 2004, was "a very black day" and said it marked "the occupation of Afghanistan by America through election."

Many observers believe that the voters' list itself was flawed. A researcher on Afghanistan working for Human Rights Watch (HRW) said there was "widespread/multiple fraudulent registration so the numbers are highly unreliable." HRW finds it impossible to believe that 10.5 million Afghans out of

a population of about 28 million have been registered to vote. Afghanistan watchers say that more than 30% of the electorate registered their names many times. The names of children also found their way onto the list. In the areas under the influence of the Taliban such as Zabul province, registration was around 55%.

Only half the Afghan population is of voting age. Many of the voting cards were issued just before the election, stoking suspicions about the electoral process. When it was pointed out to Karzai that many people were registering their names more than once, he said it reflected the growing interest in the electoral process.

Both Karzai and Khalilzad, known as the American "Viceroy in Kabul," were employees of Unocal, the American energy giant. Both are also known to have strong links with U.S. intelligence agencies. Khalilzad is a naturalised first-generation American of Afghan origin. Until September 2002, the Bush administration was seriously negotiating with the Taliban for a gas pipeline through Afghanistan. Unocal was keen on a pipeline from Turkmenistan to Pakistan, through Afghanistan. Speaking to Indian journalists in Kabul in October 2004, Khalilzad talked about the pipeline, predicting that stability was around the corner in Afghanistan and so India should once again start giving serious thought to the trans-Afghan pipeline from Turkmenistan.

Khalilzad is widely perceived as the "eminence grise" behind Karzai. He is credited with persuading Burhanuddin Rabbani, a leading light in the Northern Alliance, to switch to Karzai's camp. One of Rabbani's sons has been assured of a senior position in the new Karzai dispensation. Both were likely to be accommodated in senior positions.

UN-approved "poll facilitators" from the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe have conceded that there were shortcomings in the election but said that nullifying the results would amount to a great injustice to the people of Afghanistan.

**Source:** *Frontline* (India), October 23 - November 5, 2004.

[www.hinduonnet.com/fline/fl12122/stories/20041105001405300.htm](http://www.hinduonnet.com/fline/fl12122/stories/20041105001405300.htm)

Uzbek presidential candidate Abdul Satar Sirat, a former aide to Afghanistan's last king Zahir Shah, said:

"Today's election is not a legitimate election. It should be stopped and we don't recognize the results.... This vote is a fraud and any government formed from it is illegitimate."

**Source:** Paul Haven, "Afghan Opposition Alleges Election Fraud," *AP*, October 9, 2004.



## Postcard From Kabul

By Christian Parenti

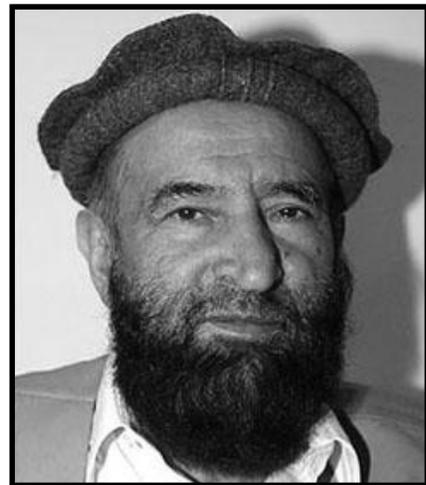
Despite a large voter turnout in Kabul and other major cities, the Afghan presidential election has been a farce. Instead of Taliban violence, the balloting was besieged by a wave of fraud and technical errors. All of Karzai's opponents denounced the vote as illegitimate, triggering a local and perhaps international credibility crisis for the U.S.-appointed President Hamid Karzai and the international occupation of Afghanistan.

Real trouble began at dawn on October 9, 2004, when voters found that the indelible ink used to mark their thumbs and prevent repeat voting was washing off. This, combined with the proliferation of fake voting cards, meant that many people were able to cast votes multiple times.

lots, still others ran out of ballots or space in ballot boxes. On top of that, there were numerous allegations of intimidation. One presidential candidate claimed his observers saw the police in Kabul telling people to vote for Karzai.

By noon most of Karzai's opponents, or their deputies, had gathered at the home of one candidate, Satar Sirat. A crush of journalists soon descended. In came the UN and EU representatives. The U.S. Ambassador was said to be on his way, but cancelled. When candidates emerged after hours in seclusion, Sirat addressed the throng of reporters. He denounced the elections as a fraud and reeled off a list of irregularities. "This is not a legitimate election. We call for a boycott of the election.... Karzai should resign."

Other candidates added their own comments. "We should postpone



"We have all sworn not to join Karzai's cabinet. Just let him try and govern," said presidential candidate and warlord, Ahmad Shah Ahmadzai, a former prime minister of Afghanistan (1995-1996) during the fundamentalist regime.



"I voted three times," said an Afghan soldier guarding the presidential palace. "But I can't tell you who I voted for, it's a secret," he added with a straight face.

"I voted three times," said an Afghan soldier guarding the presidential palace. "But I can't tell you who I voted for, it's a secret," he added with a straight face.

"I saw a man vote six times, I swear," said a female election observer at a poll across town. A few Western journalists watched as their drivers voted three and four times.

When news of the vanishing ink spread, some polls closed, then reopened. Other polls ran out of ballots, others had no pens for marking the bal-

and vote again after Ramadan," said Ahmad Shah Ahmadzai. "We have all sworn not to join Karzai's cabinet. Just let him try and govern," threatened the old mujahideen veteran.

A serious crisis had emerged.

Despite the candidates' lunch-time call for a boycott, the UN decided to carry on with the vote. Then, in the late afternoon, Karzai held a restricted, invitation-only press conference. Some of us uninvited journalists talked our way in, through layer upon layer of DynCorp security guards. In the inner

sanctum of the classy, but slightly run-down, presidential palace, we met Karzai. The exchange that followed was at times surreal and sadly comical.

"The commission will look into all of these problems but I am sure the vote was free," said the cloak-draped Karzai after a few jokes and greetings.

"Who is more important, these 15 candidates, or the millions of people who turned out today to vote?"

Karzai went on to say:

"Both myself and all these 15 candidates should respect our people, because in the dust, snow and rain, they waited for hours...to vote."

At several points, Karzai, sounding increasingly defensive, invoked the image of "a poor hungry, cold Afghan woman waiting to vote. She cannot be intimidated."

When pressed with specific examples of allegations that his campaign used fraud and intimidation, the president grew visibly irritated:

"What report? Human Rights Watch? They do not understand Afghan culture. Tribal culture, it is very democratic. Tribal elders cannot be intimidated. They do not know what is really going on."

Source: *The Nation*, October 9, 2004. [www.hinduonnet.com/fline/fl12122/stories/20041105001405300.htm](http://www.hinduonnet.com/fline/fl12122/stories/20041105001405300.htm)

# Vote Rigging and Fraud Ensured Karzai's Victory

By Khalid Bhatti

**H**amid Karzai won the first presidential election in Afghanistan, with American help, money and rigging.

People had no choice in this election, except to choose a 'lesser evil.' All the candidates represent one or another section of the elite. All the candidates were part of the U.S. hand-picked, interim government. Most are warlords and ex-guerrilla leaders

them. Money was provided to different tribal chiefs and elders. Many of them said that they received US\$10,000 to US\$80,000 to buy votes for Karzai.

Khalilzad also used his influence to ensure that some Pashtun candidates withdrew from the contest. He promised to give important positions to many warlords in the future government if they supported Karzai. It was Khalilzad who persuaded all the candidates to accept the results of the election and to end their boycott.

main candidates used their force in their strongholds. Almost two million votes were falsely registered. These were used to show a high turnout. Many people confessed that they had cast more than one vote. In Paktia, 100 voters were interviewed by one Pakistani TV reporter. Sixty-five confessed that they cast between two and five votes. This was the case in many areas. A more realistic estimate of the turnout was given at around 58% – among Afghan refugees in Iran, 40%. Only 32% of women registered. And in many areas they were not allowed to vote by local fanatic groups and tribal elders. It is not possible to get a high turnout without fraud, multiple voting and rigging.

Karzai promised a better life if he was elected. He also warned people that if he lost, reconstruction would end, with the so-called 'international community' would not give any more money. Many who voted for him believed that. The reality is quite different. Karzai has failed to solve any of the fundamental problems faced by the Afghan masses. Education, health, employment, electricity, clean drinking water, land irrigation and a free and secure life are still just a dream, after three years of American rule.

The previous record of Karzai has shown that he is just a puppet of U.S. imperialism. He has no interest in solving the problems of the people. His rule is completely dependent on U.S. and NATO forces.

**Source:** "Democracy in Afghanistan," *Socialism Today* (London, England), December 2004-Jan. 2005. [www.socialismtoday.org/88](http://www.socialismtoday.org/88)



**...and, thanks to a little help from his friends... Karzai won the presidential election in Afghanistan, thanks to substantial U.S. help, financing and—of course—the widespread vote rigging and fraud also helped.**

## Zalmay Khalilzad

Afghan-born American ambassador in Afghanistan, Zalmay Khalilzad, played the most important role in Karzai's victory. In fact, he was in charge of the campaign and holds the real power. According to leading Pakistani newspapers, like *Dawn* and the *Daily Times*, the U.S. spent US\$195 million to get Karzai elected. This money was paid to different warlords and local commanders to secure their support. Burhanuddin Rabbani's party, Jamiat-i-Islami, got US\$1 million. Abdul Rasool Sayyaf's party, Ittehad-e-Islami, got US\$1.3 million. One local commander from Jalal Abad said that he got US\$30,000 to buy votes for Karzai.

Afghan refugee camps in Pakistan witnessed the same tactics. In one camp near Peshawar, US\$10 were given for each vote. Karzai hired 700 people in Pakistan to run his campaign. Each of them was paid US\$100 per day and 150 luxury jeeps were also given to

## Vote Rigging and Fraud

The allegations of vote rigging, fraud and irregularities were made by all the defeated candidates. The main issue was the use of 'indelible ink' on the voters' thumbs. It could be washed off! That provided the opportunity for many to cast more than one vote. Fake registration was also reported.

There is no doubt that all the



## Canada had to Ensure Election "met International Standards"

"When we were pursuing the Bonn agenda...we had to... ensure that the interim President Karzai, competed in an election that met international standards, which he obviously did with great gusto and great success."

**Chris Alexander, Canada's Ambassador to Afghanistan (2003-05)**

**Source:** Canada's Role in Afghanistan, August 2005. [www.dfait-maeci.gc.ca/cip-pic/current\\_discussions/afghanistanbackground-en.asp](http://www.dfait-maeci.gc.ca/cip-pic/current_discussions/afghanistanbackground-en.asp)

## Ballots in Battlefields

By Farooq Sulehria

**H**amid Karzai won the election. That was hardly a surprise. None of Karzai's 14 rivals, as was expected, posed any serious challenge. The main challenger and runner up, warlord Younis Qanooni, a Northern Alliance leader and ethnic Tajik, could hardly secure 16%, while Hazara warlord Haji Mohammad Mohaqiq and notorious Uzbek warlord Abdul Rashid Dostum got 11% and 10%, respectively.

Karzai was initially recruited by Pakistan's Inter Services Intelligence (ISI) for the Afghan National Liberation Front (ANLF) in 1982. The ANLF was a CIA-ISI project to co-ordinate 'jihad' activities. Son of a Kandahar-based Karzai tribe, Karzai since has been in the service of the CIA.

Karzai even lent help to the Taliban, supplying it with arms when it seized control of Kabul [in 1996]. The U.S. imposed him as an interim president in violation of the loya jirga. Being a U.S. choice and an old CIA agent, he was quite unpopular, because the U.S. is hated in Afghanistan, as in the rest of the Muslim world. The Afghan people want to see U.S. troops leave as soon as possible. But by voting for Karzai, Afghans [believed they were] voting against warlords of all hues. Karzai was seen as a lesser evil. At least he had not been running a militia and committing atrocities, looting and plundering like the other candidates.

In addition, many voted for Karzai in the hope of peace.

But, above all, it was a vote to reject warlordism. Although the runners-up, all notorious warlords, also managed to garner a big chunk of votes, their votes remained limited to their fiefdoms. Guns, money and ethnicity, all played a role in securing their votes.

The landslide for Karzai not only showed Afghani frustration with warlordism, it was also a question of lacking any alternative.

The 25-year-long civil war has impoverished and disempowered the Afghan masses and civil society. The tribal structure, political parties, trade unions, student unions—in short every component of civil society—has been

torn apart in the last quarter century. The National Assembly of Afghanistan, a coalition of over 100 nationalist, secular political groups, lent support to Karzai, despite all their criticism of him, in order to block a complete Northern Alliance victory.

The Afghan left, on the other hand, was too weak to form a united front and present a candidate. Remnants of the old Peoples Democratic Party of Afghanistan and the Maoist Afghan Liberation Organization (ALO) are in the process of re-organizing. Most of Afghan's left gave critical support to Karzai. Said ALO's Tahir Khan:

"None of the candidates were desirable for us, but since the people's struggle is centered against fundamentalism, and most people were afraid that once again a fundamentalist person might come to power, and therefore preferred Karzai among all other candidates. Considering the lack of an independent and democratic candidate and preferring the worse than the worst, the ALO also favored Karzai."

Arif Afghani, leader of the Afghan Solidarity Party, a component of the National Assembly of Afghanistan, said "It is an historic tragedy that the left had to lend support to Karzai."

Behind the scenes, the U.S. Ambassador, Zalmay Khalilzad, may have been the busiest person in Afghanistan during the election campaign. A former consultant to the U.S. oil firm Unocal, Khalilzad first tried to persuade Karzai's electoral rivals to withdraw from the race. According to

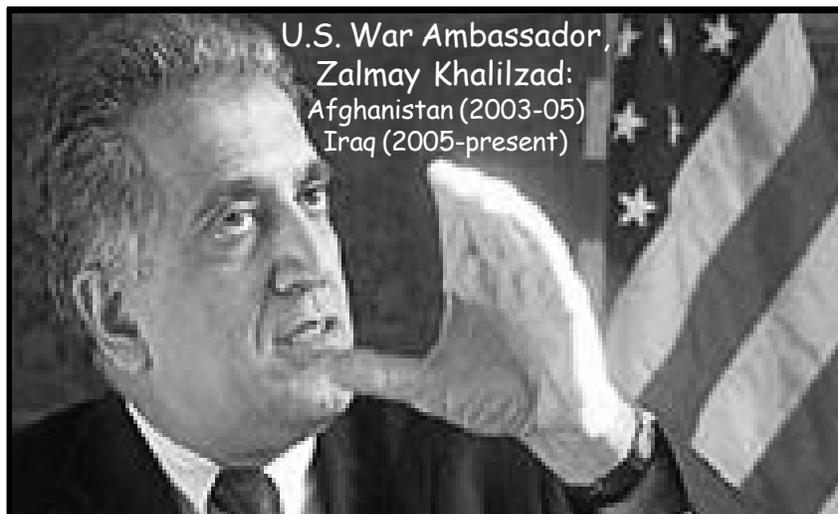
the *Los Angeles Times*, Khalilzad met so many candidates and potential candidates to "persuade" them to withdraw, that warlords from the Northern Alliance met to discuss Khalilzad's "arm-twisting."

Khalilzad began with friendly offers of road-building or ministerial posts, but if that didn't work, he'd turn to more "muscular" measures. "He told me to drop out of the elections," said presidential contender Mohammed Mohaqiq, "it was like a request." But when Mohaqiq's demands for a governorship or cabinet position weren't met, he insisted on running. Khalilzad "left, and then called my most loyal men, and the most educated people in my party and told them to make me—or request me—to resign," Mohaqiq said.

"It's not only me. They have been doing the same thing with all candidates. That is why all people think that not only is Khalilzad like this, but the whole U.S. government is the same. They all want Karzai—and this election is just a show." Despite Khalilzad's, efforts, however, only two candidates withdrew.

The next problem for Khalilzad and Karzai was that all fourteen of Karzai's rivals declared a boycott of the election. This would have cast a shadow over these first-ever Afghan presidential elections. However, Khalilzad managed to woo all candidates back into the electoral arena.

The basis for the boycott was the charge of election rigging. These charges were not baseless, but candidates denouncing such fraud were also





Ahmad Zia Massoud



Karim Khalili

The policy of Karzai's regime is that of appeasement and accommodation to warlords. In fact, Karzai and his U.S. masters depend on warlords to run the government. One of his two vice presidents, Karim Khalili, is an ethnic Hazara warlord. The other, Ahmed Zia Massoud, is the brother of revered Northern Alliance warlord, Ahmad Shah Massoud.

doing the same thing. All the powerful warlords either bought votes or coerced people in their fiefdoms to vote for them. Sahar Saba, a leading member of the Revolutionary Afghan Women's Association, said:

"Qanooni's men were standing outside polling stations for immigrants in Pakistan with dollars in their hands to buy votes."

Prior to the elections, UN election officials scrambled to explain why more than 9.9 million voter cards had been issued, given that they had originally estimated only 9.8 million voters. One example of gross disparity occurred in the province of Panjshir, where more than 124,000 voting cards were issued although the original voter estimate was only 49,573.

The explanation was simple: the voters' lists were fake. "We know that multiple registration has happened," UN spokesperson Manoel de Almeida e Silva confessed.

Afghan President Hamid Karzai acknowledged that between 1,000 and 100,000 people had more than one voting card. But instead of being apologetic for this grave mishandling, he justified it. At a Kabul press conference with U.S. Secretary of Defence Donald Rumsfeld beside him, Karzai said:

"As a matter of fact, it doesn't bother

me if Afghans have two registration cards and if they like to vote twice, well welcome.... This is an exercise in democracy and let them exercise it twice."

And many voters did indeed "exercise" democracy in this way, in some cases, half a dozen times on election day.

Many Afghans, particularly men, registered many times. The rumor that one could sell a voting card for a hundred U.S. dollars drove poor Afghans to make some quick bucks. And, as a result, 5.63 million male voters registered, although the number of eligible male voters was only 5.12 million. This means there were at least half a million fake male voters.

The future of Afghan democracy depends, above all, like everything else in this war-torn country, on the security situation. Karzai must expand an undersized army and police force and persuade 40,000 militiamen to give up their weapons in a bid to dilute the power of warlords. But he himself and his U.S. masters depend on warlords to run the government.

One of his two vice presidents, Karim Khalili, is a warlord from the Hazara minority. The other, Ahmed Zia Massoud, is the brother of revered Northern Alliance warlord Ahmad Shah Massoud. Afghans see his dependence

on warlords as a transitional phase in which he needs to depend on them until he is strong. This was a paradox Afghan voters had to face. They voted for Karzai to reject warlordism, despite Karzai's dependence on warlords.

"On winning elections, Karzai will get rid of Northern Alliance," hoped Afghan Solidarity Party leader Arif Afghani, trying to clarify this paradox. Will Karzai be able to use the legitimacy obtained from his electoral victory to control the all-powerful warlords? That's close to impossible. The warlords command militias comprising 40,000 to 60,000 men. In 2004, the combined strength of the Afghan police and Afghan National Army (ANA) did not match the militias' strength in either men or material. Karzai has the backing of around 18,000 U.S.-led troops and 8,000 NATO-led troops. By contrast, Karzai's fledgling army has 14,000 troops. No reconstruction is possible unless the ANA and the Afghan police disarm the warlord's militias.

But the policy of the U.S./Karzai regime has been that of appeasement and accommodation. Not only have warlords been accommodated, an attempt has been made to woo sections of the Taliban. With one group of warlords on his side, Karzai will not be able to disarm another group of warlords.

Karzai's decision to remove Ismail Khan as governor of Herat province, just weeks before election, won Karzai widespread support. It also developed an illusion among Afghans that Karzai would disarm the warlords as soon as he strengthens his grip on power. It remains to be seen whether Ismail Khan's removal was merely an election stunt or whether Karzai is serious about disarming warlords.\* Is Karzai's Washington master serious about democratizing Afghanistan? Or, was this a one-time show for a Bush "foreign policy" success on the eve of the U.S. presidential election?

\* **Editor's note:** Karzai's removal of warlord Ismail Khan as Herat governor, was indeed an election charade to deceive the electorate. Once elected, Karzai made Khan the minister responsible for water and energy.

**Source:** ZNet, October 31, 2004.  
[www.zmag.org/content/print\\_article.cfm?itemID=6531%20&sectionID=49](http://www.zmag.org/content/print_article.cfm?itemID=6531%20&sectionID=49)

# Afghan Elections: U.S. Solution to a U.S. Problem

By Jim Ingalls and Sonali Kolhatkar, co-directors of Afghan Women's Mission.

**J**. Alexander Thier, a former legal adviser to Afghanistan's Constitutional and Judicial Reform Commissions, is one of the few commentators who has dared to utter the simple fact that elections do not equal democracy:

"Elections themselves are only a small part of democracy.... Effective government service, protection of individual rights, accountability - these are the true fruits of democracy. Holding elections without the rule of law can undermine democracy by sparking violence, sowing cynicism and allowing undemocratic forces to become entrenched.... [Elections are merely] the end product of a successful democracy."

Regardless of who wins the elections and by what means, civil society in Afghanistan is anything but democratic. Foreign influence, particularly U.S. influence, has ensured that insecurity, warlordism and a severely curtailed media are entrenched features of the political landscape.



Photo: Christopher Anderson

**Women line up to vote during the presidential elections.**

population but only 43% of registered voters. Additionally, sharp differences in literacy between men and women put women at a huge disadvantage. Only 10% of Afghan women can read and write. While school attendance of girls has increased to about 50% nationwide, it is too early to affect women voters.

Furthermore, under Karzai's presidency, married women were banned from attending schools in late 2003. Further, under Karzai's presidency, married women were banned from attending schools in late 2003. Further, under Karzai's presidency, married women were banned from attending schools in late 2003. Further, under Karzai's presidency, married women were banned from attending schools in late 2003.

U.S. policy has empowered extreme fundamentalists who have further extended women's oppression in a traditionally ultra-conservative society. In a public opinion survey conducted in Afghanistan in July 2004 by the Asia Foundation, 72% of respondents said that men should advise women on their voting choices and 87% of all Afghans interviewed said women would need their husband's permission to vote.

On International Women's Day 2004, Hamid Karzai only encouraged such attitudes. He implored men to al-



**On International Women's Day 2004, Hamid Karzai implored men to allow their wives and sisters to register to vote, assuring them, "later, you can control who she votes for, but please, let her go [to register]."**

## Women as Pawns in Election

The Bush administration constantly calls attention to the fact that 4 million of those who registered to vote in Afghanistan were women. Just as the "liberation" of Afghan women was used to justify the bombing of Afghanistan three years ago, women's participation in U.S. imposed election is again used to justify the U.S. approach. While the administration deals in broad statistics to paint a rosy picture, a closer look reveals that the Afghan political environment, controlled by U.S.-backed warlords and a U.S.-backed president, remains extremely hostile to women.

Women comprise 60% of the

that the U.S. "liberated" Afghan women, only US\$112,500 out of US\$650 million of U.S. financial aid sent to Afghanistan in 2002 was actually given to women's organizations. (That's one dollar out of every US\$5,000.)

In 2003, according to Ritu Sharma, Executive Director of the Women's Edge Coalition, that amount was reduced to US\$90,000.

Meanwhile, women have increasingly been the targets of violence. New studies by groups like Am-

While much mileage was squeezed out of the notion

**When presidential candidate Abdul Latif Pedram, went so far as to suggest that polygamy was unfair to women, he was barred from the election and investigated for "blasphemy" by the Afghan Justice Ministry.**



low their wives and sisters to register to vote, assuring them, "later, you can control who she votes for, but please, let her go [to register]." Most of the candidates running against Karzai have mentioned women's rights in some form or another as part of their campaign platforms. While this is obligatory in post-Taliban Afghanistan, it is little more than lip service. Latif Pedram, a candidate who went slightly further than others by suggesting that polygamy was unfair to women, was barred from the election and investigated by the Afghan Justice Ministry for "blasphemy."

Just like the Afghan constitution signed earlier this year, which gives equal rights to women on paper, this election will probably have little bearing on the reality of Afghan women's lives. Denied an education and underrepresented in voter rolls, with little control over the patriarchal justice system and sexist family attitudes, women are once more simply pawns within the U.S.-designed, Afghan political structure.

A recent countrywide survey of Afghans by the International Republican Institute found that more than:

"60% cited security as their primary



Allan Rock, Canada's Ambassador to the UN (2003-2006)

"Afghanistan is now at a stage where democracy has taken root and is paying dividends, in particular in terms of building the confidence and pride of Afghans in their country. Both the adoption of a constitution and the presidential election last October are watersheds in Afghanistan's transition."

Source: "Statement to the UN Security Council on Afghanistan," August 23, 2005.  
[www.dfait-maeci.gc.ca/canada\\_un/new\\_york/statements/unsc\\_statements-en.asp?id=5941&content\\_type=2](http://www.dfait-maeci.gc.ca/canada_un/new_york/statements/unsc_statements-en.asp?id=5941&content_type=2)

concern, followed by reconstruction and economic development."

To 65% of respondents, "warlords and local commanders are the main sources of instability in the country."

While most women may need permission from their husbands to vote, their choices will be extremely limited, since most Afghans are being intimidated by U.S. backed warlords into voting for them. According to Brad Adams, Asia Director at Human Rights Watch:

"Many voters in rural areas say the [warlord] militias have already told them how to vote, and that they're

afraid of disobeying them." The intimidation tactics of Abdul Dostum and others are no secret.

But the wider context of the warlords' power is rarely mentioned. As part of Bush's "War on Terror," the U.S. made deals with Northern Alliance warlords in his crusade against the Taliban. Warlords were appointed to high-level government posts and allowed to regain regional power.

Source: *CommonDreams*, Oct. 7, 2004.  
[www.commondreams.org/views04/1007-31.htm](http://www.commondreams.org/views04/1007-31.htm)

## Government Riddled with Drug Ties

By Scott Baldauf and Faye Bowers, staff writers, *The Christian Science Monitor*.

The post-Taliban boom in opium production means that drug money now permeates every stratum of Afghanistan's society—from farmers cultivating poppies to the highest levels of the government, according to senior Afghan and European officials working here.

"We are already a narco-state," says Mohammad Nadery at the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission, which has studied the growing impunity of former military commanders and drug dealers working in government:

"If the governors...are involved in the drug trade, if a minister is directly or indirectly getting benefits from drug trade, and if a chief of police gets money from drug traffickers, then how else do you define a narco-state?"

Abdul Karim Brahowie, Afghanistan's minister of tribal and frontier affairs, says that the government has become so full of drug smugglers that cabinet meetings have become a farce. "Sometimes the people who complain the loudest about theft are thieves themselves," he says.

The UN reports that poppy cultivation increased by two-thirds in 2004 to 323,708 acres. Afghanistan now produces 90% of the world's opium. Most of it ends up on the streets of Europe and Russia as heroin. European officials



warn that this fledgling democracy is being undermined as Afghan officials make decisions based on what's good for the drug trade, rather than the electorate.

Ursula Müller, political counsellor at the German Embassy in Washington, has said: "Those guys...in the drug business are in all levels of Afghanistan's government."

Many regional warlords and opponents of the Taliban are now top officials in the Karzai government. One of the most complicated tasks is to get corrupt officials to turn away from the drug trade as a source of personal income.

Source: *The Christian Science Monitor*, May 13, 2005.  
[www.csmonitor.com/2005/0513/p01s04-wosc.html](http://www.csmonitor.com/2005/0513/p01s04-wosc.html)

## U.S. Exporting Fake Democracy — By Force

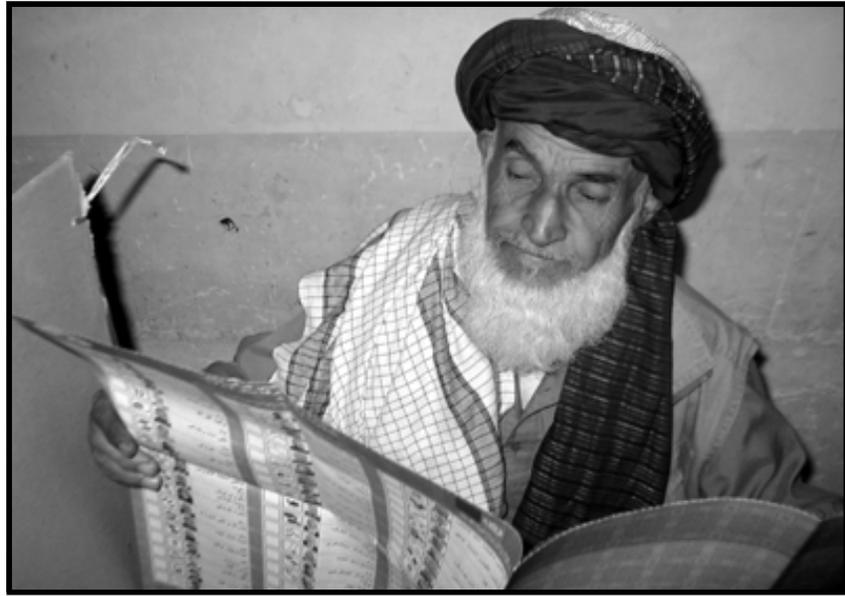
By Sonali Kolhatkar and Jim Ingalls

**W**arlords, most of whom have past or present U.S. backing, still rule much of the countryside and will play a big role in the 2005 elections. A survey by the Human Rights Research and Advocacy Consortium found that most Afghans are fearful that the elections will be used by the “commanders” [i.e., the warlords] to cement their power.<sup>1</sup>

According to election rules, those commanding private armies are to be disqualified. In July 2005, the Electoral Complaints Commission “black-listed” 208 candidates with ties to illegal armed groups. But by mid-September, only 45 low-profile candidates were actually disqualified. Meanwhile, warlords like Abdul Rasoul Sayyaf, whose criminal past has been documented by Human Rights Watch, are openly running for Parliament. So are former Taliban officials, like ex-deputy interior minister Mullah Khaksar. [Sayyaf won, but Khaksar did not. The latter was assassinated in January 2006.]

U.S.-backed president Hamid Karzai defended the right of warlords to run for parliament, in the interests of “national reconciliation.” This was just one in a series of concessions that Karzai made to warlords. In October 2004, he ran for president on an ostensibly anti-warlord platform, saying, “Private militias are the country’s greatest danger.” To back up his rhetoric, Karzai sacked two warlords in his cabinet and pretended to fire warlord Ismail Khan by removing him as governor of Herat. After he won the elections, Karzai appointed Khan Minister of Energy, and brought in the feared warlord Abdul Rashid Dostum, former Defense Minister and presidential candidate, as Army Chief of Staff.

The U.S. ambassador to Afghanistan Zalmay Khalilzad endorsed Karzai’s decision, saying in March 2005 that giving “a role to... regional



UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan

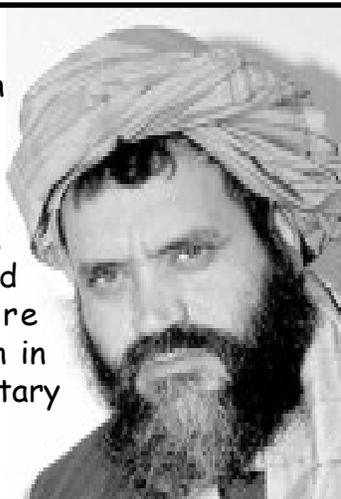
A Voter Searches for his Candidate on the Ballot

strongmen is a wise policy.”

Karzai’s government also promised former Taliban fighters immunity from prosecution for war crimes. Under this U.S.-initiated program, even Mullah Omar, the notorious Taliban chief, would receive immunity if he recants.<sup>2</sup>

Particularly relevant to the parliamentary elections, a recent report by the Kabul-based Afghanistan Justice Project, concludes that

**Former Taliban officials, like the ex-deputy interior minister Mullah Mohammed Khaksar, were allowed to run in the parliamentary election.**



“U.S. forces have jeopardized prospects for establishing stable and accountable institutions in Afghanistan, have undermined the security of the Afghan people ... and have reinforced a pattern of impunity that undermines the legitimacy of the political process.”<sup>3</sup>

### What Will Change?

Many analysts suggest that the September 2005, elections will probably result in very little change. There will be 5,800 candidates running for 249 seats in the Wolesi Jirga (House of the People), and 34 representatives on provincial councils. Rules set up by Karzai, with the approval of the U.S., allow political parties, but don’t allow party affiliations to be printed on electoral ballots. Joanna Nathan of the International Crisis Group predicts that the assembly will be a “weak and fractured, possibly even paralyzed body.” Barnett Rubin of New York University says that the elections won’t make much difference because:

“Until Afghanistan has a functioning, legal economy and basic institutions, there’s nothing for a parliament to do except act as a kind of puppet platform for people’s views.”

In a recent trip to Afghanistan we interviewed Noorani, editor of Kabul’s weekly paper, *Rozgharan*. He described three groups that will be represented in the parliamentary elections:

“Firstly, Karzai and his technocrats, another group belonging to Qanooni, Dostum and Mohaqiq [warlords] and the third, a group of intellectuals, who are unhappy with the failure of Karzai and the warlords.”

Noorani complained that the third group has no support from the

world community. In addition, they have little economic power and are under threat from the warlords.

In this third group, there are numerous parties organizing against fundamentalism and for social justice and democracy. The Solidarity Party of Afghanistan (SPA), for example, criticizes both Karzai and the warlords. SPA representative, Wasay Engineer, said his party's platform is based on "women's rights, democracy and

secular society, a disarming of the country, and freedom of the press." Between 30% and 40% of SPA's members are women. Engineer says the Solidarity Party is not alone—but are part of a forum of 16 anti-fundamentalist parties throughout the country.

Washington likes to highlight its contributions to Afghanistan's progress toward "democracy," but U.S. actions in the name of democracy undermine real democracy-building.

**Endnotes**

1. "Afghan Voters Worry 'Guns and Money' Will Affect Election," *Noticias.info*, September 13, 2005.
2. Paul McGeough, "Old Ways Linger Beneath a Veil of Votes," *Sydney Morning Herald* (Australia), September 10, 2005.
3. Casting Shadows: War Crimes and Crimes Against Humanity, 1978-2001, Afghanistan Justice Project, July 2005.

**Source:** *Foreign Policy In Focus*, September 16, 2005.

**Zalmay Khalilzad's Career**

**1979-89:** Worked with Zbigniew Brzezinski, Carter's National Security Advisor.

**1984:** Accepted Council on Foreign Relations fellowship to State Department.

**1985-89:** Senior U.S. State Department official advising on the war in Afghanistan and Iran-Iraq war, and Special Advisor on Afghanistan, promoting a mujahideen-led government. Special assistant to Reagan and Bush (senior) for Southwest Asia, Near East and North Africa.

**1991-92:** Senior U.S. Defense Department official for policy planning, and a counsellor to Donald Rumsfeld. Khalilzad viewed the Taliban as a potential force for stability and a counter balance to Iran. He only changed these views after 9-11.

**Mid-1990s:** Worked for Cambridge Energy Research Assoc. (an oil-industry/gov't think tank) doing risk analyses for UNOCAL's proposed 1,400 km, US\$2-billion natural gas pipeline from Turkmenistan through Afghanistan to Pakistan.

**1993-99:** Director of the Strategy, Doctrine and Force Structure program of the RAND Corporation's "Project Air Force."

**2001:** Special Assistant to the President and the National Security Council's Senior Director for Gulf, Southwest Asia and Other Regional Issues.

**2003-05:** U.S. Ambassador to Afghanistan. Received a U.S. Department of Defence (DoD) medal for outstanding public service. (See DoD photo above.)

**2005-present:** U.S. Ambassador to Iraq.

**Source:** Zalmay Khalilzad, Wikipedia, en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zalmay\_Khalilzad



**Rumsfeld and Khalilzad**

**The Biggest Warlords in Afghanistan**

**Khalilzad's Oil and Gas Connections**

To assure that the natural gas pipeline would proceed, the Afghani-American Zalmay Khalilzad, who had been a member of the CentGas project, became the President's Special National Security Assistant. Khalilzad then became President Bush's Special Envoy for Afghanistan.

Khalilzad is the son of a former government official under King Zahir Shah. Khalilzad was a special liaison between U.S. oil-giant UNOCAL and the Taliban government. Khalilzad also worked on various risk analyses for the pipeline project under the direction of National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice, a former member of the board of another oil company, namely Chevron.

**Source:** Dr. Norman D. Livergood, "The New U.S.-British Oil Imperialism." [www.oilcompanies.net/oil1.htm](http://www.oilcompanies.net/oil1.htm)

**Parliamentary Elections**

Election authorities declared that in the parliamentary elections, only 53% of registered voters participated, as compared with over 75% of voters in the presidential elections of 2004.

Although there were no security problems in Kabul, only 36% of the registered voters showed up at the polls. Human Rights Watch (HRW) found that voters were put off by the complexity of the ballots, disenchantment with the performance of the government and international community, and the presence of too many candidates with records of serious human rights abuses.

HRW documented attempts by warlords to subvert the elections. Regulations barring candidates associated with armed factions from running for office were poorly enforced, and armed factions supported their candidates by threatening independent candidates and intimidating voters. Women candidates, who were guaranteed at least 25% of parliament's seats, faced particular challenges in reaching out to voters and campaigning.

Among the more infamous, successful candidates, implicated in war crimes and crimes against humanity that occurred in Kabul in the early 1990s were: Abdul Rasul Sayyaf, Burhanuddin Rabbani, Mullah Taj Mohammad, Younis Qanooni, Haji Al-Mas and Mullah Ezatullah. Even Mullah Abdul Salim "Rocketi," a notorious Taliban commander, ran and won in Zabul province.

**Source:** *World Report 2006*. Human Rights Watch.

[www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/print?tbl=RSDCOI&id=43cfaea029](http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/print?tbl=RSDCOI&id=43cfaea029)

## Serious Flaws Marred the Wolesi Jirga Elections

Significant problems marred the parliamentary elections for the Wolesi Jirga (WJ, or House of the People). There were allegations of intimidation and vote rigging on election day, and widespread reports of fraud during ballot-counting.

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

The Joint Electoral Management Body (JEMB), which consisted of nine Afghan members and four international members [including one Canadian] plus the Chief Electoral Officer, had overall authority for the elections.

The Electoral Complaints Commission (ECC)—the official, independent body established by law to handle electoral grievances—was inundated with 5,397 registered complaints, which delayed the announcement of the final election results until mid-November.<sup>1</sup>

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.”<sup>2</sup>

However, 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.

### Election Results

Not surprisingly, a predominately conservative society has elected a predominately conservative parliament. Several religious scholars and leaders were elected, including Professor Rabbani and Professor Abdul Rasul Sayyaf, and 17 other candidates with religious titles attached to their names, such as mawlawi, mullah, Qazi and Qari.



**Younis Qanooni not only won his seat, he then defeated several other top elected warlords (Mohammad Mohaqiq, Burhanuddin Rabbani and Ismail Sayyaf), in the subsequent race to become the Speaker of Parliament.**

About 133 of the 249 WJ members fought in the jihad, which suggests a conservative outlook. About 113 belong to, or are affiliated with, parties that could be classified as conservative/fundamentalist or moderate/traditionalist Islamic parties.

### 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 and plain criminals that won seats in the National Assembly. According to one well-informed analysis, the newly-elected WJ will include 40 commanders still associated with armed groups, 24 members belonging to criminal gangs, 17 drug traffickers and 19 who face serious allegations of war crimes and human rights violations.<sup>3</sup>

An even more pessimistic assessment was given by the Deputy Head of the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission, who stated:

“more than 80% of winning candidates in the provinces and more than

60% in the capital Kabul have links to armed groups.”<sup>4</sup>

The ECC disqualified 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.<sup>5</sup>

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.”<sup>6</sup>

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.<sup>7</sup>

It is clear that electoral bodies like the ECC should not be expected to take on the role of courts and make de-

cisions on crimes against humanity and links to armed groups.<sup>8</sup> 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 concerns that the prestige previously associated with being an MP would be lost due to the bad reputations of so many 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 [warlords] and educated people.... 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 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.”<sup>9</sup>

### Endnotes

1. Media release, Nov. 10, 2005, “Complaints Process Promotes Rule of Law.”
2. AFP, Oct. 16, 2005, “First Results Finalized after Afghanistan Vote.”
3. Personal communication with international official, Kabul, Nov. 10, 2005.
4. IRIN News, Oct. 18, 2005, “Rights body warns of warlords’ success in elections,” Afghanistan Research & Evaluation Unit.
5. ECC media release, Op. cit.
6. Interview, Herat, September 26, 2005.
7. “Afghanistan votes: A Glass Half Full, An Opportunity Wasted,” *The Economist*, September 15, 2005.
8. See the OSCE report, “Election Support Team to Afghanistan: Recommendations on 2005 Parliamentary Elections,” October 6, 2005.
9. Interview with WJ candidate, Kandahar, October 6, 2005.

**Source:** Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit, Briefing Paper: “A House Divided? Analysing the 2005 Afghan Elections,” December 2005. [www.arei.org.af/publications/A%20House%20Divided.pdf](http://www.arei.org.af/publications/A%20House%20Divided.pdf)

## A List of Voting Problems

### Technical Problems

The Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC) identified the following technical problems on election day (September 18, 2005):

☒ Delays in opening of polling stations, ranging from half an hour to two hours in some places. This showed that Joint Electoral Management Body (JEMB) staff were ill-prepared. This caused frustration among voters. Some left without voting.

☒ Electoral staff at many polling centres did not have sufficient training. Some centres were disorganised and staff were unaware of their duties and what steps to take when confronted with difficulties.

☒ Insufficient quantities of indelible ink were provided and indelible ink was washable.

☒ Information advising voters about disqualified candidates was not provided. Some voters therefore likely voted for ineligible candidates. Even JEMB staff did not know which candidates had been disqualified.

☒ Closing of the polling stations was marred by confusion among JEMB staff as to what the final procedure was and whether ballot boxes should be transferred, and where to.

☒ In most areas, monitors and observers for political parties and candidates were not clear about their responsibilities and duties. Their lack of understanding and coordination caused panic among voters, while in some other cases they were very provocative.

### Repeated Electoral Offences Observed

- ☒ Voter intimidation included:
- (1) Lack of security in certain regions resulted indirectly in the intimidation of people in general, and women in particular away from polling centres.
  - (2) Women as a group were intimidated from voting in some districts.
  - (3) There was direct intimidation by some JEMB staff, and by party

agents inside polling centres, as offenders sought to influence outcomes or to disrupt the electoral process.

☒ At some polling centres in Logar, Parwan and Kabul provinces some JEMB staff violated voters’ freedom of expression by marking ballots themselves, claiming that as the voters are illiterate, they were helping them.

☒ Polling stations were not provided in prisons, detention centres or hospitals, and people with some types of disabilities could not vote. The political rights of many Afghans

were denied. This was a systematic offence throughout the electoral process as JEMB ignored recommendations to address these issues.

☒ Some JEMB staff entered polling booths allegedly telling voters who to vote for.

☒ JEMB staff directed children and women to vote for certain candidates.

☒ Candidates were observed campaigning inside polling centres, particularly in the south of the country.

☒ Candidate campaign posters were seen at several polling centres.

☒ Large numbers of candidate agents were observed at many polling booths.

### Electoral Fraud

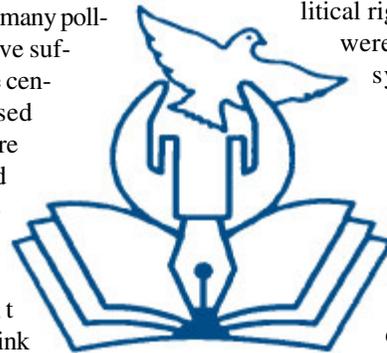
☒ Men were found to be voting several times “on behalf of” the female members of their family.

☒ The ballot box in a women’s polling station was full of votes, despite very few women actually coming to the polling station. In other polling centres, children were observed voting.

☒ At others, broken ballot boxes and irregularities in the numbers of ballot boxes were recorded.

**Source:** AIHRC Media Release, “Afghan Parliamentary Elections,” September 19, 2005.

[www.aihrc.org.af/press\\_parliman\\_elec\\_19\\_09.htm](http://www.aihrc.org.af/press_parliman_elec_19_09.htm)



**AIHRC**

# Not All MPs are "Warlords, Drug Lords & Smugglers"

By Declan Walsh

## Conflicting Faces in Parliament

A rich cast of characters will fill the 249-seat Wolesi Jirga parliament that was elected in September 2005. For some legislators, just sitting together will be a major feat.

Grizzled warlords will sit near fresh-faced young women. Former guerilla commanders and retired army generals from the 1980s conflict against the Soviet-controlled Afghan government will also sit side-by-side. And to reach their seats, some may have to squeeze past a retired Taliban fighter or a recently-returned Afghan American.

At a training session for MPs, Mullah Abdul Salam "Rocketi" of Zabul province shook hands and cracked jokes with fellow legislator Shukria Barakzai. "She is my new friend," smiled Rocketi, a bearlike former Taliban fighter named for his skill at aiming rockets.

"If people want to change their ideas, we should give them a chance," said Barakzai, one of 68 women elected under a gender quota. "But they must remember the past is the past."

Human Rights Watch (HRW) estimates that 60% of the new legislators have links to warlords. HRW singled out Abdul Rasul Sayyaf, a powerful militia commander whose guns ravaged Kabul residents in the 1990s, and Mohammed Fahim, a former defense minister accused of war crimes.

Sam Zarifi, who heads the Asia division for HRW, said:

"There is widespread cynicism about this parliament. How can people trust a government which allows warlords and notorious human rights abusers into power?"

A European diplomat, who asked not to be named, said that about 20 legislators still have active private militias and that at least 20 more have been involved in drug smuggling. Afghanistan produces 87% of the world's heroin, according to a recent U.N. study.

But the parliament also has many political newcomers who say they are determined to make a difference—including one from Southern California.

Daoud Sultanzozi left his Malibu beachfront house in October 2005 to sit in the new parliament. A former pilot

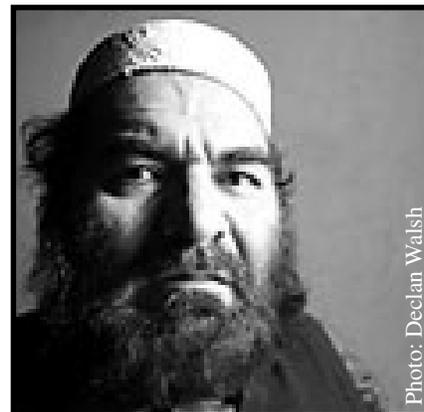


Photo: Declan Walsh

Mullah Abdul Salam, or "Rocketi," is a former Taliban fighter named for his skill at aiming rockets.

Shukria Barakzai, Editor-in-Chief and founder of *Aina-E-Zan (Women's Mirror)*, a weekly Kabul newspaper. "The failed policies of the last three years...do not protect the security of Afghanistan but are obstacles to it. The support of armed groups and outlaws does not support the people and has slowed down the democratic process.

In many provinces and villages...there is no difference between before the Taliban regime, the time of the Taliban, and now. Child marriage, forced marriage and violence against women are still common and accepted practices....

It is still a great risk to be a journalist. Journalists are often jailed and their lives threatened."

for the Afghan national airline, he sought asylum 25 years ago after diverting a DC-10 jet to Germany. He then moved to California to earn US\$22,000 a month as a United Airlines pilot. He said the prospect of sitting beside men notorious for Afghanistan's worst bloodshed was "stomach churning."

Some analysts say it's anyone's guess whether such a diverse group—an estimated 20% is illiterate—will be able to work together to pass legislation. A fractious parliament might suit Karzai, who still wields most political power. But a weak assembly could damage his reform credentials and breed widespread disillusionment about long-promised reconstruction.

One of the first issues new MPs might have to confront is whether to bring human-rights abusers to justice.

"A war criminal is someone who killed innocent people," said Haji Al-Mas, a former commander [warlord] in Kabul. "But those who fought against terrorism and the Taliban are not warlords. They are holy warriors."

Another concern is corruption. The parliament's first task will be to elect a speaker—a race that has already been marred by allegations of vote-buying at up to US\$600 per vote.

Many MPs appealed to critics not to write them off. "Don't forget this is not just a collection of warlords, drug lords and smugglers," Barakzai said. "We have good people as well."

**Source:** *Chronicle Foreign Service*, December 19, 2005.

[www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/c/a/2005/12/19/MNGOEGA9T81.DTL](http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/c/a/2005/12/19/MNGOEGA9T81.DTL)

## Bush Congratulates Afghans for "Successful Elections"

Here is U.S. President George W. Bush's official response to parliamentary elections in Afghanistan:

"I congratulate the Afghan people and Afghan government for today's successful parliamentary elections, which are a major step forward in Afghanistan's development as a democratic state governed by the rule of law."

**Source:** "Bush, Rice Congratulate Afghanistan on Successful Elections," Office of the Press Secretary, Sept. 18, 2005. [usinfo.state.gov/sa/Archive/2005/Sep/18-118686.html](http://usinfo.state.gov/sa/Archive/2005/Sep/18-118686.html)

## JEMB says Elections were Fair

The Joint Electoral Management Body (JEMB) announced that it had completed the certification of all final results from this year's historic Wolesi Jirga and Provincial Council elections. Bissmillah Bissmil, Chairman of JEMB said:

"With the certification of final results for Kandahar and the country-wide Kuchi constituency, we have now completed certification of all final results for both the Wolesi Jirga and the Provincial Council elections. Today marks an important milestone in Afghanistan's transition to a stable and strong democracy. The newly elected members will go on to represent and

serve the people of their provinces and the hopes and aspirations of the people are with them as they work to help rebuild our country."

**Source:** "JEMB certifies all final results for Wolesi Jirga and Provincial Council elections," Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, November 12, 2005.

[www.reliefweb.int/rw/RWB.NSF/db900SID/RMOI-6J53DK](http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/RWB.NSF/db900SID/RMOI-6J53DK)



## Warlords take Elections

Ahmad Fahim Hakim, deputy chairman the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission, reported that:

"More than 80% of winning candidates in provinces and more than 60% in the capital Kabul have links to armed groups."

He added that some of the new MPs were themselves notorious warlords.

Horia Mosadiq, country director for the Human Rights Research and Advocacy Consortium, said one of the main reasons for the

low voter turnout was the presence of candidates linked to illegal, armed groups.

Electoral law barred anyone with links to armed groups seeking election, but many warlords involved in the bloodshed of the past quarter-century slipped through a UN-backed review.

Local analyst Qasim Akhgar warned that having warlords in parliament would disappoint many Afghans seeking an arms-free society after more than 20 years of war and destruction: "If warlords infiltrate the parliament, the parliament would lose the support of people...and it will decelerate the process of democracy."

At least 50 [JEMB] electoral staff were fired for alleged fraud, following accusations of irregularities that sparked protests across the country.

Electoral officials said about 680 ballot boxes (3% of the total votes) were taken out of the counting process because of the fraud allegations.

**Source:** IRIN News, October 18, 2005. Integrated Regional Information Networks, UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.

[www.irinnews.org/report.asp?ReportID=49623&SelectRegion=Asia&SelectCountry=AFGHANISTAN](http://www.irinnews.org/report.asp?ReportID=49623&SelectRegion=Asia&SelectCountry=AFGHANISTAN)



Ahmad F. Hakim



Pierre Pettigrew, Canada's Foreign Affairs Minister (2004-2006) met with Afghanistan's Foreign Affairs Minister Abdullah, in Montreal on May 30, 2005. This was Abdullah's second visit to Canada since his appointment to the post in 2004.

**Source:** [www.canada-afghanistan.gc.ca/afhg\\_for\\_visit-en.asp](http://www.canada-afghanistan.gc.ca/afhg_for_visit-en.asp)

## Martin Applauded "Successful" Elections

Prime Minister Paul Martin issued an official statement praising the Afghan parliamentary elections and Canada's role in them:

"These successful elections represent a major step forward on Afghanistan's path to greater stability and peace. Canada will

continue to support democracy in Afghanistan by helping to keep the peace and to build responsible and



Prime Minister Paul Martin (2004-2006)

accountable institutions of government.

Canada congratulates the Afghan government and everyone who worked so hard to make these elections a success: elections officials and everyone who participated on the Joint Electoral Management Body, as well as national and international observers."

**Source:** Media Release, Office of the Prime Minister, September 19, 2005.

## Joya Causes Uproar on the First Day of Parliament



"I offer my condolences to the people of our country for the presence of warlords, drug lords and criminals [in Parliament]."

"Those with money, power and backed by foreign countries came into parliament. Their presence pollutes our parliament as a legislative source."

"President Bush owes us an apology for supporting extremist warlords, the Northern Alliance criminals."

Among Afghanistan's legislators are some accused of human rights abuses and many are unhappy at the preponderance of such figures in parliament. Malalai Joya, known for her outburst against them at the constitutional convention, again denounced their presence in the National Assembly.

"I offer my condolences to the people of our country for the presence of warlords, drug lords and criminals [in Parliament]," Ms. Joya said at an impromptu news conference after the swearing-in ceremony. The people of Afghanistan have recently "escaped the Taliban cage but still they are trapped in the cage of those who are called warlords," she said.

Hers was the only angry voice of the day.  
*The New York Times*, December 19, 2005

Malalai Joya said the cycle of violence in her country would not end until those who commit violence are punished, rather than being allowed to sit as members of parliament. But she was not optimistic that this would happen anytime soon:

"How can our people be hopeful that the parliament will arrange a way to put the war criminals of our country in international or national courts when some of the most famous criminals in the country are in parliament?"

*Asia Times*, December 21, 2005.

Malalai Joya is one of the most outspoken critics of the makeup of the new parliament, whose members include warlords, militia commanders and former Taliban officials. She said:

"I'll try to introduce legislation that will protect the rights of the oppressed people and safeguard women's rights... Those who came here under the name of democracy should not be given the chance to continue their crimes under the slogan of democracy... I will continue my struggle against warlords... especially against those parties who destroyed our country."

*Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty*, December 20, 2005.

Malalai Joya has vowed to stand up against warlords elected to parliament:

"Our people are concerned that the election took place in an armed environment, and that is why our people and the international community should not have expected democratic elections, which didn't take place....

Those with money, power and backed by foreign countries came into parliament. Their presence pollutes our parliament as a legislative source. But...some real and true representatives of people also came into this parliament. But, unfortunately, they are in a minority."

Golnaz Esfandiari, *Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty*, December 19, 2005.

Malalai Joya was the only discordant voice on December 19, 2005, at a very consensual ceremony [to open Afghanistan's new parliament].

Denouncing the presence of warlords in parliament, she asserted that "the men and women of Afghanistan are like pigeons who have been freed from Taliban cages, but whose wings have been cut off and who are in the claws of vampires who suck their blood."

She added that "most of those vampires are to be found in parliament."

Directly attacking the American godfather, she added:

"President Bush owes us an apology for supporting extremist warlords, the Northern Alliance criminals."

*Le Monde*, December 20, 2005.

A debate erupted over the potentially explosive issue of warlords sitting among the elected representatives.

Malalai Joya called for all of Afghanistan's human rights abusers and "criminal warlords" to be brought to justice. Delegates responded by pounding their fists on the tables to demand that she sit down. She refused, shouting that it was her right as an elected official to speak.

*USA Today*, December 20, 2005.

**Source:** Website, Defense Committee for Malalai Joya.

# Joya's Goal as MP is to Expose the Sham Parliament

**Sonali Kolhatkar:** Why did you run for parliament?

**Malalai Joya:** Hundreds of people from Farah and other provinces insisted that I run. I was intending to decline because I believe parliament will never bring anything positive for the nation. But my supporters kept saying "Your voice at the loya jirga gave us hope that there is at least one who understands our suffering. Now we want you to be the voice of voiceless at parliament." I couldn't help but accept the honor to be the voice of my oppressed nation in a parliament dominated by criminal warlords.

I will feel satisfied if I succeed in exposing the real nature of the current parliament and informing the Afghan people from within the parliament that the criminals sitting there are making laws for the benefit of the rich, the drug traffickers, warlords and high-level bureaucrats, and against the aspirations of the down-trodden masses.

**Kolhatkar:** If the warlords are so unpopular, how is it that so many of them were elected to the parliament?

**Joya:** Afghanistan is still a country strangled by the hands of the Northern Alliance. These are fundamentalist bands notorious for their terrible crimes between 1992 and 1996. After 9/11, America and its allies helped these criminals occupy Kabul and dominate the entire country. In a country under such religious fascists, holding free and democratic



Burhanuddin Rabbani was the president of Afghanistan during the mujahedeen's fundamentalist regime (1992-1996). He was elected to parliament as an MP in 2005.

elections is out of the question. Elections in such conditions are widely rigged. It is unbelievable, but still a reality, that regarding the issue of multiple voting, Karzai himself openly justified it by saying "This is an exercise in democracy. Let them exercise it twice!"

The warlords have not been elected by the people but by the killing machine, political power, billions of dollars and the intimidation of fundamentalists supported by the U.S. and numerous NGOs. It was not a free election, so one

cannot conclude that people elected their killers as their representatives. It was a fraud and an unfair election process that made them MPs.

**Kolhatkar:** What is the U.S. position on warlords today?

**Joya:** As the U.S. administration revived the warlords in the first place, it continues to support and rely on them. The U.S., as before, is not bothered by which criminal band rules the country as long as it is obedient to Washington, no matter how cruel, corrupt and anti-democratic it is. Many in Afghanistan are of the opinion that America's highly-trumpeted "war against drugs

painful and disgraceful way. The U.S. is relying on the killers of tens of thousands of Kabul residents and allowing representatives of these killers to enter and dominate the parliament and important posts in the government.

**Kolhatkar:** How can you change the political status quo with so many warlords in parliament alongside you?

**Joya:** I think that such a claim would be too much for me, or any other pro-people MP. But, as I've promised to my people, I'll never get tired of unmasking the criminals in the parliament, government or judiciary.

I feel my presence in the parliament



Malalai Joya

"The criminals sitting there [in Parliament] are making laws for the benefit of the rich, the drug traffickers, warlords and high-level bureaucrats."

"America's highly-trumpeted 'war against drugs and terrorism,' and its campaign to 'promote democracy,' are bogus because the U.S. has forged a unity with the most infamous, anti-democratic, religious terrorists and drug-mafia forces in Afghanistan's history."

"The warlords have not been elected by the people but by the killing machine, political power, billions of dollars and the intimidation of fundamentalists supported by the U.S. and numerous NGOs."

and terrorism," and its campaign to "promote democracy," are bogus because the U.S. has forged a unity with the most infamous, anti-democratic, religious terrorists and drug-mafia forces in Afghanistan's history.

The U.S. government has its own strategic agenda in our country. The U.S. ambassador and secretary of state have claimed that the U.S. will not repeat its past mistake of supporting fundamentalists. However, the U.S. is repeating that "mistake" in a much more

will lead to a small increase in political consciousness. If that does not happen, then I will definitely resign. I would like the world to know that the Afghan parliament is another instrument in the hand of fundamentalists to try to legitimate and perpetuate their bloody rule in the country.

**Source:** "If I Arise: Talking with Malalai Joya, Afghanistan's Youngest Revolutionary," *Clamor*, June 10, 2006. [www.zmag.org/content/showarticle.cfm?ItemID=10406](http://www.zmag.org/content/showarticle.cfm?ItemID=10406)

## MP Attacked in Parliament for Denouncing Warlords!

This report was written by an Afghan journalist in Kabul, who—for security reasons—wishes to remain anonymous.

On May 7, 2006, Malalai Joya responded in parliament to a warlord who referred to the brutal and criminal atrocities of the mujahadeen regime as “mistakes.” Joya said: “There is a big difference between mistakes and crimes.” She then said:

“There were two types of mujahideen, one who were really mujahideen, and the second who killed tens of thousands of innocent people and used the holy war of Afghans against the Soviet Union as a motive to gain power and destroyed our country.”

When her speech finished, some MPs hurled bottles at her, including:

- Parwin Durrana, a woman MP who—with the help of Saudi Wahabis—was granted a seat in parliament to represent Afghan nomads.
- Qazi Nazir Ahmad, a commander of Rabbani’s Jamiat-e-Islami gang, an Islamic party in power (1992-1996).
- Saifoor Niaza, an executive member of Jamiat e Islami in Mazar e Sharif (a northern Afghan city).
- Malali Ishaqzai from Qandahar, the unofficial capital of the Taliban.

Some well-respected MPs quickly formed a human ring around Joya and called for security forces.

However, other warlords immediately began insulting her with foul language, calling her a prostitute and ordering their followers to rape her. Some warlords yelled at Joya, calling her a communist and accusing her of being a member of the Revolutionary Association of Women of Afghanistan.

Shukria Barakzai, a woman MP from Kabul, later confirmed during an interview with Tolo TV, that warlords had threatened to rape and kill Joya.

According to another MP, a famous warlord—Rasul Sayyaf—ordered someone to wait by the door and knife Joya as she walked out.

[Burhanuddin] Rabbani and Sayyaf, two gang leaders [warlords] who had committed atrocities under the name of Islam and jihad, unsuccessfully tried to use Joya’s speech as a reason to discuss her status in parliament.



Those supporting Joya have also received death threats. Mr. Qazizada, an MP from Herat, told Joya that if he is killed, it would be by warlord Ismail Khan’s followers. A Kabul-based journalist’s association said they

received death threats because of the press conference they held for Joya after she was attacked by warlords.

**Source:** May 9, 2006. Malalai Joya website: [www.malalaijoya.com](http://www.malalaijoya.com)

## Some Women MPs Walk Out in Protest

By Jean MacKenzie and Wahidullah Amani.

The attack against Joya in parliament sparked a walkout of female members. On May 9, 2006, they boycotted the parliamentary session for several hours, until the speaker, Younis Qanooni, himself a prominent figure from the mujahedin era, apologised.

“There were about 30 or 40 of us,” said Shukria Paikan Ahmadi, a deputy from Kunduz. [Editor’s note: That is about half of the women MPs.]

“The mujahedin are always intimidating us and we can’t say what we want. When a women was speaking, a commander [warlord] from Herat told her to be quiet, otherwise they’d do to her what they did to Malalai [Joya].... The warlords are a majority in parliament. And even though they are all from different factions, in this they are together. They are all against us, against the women.”

Ahmadi described as “savage” the behaviour of those attacking Joya:



**Shukria Paikan Ahmadi**

“We cannot accept this... We just do not have the patience. It would be better to leave parliament forever.”

**Source:** “Afghanistan’s Buzkashi Parliament,” *Afghan Recovery Report*, May 17, 2006. Institute for War and Peace Reporting. [www.afghanwomensmission.org/news/index.php?articleID=60](http://www.afghanwomensmission.org/news/index.php?articleID=60)

# Drug Trade Reaches right up into Afghan Cabinet

By Toby Harnden

Some Afghan cabinet ministers are deeply implicated in the drug trade and could be diverting foreign aid into trafficking, said Habibullah Qaderi, the country's anti-narcotics minister, on February 4, 2005.

The admission will dismay Western governments, which just pledged US\$10.5 billion in aid to help fight poverty, improve security and crack down on the drugs trade.

It raises the prospect that money being donated by the West could be used indirectly to kill British soldiers, 3,300 of whom will be stationed in anarchic Helmand province, where corrupt officials, insurgents and drug lords overlap.

"I don't deny that," said Qaderi in a *Sunday Telegraph* interview, when asked whether corruption linked to the £2.7 billion-a-year drug trade went right up to the cabinet.

Such high-level criminality, he said, would help account for why "a lot of trafficking through different parts of the country" was being conducted with apparent impunity.

But Qaderi declined to name names and said Afghanistan's weak justice system, itself bedevilled by corruption, meant that it was difficult to convert allegations and rumours into fact. "The question is how to find evidence against these people."

In Kabul, the houses of several senior politicians resemble small palaces with marble corridors, painstakingly manicured lawns and dozens of armed guards. Even in a provincial town such as Helmand's capital, Lashkar Gah, ostentatious homes stand in stark contrast to the surrounding poverty and are known as houses of "smugglers," a euphemism for drug traffickers.

Western aid officials and several European diplomats named the same high-ranking politicians and officials, including one with close links to Afghan president Hamid Karzai, as drug lords. A veteran European diplomat in Kabul said:

"The problem, as ever, is the smoking gun. We all know it is happen-



Some Afghan cabinet ministers are deeply implicated in the drug trade and could be diverting foreign aid into trafficking, said Habibullah Qaderi, Afghanistan's anti-narcotics minister.

ing. We all know the names. But I have never seen any direct evidence and I don't know anyone who has."

Ali Ahmad Jalali, who resigned as Afghanistan's interior minister last year, said:

"Sometimes government officials allow their own cars to be used for a fee. Sometimes they give protection to traffickers.

In Afghanistan, corruption is a low-risk enterprise in a high-risk environment. Because of the lack of investigative capacity it is very difficult to get evidence. You always end up arresting foot soldiers."

But he accused Western governments of exaggerating the problem to justify limiting their long-term commitment to rebuilding Afghanistan. The "drug problem in Afghanistan is demand-driven" from the West, he said, with 90% of profits being made outside the country. NATO policies, moreover, had helped to consolidate the drug lords because they had focused solely on fighting Taliban and insurgent forces rather than attacking the trade.

Jalali urged British troops in Helmand not to ignore narcotics, 90% of which end up in Europe:

"I understand NATO's argument that if they eradicate poppy fields then that antagonizes the popula-

tion. But there are legitimate targets—mobile labs and stockpiles—which only drug lords, rather than ordinary poppy growers, are involved with."

A British official said that some Afghan MPs are linked to the drug trade and that some officials had to be circumvented because they were corrupted by drugs:

"There are plenty of people in the national assembly who are very dodgy. Corruption is endemic so I have to be careful with some figures in the Afghan set-up who might not be 100% committed to eradicating drugs."

The World Bank recently castigated Western governments for failing to channel money through the Afghan government, leading to vast amounts of cash being spent on exorbitant salaries, security guards and fortified accommodation for aid workers.

The *Kabul Weekly*, an Afghan newspaper, summed up the dilemma:

"If aid is given to NGOs, huge amounts go into their own expenditures. If it's given to the Afghan government, the poor bureaucracy and corruption waste it."

**Source:** *The Telegraph* (UK), February 5, 2006. [www.rawa.org/drugs2.htm](http://www.rawa.org/drugs2.htm)

## Major Bloc in Parliament Controlled by Hekmatyar?

By Wahidullah Amani

**H**ezb-e-Islami is back, green flag and all. The most radical and powerful of Afghanistan's Islamic movements is an officially-recognized political party which now claims to be one of the largest blocs in parliament.

Party leaders say they will sweep to power in future elections now that they can campaign openly.

They also say they have broken ties with the man most closely identified with Hezb-e-Islami, its founder Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, whom the U.S. lists as a terrorist.

Many political analysts, however, are sceptical of the party's claim that it has reformed.

Hekmatyar, one of the major commanders [warlords] in the resistance to the Soviet occupation of the 1980s, is an unrepentant mujahedin. He has called repeatedly for a new holy war against the foreign occupiers and those who cooperate with them—including the current Afghan government.

He has publicly vowed that his supporters will never join the present regime.

"Hekmatyar does not represent Hezb-e-Islami," said Sayed Rahman Wahedyar, a Kabul member of the faction. "We have cut all ties with Hekmatyar."

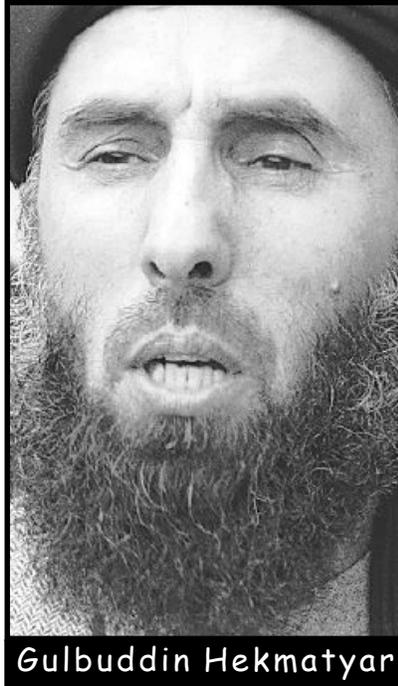
According to Wahedyar, the current Hezb-e-Islami party supports the country's ongoing peace process, and even tolerates foreign troops, viewing them as necessary in the currently-unstable, security environment.

Wahedyar added that MP Khalid Farooqi, a powerful Hezb-e-Islami commander in Paktika province during the mujahedin years, is the party's new leader.

But the new-look Hezb-e-Islami does not appear to have deviated far from its fundamentalist roots.

As a result of the September 2005 parliamentary election, Hezb-e-Islami has 34 members in the lower house of parliament, making it one of the largest groups in the 249-member body, according to Wahedyar.

Given Afghanistan's chaotic,



Gulbuddin Hekmatyar

political landscape, with 81 parties, this represents a significant achievement. Wahedyar says the party would have been even more successful if it had been allowed to register earlier:

"The justice ministry did not want to let Hezb-e-Islami conduct political activities.... They wanted us to change our name and flag. But we resisted."

It took repeated negotiations with President Hamed Karzai, and one-and-a-half years, to overcome the government's reluctance to see the symbols of Hekmatyar's once-formidable power officially displayed.

Hekmatyar has a host of enemies among those now in power. He engaged in a vicious civil war with many of them after the collapse of communist rule in 1992, when mujahedin commanders destroyed Kabul and much of the rest of the country in a fierce power struggle. He was twice prime minister between 1992 and 1996.

When the Taliban came to power in 1996, Hekmatyar went to Iran, where he continued to run Hezb-e-Islami.

His outspoken condemnation of the invasion of Afghanistan and of the interim government established in the wake of the September 2001 attacks on the U.S. got him expelled from Iran and earned him a place on the U.S. government's list of most-wanted terrorists.

Hekmatyar is currently in hiding. Observers say he continues to have broad popular support, especially in the Pashtun-dominated south. An ethnic Pashtun, he appeals to many who want a strong Islamic state in Afghanistan, and who condemn what they see as the corrupting influence of the West.

His supporters say he has been unfairly excluded from power. They point to other former mujahedin leaders and militia commanders who have been accepted into the new government, and ask why Hekmatyar's alleged crimes are deemed worse than those ascribed to General Abdul Rashid Dostum, the former strongman of the north who is now chief of staff of the armed forces, or of Ismail Khan, who ruled the western province of Herat with an iron hand until being made energy minister in December 2004.

Abdul Gheyas Eleyasi, head of the political parties department at the justice ministry, acknowledged that officials were initially reluctant to grant Hezb-e-Islami an official license. Eleyasi explained:

"We registered them only after we received confirmation from the ministries of defence and the interior, as well as the security organs and UNAMA [the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan] that the party no longer had links with Hekmatyar."

But many suspect that Hekmatyar is still running the show. Political analyst Fazul Rahman Orya said:

"Hekmatyar has played many such games and he has always won them.... Hezb-e-Islami is certainly here with Hekmatyar's agreement. They are behaving according to Hekmatyar's wishes, so as to accomplish his goals."

**Source:** "Have Hekmatyar's Radicals Reformed?," Afghan Recovery Report, April 6, 2006. Institute for War & Peace Reporting.

[www.iwpr.net/?p=arr&s=f&o=260881](http://www.iwpr.net/?p=arr&s=f&o=260881)

A powerful faction in the new Afghan parliament may still be controlled by a man regarded as a terrorist, even by the U.S. government.

# The Fundamentalist Nonsense of "Canadian Values"



By Richard Sanders, coordinator, Coalition to Oppose the Arms Trade and editor, *Press for Conversion!*

Just as Prime Minister Jean Chretien had done (in October 2003), Prime Minister Stephen Harper made a surprise, "morale-boosting" visit to Afghanistan (in March, 2006). After narrowly winning Canada's January elections, Harper was soon off on his first foreign trip. The destination? Afghanistan! While there, Hamid Karzai became the first foreign head of state to shake Harper's newly-elected hand.

As U.S. helicopter gunships circled noisily overhead, the two smiling leaders exchanged political pleasantries. Karzai, whose election owed much to Canada's diplomatic, military, logistical and financial support, dutifully expressed thanks to Canada for giving: "the lives of your sons, for contributing in money, for contributing in soldiers and for being one of the biggest helpers in Afghanistan."<sup>1</sup>

During his photo-op laden journey to rally public support for the Liberal-initiated war in Afghanistan, Harper-like Chretien before him—was filmed speaking to Canadian soldiers. He thanked them for "defending Canada's national interests," for "demonstrating an international leadership role for our country," for building democracy, promoting women's rights and protecting Canada from the "threat of terror [and] the threat of drugs."

Using the kind of Cold War rhetoric we expect from U.S. presidents, Harper said our war in Afghanistan was "vital...to the free world." Saying Canadians don't "cut and run," Harper served Canada's warfighters with a medley of folksy, sports idioms, talking of "stepping up to the plate" and saying "you can't lead from the bleachers."

And, according to Harper, "carping from the sidelines" is also a no-no. It's just not part of that great "Canadian tradition" of talking loudly about peace while quietly profiting from wars. Apparently though the reduction of complex political, economic and geostrategic issues into simple, black-and-white idiomatic expressions is as Canadian as a good old hockey fight.

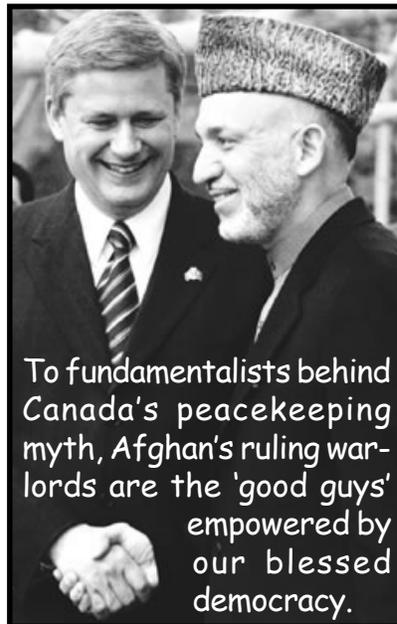
CP photo: Tom Hanson



Prime Minister Stephen Harper gives the thumbs-up to media from a U.S. "Blackhawk" helicopter gunship after visiting Canada's military base in Kandahar. March 13, 2006.

Source: CTV. [www.ctv.ca/generic/WebSpecials/canadian\\_forces/gallery5/image15.html](http://www.ctv.ca/generic/WebSpecials/canadian_forces/gallery5/image15.html)

Indeed, the spouting of child-like truths is a near-glorious pastime in which our great, political leaders so often excel. Unfortunately, exposing their myth-making talk cannot be challenged in polite company, such as the media companies that regularly parrot our politicians' utter nonsense. To people



To fundamentalists behind Canada's peacekeeping myth, Afghan's ruling warlords are the 'good guys' empowered by our blessed democracy.

like Chretien, Martin and Harper, the ardently-held, but sadly-naive, belief in "Canadian values" amounts to a kind of sacred doctrine. It is, in effect, a religious fundamentalism; the expression of an all-too-literal take on the widely-accepted, official PR line that Canada is a global force for peace. (Ironically, our support for "world peace" is more-and-more being proudly recognized as a function of our military prowess.)

Those keepers of the political faith, like Harper—or, at least, his

speechwriters—seem to have a natural propensity for simplicity in both speech and thought. They can easily gush praise upon Canadian troops for "taking a stand" to promote democracy abroad or for carrying on that other apparently great national tradition, which Harper, while in Afghanistan, called "doing good when good is required."<sup>2</sup>

In a similarly-simplistic vein, Lt.-Col. Tom Doucet, Canada's "team commander" in the Afghan war zone, summed it up for docile media like this:

"Once we get rid of the bad people, we can carry on with full force...the reconstruction and development."<sup>3</sup>

However, neither Doucet nor Harper—or, for that matter, the Liberal "do gooders" who set the whole stage for this horror—ever wonder how Afghan's will ever get "rid of the bad people" who now run their government. To the fundamentalists behind Canada's peacekeeping myth, these Islamic terrorists and drug barons are the "good people" who our blessed democracy has empowered to rule Afghanistan.

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# Killing "Detestable Murderers and Scumbags," the Canadian Way

By Justin Podur and Sonali Kolhatkar.

On July 11, 2005, with great nuance and tact, Canada's Chief of Defence Staff, General Rick Hillier, described those arrayed against the NATO mission in Afghanistan as: "detestable murderers and scumbags, I'll tell you that up front. They detest our freedoms, they detest our society, they detest our liberties."

This was not Canadian officialdom's typical line on operations abroad. Canada's foreign policy is usually presented publicly as "peacekeeping," or helping "failed states" to build "capacity." Even Canadian military operations are somehow presented as peaceable.

Hillier was explicitly trying to dispel this image, and not merely with the tactics of demonization ("detestable scumbags"), fear and racism ("they detest our freedoms"), and repetition ("they detest our liberties"). Hillier also wanted to dispel perceptions of the Canadian military as a peaceful, humanitarian force in world affairs: "We are the Canadian Forces, and our job is to be able to kill people," he said.

Hillier continued the fear campaign: "Osama bin Laden, some time ago, indicated Canada was a target."

"As a responsible citizen of the world, we have been involved in the campaign against terrorism and, of course, we try to bring stability to

places that are unstable and therefore have acted as hotbeds for supporting terrorism."

To use military language, Hillier created an "opening" that Major General Andrew Leslie then exploited at a conference in August 2005 called "Handcuffs and Hand Grenades":

"Afghanistan is a 20-year venture [but] there are things worth fighting for. There are things worth dying for. There are things worth killing for." Explaining why Canada had to be in Afghanistan for 20 years, Leslie said it was because "every time you kill an angry young man overseas, you're creating 15 more who will come after you."

It doesn't take a military genius to recognize that Hillier and Leslie are making self-contradictory statements. If every time Canada kills someone overseas it's creating 15 "angry young

## Meet Lt. General Rick Hillier, Canada's Chief Warlord

By Richard Sanders, coordinator, Coalition to Oppose the Arms Trade and editor, *Press for Conversion!*

Canada's highest-ranking military officer says he "never wanted to be anything other than a soldier."<sup>1</sup> "I knew right from the start what I wanted to be,"<sup>2</sup> says Hillier, whose overwhelming desire to join the armed forces began in early childhood.

A *Globe and Mail* puff piece presents Hillier as both (a) "a fresh breed of 'tell it like it is' leader [that] the country needs to face the realities of a new world" and (b) a "typical" Canadian:

"Gen. Hillier's roots couldn't be much more Canadian. He began sending earnest letters to the Canadian Forces at age 7.... The military wrote back in an effort to recruit him.... His imagination just went wild at the thought of enlisting in the army....

He was in many ways a typical teenage boy, who would get together with friends to drink beer and shoot a .22 around town."<sup>4</sup>

Although it's not clear when this supposedly "typical" Canadian teenager began to "drink beer" and fire a rifle "around town," we know he was 17 when he left Campbellton, Newfoundland, to join the army.<sup>5</sup>

The rest, as they say, is history. During his rise to the top of Canada's military, Hillier even served as the Deputy Commanding General of the U.S. Army's "III Corps."<sup>6</sup> Nicknamed the "Phantom Corps" and "America's Hammer," it is described as "offensive in nature."<sup>7</sup> The Third Corps is based at Fort Hood, Texas, which is "billed...the largest military base in the free world."<sup>8</sup>

Canada's Rick Hillier was the Deputy Commanding General of the U.S. Army's "III Corps."



### Quotations from General Hillier: On Canada in Afghanistan...

"These are detestable murderers and scumbags.... They want to break our society. I actually believe that... It doesn't matter whether we are in Afghanistan or any place in the world. We are going to be a target in their sights. They detest our freedoms. They detest our society. They detest our liberties... We're not going to let those radical murderers and killers rob from others and we're certainly not going to let them rob from Canada... We're not the public service of Canada, we're not just another department. We are the Canadian Forces and our job is to be able to kill people."<sup>9</sup>

### On being a soldier...

"I'm a little uncomfortable with the term warrior. I'm even more uncomfortable with the term peacekeeper."<sup>10</sup>

### On being himself...

"I'm not smart enough to be anybody else but myself."<sup>11</sup>



Lt. Gen. Rick Hillier

men,” does that make those 15 people “detestable scumbags?” If killing is so incredibly counterproductive, does it make sense to proudly announce that “our job is to be able to kill people?” And if every killing of these “detest-

able scumbags” creates 15 more enemies, should that really be considered a goal “worth killing for?”

Hillier and Leslie’s comments can be understood as media operations intended to legitimize a more aggressive military role for Canada in the world. That their speeches sound like warmed-over propaganda scripts of American neoconservatives should not be surprising, since the U.S. is the only possible contemporary model Canada could have for aggressive militarism. But the comments by the generals are more aggressive than Canada’s official foreign policy doctrine. That doctrine was more systematically expounded by Canada’s then-Foreign Minister Bill Graham in a September 2005 speech on Canada’s Afghan Mission.

In that speech, Graham described the ideology motivating Cana-

da’s more aggressive posture. The idea is that there are “failed states” from which danger “leaks out” into other areas. Afghanistan fits into this scheme as a country with an “unfortunate history of war and misrule... culminating in the rule of the Taliban, their support for al-Qaeda and their attack on New York.”

While there may seem to be a large space between Graham’s “helping” approach and Hillier/Leslie’s “kill people” approach, Canada’s real foreign policy path is rather narrow: it involves supporting and legitimizing U.S. foreign policy, whether through “failed state” rhetoric, military support or profitable arms exports. Canada’s Afghan mission fits the bill on all counts.

**Source:** Excerpt, “Detestable Murderers and Scumbags: Canada in Afghanistan.” [www.zmag.org](http://www.zmag.org)



### On being “very close friends” with Afghan warlords...

“I was enthralled by the Afghan people.... You had to experience their version of friendship to understand it. I experienced it from normal people..., right through to President Karzai himself, and including many of the warlords. They weren’t necessarily malicious, so we worked with these folks.... Many of these folks were incredible leaders. Many of them had one goal: a stronger Afghanistan.... Others went down the road of personal greed, into the drug trade.... Some of them became very close friends.”<sup>10</sup>

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### How Politicians Responded to Hillier’s “Scumbags” Comment

“He’s starting to give the public an idea that the troops are about to go in a dangerous area and he’s trying to explain why they’re going there in the pursuit of terrorists.”

**Gordon O’Connor**,  
Canada’s Conservative  
Minister of Defence



“Controlled anger, given what’s happened, is an appropriate response. We have a very committed, level-headed head of our armed forces, who isn’t afraid to express the passion that underlies the mission that front-line personnel are going to be taking on.... A bit of strong language in the circumstances, I don’t find that to be wrong.”

**Jack Layton**, NDP leader.

“General Hillier is not only a top soldier, he...has served in Afghanistan. The point he is simply making is we are at war with terrorism and we’re not going to let them win.”

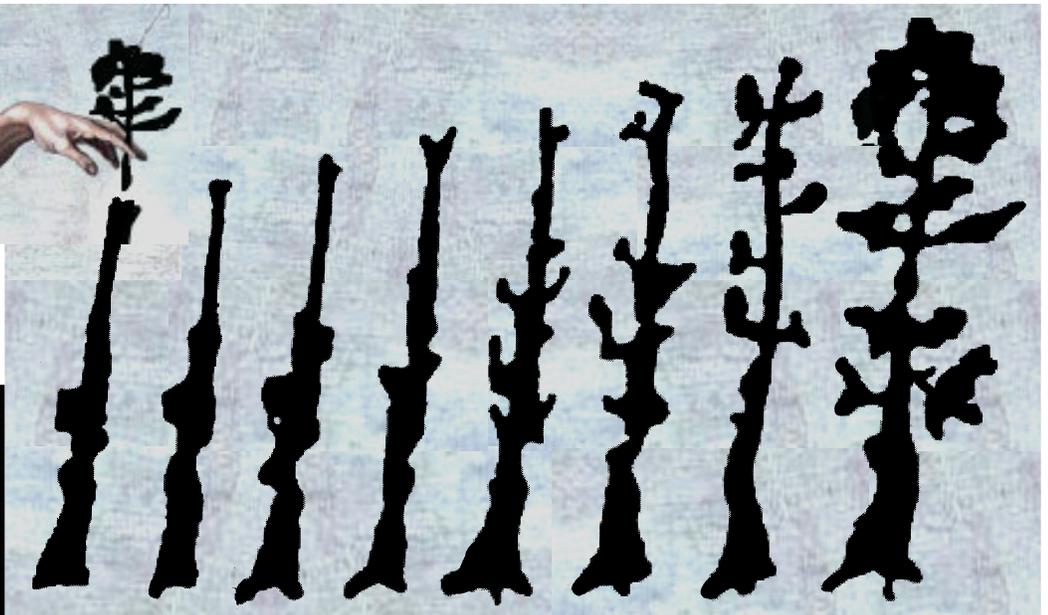
**Paul Martin**, then-Liberal  
Prime Minister.

**Source:** Canadian Press, July 16, 2005.





Putting the "fun" in fundamentalism!



Although this is not exactly a real photo of President George W. Bush, he actually did make these statements:

"We...discussed the importance of a democracy in the greater Middle East in order to leave behind a peaceful tomorrow," May 10, 2005.

"The public education system in America is one of the most important foundations of our democracy.... It is where children...learn to be responsible citizens, and learn to have the skills necessary to take advantage of our fantastic opportunistic society," May 1, 2002.

"Our enemies are innovative and resourceful, and so are we. They never stop thinking about new ways to harm our country and our people, and neither do we," Aug. 5, 2004.

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