

## **Democratising Afghanistan: An Analysis of the 2005 Parliamentary Elections**

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**Abstract:** The interviews and observation of the September 2005 elections for the lower house of parliament and provincial councils in Afghanistan disclose that despite shortcomings, the elections were relatively free. The elections, conducted in the absence of party politics, created a divided legislature struggling to unite. Women members, equally divided by region and ethnicity, may exert a moderating influence on the legislature, which is dominated by the "Islamist right."

In conformity with the Bonn Agreement signed in December 2001, Afghanistan's New Constitution, ratified in January 2004, provides for a presidential executive and a directly elected parliament. Afghanistan held its first presidential election on October 9, 2004 in which Hamid Karzai emerged as the President of Afghanistan. This is followed by the legislative and provincial level elections held on September 18, 2005. Elections were held to elect 249 members of *wolesi jirga* (lower house of Parliament) and members of the 34 provincial councils. These elections marked the final phase in the process of democratising Afghanistan as stipulated in the Bonn Process that was initiated after the American Military Campaign that dismantled the Taliban regime. This study analyses the first ever parliamentary elections in Afghanistan.

### **The Legal Set Up**

The New Constitution of Afghanistan provides for a two-chamber parliament or national assembly and provincial level councils and

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district level councils. According to Article 82 of the Constitution, the National Assembly consists of two houses: the *wolesi jirga* (lower house of Parliament), the highest legislative organ consisting of 249 directly elected members, and the “*meshrano jirga* (upper house or Senate) with 102 members partly elected indirectly by the elected provincial and district councils and partly appointed by the President. The Constitution stipulates that in the *wolesi jirga*, at least 68 (or 25%) members of those elected “should” be women.

Constitutionally, no one can become simultaneously a member of both houses of the National Assembly. According to Article 83 of the Constitution, members of the *wolesi jirga* are elected by the people through free, general, secret and direct elections. However, electoral constituency and other related issues are to be determined by election laws. According to Article 11 of Afghanistan’s “Laws on Elections,” the President is empowered to determine, through a decree, legislative, provincial and local (district level) constituencies.

Article 8 of the “Laws on Elections” provides for the establishment of an Independent Election Commission to conduct elections. Since Afghanistan did not have an Independent Election Commission, the September 2005 elections for *wolesi jirga* and provincial level councils were conducted under the auspices of the United Nations-Afghan Joint Electoral Management Body (JEMB). This was made possible by the Presidential Decree No. 40 of July 26, 2003 that announced the establishment of JEMB and the Presidential Decree No. 110 of February 2004 that gave JEMB “full responsibility for preparing, managing, convening and overseeing” elections and to assume full powers of the Independent Election Commission until the end of the first election.<sup>1</sup> On November 30, 2005, Peter Erben, the UN Chief Electoral Officer for Afghanistan, announced that JEMB ceased to exist after the announcement of the final results of the polls for *wolesi jirga* and provincial councils. Thereafter, according to Erben, Afghanistan’s Independent Election Commission will take full responsibilities for preparing, managing, convening and overseeing elections and matters related to elections in Afghanistan.

According to JEMB, 12.5 million Afghans were eligible to vote in the elections for *wolesi jirga* and provincial councils on September 18, 2005. Women accounted for approximately 40 percent of the

total number of eligible voters. A voter, by law, has to be at least 18 years old and a citizen of Afghanistan. The registration process for *wolesi jirga* and provincial council elections comprises two phases: (1) Comprehensive Registration Period (CRP) and (2) Voter Registration Update Period (VRUP). CRP refers to the registration process conducted for the 2004 Presidential Election, during which approximately 11 million Afghans registered to vote. The VRUP was commissioned by JEMB in March 2005 to update the list of voters who for technical reasons could not register during CRP. The VRUP exercise started on June 25, 2005, and ended on July 21, 2005.<sup>2</sup> According to registration returnee officers, approximately 1.7 million Afghans registered through the VRUP.

On July 18, 2005, the JEMB, opened six Refugee Encashment Centers (RECs) to run until September 8, 2005, to allow refugees who return after the Voter Registration Update Period to receive a Voter Registration Card. The RECs were established in Kabul, Daman, Mohmand Dara, Zaranj and two sites in Herat. Only Afghans with UNHCR documentation establishing their recent returning status were allowed to use the facilities. The government adopted the unconventional Single Non-transferable Vote system (SNTV) for the *wolesi jirga* and provincial councils. Under this system, voters select just one candidate from those listed on the ballot paper. The candidate with the highest number of votes wins the seat or seats allocated to their respective constituencies. The voting was also unconventional in that Afghanistan's Election Law divides the country of over 23 million people into 34 provincial constituencies. Each electoral constituency was allocated seats proportionate to the population size of the province. Therefore, a candidate either for *wolesi jirga* or provincial councils in a given province needed to poll a majority of the votes in that province. Thus, a candidate who is popular in his or her constituency but not so known across the province is not likely to be elected to the *wolesi jirga* or provincial councils.

### **Parties and the Candidates**

Elections in the absence of political parties and the law that regulates party politics become a futile exercise. Therefore, the 2004 Constitution allows political parties to be established so long as their

charters “do not contradict the principles of Islam,” and they do not have affiliations with other countries. The “Law on Political Parties” ratified in March 2004 by a presidential decree required a political party to register with the Ministry of Justice of Afghanistan.<sup>3</sup>

There were many political parties registered as required by regulation. Yet President Karzai, fearing that party competition may further polarize the existing ethnic and ideological cleavages and thus jeopardize the attempts at consolidating democracy, decided not to allow party-based elections. This was a deliberate move in the interest of Afghanistan and political stability of the country. However, some observers believe that this move aimed at thwarting the emergence of an opposition so that the power could be “concentrated overwhelmingly in the hands of the president in the period ahead.”<sup>4</sup> In any case, the candidates affiliated to the numerous parties contested as independents.

According to electoral law, a candidate running for the *wolesi jirga* must be a citizen of Afghanistan, of at least 25 years of age, and presenting the signature of at least 300 voters supporting his application. Moreover, the candidate must be registered to vote and has not been convicted of a crime against humanity. The eligible candidate should not have ties with illegal armed militia groups.<sup>5</sup>

Registration of candidates began in April 2005 and ended on May 19, 2005. A total of 2,707 candidates contested for the *wolesi jirga* of whom 328 were women. Additionally, 68 seats (7 female and 61 male) were contested by the Kuchi (nomads) inhabitants of Afghanistan.<sup>6</sup> The candidates broadly represented the Afghan ethnic divide.

### **The Election Campaign and Strategies**

Afghanistan’s new Constitution gives the candidates one month before the polling day to campaign and mobilize their supporters to vote. However, colourful posters conveying candidates and party messages could be seen in public places throughout Afghanistan as early as March, 2005. Local television and radio stations aired debates and newspapers carried editorials and comments on the outcome of the historic election. Campaign methods included mass gatherings, distribution of candidates’ name cards (including pictures, electoral

emblems and address), visits to the villages and surrounding neighbourhoods, and fliers and posters explaining candidates' election manifesto.

The candidates used posters and mass gatherings to mobilize the masses and galvanize support. They used posters to inform the public about their respective policies and objectives. They organized mass gatherings and assemblies attended by farmers and inhabitants of the villages in the neighborhood. In addition to speeches, candidates provided food and refreshments at these gatherings. From the informal interviews conducted by the author, it became apparent that attendance in the gathering did not indicate the electoral strength of the candidate. Some 50 respondents from Jalalabad capital city of Nangarhar province, confided to the author that the warlords threatened them with dire consequences should they not attend and vote for them. Thus, most people attended the campaign rallies to avoid intimidation by powerful candidates. However, one interviewee said forthrightly that "we will attend the election rallies of all the candidates in this neighborhood but we will vote for the candidate of our choice. The good thing about the election is that voting is done secretly and we will not inform the candidates whom we voted and whom we did not."

A content analysis of speeches in mass rallies showed that candidates highlighted the local issues and promised reconstruction of roads, schools and canals, provision of better education, justice, eradication of poverty and corruption in administration. They also promised transparency in administration, better living standards, and creation of a moral polity ruled by law. Most of the candidates also highlighted the need to revive and strengthen Afghanistan's sovereignty and territorial integrity. Almost all candidates stressed the need to build an Islamic polity and protect Afghanistan's Islamic heritage and values. However, they shied away from discussing US-Afghanistan relations and the presence of foreign forces perhaps because, according to one respondent, "the candidates were either aware that Afghanistan's security requires presence of foreign forces or afraid to speak of their presence."

One powerful candidate, Yunus Qanooni, however, appreciated the international support but censored President Hamid Karzai's government for his weak leadership and inability to benefit from

the opportunities made available by the international community. Qanooni served as an Interior Minister and, later, Education Minister in Karzai's government. He called for amending the 2004 Constitution to create the post of Prime Minister and reforming the system of administration and the rules pertaining to elections. Qanooni argued that the creation of the post of Prime Minister would strengthen the President ignoring the fact that the power struggle between a powerful President and a strong Prime Minister was responsible for much of the civil war in the 1990s.

### **Voter Turnout**

Polling took place in 28,157 polling stations in 6,000 locations throughout Afghanistan. The Afghans voted in exclusively male or female polling stations staffed by almost 200,000 polling staff. According to official estimates, the turnout rate was around 53 percent or some 6.8 million of 12.5 million registered voters. According to BBC, the turnout in the vote for September's landmark parliament and provincial assemblies was about 20 points less compared to the 2004 Presidential Poll.<sup>7</sup> Ahmed Nadri, Chairperson of the Free and Fair Election Foundation of Afghanistan, which sent 5,000 observers to the polls, concurred with the BBC report on low voter turnout.<sup>8</sup>

The main reason for this relatively low turnout "was the fact that this time the Afghan refugees were not given an opportunity to vote."<sup>9</sup> Almost 1.35 million eligible voters in Pakistan and an estimated 60,000 in Iran, who contributed to President Hamid Karzai's victory in October, 2004 Presidential Election, were disenfranchised. Even the internally displaced population (IDP) of about 6,000 refugee families, living in Hesar Shahi desert of eastern Nangarhar Province, could not cast their votes because no polling station had been set up for them.<sup>10</sup>

### **The Result**

Peter Erben, the UN Chief Electoral Officer for Afghanistan, described parliamentary and provincial elections as "a very hard contest" due to the number of candidates contesting. Given the fact that Afghanistan is administratively composed of 34 provinces, there

were a total of 69 different elections, two in each province and one for the *kuchi* [nomad] community.<sup>11</sup> Therefore, two elections were held in each province on the same day, one for the 249-member *wolesi jirga* and another for the provincial council. The size of provincial councils varied from nine to 29 members, depending on the population size of the province. The major challenge for the organizers of the elections, according to Bismillah Bismil, JEMB's Chairman, was the transportation of ballot boxes from polling stations to provincial counting centres. The JEMB had to bring ballot boxes from more than 6,000 polling stations to counting stations in each of Afghanistan's 34 provinces.

The final certified results of the polls were announced on November 12, 2005, by Bismillah Bismil. The results were due in the final week of October, 2005, but were held up because of complaints of cheating and fraud in the ballot count in many Afghanistan's provinces.<sup>12</sup> JEMB held up the release of results for 700 polling stations until investigations into alleged fraud and malpractice were completed by the Election Complaints Commission (ECC). The ECC is composed of two national and three international commissioners with its head office in Kabul. Richard Atwood, the JEMB's chief of operations, later observed that the recounting of disputed ballot boxes, for instance in Nangarhar Province, proved the allegation of malpractice and rigging as baseless.<sup>13</sup> However, some candidates in the interview conducted in Nangarhar Province maintained that their complaints were not taken seriously by the ECC and that the alleged malpractices were not investigated. Nevertheless, the JEMB claimed that the results were credible. To Bismil, the elections marked an important milestone in Afghanistan's transition to a stable and strong democracy and the newly-elected members will represent and serve the people of their provinces.<sup>14</sup>

### **Election Observers**

The elections for *wolesi jirga* and provincial councils were held under close observation of several international and domestic observation missions and organizations. They included the European Union Election Observation Mission (EUEOM), the Human Rights Watch, the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC), the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), the

Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe Election Support Team to Afghanistan (OSCE), the Bangkok-based Asian Network for Free Election (ANFREL), the Free and Fair Elections Foundation of Afghanistan (FEFA) and the candidate agents. EUEOM's presence was significant in that it monitored the whole process. According to Benita Ferrero-Waldner, Commissioner for External Relations and European Neighbourhood Policy, "Election Observation Missions are an important instrument for building confidence in the democratic processes of a country."<sup>15</sup> The EUEOM comprises three types of election experts: (1) core team election experts, (2) long term election experts, and (3) short-term election experts. The long-term observers were deployed to the provincial level to follow the campaign period and pre-election preparations. However, short-term observers arrived just before the Election Day to observe voting, counting and the tabulation of results.

On 14 October, 2004, the Chinese *Xinhua* Daily reported that Peter Erben, the Chief Electoral Officer at the UN-sponsored JEMB, has confirmed malpractice and fraud in some cases and promised an investigation into the complaints. The *Christian Science Monitor* observed that "allegations of commanders intimidating voters, buying votes, and stuffing ballot boxes have led to almost daily protests in regional capitals and in Kabul. Election officials have sacked 50 of their own for fraud, and have thrown out what they believed were 680 spoiled ballot boxes."<sup>16</sup>

The vote rigging allegations made many to view the Afghan parliamentary elections as an "unfair" exercise. In a protest demonstration held in front of the presidential palace, the candidates accused authorities of involvement in the electoral process and demanded a recount. Similar protest demonstrations were held in a number of provinces. According to an independent candidate for *wolesi jirga*, Syed Murtaza, "mass irregularities have been committed in the ballot counting to ensure the success of certain candidates in the elections and that is why we are demanding recounting of the votes."<sup>17</sup> This prompted Mohammad Yunus Qanooni, the newly elected speaker of the *wolesi jirga*, to propose a recount of the vote to "secure the legitimacy of the elections."<sup>18</sup>

The EUEOM considered the allegation of fraud and intimidation as "worrying" but argued that it was not practiced nationwide.<sup>19</sup>



FEFA viewed the result credible. It believed that “the security incidents and election violations, including serious intimidation, did not affect the results.”<sup>20</sup> The IRI observers were satisfied that the elections were well organized and that the voters were well informed as to the balloting process.<sup>21</sup> A senior government official in an interview admitted that fraud and malpractices were committed by a handful of returning officers. However, these irregularities did not dent the legitimacy of the electoral process.

### The Re-emerging “Islamist Right” Factor

The newly elected members of the *wolesi jirga* belong to different ideological orientations. Over half of the 249-seat *wolesi jirga*, is made up of ex-*mujahidin* (anti-Soviet holy warriors), religious figures including the four former Taliban commanders, and 11 former Communists. There are also members who may roughly be classified as liberals. Pakistan’s daily newspaper *Fronier Post* reported that the leaders of the *mujahidin*, who led the Afghan resistance to the 1979-89 Soviet occupation, and who later fought against each other during the ensuing civil war, dominate the *wolesi jirga* with a majority of the 249 seats and the provincial councils.<sup>22</sup> The big cities, in particular Kabul and Herat, have more educated professionals winning seats, but even in Kabul province half of the 33 seats have been won by *jihadi* figures.<sup>23</sup>

According to both *Xinhua* and the *New York Times*, the Islamist right is represented by such figures as former President Burhanuddin Rabbani, Abdul Rasoul Sayyaf, Hajji Mohammad Mohaqiq, Mohammad Yunus Qanooni and the prominent Taliban figure Abdul Salam Rocketi. One may add to the list, among others, names such as Malawi ‘Ata Ullah Ludin and Muhammad Khalid Farooqi, the leader of registered Hezb-e-Islam-i-Afghanistan. *EurasiaNet* in its November, 2005, issue reported that “40 or so members of Hizb-e-Islami” have been elected to the *wolesi jirga*.<sup>24</sup> Some women elected to the *wolesi jirga* are also affiliated with the Islamist right. According to the *New York Times*, the results for Afghanistan’s *wolesi jirga* and provincial councils signals a victory for “Islamic conservatives and the *jihad* (anti-Soviet holy war) fighters” and the return of the “fallen people” to the helm of power.<sup>25</sup> Several dozens of them have emerged victorious in the September polls.<sup>26</sup>

The surge of the Islamist right provides a useful insight into the nature of the party system that may take shape on the Afghan political scene. The *wolesi jirga* in its first sitting elected Qanooni as the speaker. For this, however, Qanooni had to dissolve his Afghanista-e-Naween (New Afghanistan) Party and rejoin Rabbani's Jam'iat-e-Islami (Islamic Association of) Afghanistan. This killed all chances of a two-party system emerging, one headed by Qanooni and the other by Karzai.<sup>27</sup>

Participation of the Islamist right in the democratic process may lead Afghanistan, unless otherwise imposed, to a multi-party system. President Karzai has to share power with the elected representatives.<sup>28</sup> More importantly, the government will have to work with powerful political figures, as among the winners are some of the prominent men of the past two decades of war and turbulent politics.

In addition, the re-emergence of the Islamist right attracts attention to two interesting and yet interrelated observations: (1) the real source of grassroots support in Afghanistan and (2) the West's perception, especially that of the United States, towards democracy and democratisation of Afghanistan. Academics and political analysts suggest that despite the unconventional method of voting, results show that the Islamist right wields strong grassroots support across the country. The Islamist right has chosen to use the power of the ballot instead of the bullet. The presence of Islamist right in the decision making process, according to Qanooni, is essential for maintenance of peace and stability in Afghanistan which is sought by the West as well. To Qanooni, therefore, the West must respect public opinion and accept the role of *mujahidin* in the decision making processes in Afghanistan.<sup>29</sup>

Despite their strong presence in the *wolesi jirga*, observers of government and politics of Afghanistan believe that the Islamist right will not speak with one voice.<sup>30</sup> Afghanistan will have a "fractured" or "split" *wolesi jirga*. Mir Ahmad Joyenda, elected member of the *wolesi jirga* from Kabul constituency, believes that the elected representatives in Afghanistan's lower house may not easily coalesce into a united block. Ethnic and regional divisions and even differences over adoption of a specific strategy will keep them divided.<sup>31</sup> Afghanistan's daily newspaper *Iradah* wrote that ideological differences will mar the *wolesi jirga* and hence the elected

personalities will fail to cooperate. However, there are others who believe that ideology or ethnicity may not inhibit the opposition to form a united front in its relation with the executive.<sup>32</sup> Ahmad Shah Ahmadzai says that “currently we are under negotiations with various *mujahidin* groups to form a single line of action in the future parliament so that we can get rid of the foreign occupation.”<sup>33</sup>

### **Women Empowerment**

The elections for the *wolesi jirga* and provincial councils and women’s participation are suggestive of the recognition of the political role of women by the Afghans hence opening a window of opportunity for women to participate in decision-making processes of their country. The Afghan women have traditionally played decisive roles in the family and the society. Afghanistan’s new Constitution has simply extended the informal role of the Afghan women to the policy level. Peter Erben, Chief Electoral Operation Officer, confirmed that Afghan women participated actively both as candidates and voters.<sup>34</sup> Some argue that women who have taken part do not represent the conservative sections of the population. “The changes, which they may attempt to bring about, may go against age-old Afghan social norms.”<sup>35</sup> However, there is an “attitude shift” among the Afghan men about the role of women in politics. A week before the polling day, the 50 Afghans interviewed told the author that women can play a positive role in development and reconstruction of the Afghan society but required women to carry out their duties in accordance with Afghan Islamic traditions. A few years earlier, it was hard to find either women working or men raising their voices in support of women to participation in the decision-making process. Swanee Hunt, the Director for the Women and Public Policy Program of Harvard University, confirms this attitude shift through her personal interactions with the Afghans in Kabul. According to her, some Afghan men believe that “at a policy level, women are perceived by many [Afghan men] as untapped resources in a country emerging from decades of hardship. Women run things better in peace time, and now we have peace.”<sup>36</sup> According to Masuda Jalal, Afghanistan’s Minister for Women Affairs, “the people of Afghanistan’s reaction towards women empowerment, women’s leadership, and promotion of gender equality are positive.”<sup>37</sup>

## Conclusion

The September elections for *wolesi jirga* and provincial councils drew to a close the Bonn Process that mandated President Hamid Karzai to carry out democratization of the Afghan society. Afghanistan's parliament held its first historic convention on December 19, 2005. President Hamid Karzai officially declared Afghanistan's first ever law-making body open and swore in all its elected and appointed members. Karzai viewed the historic convention of Afghanistan's legislature as the symbol of revival of the country's true sovereignty.

The September 2005 elections for *wolesi jirga* and provincial councils have opened a new phase of political debate in the politics of the country. The elections brought to the limelight issues relating to ideological and ethnic cleavages, women, partisan politics, Islam and the Islamists and the effective use of the system of check and balance provided by Afghanistan's New Constitution. The debate has indeed already begun. It is far from clear how voting blocs will form, because the election system sidelined political parties, and most candidates ran as independents. But political analysts predict a body divided among themselves and confrontational towards the government. Women may have a moderating influence but are also likely to be divided by region and ethnicity and even ideology.<sup>38</sup>

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## Notes

1. "Afghanistan's Election Law" (Dari) *Ariye* [Online] available from <http://www.ariye.com/daril/entekhabat/qanoonentekhabat.html>, accessed December 12, 2004. Also see, The Joint Election Management Body, [Online] available from <http://www.jemb.org> accessed on November 12, 2005.

2. *Wolesi Jirga* and Provincial Council Elections Afghanistan 2005, *Joint Election Management Body*, [Online] available from [http://www.jemb.org/pdf/jemb\\_final\\_registration\\_report\\_21-07-05.pdf](http://www.jemb.org/pdf/jemb_final_registration_report_21-07-05.pdf), accessed on August 13, 2005.

3. The Bonn Process facilitated formation of over 90 political parties since December 2001. However, 78 of them have been granted license by Afghanistan's Ministry of Justice (AMJ) to operate. *Asia Times Online*, September 23, 2005, available from [http://www.atimes.com/atimes/Central\\_Asia/GI22Ag01.html](http://www.atimes.com/atimes/Central_Asia/GI22Ag01.html), accessed on November 10, 2005.

4. *Ibid.*

5. "Afghans to Elect National Assembly, Provincial Council Representatives," *Reliefweb*, [Online] available from <http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/RWB.NSF/db900SID/EGUA-6GAR94?OpenDocument>, accessed on October 29, 2005.
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9. *The News* (Pakistan Daily), September 27, 2005.
10. *Ibid.*, October 15, 2005.
11. Integrated Regional Information Networks (IRIN), a UN humanitarian information unit, UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, April 25, 2005, in *Payvand's Iran News* [Online] available from <http://www.payvand.com/news/05/apr/1202.html>, accessed on August 6, 2005.
12. *The Dawn* (Pakistan Daily), November 13, 2005.
13. *The News*, October 22, 2005.
14. See "JEMB Certifies All Final Results for *Wolesi Jirga* and Provincial Council Elections: November 12, 2005," *Joint Election Management Body*, [Online] available from <http://www.jemb.org/eng/Media/pressr.pdf>, accessed on December 17, 2005. See also Pakistan's *The Dawn* Daily, November 13, 2005.
15. "EU Election Observation Mission for Afghanistan Parliamentary Elections," *Emma Bonnino's Official Website*, [Online] available from [http://emmabonino.it/press/about\\_emma\\_bonino/2390](http://emmabonino.it/press/about_emma_bonino/2390), accessed on October 29, 2005.
16. *The Christian Science Monitor*, October 27, 2005.
17. *Xinhua* (The Chinese Daily), October 14, 2005.
18. *Agence France Press* (AFP), October 27, 2005 [Online] available from *Afghan News Network*: <http://www.afghannews.net/index>, accessed on October 29, 2005.
19. *The New York Times*, October 3, 2005.
20. *Ibid.*, September 19, 2005.

21. "Impact of Election Still in Question" *Institute for War and Peace Reporting*, September 21, 2005, [Online] available from <http://www.iwpr.net/index>, accessed on January 16, 2006.
22. *Frontier Post*, October 29, 2005.
23. *The New York Times*, October 23, 2005.
24. Amin Tarzi, "Afghanistan: New Parliament Must Cope with Deep Divisions" [Online] available from <http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/civilsociety/articles/pp.112005.shtml>, accessed on November 27, 2005.
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28. *The News*, September 27, 2005.
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31. *The Christian Science Monitor*, October 27, 2005.
32. *'Iradah* (Afghanistan Daily), November 13, 2005.
33. For full text of Ahmad Shah Ahmadzai's interview see, *Asia Times Online*, September 24, 2005, available from [http://www.atimes.com/atimes/Central\\_Asia/GI22Ag01.html](http://www.atimes.com/atimes/Central_Asia/GI22Ag01.html), accessed on November 10, 2005.
34. *Frontier Post*, October 1, 2005
35. *The News*, September 27, 2005.
36. *The Washington Times*, October 30, 2005.
37. *Afghan Daily* (in English), October 31, 2005.
38. *The New York Times*, October 23, 2005.