

DIIGO LIST: AFGHANISTAN ELECTIONS 2009

Karzai Pre-Poll Media Saturation Criticised

http://www.iwpr.net/?p=arr&s=f&o=354455&apc_state=henparr

A month before elections, a media monitoring unit alleges that the incumbent is unfairly dominating the airwaves

Spend an evening watching national TV station Radio Television Afghanistan, RTA, and you may be forgiven for thinking that Afghanistan has just one prominent public figure: President Hamed Karzai.

during a presidential election campaign, it borders on a gross violation of the election law,

during the first two weeks of monitoring, Karzai was on the TV news 55 times; his closest rival, Abdullah Abdullah, was a distant second with 13 appearances. Ashraf Ghani, the only other challenger given a chance in the poll, enjoyed a mere six airings.

Afghanistan's increasingly chaotic campaign features 41 candidates with widely differing backgrounds, skills, and finances. Some, like Karzai and Abdullah, can afford to blanket the capital with posters and billboards, as well as taking out expensive television advertisements. A one-minute spot during prime time on the most popular station – the commercial channel Tolo – costs 600 US dollars.

At Tolo and other Afghan media, pressure from all sides - Blog - Committee to Protect Journalists

<http://cpj.org/blog/2009/07/at-tolo-and-other-afghan-media-pressure-from-all-s.php>

With elections due on

August 20, pressure is mounting on Afghan journalists, and it's coming from all sides.

attacks and abuse aimed at journalists as the elections approach

What about threats and violence directed at his news crews?

"There is increased sophistication in the ways they do intimidation. All the blunt instruments of harassment **CPJ knows** [<http://cpj.org/asia/afghanistan/>](http://cpj.org/asia/afghanistan/) of.

There are continuing problems with the insurgents, but a lot of our problems end up being with government. They use different ways of coming at us: We have a number of court cases about broadcasting Indian drama serials or retransmitting Al-Jazeera, and we expect more when they are unhappy with us. It's difficult when the judiciary is selected by the president's office. They've charged us under the national security legislation for airing India

serials--that sort of law is designed to go after the guys trying to blow up the country. The bottom line is the government feels it can do whatever it wants without real accountability."

- "Generally, but, sure, we have complaints from the other side as well. That pressure seems to be easier to manage. In some ways they seem to be much more media savvy. They seem to be more concerned about their relationship with the media than the government does," Mohseni told me.
- The other side being?

"Well it depends, because there are the Taliban and other groups within the Taliban. There's no single group opposing the government in an armed fashion. There are clear cases of intimidation, and it's not all hunk-dory. ... There have been plenty of incidents of intimidation, people being shot at, but the intimidation isn't the same as it is with the government. I think it's largely because they understand they need media and they're very careful about how they go about treating us, whereas the government sees it otherwise.

Afghanistan Tells Journos: No Election Criticism (Updated) | Danger Room | Wired.com

<http://www.wired.com/dangerroom/2009/07/afghanistan-tells-journos-no-criticism-please>

Afghan election commissions "code of conduct," to be signed by journalists who want to be accredited to cover the upcoming vote

No mentioning of **corruption** <http://www.csmonitor.com/2008/1023/p06s01-woqn.html> , then?

this "code of conduct" could be used as a rather sweeping tool to close down or restrict media outlets that publish critical reports

harassment and intimidation against the media is on the rise

US envoy warns of imperfect Afghan poll - Yahoo! News

http://news.yahoo.com/s/ap/20090724/ap_on_re_as/as_afghanistan

President Barack Obama's special envoy said Friday that Afghanistan's upcoming presidential contest will be imperfect, but the country cannot be held to a democratic standard that even the U.S. struggles to achieve.

Richard Holbrooke's trip to this central Afghan province coincided with President Hamid Karzai's first election rally in Kabul ahead of the Aug. 20 ballot.

"Elections here will be imperfect," Holbrooke said between briefings at a military base run by Polish and U.S. troops. "But I am an American who lived through an imperfect election eight years ago. I am not going to hold Afghanistan to standards which even the United States does not achieve."

"This is not Iraq. This is not Vietnam. This is a nation that is directly related to the attacks of 9/11," Holbrooke said, referring to al-Qaida's attacks in New York and Washington on Sept. 11, 2001.

The big lie of Afghanistan | Malalai Joya | Comment is free | The Guardian

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2009/jul/25/afghanistan-occupation-taliban-warlords>

In 2005, I was the youngest person elected to the new Afghan parliament. Women like me, running for office, were held up as an example of how the war in Afghanistan had liberated women. But this democracy was a facade, and the so-called liberation a big lie.

It is my view that these British casualties, like the many thousands of Afghan civilian dead, are victims of the unjust policies that the Nato countries have pursued under the leadership of the US government.

Almost eight years after the Taliban regime was toppled, our hopes for a truly democratic and independent Afghanistan have been betrayed by the continued domination of fundamentalists and by a brutal occupation that ultimately serves only American strategic interests in the region.

the government headed by Hamid Karzai is full of warlords and extremists who are brothers in creed of the Taliban

For expressing my views I have been expelled from my seat in parliament, and I have survived numerous assassination attempts.

The fact that I was kicked out of office while brutal warlords enjoyed immunity from prosecution for their crimes should tell you all you need to know about the "democracy" backed by Nato troops.

In the constitution it forbids those guilty of war crimes from running for high office. Yet Karzai has named two notorious warlords, Fahim and Khalili, as his running mates for the upcoming **presidential election**

http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/south_asia/8102805.stm .

Under the shadow of warlordism, corruption and occupation, this vote will have no legitimacy, and once again it seems the real choice will be made behind closed doors in the White House. As we say in Afghanistan, "the same donkey with a new saddle".

Today the situation of women is as bad as ever. Victims of abuse and rape find no justice because the judiciary is dominated by fundamentalists

This week, US vice-president Joe Biden asserted that "**more loss of life [is] inevitable** <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2009/jul/23/afghanistan-british-us-troops-deaths>" in Afghanistan, and that the ongoing occupation is in the "national interests" of both the US and the UK.

The Afghan people want peace, and history teaches that we always reject occupation and foreign domination.

we know that values like human rights must be fought for and won by Afghans themselves.

American Empire Project: Everything That Happens in Afghanistan Is Based on Lies or Illusions

http://aep.typepad.com/american_empire_project/2009/07/everything-that-happens-in-afghanistan-is-based-on-lies-or-illusions.html

Just this week, the Obama administration first **claimed** <http://www.google.com/hostednews/ap/article/ALeqM5qjc2qjOKXqk3dqB6yvfHT9LRxwxqD99C0JNG0>

it had no grounds to investigate General Abdul Rashid Dostum's infamous 2001 massacre of Taliban prisoners, even though Dostum seems to have been on the CIA payroll at the time, and his troops were backed by U.S. military operatives. Later, the president reversed course, **ordering** <http://edition.cnn.com/2009/POLITICS/07/12/obama.afghan.killings/index.html>

national security officials to "look into" the matter. In the end, President Obama may prefer to "move on." As does Dostum, who recently rejoined the Karzai administration.

Ajmal's stricken father asks, "What kind of government doesn't protect its own citizens?" The answer is: a government that's bought, paid for, and answerable to outsiders, a government that has neither the need nor the inclination to care for its citizens.

That's the government the international community is now spending more than \$500 million to reelect. (Most of that money comes from the U.S.) International election officials, of course, are neutral -- so neutral that they look the other way as Karzai makes deals with rival warlords to ensure his reelection. One by one they come over to his side, and word leaks out about which ministries they've been promised.

International agencies responsible for mounting the election have already abandoned the goal of a "free and fair" vote. They're aiming for "credible," which is to say, an election that looks pretty good, even if it's not. In the context of accumulated illusions, this goal is

called "realistic," and perhaps it is. As the fixer's grieving father says, "Our government is a puppet of foreigners. That is why we expect nothing from it."

Afghanistan's bravest woman brings her message to UK « RAWA News

<http://www.rawa.org/temp/runews/rawanews.php?id=1164>

"I have a country full of people who know what I know and believe what I believe; that we Afghans can govern ourselves without foreign interference."

"There can never be lasting peace if the lives of Afghans are not valued as much as the lives of Western soldiers. Every death is a tragedy, but too often the Afghan victims of this war are merely nameless 'collateral damage' reported in the media as having been killed by 'mistake'."

"Helmand is not the whole of Afghanistan. Even if they annihilate Taliban there, they should not call it a success because Taliban are logistically and militarily stabilised in hundreds of other parts of Afghanistan ... and growing stronger as each day dawns."

"But it is the responsibility of our own people to fight for their rights, to achieve values like democracy and women's rights, human rights in our country. It's a prolonged struggle, it's a risky struggle full of hardships and challenges, but I trust in my people."

One of the most widely-cited advantages of Nato's intervention has been improved conditions for Afghan women. Ms Joya disagrees. "Just as the US air strikes have not brought security to Afghans, nor has the occupation brought security to Afghan women. The reality is quite the opposite. The now infamous 'Family Law' is but the tip of the iceberg of the women's rights catastrophe in our occupied country. The whole system, and especially the judiciary, is infected with the virus of fundamentalism and so, in Afghanistan, men who commit crimes against women do so with impunity."

Western "whitewash"

"war criminals" who sit in the Afghan parliament

so much of Afghanistan's reality has been kept veiled by a Western media consensus in support of the 'good war'," she says

Next month's elections offer little hope of change, she believes, and will be tainted by vote-rigging. "It is clear that the future president is already chosen in Washington. As in the proverb of our people 'Same donkey but with a new saddle!'"

Afghan woman MP lists 'enemies' « RAWA News

<http://www.rawa.org/temp/runews/rawanews.php?id=1170>

Malalai Joya

Ms Joya named those "enemies" as Nato forces who bomb from the sky, the resurgent Islamists of the Taliban, and the country's "warlords".

she dismissed next month's presidential election as a "deception".

Ms Joya technically remains an MP, but has been suspended since 2007, on charges of insulting the parliament after she compared it to a zoo.

there is no functioning democracy in Afghanistan under current conditions

"The election is a showcase for the US government to deceive people around the world,"

"We have a proverb - an old donkey but a new saddle,"

"No nation can donate liberation to another nation," Ms Joya said, to loud applause from the audience.

"Only nations which liberate themselves can be free."

Afghanistan: Led by donkeys « RAWA News

<http://www.rawa.org/temp/runews/2009/07/10/afghanistan-led-by-donkeys.html>

It is not good enough for the defence secretary, Bob Ainsworth, to strike Churchillian tones by saying the way forward will be hard and dangerous, and then plead for public forbearance. The business of government is to set a goal and provide a strategy for getting there. In Afghanistan we have neither. And the British public's tolerance is running on a timer.

British soldiers are notionally dying to allow a national election to take place in Helmand. Unless miracles happen, this poll will usher in four more years of a corrupt narco-regime whose leader, Hamid Karzai, is the not-so-private despair of everyone from Barack Obama downwards.

Mr Karzai's re-election could trigger a violent backlash from Afghans yearning for a government they can trust

Colonel David Haight put it pithily: "Four more years of this crap?"

Mr Karzai

continues to be confident of victory, even an outright one in the first round. He should be, because he has placed his loyalists in the election commission. The only question is whether the Afghan voters are so fed up with this that they will defy their clan elders and vote him out.

Let us all be clear. As things stand, we are losing this war, not just because the Taliban show more resilience, nor simply because people like Mr Karzai and his family thrive off the instability their rule creates. We are losing because a coalition spending \$20bn a month on military operations has - after eight painful and bloody years - no political strategy for reaching its stated goals. Afghanistan is not the only country whose government is failing. Successive British governments that mouth platitudes about the sacrifice their troops make fail them time and time again.

Clear, hold, build? Not in Afghanistan | Peter Beaumont | Comment is free | guardian.co.uk

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/cifamerica/2009/jul/14/military-afghanistan-clear-build-hold>

General Petraeus's oft-cited military formula is not the key to success in Afghanistan

From the surge in 2007 in Iraq to Afghanistan today, allied military strategy in both conflicts has been focused on three words that have been iterated and reiterated at each crisis and turning point. Those words are "clear, hold, build", representing the credo of General David Petraeus's **Field Manual 3-24 on Counterinsurgency (pdf)**

<http://www.fas.org/irp/doddir/army/fm3-24.pdf> , first published in 2006.

Clear

The problem, however, with the notion of "clearing" is that it assumes that the Taliban are somehow "other" to the rest of the population, not least in the Pashtun south. But the reality, whether we like it or not, is that the social and cultural values represented by the Taliban have large areas of cross-over with substantial sections of the rest of Afghanistan.

what is being earmarked for excision represents often commonly shared values – a policy that risks inflaming the conflict rather than "pacifying" it.

Their argument in Afghanistan – as in Iraq – is that those opposing coalition efforts can be separated into categories: those absolutely committed to fighting who must be killed or otherwise taken out of the equation; and those less committed or those who fight for money, who can be discouraged by the elimination of the first group

it ignores the social organisation, cohesion and strong kinship relationships in Afghanistan, as well as the reciprocal obligations

over the last few years, US and UK estimates have proved to be consistently wrong about the numbers, concentrations in locations and levels of local support for Taliban fighters – and why people are supporting them.

There has been a failure to grasp even why individuals are fighting.

Hold

I

Despite eight years in Afghanistan, and a procession of campaigns, US and UK forces are no closer to holding the ground than they were three years ago.

inevitably, the Taliban returns more determined, more knowledgeable about their enemy and with ever more effective weapons.

And given the increasingly wide distribution of the violence, the policy of holding requires ever greater troop levels, suggesting to the population an *occupation* ever more determined. And in doing so, it poses the risk of an ever more intensified resistance.

Build

Eight years of largely wasted effort in Afghanistan have barely made an impact on its multiple conflicts and challenges – for which the coming elections will once again be presented as a fig leaf.

U.S. Aims In Afghanistan Hinge On Election : NPR

<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=106996720&ft=1&f=1001>

August's presidential election in Afghanistan could be more competitive than many observers have been predicting. For months, it seemed that President Hamid Karzai was virtually certain to win re-election, but an apparent recent surge in support for two of Karzai's rivals has opened the prospect that he could be forced into a runoff.

what if Karzai — long thought of as America's man in Afghanistan — were to lose?

Alexander Thier, a senior adviser at the U.S. Institute of Peace, says "the Afghan people are skeptical because of our long and uncritical support" of Karzai.

"Karzai is working with a lot of people who have enough money to win the election — the old warlords who've accumulated a lot of ill-gotten U.S. cash."

Anthony Cordesman of the Center for Strategic and International Studies, who just returned from Afghanistan, warns that poll numbers in Afghanistan are unreliable, offering little more than "a dim indication" of public opinion.

channelnewsasia.com - Spiralling violence unnerves Afghanistan before vote

http://www.channelnewsasia.com/stories/afp_asiapacific/view/444770/1/.html

The August 20 presidential vote, only the second in Afghan history, is seen as a crucial test in the nearly eight-year effort led by the United States and NATO to stabilise Afghanistan since the 2001 overthrow of the Taliban.

Haroun Mir, analyst from the Afghanistan Centre for Research and Policy Studies in Kabu

67 troop deaths so far in July

"There will be 7,000 voting centres in Afghanistan and I think neither the Afghan government nor coalition forces have enough personnel to provide security for each of these voting stations," he told AFP.

The consequences, he said, will be that people stay away from the polls, or the legitimacy of the ballot will be called into question with election monitors also scarce.

Should James Carville Be Involved In Afghanistan's Politics? | NEWS JUNKIE POST

<http://newsjunkiepost.com/2009/07/26/should-james-carville-be-involved-in-afghanistans-politics>

The Democratic strategist and former President Clinton's key adviser has joined the campaign of one of President Karzai's challenger, Ashraf Ghani. Ghani is a former finance minister and was an analyst at the World Bank.

Carville's objective is to try to get his candidate into a second round against Karzai. The political strategist is already in full attack mode against the current President, he made the following statement about Afghanistan: " *Just because it has a failed president doesn't mean it has to be a failed country.*"

James Carville, when asked by NPR, declined to say if he was getting paid for his work.

has helped other candidates in various international elections in the past

it could make Karzai's re-election bid easier by making Ghani appear to be the candidate endorsed by the US

It will also, in a likely win by Karzai, make dealing with Karzai a lot more difficult for Richard Holbrooke and the Obama administration

International Crisis Group - 171 Afghanistan's Election Challenges

<http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=6176&l=1>

The weakness of state institutions, the deteriorating security situation and the fractured political scene are all highlighted by – and will likely have a dramatic effect on – the electoral process.

The years since the last poll saw the Afghan government and international community fail to embed a robust electoral framework and drive democratisation at all levels.

The Afghan government, UN and donors failed to use the interim period to build the capacity and resources of the IEC; strengthen the legal framework including replacing the inappropriate Single Non-Transferable Vote (SNTV) system; and produce a sustainable voter registry.

increased popular disillusionment and thus reduced buy-in for the state-building agenda, including potentially election participation

a highly centralised political patronage system in which the head of state wields enormous powers, bringing personalities rather than policies to the fore

lack of an accepted constitutional arbiter in case of dispute

The insurgency, centred in the south and east of the country, may affect the ability of people in such areas to freely exercise their franchise and makes scrutiny of the process much more difficult, increasing opportunities for fraud.

here are 41 candidates running in the presidential poll – most prominent in challenging Hamid Karzai are former foreign minister and leading Northern Alliance personality Abdullah Abdullah and former World Bank official and finance minister Ashraf Ghani Ahmadzai. The large number of candidates – about 3,300 (10 per cent of them women) – for the provincial councils provides ample evidence of continued interest in the process.

The voter registration update, while adding some momentum to the process, failed to address striking flaws in the voter registry which could lay the groundwork for fraud and which the international community has not spoken up about.

BBC NEWS | South Asia | Afghanistan 'agrees Taliban deal'

http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/8170003.stm

The Afghan government has agreed a truce with Taliban insurgents in the north-western province of Badghis ahead of elections next month, officials say.

The Taliban have pledged not to attack voting centres and to hand key areas to government forces, officials say. There

has been no word from the militants.

the UK is emphasising that more must be done to engage moderate members of the Taliban

Foreign Secretary David Miliband announced the shift of emphasis in the UK's Afghanistan strategy in a speech to Nato.

He stressed the Afghan government must do more to talk to moderate members of the Taliban as part of a broader political process.

But it would not be the first time the Afghan government has tried to engage the Taliban.

In October 2008, President Hamid Karzai's brother confirmed a BBC report that he had met former members of the Taliban in Saudi Arabia as part of a first step towards peace talks.

There are grave concerns about security across the country ahead of presidential and provincial council elections on 20 August.

M. Jamil Hanifi: Editing the Past: Colonial Production of Hegemony Through the Loya Jerga in Afghanistan « OPEN ANTHROPOLOGY

<http://openanthropology.wordpress.com/all-posts/m-jamil-hanifi-editing-the-past-colonial-production-of-hegemony-through-the-loya-jerga-in-afghanistan>

10 percent of Afghan polling centers in danger

http://news.yahoo.com/s/ap/20090728/ap_on_re_as/as_afghan_elections

Hundreds of polling stations could be closed in Afghanistan's most violent regions, raising concerns that many ethnic Pashtuns will be unable to vote in next month's presidential elections.

Afghan authorities plan to establish about 7,000 polling centers across the country for the Aug. 20 balloting. But security officials are unsure whether voting can take place in about 700 of them, said Noor Mohammad Noor, a spokesman for the Independent Electoral Commission.

At least 500 will probably not open because of security fears, according to a Western official working on the elections.

Taliban spokesmen have called on Afghans not to vote in the election but have not explicitly threatened to attack polling stations.

With so much uncertainty, the top U.N. official in Afghanistan, Kai Eide, called the upcoming ballot "the most complicated elections I have seen."

About 17 million registered voters are eligible to vote for Afghanistan's next president and provincial council members

Even without the threat of violence, the logistics of setting up polling centers in an impoverished country of deserts, towering mountains, few roads and poor infrastructure are challenging.

Afghan women candidates campaign in burqas

http://news.yahoo.com/s/ap/20090729/ap_on_re_as/as_afghanistan_burqa_candidates

Taliban says it will disrupt Afghan poll

http://news.yahoo.com/s/ap/20090730/ap_on_re_as/as_afghanistan

The Taliban urged Afghans on Thursday to stay away from the Aug. 20 elections, threatening to block the roads to polling stations and dismissing the balloting as an "American process."

"All those Afghans should stand together with the Islamic emirate and should not participate in this American process," the Taliban said in a statement. The Islamic emirate is the name used by Taliban groups loyal to Mullah Omar.

Hundreds of polling stations are likely to remain shut on the election date, almost all in areas dominated by Pashtuns, the biggest ethnic group and the backbone of the Taliban. A low Pashtun turnout could call the legitimacy of the election results into question.

Big crowds good sign for Karzai in re-election bid

http://news.yahoo.com/s/ap/20090803/ap_on_re_as/as_afghan_election

Abdullah's campaign manager last week predicted street violence if Abdullah doesn't win, contending that Karzai can't prevail unless he steals the vote. Abdullah distanced himself from the comments, saying it wasn't his view or that of his supporters

Threats of campaign violence — combined with several deadly attacks on candidates' campaign teams in recent days — are partial indicators that Afghans are not likely to view the election process as "credible and legitimate," said Candace Rondeaux, an Afghanistan expert for the International Crisis Group

Afghanistan: Politics, Government Formation and Performance

http://assets.opencrs.com/rpts/RS21922_20090626.pdf

Q&A : 'We will not leave you alone' - IPS ipsnews.net

<http://ipsnews.net/news.asp?idnews=46785>

U.S. President Barack Obama has made Afghanistan and Pakistan his number one foreign policy priority

Many Afghans are confused. Why has President Obama called for an end to U.S. military action in Iraq but increased military involvement in Afghanistan despite his Secretary of Defense, Robert Gates, saying there is "no military solution" to defeating the Taliban and al Qaeda

We have also put the emphasis on development. President Obama has just gone in for much more money to promote agriculture projects here, educational projects, good governance projects to help the best people who are already in your government to clean it up and prevent corruption

Along with those extra soldiers we are bringing more American civilians; specialists in agriculture, education, higher ranked, greater numbers and greater expertise working with your government and private individuals

How realistic is "civilian uplift" when it is already difficult for U.S. embassy and USAID mission to get permission from your security officials for site visits?

most of the American civilians like most of the American military will be concentrating in the south and in the east, precisely where most of the problems are

We are here to help your very brave policemen and soldiers defeat a terrible enemy - for us that is al Qaeda and the people who support them.

Afghan challenger blasts government security

http://news.yahoo.com/s/ap/20090809/ap_on_re_as/as_afghanistan

President Hamid Karzai's top challenger charged Saturday that the government was failing to establish safe conditions for the Aug. 20 election, but pledged that his supporters would not protest violently if he lost.

Abdullah Abdullah said Karzai's administration, which is supposed to have primary responsibility for election security, was not protecting campaign workers.

20 attacks against politicians or their aides in recent weeks

Taliban still a major threat 8 years later - CNN.com

http://www.cnn.com/2009/WORLD/asiapcf/08/10/afghanistan.taliban.challenge/index.html?eref=rss_topstories

The **Taliban** [<http://topics.cnn.com/topics/The_Taliban>](http://topics.cnn.com/topics/The_Taliban) insurgency has blossomed in northern Afghan provinces such as Kunduz and Baghlan, long considered some of the safest territory in the country. And just 20 miles east of Kabul, Taliban "judges" operate openly in the back of pickup trucks, settling legal disputes between villagers in makeshift "mobile courts."

The insurgents are filling a vacuum left by Afghanistan's Western-backed government, which foreign diplomats and military commanders concede suffers from nepotism, corruption and predatory practices.

McChrystal, a former U.S. joint special operations commander who recently took command of the U.S.-NATO operation in **Afghanistan** [<http://www.example.com/2009/WORLD/asiapcf/08/10/skateistan/index.html>](http://www.example.com/2009/WORLD/asiapcf/08/10/skateistan/index.html) , said the Taliban are challenging the very legitimacy of his partners in the Afghan government.

"The fundamental conflict in any insurgency is fighting for legitimacy with the people and the support of the population," he explained in a recent interview with CNN.

"Who do they look to as their legitimate government? Who do they pay taxes to? Who do they look to for rule of law? Who do they look to as protection? In the case of this insurgency, what we have is an Afghan government that is trying to establish itself around the country. It has problems with corruption. It has problems in some cases with predatory behavior."

"What service has this government provided us?" asked Fawad, a young street vendor who sells watermelons for 20 cents apiece. He said that at least once a week, Afghan police show up and demand bribes of up to \$100 from vendors, who must pay if they want to continue selling their goods.

"We don't want a tyrant who oppresses the people," Fawad said when asked who he would vote for in the elections.

"What we want is security."

Earlier this month, an Afghan employee for CNN, who prefers not to be named for security reasons, witnessed how locals turn to the Taliban to resolve their disputes, in a village barely 20 miles east of the Afghan capital.

He said openly armed insurgents rolled up in a pickup truck, and a Taliban judge began mediating local disputes. In one case, the Taliban official resolved a disagreement between two shepherds whose flocks of sheep had gotten intermixed while grazing.

"I was shocked," said the Afghan eyewitness, who was visiting the village to attend a funeral. "The villagers were lining up asking for help from the Taliban."

Taliban "mobile courts"

"There are cases of rule of law being taken care of by the Taliban instead of the Afghan government," said Col. Paul Kolken, a Dutch military spokesman at Kandahar Air Base. He said the Taliban are operating mobile courts as close as possible to the city of Kandahar.

Human rights activists accuse the Karzai government of making deals with some of the country's most notorious warlords ahead of the August 20 presidential elections.

Karzai's choice of Mohammed Fahim, a former Northern Alliance militia commander, as vice presidential running mate. Fahim has long been accused of committing human rights abuses.

Many Afghan observers argue this culture of impunity runs directly to the presidential palace. For years, Karzai's brother, Ahmed Wali, has been dogged by accusations that he is a major player in the booming drug trade in southern Afghanistan.

"If the same trend continues, if the same failing of the administration continues, more troops, more resources, more civilian advisors will not be a substitute," argued presidential candidate Abdullah Abdullah.

"People are frustrated with things not happening," Mohseni said. "In terms of day-to-day life, the development that they wanted in government has not been happening."

Afghan Elections: The Contenders - By Jean MacKenzie | Foreign Policy

http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2009/08/06/the_contenders?page=full

The current Afghan president was the darling of the Bush administration, which played well at first with his constituency, who felt that U.S. support would soon translate into U.S. dollars.

Karzai is blamed for a multitude of problems: the failure of aid programs, deteriorating security situation, booming corruption, and an inability to rein in foreign troops, whose heavy-handed actions have precipitated a backlash and curried support for the insurgency, especially in the south

Abdullah's greatest asset is his close association with the legendary commander Ahmad Shah Massoud, whose handsome, brooding face graces many of Abdullah's campaign posters. But Massoud, who was assassinated two days before the September 11 attacks, might prove to be just as much of a liability to his former spokesman. Called the Lion of the Panjshir, he is revered as a national hero by a large part of the population, but reviled by the Pashtuns -- who see

him as no better than the rest of the warlords who tore the country apart during the civil war from 1992 to 1996.

Ashraf Ghani Ahmadzai

He has also brought in Washington insider James Carville, the campaign strategist credited with Bill Clinton's 1992 win, as an advisor.

Mirwais Yasini

Virtually no Afghan supporters, but popular with the international community

This parliamentarian, who is not well known at home, has risen to campaign prominence thanks to visits from several prominent international guests, among them EU foreign-policy chief Javier Solana and U.S. Special Envoy Richard Holbrooke, who met with him as one of a trio of "leading contenders," along with Abdullah and Ghani. Yasini is much more popular with the international community than with his compatriots, but this might be enough to gain him a prominent position in the new administration.

Ramazan Bashedost

Driving around the country in a rickety bus, meeting with laborers and farmers in remote corners of the country, the outspoken Basher Dost lambastes almost all of his rivals with equal fervor. He has bitterly criticized the small army of nongovernmental organizations that exist, he says, just to bilk the Afghan people of money that should rightfully be theirs, and he decries the lavish cars and homes of his fellow parliamentarians.

he looks sure to serve as Afghanistan's populist conscience for some years to come

Poll shows Karzai leading ahead of Afghan election - Yahoo! News

http://news.yahoo.com/s/ap/20090814/ap_on_re_as/as_afghan_elections

Poll shows Karzai leading ahead of Afghan election

http://news.yahoo.com/s/ap/20090814/ap_on_re_as/as_afghanistan

President Hamid Karzai holds a strong lead in the Afghan presidential race but is still short of the majority he needs for a first-round victory, according to a poll released Friday with less than a week to go before the balloting

The poll by a U.S. government-funded group suggests turnout will be crucial, especially in the Pashtun south — the president's support base where Taliban fighters have been warning voters to stay away from the polls.

Opposition candidates have been accusing Karzai and his team of using state resources to ensure re-election

Local and international monitors are convinced there will be voter irregularities

If no candidate wins over 50 percent of the vote, the top two finishers will face a run-off in early October. That could lead to a coalition uniting around a single candidate to try to defeat Karzai.

The poll, based on face-to-face interviews with 2,400 people between July 16 and 26, was funded by the International

Republican Institute, a non-governmental group that receives money from USAID, the U.S. government aid arm.

In the southern province of Helmand, U.S. Marines have been trying to secure the strategic town of Dahaneh to cut Taliban supply lines and enable the government to open a polling station there.

After two days of fighting, Marines helped Afghan officers raise the Afghan flag over the town Friday after tribal elders assured the Americans there were no Taliban left there.

Soon after the flag-raising ceremony, the Marine base in the town came under small arms, machine gun and rocket-propelled grenade fire, sending Marines running for cover.

In the capital, meanwhile, two rockets were fired at Kabul's airport Friday

It was the second rocket attack on the capital this month.

Taliban threatens polling stations in Afghanistan

http://news.yahoo.com/s/ap/20090816/ap_on_re_as/as_afghanistan

Afghanistan says ex-militia chief Dostum free to return | South Asia | Reuters

<http://in.reuters.com/article/southAsiaNews/idINIndia-41788820090816?feedType=RSS&feedName=southAsiaNews&sp=true>

Exiled Uzbek General Abdul Rashid Dostum can return to Afghanistan at any time, the government said on Sunday, after his supporters threatened to withdraw backing for President Hamid Karzai in the Aug. 20 election

Dostum was a key part of the alliance that toppled the Taliban in 2001, but has regularly been accused by human rights groups of widespread abuse, in particular allowing the massacre of several thousand Taliban prisoners in 2001

Afghanistan passes 'barbaric' law diminishing women's rights | World news | guardian.co.uk

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2009/aug/14/afghanistan-womens-rights-rape>

Rehashed legislation allows husbands to deny wives food if they fail to obey sexual demands



Afghanistan <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/afghanistan>> has quietly passed a law permitting Shia men to deny their wives food and sustenance if they refuse to obey their husbands' sexual demands, despite international outrage over an earlier version of the legislation which President Hamid Karzai had promised to review.

The new final draft of the legislation also grants guardianship of children exclusively to their fathers and grandfathers, and requires women to get permission from their husbands to work.

"It also effectively allows a rapist to avoid prosecution by paying 'blood money' to a girl who was injured when he raped her," the US charity Human Rights Watch said.

Although Karzai appeared to back down, activists say the revised version of the law still contains repressive measures and contradicts the Afghan constitution and international treaties signed by the country.

"Tamkeen is the readiness of the wife to submit to her husband's reasonable sexual enjoyment, and her prohibition from going out of the house, except in extreme circumstances, without her husband's permission. If any of the above provisions are not followed by the wife she is considered disobedient."

Human Rights Watch, which has obtained a copy of the final law, called on all candidates to pledge to repeal the law, which it says contradicts Afghanistan's own constitution.

The group said that Karzai had "made an unthinkable deal to sell Afghan women out in the support of fundamentalists in the August 20 election".

Brad Adams, the organisation's Asia director, said:

"These kinds of barbaric laws were supposed to have been relegated to the past with the overthrow of the Taliban in 2001, yet Karzai has revived them and given them his official stamp of approval."

Threat of violence looms over Afghan vote

http://news.yahoo.com/s/ap/20090817/ap_on_re_as/as_afghan_election

The threat of violence looms over Afghan presidential election Thursday. And not just from Taliban militants.

Abdullah Abdullah, a former foreign minister who is President Hamid Karzai's top rival, told a crowd of flag-waving

supporters in Kabul on Monday that he will win the election — "if they don't steal your votes," confident rhetoric that analysts say could stoke a violent backlash if his supporters believe they've been cheated.

Serious questions over the fairness of the balloting could result in a winner without real legitimacy — a serious problem in a country where the central government is struggling to exert control beyond the capital.

Abdullah, a trained ophthalmologist who has railed against government corruption, isn't the only one who expects fraud

Voting observers warn that cheating will most likely take place at polling stations in remote or dangerous areas where independent monitors won't be able to be present.

A black market for voter registration cards is said to be flourishing

suspiciously high number of women — far more than men — have been registered to vote in culturally conservative provinces where Karzai expects to do well among his fellow ethnic Pashtuns who form the majority there

contending that Karzai can't prevail unless he steals the vote

an allegation similar to those which triggered violent protests in Afghanistan's western neighbor, Iran, after President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad claimed victory in the June 12 balloting

"If there is no fraud in the election, it is clear for the nation who the winner will be and who the next president will be — if they don't steal your votes," Abdullah told thousands of supporters at Kabul's main sports stadium on Monday

Peaceful protests, though, are not part of Afghanistan's history, said Haroun Mir, the director of Afghanistan's Center for Research and Policy Studies.

"Unfortunately, in any demonstration in Afghanistan's history, the demonstration comes with violence, and if the result of the election is not acceptable for one of the candidates, a candidate that has, say, 30 to 40 percent of the vote, if there is a protest it will be violent,"

If Abdullah supporters believe the election is stolen, they aren't likely to go file protests with the country's Electoral Complaints Commission, because they will view the body as an arm of Karzai's government, said John Dempsey, a Kabul-based analyst with the U.S. Institute of Peace.

A Taliban spokesman, Zabiullah Mujahid, has denied that militants would cut off fingers. But the Taliban is a loose collection of militant leaders, and individual insurgents could still carry out such attacks.

Election security in Kunduz | The AfPak Channel

http://afpak.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2009/08/18/election_security_in_kunduz

I was in Kunduz yesterday. The security there is extremely problematic

Kunduz

Groups of fifty Taliban are now operating on a regular basis, instead of ten a few months ago

The Taliban are immediately near the city during the night and they are very confident and aggressive

There is no way to stop the Taliban if they want to attack polling stations and block the road

The security forces are not enough: there are only a thousand policemen and five hundred Afghan National Army infantry for one million people in the province

This election is also a moment of truth concerning the state's ability to control and organize; so far not so good, even in the north.

The Taliban will still be winning -- unless what comes after the election is real change. - By J Alexander Thier | Foreign Policy

http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2009/08/18/the_day_after?page=full

The Taliban will still be winning -- unless what comes after the election is real change.



However, just days before the election, violence is at a seven-year high and it is difficult to say whether Afghans in the most restive provinces will have the confidence to show up in force at the polls

Taliban threats to cut off voters' fingers

- *Denied by the Taliban.*

The twin pillars of legitimacy in Afghanistan are security and justice. In the absence of either -- or both -- people will look for alternatives. This is where the Taliban come in.

From 1994 to 1996, as the Taliban swept across an Afghanistan rent by chaos and warlordism, it was their approach to security and justice, not Islam, that won them legions of supporters.

The Taliban brought law and order, often absurd in form (no kite-flying) and brutal in application, but always swift and effective. Today, they are drawing from the same playbook, and it is still working.

Why? Because the Karzai government and its international backers have failed after nearly eight years to create a government that is respected and trusted by many of its people.

Warlords who committed well-documented atrocities -- some after the U.S. invasion in 2001 -- continue to occupy high positions in the government.

The return of Gen. Rashid Dostum this week to Afghanistan -- the infamous Warlord of the North who has a well-documented human rights abuse beat sheet going back nearly three decades -- is only one example of how the Karzai government has undermined itself by cozying up to criminals.

Corruption is also endemic in the country. Afghanistan was ranked among the top five most-corrupt countries in the world by Transparency International this year. Ties to the \$4 billion opium trade are found at every level of government. Even when the justice system seems to function, the powerful go free. In April, President Hamid Karzai pardoned five convicted drug traffickers -- one the nephew of his campaign manager. And most ordinary Afghans don't have access to a reliable court to resolve their disputes.

Afghans go to the polls tomorrow

<http://www.pajhwok.com/viewstory.asp?lng=eng&id=80105>

US

Secretary of State Hillary Clinton said it was the right of the people to pick their leaders. "With respect to Afghanistan

, we have made a number of statements over the last several days supporting the electoral process, speaking out against

the uptick in violence.

Italian Foreign Minister Franco Frattini

for the consolidation of internal security

Experts: Voter turnout could deal blow to Taliban - CNN.com

http://www.cnn.com/2009/WORLD/asiapcf/08/19/afghan.voter.turnout.taliban/index.html?eref=rss_topstories

A high voter turnout in Thursday's presidential elections in Afghanistan could help marginalize the Taliban, experts said Wednesday.

Fifteen million voters, almost half the nation, are registered.

In the last week, two suicide car bombers killed 15 people in Kabul, a rocket landed on the presidential palace compound, wounding a staffer, and Afghan security forces killed three gunmen after storming a bank. The Taliban said the gunmen were potential suicide bombers and that there were 17 more in the capital.

In essence, a large voter turnout will be a vote of confidence in the democratic process

"[Voters are] not going to be able to stand up to the **Taliban** [<http://topics.cnn.com/topics/The_Taliban>](http://topics.cnn.com/topics/The_Taliban) and Taliban intimidation if they don't believe in the alternative,"

It's imperative the election is deemed legitimate, he said, because if the Afghan people think the election was rigged or predetermined, they will lose faith in an already weak and corrupt government.

"As we increase our military resources there, it will look like the U.S. is pouring in to prop up a leader not supported by his own people," Thier said.

"There's a concern that if they don't handle this election properly, there will be more violence because people are not trusting the legitimacy of the election," said Patricia DeGennaro, who has served as a consultant on policy development in President Hamid Karzai's office.

"The entire project in Afghanistan - the reason we have tens of thousands of troops there - is based on the idea that eventually we'll get a stable and effective government," he said. "If it's thoroughly discredited by the Taliban, if it leads to more instability, then the political side of the equation won't come together and the military side won't be enough to hold Afghanistan together."

There are plenty of people in Afghanistan who want to see democracy and civil society prevail, but there are more people - largely in the rural areas - who have little faith in government, he said.

"There is a population that lacks the education and opportunities to even conceive what benefit they could get from a modern nation-state," said Anderson, who headed the CIA's Afghan task force in the late 1980s. "They've always been able to prevent a modernizing state force from extending its writ into the countryside."

"We should care about those troops, but we should also care about stability in Afghanistan so we don't see a return to something that looks like pre-9/11 Afghanistan,"

Afghans in Kabul brush aside jitters on eve of vote -- latimes.com

<http://www.latimes.com/news/nationworld/world/afghanistan/la-fg-afghan-mood20-2009aug20,0,3735516.story>

War-weary residents are unfazed by the preelection violence that has swept Afghanistan. 'I've seen so much war,' says one. 'It's my whole life. I don't know anything else. Why would I be afraid now?'



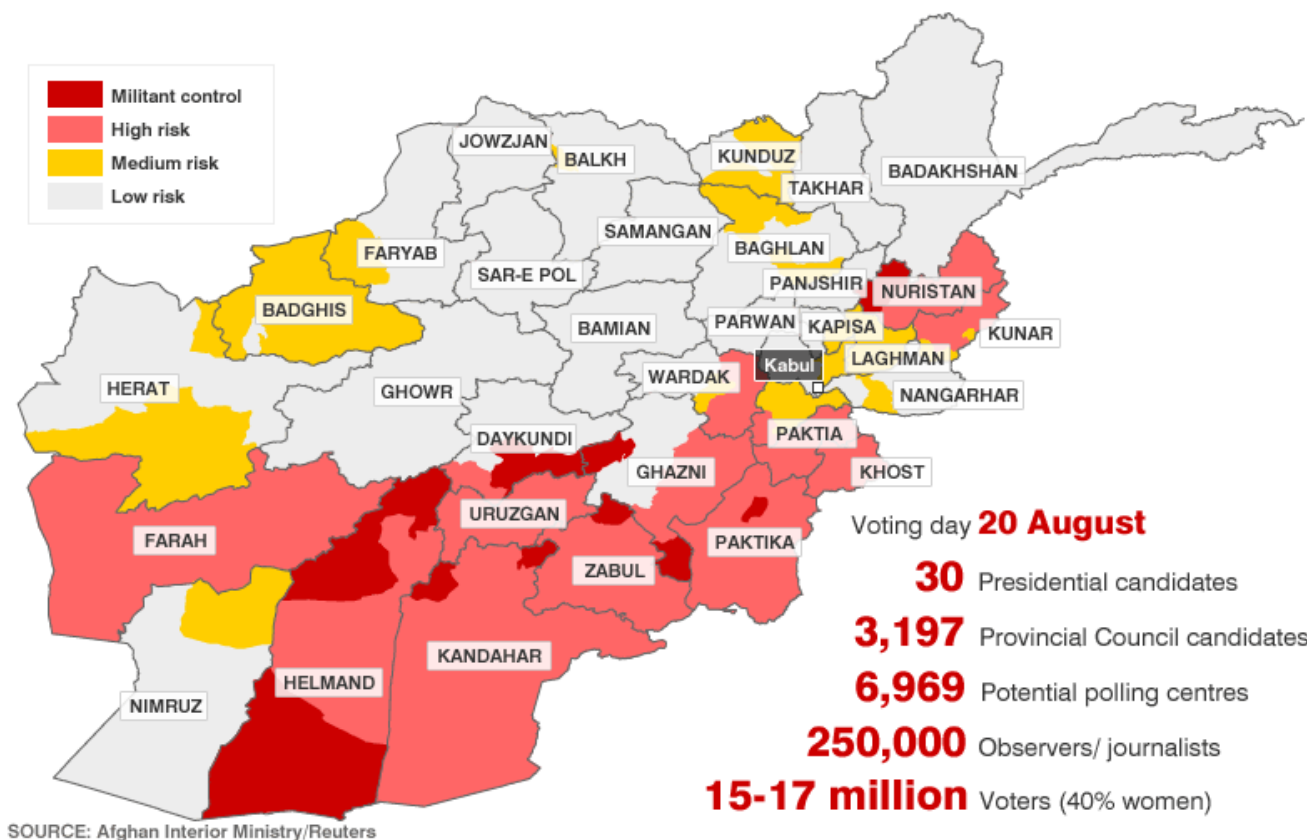
On the eve of the vote, there was ample reason for nervousness. At least six election workers died in attacks by insurgents. Six more American troop deaths were reported in Afghanistan's volatile south. And Taliban fighters engaged in an hours-long shootout with police in the heart of the capital, a clash that left three militants dead.

Wednesday brought a final flurry of preparations at about 6,000 polling stations around the country. This is only Afghanistan's second direct presidential election, and the logistical challenges are enormous. Election materials were still arriving at some sites.

So I say to every Afghan, 'Go and vote.'

BBC NEWS | South Asia | Afghanistan: Election security map

http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/8194230.stm



Although the map was produced in April, before an escalation of pre-election violence, much of it still corresponds with the latest updates gathered by BBC Afghan reporters and contacts in the country.

The BBC Afghan service suggests 234 out of the 368 districts are totally secure, nine totally insecure.

AREAS OF ENEMY CONTROL

- *Not that anyone believes in it anymore, but let me say: so much for BBC impartiality.*

Virginia M. Moncrieff: Afghanistan's Karzai - Pretty Much Loathed but Pretty Much Re-elected

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/virginia-moncrieff/afghanistans-karzai---pre_b_226702.html

The plan goes like this: After the election of August 20, Karzai will exit stage left, taking with him his failed policies, his dodgy connections -- both within his family and his friendships with warlords, and his association with eight years of embarrassing coalition failure. In will come a brand new clean slate over which NATO and US allies can crayon their ongoing strategy.

The problem with that plan is -- as Iron Mike so wonderfully put it -- we are about to be punched in the face. Karzai, it seems, is not going anywhere.

made nice with the Taliban, who have allowed voter registration in their held areas, while threatening anyone who

plans to vote

"He is in power, promises the warlords another five years (of) power, he has got his brothers and a large number business community around him who have benefited throughout the eight years in the past, he has all governors, provincial administrations and local leaders in his government chain...." one Kabul resident who previously voted for Hamid Karzai told the Huffington Post.

But the Afghan election is not just about the future of one country. It is about the lives and security of billions of people across the globe. The US people cast a vote for the world every time they vote for their president. This time, Afghans will be doing the same.

As Afghan Polls Open, Contest for Presidency Tightens - NYTimes.com

<http://www.nytimes.com/2009/08/20/world/asia/20afghan.html>

Mr. Karzai appeared on state television and called on people to vote despite Taliban threats, saying the security forces would ensure their safety. The announcement immediately drew criticism from the election commission for breaking a campaign blackout during the last 48 hours before the vote, but it was an indication of how concerned the government is about low turnout.

In a late development, local Taliban leaders agreed to allow people in Wardak Province, just south of Kabul, to vote unmolested, a government minister said. He asked not to be named because of the political nature of the information. The minister said he believed that the Taliban would allow the vote to go ahead in the south, despite their threats.

Despite gains by his opponents, Mr. Karzai fought back hard in the last two weeks, making selective campaign stops and securing the return of a former Uzbek warlord, **Abdul Rashid Dostum** <http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/people/d/abdul_rashid_dostum/index.html?inline=nyt-per>, from exile. The Uzbek leader has been widely criticized for past human rights abuses, and opponents and Western diplomats have condemned the president's association with him as an example of the unsavory alliances Mr. Karzai has made to try to secure his re-election.

The election monitoring group said it would have more than 7,000 observers in 249 of Afghanistan's 368 districts. Mr. Abdullah's campaign office said it would have 27,000 representatives watching the vote and the count Thursday evening.

Afghanistan Elections 2009 « OPEN ANTHROPOLOGY

<http://openanthropology.wordpress.com/2009/08/20/afghanistan-elections-2009>

2004 Election in Afghanistan - Demonstration Elections

<http://www.zmag.org/zmag/viewArticle/19554>

Demonstration Elections « OPEN ANTHROPOLOGY

<http://openanthropology.wordpress.com/2009/08/20/demonstration-elections>

Al Jazeera English - CENTRAL/S. ASIA - Afghans vote amid security fears

<http://english.aljazeera.net/news/asia/2009/08/2009820254231266.html>

There were a number of reports of attacks, including mortars being fired at polling stations in the southern city of Kandahar and in Logar province, before voting began at 7am (02:30 GMT) on Thursday.

"There have been a number of attacks, particularly in the south and east of the country. But we are seeing queues forming at polling stations in the north, also in the capital, as well as, encouragingly, in the east."

About 17 million people are eligible to vote

There were no reports of any casualties in the Kandahar blasts, but police sources told Al Jazeera that one out of the 55 or so polling stations in the southern city had been hit.

But Al Jazeera's Zeina Khodr, reporting from Kandahar, said that queues were forming at the polling station she had visited in the city.

"I request my dear countrymen to come out and cast their vote to decide their future," Karzai said.

"Vote. No violence."



"... all main and secondary roads will be blocked for traffic and the mujahidin will bear no responsibility for whoever gets hurt," the statement said.

preliminary results expected by Saturday

Turnout appears low as Afghans vote for president - AP

http://news.yahoo.com/s/ap/20090820/ap_on_re_as/as_afghanistan

Taliban threats scared voters and dampened turnout in the militant south Thursday

KABUL – Taliban threats kept voter turnout low in the capital and the militant south Thursday as Afghans chose the next president for their deeply troubled country.

After 10 hours of voting, including a last-minute, one-hour extension, election workers began to count millions of ballots. Initial results weren't expected for several days.

An Associated Press reporter who visited six polling centers in Kabul said he saw no lines at any of them, and a voting official in Kandahar, the south's largest city and the Taliban's spiritual birthplace, said voting appeared to be 40 percent lower than during the country's 2004 presidential election

Scattered reports of violence trickled in from around the country, including a rocket that landed near voters in Helmand and an explosion at a voting site in Kabul.

Security companies in the capital reported at least five blasts, and Kabul police exchanged fire for more than an hour with a group of armed men, including a suicide bomber who blew himself up. Taliban spokesman Zabiullah Mujahid called AP and claimed that five gunmen were fighting with police.

Preliminary results were expected to be announced in Kabul on Saturday

However, presidential candidate Ramazan Bashardost, who had 10 percent support in pre-election polls, said he washed off the supposedly indelible ink and called on authorities to "immediately stop this election."

In northern Baghlan province, insurgent attacks closed 14 polling sites, and the police chief of Old Baghlan city and several police were killed, said Abdul Malik, the provincial election director.

"Some of the stations are open, with the presence of our personnel, but there is no one coming to vote. I told them to wait until the end of the day before coming back," Malik said.

An AP reporter in southern Helmand province said more than 20 rockets had landed in the capital of Lashkar Gah, including one near a line of voters that killed a child.

A blast at a high school in Kabul serving as a polling center wounded an election monitor and briefly shut down voting, an election observer named Ezatullah said.

At a high school in eastern Kabul, election workers were ready at 7 a.m., but no one was there. A 30-year-old shopkeeper whose store is about 100 yards (meters) away said he didn't see the point. "I am not voting. It won't change anything," said Mohammad Tahir, 30.

The country has been rife with rumors of ballot stuffing, bogus registrations and trafficking in registration cards on behalf of the incumbent, allegations his campaign has denied.

Afghans go to polls ... if the Taleban let them - Jerome Starkey

<http://www.jeromestarkey.com/post/167039941/afghans-go-to-polls-if-the-taleban-let-them>

AS AFGHANISTAN votes today in a landmark presidential election that will redefine Britain's mission in the country, the Taleban have shown their shadow government is still in control of huge swathes of countryside.

Insurgents blocked the roads in and out of Helmand's capital, Lashkar Gah, yesterday to try to stop people voting

Despite a massive UK operation just outside the city and an American surge designed to make the province safe enough to vote, traffic in and out of the city was down by more than 80 per cent as word of roadblocks and explosives trapped people in their homes.

The only travellers reaching Lashkar Gah from the south had "permission slips" signed by insurgent commanders, to let them through a series of impromptu checkpoints.

The white slip of paper, about the size of a parking ticket, looked like it had been produced on a colour photocopier. It read, "The Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, Helmand Province, Marja District". In smaller writing were the words "Military Commission Special Permit".

At a nearby bus station

"Normally there are hundreds of people here," said hotelier Mohammad Sarwan, 46. "But in the last two days, because of the election, we haven't had anyone."

Local governor Gulal Mangal said he hoped 75 per cent of Helmand's 800,000 people would vote. But privately, his staff were less optimistic. "We'll be lucky if we get 200,000," one said.

Afghans Go to the Polls - The New York Times > World > Slide Show > Slide 6 of 11

http://www.nytimes.com/slideshow/2009/08/20/world/20090820-AFGHAN_6.html



Taliban Attacks Set Stage for a Tense Afghan Vote - WSJ.com

<http://online.wsj.com/article/SB125074916908145527.html>



Even before polls opened at 7 a.m. local time, a number of rocket and bomb attacks were reported in cities. At least eight rockets were fired at the southern city of Kandahar early Thursday morning, residents said. There were no known casualties.

Amid the assault, many polling stations across Afghanistan opened to just a trickle of voters, a far cry from 2004, when long lines of Afghans waited to cast their ballot in the first presidential election after the fall of the Taliban.

Yet the onslaught appears to have been successful, at least in the early hours of voting, driving down turnout.

The government, which has struggled to secure Kabul and other key polling areas before the vote, has responded in part by attempting to quash media reports of the violence.

On Wednesday, it said it would shut down Afghan media outlets and expel foreign journalists who reported on insurgent attacks during polling hours. Officials announced the ban on Tuesday, without specifying what punishment violators would face.

Many journalists and media executives said they planned to ignore the ban. "I understand their concerns," said Saad Mohseni, the owner of Tolo TV, the country's most popular television channel. "At the same time, you cannot target the messenger. Their order is basically illegal because it defies our constitution," which guarantees freedom of expression.

"If we hold elections with low turnout or end up with the same government we have -- then the whole enterprise of rebuilding Afghanistan could be certainly undermined," said Haroun Mir, a co-founder of Afghanistan's Center for Research and Policy Studies, a think tank.

"We expect a lot of fraud," said Jandad Spingar, director of the Free and Fair Elections Foundation, a United Nations-funded watchdog group. "There are people who have many registration cards. Certainly they will use all of them."

Real and fake voter-registration cards have been readily available in Afghanistan's markets for weeks, most of them

using pictures of women in head-to-toe burqas.

Mr. Spingar's foundation has detailed hundreds of instances of other kinds of fraud: the same person registering multiple times; underage voters; and election workers taking bribes to favor specific candidates.

Zemari Barakzai, a senior official at the Independent Election Commission, acknowledged irregularities. "We believe these cases represent a small percentage of the total number of votes," he said.

BBC NEWS | South Asia | LIVE: Afghan election 2009

http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/8209279.stm

Afghanistan's election day was marred by widespread and deadly Taliban attacks, patchy turnout and claims of serious fraud.

BBC Persian TV's Daud Qarizadah says: One of the MPs who came and took part in one of the debates I chaired accepted the turnout was lower than the last election

Mohammad Zaki Shahamat, a correspondent for Afghanistan's Daily Outlook newspaper, says most TV channels adhered to the government's call to refrain from reporting violence. He says the media may well have played a role in encouraging people to vote.

Behruz , in Kabul, e-mails: Its not an election but a comedy. In my neighborhood I saw a few guys who easily washed their fingers and went for second time to vote, if all these things are happening in capital what do you think how is the condition in remote areas?

The BBC's Bilal Sarwary, in Kabul, says: Polling stations are now closing on time in Kabul. Earlier plans to keep them open were dropped due to the low turnout.

Update on that battle in northern Baghlan: the province's governor said the Taliban attacked polling centres in Baghlan-e-Markazi district this morning. Fighting continued for hours, with the district police chief dead and four Taliban militants also reportedly killed

<!-- E IIMA -->

<!-- S ILIN -->

strickvl tweets: <<http://twitter.com/strickvl>>

<!-- E ILIN -->

'Now the campaign starts' say kandaharis as they start scrubbing 'indelible' ink from their fingers...

A 13-year-old boy with a fake registration card has voted, reports CNN's Kevin Flower. The journalist's posted the pic on a Twitter picture page

<!-- S ILIN -->

here. <<http://twitpic.com/ekm7j>>

<!-- E ILIN -->

Utterly farcical, if true. FYI: Afghan voters must be at least 18 years old.

Samina Ahmed, of the International Crisis Group, in Kabul, says: People are scared, partly I suspect because they don't know where the violence will hit, partly because there have been attacks in Kabul this morning, and partly because the government's failure to provide information on these random attacks creates a sense of insecurity and fear.

women's participation in central Daykundi province is remarkably high

Presidential candidate Ramazan Bashardost has called for the election to be halted "immediately", because he says the ink which is supposed to mark voters' hands indelibly, so they can't vote again, is easily washed off. "This is not transparency, it is not honest, it is not free," he said.

In eastern Ghazni province there are reports of two missing ballot boxes. In northern Badakhshan province, two helicopters with ballot boxes for 1,500 people had to turn back in one district because they could not land owing to the difficult terrain - those people will now not be able to vote.

Tolo TV has reported that in some provinces, under 18s with voting cards, clearly false, have been allowed in to vote.

how the Afghan media is handling the government decree not to report violence on election day: the TV stations are not mentioning any attacks

The BBC's stringer in Wardak province, an hour's drive from Kabul, says it's quiet there. No-one is out on the streets, no-one is voting. The Taliban there made threats not just against anyone who voted, but anybody so much as seen outside their homes.

Azad, in Jalalabad, e-mails: Why should I go to voting? It's not election but selection of best puppet among 42 persons by American imperialists.

It seems domestic Afghan TV channels are sticking to the government ban on reporting of election day violence. Most of the coverage has focused on round table discussions with guests encouraging people to vote.

The BBC's Bilal Sarwary, in Kabul, says: There's a serious gun battle going on in the city's Karti Naw district between people described as militants who've taken refuge in a house and international forces. Witnesses have heard rocket-propelled grenades and AK-47s being fired.

The BBC's Harun Nazafijada in Kabul says: I can see a number of girls with make-up wearing jeans and mini-skirts voting in a school. There are women in burkas too. Many of the women voters seems to be students.

The BBC's Bilal Sarwary, in Kabul, says: The city's emptiness is a stark contrast to the last elections in 2004. There have been two explosions in the capital, but no casualties. In the eastern city of Jalalabad turnout has been low, but high in the districts, despite several militant attacks.

In a widely criticised move, the Afghan government tried to ban media coverage of any militant attacks during the polls, in case it scared off voters. Foreign media, including the BBC, are ignoring this. But there are reports some Afghan reporters have been harassed and beaten by security forces.

The BBC's Bilal Sarwary, in Kabul, says: A small bomb exploded behind a polling station in Kabul, but there were no casualties.

"Britney Jamilya Spears" is the name of one of a number of phantom voters who has reportedly surfaced on the lists.

BBC NEWS | South Asia | Corruption fears over Afghan poll

http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/8206469.stm

The BBC's Ian Pannell explains how voting cards were obtained by the BBC

Afghanistan's presidential election has been beset by fraud and corruption, a BBC investigation suggests.

Voting cards are being sold openly and candidates have been offering thousands of dollars in bribes for votes.

A senior Afghan Independent Election Commission official denied to the BBC that voting cards were being sold.

The allegations came as militants launched a flurry of deadly attacks across Afghanistan on Tuesday, in the wake of their threats to disrupt the election.

An Afghan working for the BBC went undercover in Kabul to investigate reports that voting cards were being sold and was offered 1,000 cards, each costing around £6 (\$10).

It is impossible to know how many voting cards have been sold in such a manner, says the BBC's Ian Pannell in Kabul, but there have been a number of arrests.

Multiple voting cards are reported to have been issued to some individuals, while government workers have actively and illegally campaigned for candidates, says our correspondent.

An influential tribal leader in the north of the country said he had been offered thousands of dollars by campaign teams in exchange for delivering large blocks of votes.

Separately, an independent monitoring group said it had shown evidence of corruption to election officials, but they had not acted on the information.

BBC NEWS | Technology | Web tool oversees Afghan election

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/technology/8209172.stm>

The Alive in Afghanistan project plots the SMS reports on an online map.

"In the rural areas there are not going to be monitors, and it is questionable how much international media coverage there will be in these areas."

BBC NEWS | South Asia | Taliban's view of Afghan polls

http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/8210707.stm

BBC NEWS | Q&A: Afghan election

http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/8179845.stm

There are 17 million out of an estimated 30 million Afghans registered to vote. The minimum voting age is 18.

Afghan refugees in Pakistan and Iran will not take part in the election.

It is estimated that counting could take two to three weeks and should be complete by 2 September.

Preliminary results of the presidential election may be announced, pending adjudication of complaints, between 3 -16 September.

The final results will be declared on 17 September.

Of 7,000 polling centres across the country, doubts remain whether the vote can be held in about 700 of them because of security concerns.

The flourishing Afghan media have taken a keen interest in the elections. The Kabul Weekly reported in July that: "The

airwaves are so flooded with the election-related broadcasts that it is hard to find any other topic on the TV or radio."

The leading television stations - both private and state-run channels - have carried special election programmes on a daily basis, interviewing candidates or their representatives and conducting debates among several contenders.

Media comment has also highlighted security concerns and fears about fraud and rigging and has been vocal in warning about the consequences of the ethnic card being played in the elections.

Some candidates have accused the state-run broadcaster of bias in favour of the incumbent president, a charge rejected by government officials.

The European Union officially launched its observation mission in July.

Some 67 observers from 25 countries, backed up by a further 50 on polling day, will be assigned to monitor the electoral process in a majority of the 34 provinces of the country from eight regional centres, an EU official said.

BBC NEWS | South Asia | Afghan elections: The main candidates

http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/8173389.stm

BBC NEWS | In Pictures | In pictures: Afghan polls

http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/in_pictures/8211007.stm

BBC NEWS | Programmes | World News America | Voices of the Afghan electorate

http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/programmes/world_news_america/8210975.stm

Afghan elections: live | World news | guardian.co.uk

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/blog/2009/aug/19/afghanistan-hamid-karzai>

Premiers incidents de la journée électorale afghane - Asie-Pacifique - Le Monde.fr

http://www.lemonde.fr/asia-pacifique/article/2009/08/20/l-afghanistan-aux-urnes-dans-un-calme-relatif_1230083_3216.html



Dans les provinces méridionales de Kandahar, de Ghazni et du Helmand, et orientales de Nangarhar et Kunar, plusieurs roquettes ont été tirées, faisant plusieurs blessés selon des témoins. Deux bombes ont également été désamorçées avant l'ouverture dans un bureau de vote à Ghazni, dans le Sud, et deux ou trois bureaux ont été visés dans la nuit à Khost dans le Sud-Est selon une source onusienne.

Afghanistan election: police fight gun battle with Taliban after voting begins - Telegraph

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/asia/afghanistan/6059583/Afghanistan-election-police-fight-gun-battle-with-Taliban-after-voting-begins.html>

Police in the capital Kabul fought a gun battle with the Taliban after voting began in the Afghanistan election.

Election observers said voters had begun arriving cautiously at polling stations after a slow start, but early turn out appeared low in rural parts of the insurgency-hit south.

A credible poll with significant turn out is seen as critical to Western-backed efforts to secure the country and strengthen the government in the face of a worsening Taliban-led insurgency.

Tribal leaders accuse Hamid Karzai supporters of offering bribes - Telegraph

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/asia/afghanistan/6056330/Tribal-leaders-accuse-Hamid-Karzai-supporters-of-offering-bribes.html>

Afghan tribal leaders have accused Hamid Karzai's officials of offering them large cash payments to support his presidential campaign and help rig the vote.

An official complaint seen by The Daily Telegraph alleges a named government official gave elders up to \$8,000 (£4,800) to organise militiamen to 'protect' polling stations during voting and told them they were expected to

support Mr Karzai.

According to Western diplomats, Mr Karzai's government has set aside \$8 million dollars to pay tribal leaders to patrol polling stations in areas under Taliban control. His opponents claim the money is part of a 'slush fund' to buy votes and "steal the election".

Elders in eastern Afghanistan have complained government officials who came to recruit fighters at \$160 (£100) each told them they would be expected to organise the vote for Mr Karzai.

The elders are now preparing to submit their complaints to the Afghan Electoral Complaints Commission.

Voter registration figures in Afghanistan show Paktia has twice as many women registered to vote as men, raising fears concerted preparations to swing the vote have been made.

31 stations stay shut in Paktia - Pajhwok Afghan News

<http://www.pajhwok.com/viewstory.asp?lng=eng&id=80159>

More than 30 polling stations stayed closed in southeastern Paktia province after election staff refused to turn up for duty due to security concerns, officials said on Thursday.

Police chief Brig. General Aziz Ahmad Wardak told Pajhwok Afghan News voting was cancelled in Zurmat and Janikhel districts and provincial capital Gardez to keep election officials from being harmed.

At a polling station in Gardez

Girls

High School

, some monitors alleged minor girls cast votes. Torpikai, head of the 5th polling station, said most of the girls were aged between 12 and 15.

Election workers allegedly told the girls the names of several candidates they should vote for.

"No one asked about my age on registration day and thus I got card. Now I want to use it."

A foreign observer, who requested anonymity, said: Many ineligible people cast their ballots. Our job is to observe, not to tell them why they are voting."

A girl brought two cards, but we did not let her use them

Rockets hit Kunduz polling centre - Pajhwok Afghan News

<http://www.pajhwok.com/viewstory.asp?lng=eng&id=80165>

Suspected militants fired rockets into a polling centre in northern Kunduz province while a bomb blast took place near the police headquarters in Takhar, officials said on Thursday.

Nisar Ahmad, one of the voters, said: "I was casting my vote when a rocket landed close to the polling centre. The

ensuing blast created panic among people, but they continued to cast ballots."

Governor's spokesman Mehboobullah Syedi said the process of voting was in progress without any disruption.

Today's Afghan election is a moment of truth for zealous liberal aggressors | Simon Jenkins | Comment is free | The Guardian

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2009/aug/19/afghan-election-taliban-rumsfeld-intervention>

A bombastic crusade has mutated into despair. Where next will they bless with democracy at the blast from a drone?

During the last Afghan elections, a UN official outside a polling booth grabbed a voter's blue-stained finger and raised it before the cameras. "Look," he said ecstatically. "This is what it's all about."

No, it isn't.

Even in its present belligerent stance, the western world does not go about bombing and killing people just so they can vote.

Voting is one thing, elections another. tomorrow's **election** [<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2009/aug/19/afghan-election-violence-blackout>](http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2009/aug/19/afghan-election-violence-blackout) will make no difference to the ramshackle structure of government in what, nearly eight years after the Nato invasion, is a wholly dysfunctional state.

the awesome scale of electoral pollution should make even nation-building's most ardent defenders pause to think

Reports are rife of vote selling, ballot rigging and general chicanery. Karzai's running mate is the dubious warlord **Mohammad Qasim Fahim** [<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2009/may/04/afghanistan-president-hamid-karzai-election>](http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2009/may/04/afghanistan-president-hamid-karzai-election) , and he has allowed back the brutal Tajik leader **Abdul Rashid Dostum** [<http://www.guardian.co.uk/politics/blog/2009/aug/18/afghanistan-michael-white>](http://www.guardian.co.uk/politics/blog/2009/aug/18/afghanistan-michael-white) from well-deserved exile.

There is no grimmer testament to the failure of three years of "hearts and minds" than that only three of Helmand's 13 electoral districts are reportedly **safe for election monitors** [<http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/asia/article6801217.ece>](http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/asia/article6801217.ece) to attend.

the Afghan operation must constitute the biggest incitement to global mischief ever invented

a nation that under the Taliban was introverted and passive (save for its unwitting role in 9/11 as host to Bin Laden) is now a magnet for international killers and fanatics

British policy, whatever it was, simply has not worked. It has failed. No amount of platitudes from London or Washington can alter that.

This election should be a moment of truth for liberal interventionists everywhere. To cruise the world instigating elections at the point of a gun may have conferred neocon street cred on George Bush and Tony Blair. It has met its nemesis in the partition of Yugoslavia, the reversion of Iraq to feuding religious rivalry, and the chaos of Afghanistan. Other theatres of this missionary zeal – Pakistan, Palestine, Sudan and, in a different sense, Iran and Burma – are not

glowing advertisements for the policy. Who knows where it will next bless with democracy at the blast from a drone?

Afghanistan has become a lucrative melting pot of idealistic NGOs, underemployed diplomats and hi-tech weapons salesmen

Tomorrow's election stands alongside opium eradication and gender awareness courses in the long history of "telescopic philanthropy", as satirised by Dickens in **Mrs Jellyby** <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/politics/2005/jun/20/backbencher>> .

But there comes a point in the rhetoric of heroism when the pointlessness of it all bursts the shackles of jingoism.

Video: Despite Panther's Claw, many presidential ballot boxes will not open - Times Online

<http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/asia/article6801217.ece>

Only half of the planned polling stations in Helmand province will be able to open for the presidential election tomorrow, despite recent efforts by British Forces to push back the Taleban, *The Times* has learnt.

The Independent Election Commission said that it originally planned to open 222 polling stations across Helmand

But Zekria Barakzai, spokesman for the commission, told *The Times* that only 107 polling stations would be open in Helmand because of poor security in the province, where British troops have been deployed since 2006.

He said that the polling stations would cover only half of Helmand's registered voters — estimated at between 530,000 and 680,000, or between 3 per cent and 4 per cent of the country's total.

Two of Helmand's 13 districts will have no polling stations — Baghran, with a population of 74,200, and Dishu, with a population of 18,600, according to IEC figures.

No voters at all have been registered in five districts with a combined population of 177,300.

The head of the biggest election observer mission told *The Times* that his team of 80 monitors in Helmand would monitor only three of its districts, or 63 polling stations.

There will be a total of 22 international observers in Helmand, including six from the European Union, but they too will be unable to visit many polling stations.

Afghanistan election ink safeguard fails detergent test | World news | guardian.co.uk

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2009/aug/20/afghanistan-election-ink>

Afghanistan election ink safeguard fails detergent test

Ink used at some polling stations to mark voters can be removed with household soap, in embarrassing echo of 2004 scandal



Hours after polls opened at 7am, members of the Abdullah Abdullah campaign found they were able to remove the supposedly indelible ink that election workers put on the fingertips of people who have cast their ballot.

A local journalist working for the Guardian removed the ink from his finger in just a couple of minutes.

It is difficult to underestimate the embarrassment this will cause election organisers after a failure to buy the correct ink for the 2004 poll led to widespread multiple voting. The so-called ink scandal of 2004 caused fury among many voters and election organisers vowed it would never happen again.

Kamaludin Nazami, an engineer and Abdullah campaign official, said the ink problem was also being reported in south Kabul and in Herat.

She said she was more concerned about reports from the south that ballot box stuffing began last night in insecure areas.

"They know they can do this [ballot stuffing] because no one is going to go to these sorts of areas to check up on it," the spokeswoman said. "This wouldn't matter if just one of the safeguards worked — if the ink stuck, if polling stations were secure and if people had not been given more than one voter card each. But with all three of them so compromised, people can abuse the process."

Afghan election marred by violence and fears of voter fraud | World news | guardian.co.uk

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2009/aug/20/afghan-election-violence-fraud>

Rocket attack in Helmand kills child in voting queue and Taliban attempt to mount commando-style raid in Kabul

initial reports suggested turnout was low in the capital and the militant south as violence cast a shadow over the polls.

More than 20 rockets landed in Lashkar Gah, the capital of Helmand province, in the south, including one that landed near a line of voters and killed a child. In northern Baghlan province, insurgent attacks closed 14 polling sites and several police officers were killed, said Abdul Malik, the provincial election director.

A voting official in Kandahar, the south's largest city and the Taliban's spiritual birthplace, said voting appeared to be 40% lower than during the country's 2004 presidential election.

Afghan Election | Demotix.com

<http://www.demotix.com/afghanelection>

Twitpic - Share photos on Twitter

<http://twitpic.com/ekm7j>

Op-Ed Contributors - As Afghanistan Votes, Will the Taliban Win? - NYTimes.com

http://www.nytimes.com/2009/08/18/opinion/18Afghan-intro.html?_r=2&ref=global

Flickr: United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan's Photostream

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/unama>

UN Afghan Mission - Elections 1388/2009

<http://unama.unmissions.org/Default.aspx?tabid=1975>

AfPax Insider: "A Nightmare Scenario" for Afghanistan

http://www.afpax.com/index.php/post/7751/A_Nightmare_Scenario_for_Afghanistan

د رای ورکونکو د نوم لیکنې کارت
کارت ثبت نام رای دهندگان

نوم / اسم - تخلص: حمید
دپلار نوم / نام پدر: لالی
د نیکه نوم / ولدیا: [Redacted]

د زیریدني نیټه / تاریخ تولد: ۱۳۶۴ / ۰۱ / ۰۱

جنسیت: نارینه / مرد / ښځینه / زن

بی خایه شوی / بیجا شده / کوچی

AfPax.com

Op-Ed Contributor - Phantoms at the Polls - NYTimes.com

<http://www.nytimes.com/2009/08/18/opinion/18atif.html>

Demoralization and despair have reached such a level in my city, Kandahar, this summer that most people tell me they will not participate in Thursday's presidential election.

They doubt the transparency of the vote, disbelieving that President Hamid Karzai's corrupt administration will allow another candidate to win.

One reason for the pessimism here is that the president's brother, Ahmad Wali Karzai, managed to place relatives and friends in most of the important government positions.

One of them runs Kandahar city's education system, so it's no surprise that many of the teachers are encouraging their students to support the president.

People who live in the suburbs are even more vulnerable to the Taliban's threats, as the government security forces have little or no control out there.

And even if the government were to send troops to secure the polling stations in every district on voting day, the people would still not dare to vote, rightly fearing that the Taliban would punish them after the troops left.

Turnout Seen as Uneven in Afghanistan as Polls Close - NYTimes.com

<http://www.nytimes.com/2009/08/21/world/asia/21afghan.html?hp=&pagewanted=all>

an election that has become a critical benchmark of the nation's progress for both the Afghan government and the Obama administration

Despite the apparently low turnout in the south and complaints from some candidates about fraud, Afghan and American officials were quick to congratulate

"On the basis of what we've seen so far, it seems clear that the Taliban utterly failed to disrupt these elections," said **Richard C. Holbrooke** [<http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/people/h/richard_c_holbrooke/index.html?inline=nyt-per>](http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/people/h/richard_c_holbrooke/index.html?inline=nyt-per) , the American special envoy to the region, in an interview after he toured four polling stations in Kabul.

Mr. Karzai's main opponent, the former foreign minister **Abdullah Abdullah** [<http://topics.nytimes.com/topics/reference/timestopics/people/a/abdullah_abdullah/index.html?inline=nyt-per>](http://topics.nytimes.com/topics/reference/timestopics/people/a/abdullah_abdullah/index.html?inline=nyt-per) , called the low turnout in Kabul, "unsatisfactory." He added that his supporters were lodging complaints of fraud, in particular from the southern province of Kandahar.

in Kandahar, witnesses said, insurgents hanged two people because their fingers were marked with indelible ink used to denote that they had voted

Ashraf Ghani [<http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/people/g/ashraf_ghani/index.html?inline=nyt-per>](http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/people/g/ashraf_ghani/index.html?inline=nyt-per) , the former finance minister who is one of the presidential candidates, e-mailed American officials to say that he had reports that his opponents were stuffing ballot boxes

As the suspicions of election fraud continued throughout the day, there were reports of sporadic violence that began in the morning as polls opened

But residents of Kabul said the turnout seemed lower than in previous elections in 2004 and 2005. At one polling station, Mitra Hemat, 24, an election worker, said the turnout was significantly down. "There are very few people," she said. "People are afraid, I can tell."

Rockets and Intimidation Deter Voters in the South - NYTimes.com

<http://www.nytimes.com/2009/08/21/world/asia/21sceneoppe1.html?hp>

Only about 30 more people voted the rest of the afternoon. Election officials estimated that just 250 to 300 people voted all day — the only ones voting across an area larger than Connecticut, with a total population estimated at 35,000 to 50,000

Not one of them was a woman, Massoud Ahmad Rassouli Balouch, the district governor, said.

Some Marines speculated that Taliban spies — surely among the 100 or so people who voted before the first explosion — must have reported that some people were going to the polls, and they fired the rocket to derail any more voting.

The Marines here — who were ordered not to go to the actual polling place — said they were surprised at even the limited turnout.

"I didn't think we'd get even 10 people, to be honest with you, because of the intimidation campaign," said Lt. Col. Tim Grattan, the battalion commander.

Latest Updates on Afghanistan's Election - At War Blog - NYTimes.com

<http://atwar.blogs.nytimes.com/2009/08/20/latest-updates-on-afghanistans-election/?hp>

Analysis: Afghan vote shows Taliban still potent - AP

http://news.yahoo.com/s/ap/20090820/ap_on_go_pr_wh/us_us_afghanistan_analysis

The violence-scarred elections in Afghanistan provided a stage for the [Taliban](#) to show war-weary Americans and Afghans that it has rebounded and can strike — even after eight years of war.

For [President Barack Obama's](#) policies, the timing couldn't be worse.

New polling shows a majority — 51 percent — of those surveyed now believe the war is not worth the fight, an increase of 6 percentage points in a month.

"We've got to make sure that we are really focused on finishing the job in Afghanistan. But it's going to take some time," the president said on a talk-radio program Thursday. He gave a nod to the election, saying it "appears to be successful" despite the "Taliban's efforts to disrupt it."

The Bush administration used earlier elections in Afghanistan and Iraq as evidence of success of its war policies.

This White House isn't getting that boost.

The White House has been particularly reticent to talk about the Afghan vote, where the turnout appears to have been significantly lower than in the first-ever direct election of a president there in 2004.

the country's long history of bloody uprisings against past leaders who were seen as place men for foreign powers

Just three years ago the U.S. had about 20,000 forces in the country. Today, it has triple that, on its way to 68,000 by year's end when all of the 17,000 newly deployed are in place.

A Washington Post-ABC News poll this week showed, however, that only 24 percent of Americans support that move, with 45 percent saying the force should be decreased.

Now comes the hard part in Afghanistan election: Deciding who won -- latimes.com

<http://www.latimes.com/news/la-fg-afghan-election21-2009aug21,0,6559355.story?track=rss>

Despite scattered violence, the day went smoothly

- *Contrast to the live blog coverage; now the mainstream media is doing its job, realigning itself with the authorities and the mission.*

viewed by the West as a litmus test for the legitimacy of Afghanistan's central government

- *Note, as usual, the election was not about democracy, but about managing perceptions of legitimacy, and aiming for stability.*

Despite scattered violence that killed 26 people in various parts of the country, fears of large-scale attacks on voters, election workers and polling places did not materialize. Although Taliban intimidation appeared to have kept some voters home, officials were already saying that turnout, though not as high as hoped, had probably been sufficient to reflect national sentiment.

- *Whitewash galore, strong contrast with live blog coverage from correspondents on the ground.*

there was little immediate evidence of widespread, systematic fraud, election observers said

- *The funny thing about this sentence is that there was also little evidence of widespread systematic election observing, especially in those places where the Taliban has most influence.*

"All things considered, we're cautiously optimistic that it was a good day for the country," said Aleem Siddique, a spokesman for the United Nations mission in Afghanistan.

- *But of course he must say that: the UN backs the NATO mission, it authorized it, UN observers are partisans in this situation.*

Turnout appeared lowest in the south, where fighting this summer has been intense. Thousands of American troops are deployed in Kandahar and Helmand provinces, where the insurgency has its deepest roots.

In Kabul, the capital, voting got off to a sluggish start but picked up in the late afternoon. Still, it appeared that fewer people had voted than in the last presidential election.

At least five explosions, one of them at a polling station, were reported in Kabul, and for the second day in a row, police and suspected insurgents exchanged gunfire in the city center.

VOA News - 26 Killed During Afghan Election, Turnout Uncertain

<http://www.voanews.com/english/2009-08-20-voa21.cfm>

Member of Parliament Fawzia Kufi tells VOA she witnessed Independent Election Commission personnel filling out

women's ballots.

"The level of fraud and interference by the election staff, by the local officials was very high," Kufi said. "I have visited a site. The IEC staff were filling out the ballots on their behalf. This, I think, is going to affect the credibility of the result of the election and the government, which is going to be created as a result of this election."

Despite low turnout, Afghan vote declared a success - McClatchy

http://news.yahoo.com/s/mcclatchy/20090820/pl_mcclatchy/3296122

Afghan government and the principal opposition candidate declared the country's second presidential election a success Thursday

strong indications that Taliban threats and attacks had kept voters at home in southern and eastern Afghanistan

A battle between security forces and Taliban in Baghlan province may have killed as many as 40, including the district police chief, according to Afghan and Western officials.

Attendance was reportedly much higher in western and northern regions than in the east and the south, where U.S.-led international troops and Afghan security forces are struggling to contain the [Taliban](#) and allied Islamic extremist groups nearly eight years after the U.S.-led invasion in the wake of the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks.

Still, the overall turnout was expected to fall far short of the 70 percent achieved in the [2004 presidential election](#),

Commission Chairman Azizullah Ludin said that 95 percent of the 6,185 polling centers had opened.

Ludin scoffed at charges by Ramazan Bashardost, a presidential candidate and former planning minister, that the indelible ink used to mark people's fingers to ensure that they didn't vote more than once could be washed off easily.

"I would give a prize if anyone appears and claims that he was able to rub off the ink," Ludin told a news conference.

In the ragged tent he uses as an office, Bashardost and several aides held up fingers from which the ink had washed off, however. Bashardost also produced a complaint endorsed by a member of the Election Complaints Commission after the ink on his finger rubbed away.

the distribution of millions of phony and duplicate voter registration cards and the lack of voter lists

Insurgents launched rockets and mortars into Kandahar, the largest city in the Taliban's southern heartland, and Lashkar Gah, the capital of the neighboring opium-producing province of [Helmand](#), where thousands of U.S. Marines and British troops are deployed, residents and Afghan and Western officials said.

Lashkar Gah

voter turnout was below 20 percent in the city

Mohammad Nabi , the deputy police chief in southeastern Uruzgan province, thought that province-wide turnout was less than 40 percent.

Ahmad, who was speaking from Kandahar city, said the Taliban had exchanged fire with security forces in the city and that "except for two or three children, you don't see anyone in the street. The turnout is very low, perhaps less than 5 percent."

Turnout in [Kabul](#) appeared to be low

Karzai, Abdullah teams claim wins in Afghan vote - AP2

http://news.yahoo.com/s/ap/20090821/ap_on_re_as/as_afghanistan

Campaign teams for [President Hamid Karzai](#) and top challenger Abdullah Abdullah each positioned themselves Friday as the winner of Afghanistan's [presidential election](#)

Abdullah's unofficial returns showed him beating Karzai handily — but they did not include any numbers from Afghanistan's south and east

Across town, Karzai's campaign team said the president had won more than 50 percent of the nation's vote

"What Karzai's office is claiming is not correct. The result is in front of you. You can see Abdullah is ahead with 62 percent and Karzai has 31 percent," said Abdullah spokesman Sayyid Agha Hussain Fazel Sancharaki.

A top election official, Zekria Barakzai, told The Associated Press he estimated 40 percent to 50 percent of the country's 15 million registered voters cast ballots — far lower than the 70 percent who voted in the presidential election in 2004.

Clearly, however, there were some irregularities.

The Times of London newspaper reported Friday that election officials at a polling station near Kabul recorded 5,530 ballots in the first hour of voting Thursday, even though no voters were at the site when the Times' reporter arrived at 8 a.m., one hour after the voting began.

Election workers said the area was pro-Karzai and was controlled by a lawmaker who said he had already voted for the president, even though his finger wasn't marked with indelible ink, a fraud prevention measure, the Times reported.

The International Republican Institute, a U.S.-based nonprofit organization that had about 30 election observers in Afghanistan, said the vote was at a "lower standard" than the 2004 presidential ballot and 2005 parliamentary vote but that "the process so far has been credible."

Low turnout — estimated between 40 and 50 percent nationwide — showed that Taliban efforts to keep people home were at least partly successful, creating an election "defined by violence," said Richard S. Williamson, the IRI's delegation leader in Afghanistan and a former U.S. ambassador to the U.N.

"There is no denying the fact that a notable reason for low turnout was the lack of security, and obviously that must be

addressed," IRI said. "Second, there were many credible reports that voter registration cards were sold. ... While it is difficult to determine how widespread this practice was, the magnitude of such reports of fraud warrant investigation."

Human Rights Watch cautioned against declaring the election successful, given the violence Thursday and low turnout in areas where Taliban influence is greatest.

"Early impressions of turnout suggest that violence and intimidation succeeded in keeping voters away from polling stations in a huge swathe of the country, which adds up to a successful day for the Taliban," said Rachel Reid, Afghanistan researcher for Human Rights Watch.

"If international standards are dropped, there risks being a serious credibility gap — which will only serve to increase disillusionment with the efforts to create a democracy."

No sign of voters on election day in Afghanistan despite official claims - Times Online

<http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/Afghanistan/article6804537.ece>

At 8am, an hour after the Afghanistan's presidential polls opened, the polling station at the Haji Janat Gul High School

was entirely empty of voters

But the apparent lack of voter activity was deceptive, insisted election officials

the ballot boxes were already full almost to the brim

"The people have already come. They came here with lorries at 7 o'clock, now they have gone to the fields with their sheep" said Lawan Geen proudly.

The grey bearded election worker from the Independent Election Commission seemed rather less than happy at the unannounced arrival of two Times journalists at his polling centre just outside Kabul.

The absence of voters witnessed by The Times yesterday in this centre on the edge of the capital was replicated across the country, with fearful Afghans staying away from the polls after repeated threats from the Taleban.

But the polling station in Pul-e-Charki painted a suspiciously different picture. In total 5,530 votes had already been cast for the Presidential Elections, according to the records being kept by the election staff beside each ballot box. In each box there were an oddly uniform 500 to 510 votes. More impressive still, some 3,025 of the ballots were women's votes.

the staff working on the 12 separate ballot boxes at the site must have been processing at least 100 voters per minute since polling

began.

There were no sign of any election monitors at the site and nor were there any female staff to oversee the women's ballot boxes, as the electoral commission required.

For an hour The Times waited at the polling site. The polling staff fidgeted.

But no one came to vote.

A burly middle-aged man called Lal Mohammad stepped forward and held out two voting cards.

As the thirty voters each made their way to the ballot box it became evident that the staff were able to process a maximum four voters every three minutes, or at best 80 voters per ballot box per hour, or 960 for the entire polling centre per hour. How was it possible then to process 5,530 in an hour, The Times wondered. Did the election officials suspect any sort of fraud?

"At about 4am the IEC staff came to the polling station,"

I have not seen any women here." The other policemen corroborated the tale.

BBC NEWS | South Asia | Afghan rivals claim poll victory

http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/8213374.stm

The two leading contenders for Afghanistan's presidential election have both claimed victory.

"Initial results show that the president has got a majority," he told Reuters news agency. "We will not go to a second round. We have got a majority."

One election commission official, Zekria Barakzai, told the AFP that he expected the official results to be announced next week.

"The turnout was different from south to the north and central parts of Afghanistan but still it is satisfactory and I expect that turnout will be from 40 to 50%," he said.

Afghan police beat, detain journalists during election - Committee to Protect Journalists

<http://cpj.org/2009/08/afghan-police-beat-detain-journalists-during-elect.php>

New York, August 20,

2009--Security forces obstructed, assaulted, and detained Afghan and foreign journalists in Kabul and elsewhere in Afghanistan today, enforcing an official

gag order on news of violent incidents during the presidential election. A spokesman for President Hamid Karzai told the press that information about attacks would discourage voter turnout.

Multiple accounts mentioned police beating journalists, threatening them with guns, and snatching equipment,

"Security forces must stop detaining and assaulting reporters and allow free coverage of the elections and related violence," said CPJ Deputy Director Robert Mahoney. "It's editors, not governments, who decide what news to cover."

Obama lauds Afghan vote, warns of more violence - AP

http://news.yahoo.com/s/ap/20090821/ap_on_go_pr_wh/us_us_afghanistan

"This is an important step forward in the Afghan people's efforts to take control of their future even as violent extremists are trying to stand in their way," Obama said at the White House

- *Comical, the foreign invader talks about Afghans taking control, in the face of "violent extremists" standing in their war. Hopefully he meant the U.S.*

Obama said it was the first democratic election run by Afghans in more than three decades. The 2004 election that put President Hamid Karzai in power was run by the United Nations

"Our goal is clear: to disrupt, dismantle and defeat al-Qaida and their extremist allies," he said. "That goal will be achieved, and our troops will be able to come home as Afghans continue to strengthen their own capacity and take responsibility for their own future."

"The fact that security was more of a concern during this election than the 2004 election obviously says a lot about what's occurred here over the last five years," Corker said in an interview from Pakistan. He was referring to the deterioration of security as the Taliban has gained strength in some areas.

"There's no question that more of the polling stations were open than one had anticipated, given the threats and the violence from the Taliban," said Mark Schneider, senior vice president of the International Crisis Group, which advises governments and international organizations.

James Dobbins, who was the Bush administration's special envoy to Afghanistan in the early years of the war, said that from available information it appeared the election should be considered successful in the sense that it was a genuine political contest between viable candidates.

"Just holding the election is an important sign — if not of progress, then at least of sustained effort toward that end state of a democratic Afghanistan," said Daniel Markey, a Central Asia expert at the Council on Foreign Relations. "But in the near term, the best that we can hope is that they don't prove to be even more disruptive and provide even more propaganda value to the insurgency."

Presidential vote count completed

<http://www.aliveinafghanistan.org/reports/view/210>

A day after the landmark presidential polls, the Independent Election Commission (IEC) announced on Friday the completion of the vote count in all provinces.

Results would start trickling in from nearly 7000 polling centres across the country today, a senior official said, adding the IEC would announce the preliminary outcome after careful tallying on August 25.

152 of 643 polling centres stay closed in southern zone

<http://www.aliveinafghanistan.org/reports/view/93>

More than 150 of the 643 polling centres proposed to be set up in the southern zone, comprising five provinces, will stay closed on Election Day (August 20) for security reasons.

Afghanistan's Independent Election Commission (IEC) head for the southern zone told Pajhwok Afghan News the 152 polling centres were located in the restive districts of Kandahar, Helmand, Uruzgan, Zabul and Nimroz.

Alive in Afghanistan | UN praises elections as an achievement for Afghans

<http://www.aliveinafghanistan.org/aiablog/?p=672>

The United Nations top official in Afghanistan Thursday described the conduct of presidential and provincial council elections as an achievement for the Afghan people.

"I would like to pay tribute to all the Afghans in the Independent Election Commission (IEC) and the security forces and all the others who participated throughout this process for the achievement we can see today," he said.

The security situation, in general, allowed people to take part in the elections, he noted.

Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon also congratulated the Afghans on the elections, saying they demonstrated again their desire for stability and development in their country.

The US Embassy in Kabul said: "The American people congratulate the people of Afghanistan as this Election Day concludes, on the historic occasion of your nation leading for the first time, democratic elections for president and provincial councils.

BBC NEWS | South Asia | Obama praises Afghans for voting

http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/8215425.stm

"Over the last few days and particularly yesterday we've seen acts of violence and intimidation by the Taliban and there may be more in the days to come," Mr Obama said.

"We knew that the Taliban would try to derail this election.

The counting appeared to be completed by Friday lunchtime, with official returns due over the weekend

America, he added, would work with Afghanistan "to strengthen Afghan security, governance and opportunity".

"Our goal is clear - to disrupt, dismantle and defeat al-Qaeda and their extremist allies," he said.

BBC NEWS | South Asia | Regional media split on Afghan poll

http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/8214487.stm

The election "was held amid incessant Taliban attacks" which "demonstrated the authorities' inability to control the situation in a large part of the country," wrote Olga Allenova in Russia's **Kommersant**.

Pakistan's **The News** wrote that "whichever way the poll goes, the outcome will be influenced as much by external as internal factors, for it is the eternal fate of Afghanistan to be of interest to a range of nations beyond its borders."

New Delhi-based **Asian Age** also stressed the role that other countries play in Afghan politics.

"The elections are a test of the Af-Pak strategy of the Obama administration, given that the troop surge was intended to enable civilians to participate in the election process and, in a way, to blunt the insurgent campaign of intimidation and violent retribution," the paper said.

And a commentator in Hong Kong's **Asia Times** took the line that it mattered little who emerged as the victor. "Who cares who the winner is?" Pepe Escobar wrote. "Afghanistan will be ruled by Barack Hussein Obama anyway."

BBC NEWS | South Asia | Afghanistan's day of reckoning

http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/8205787.stm

What will be the test of legitimacy for Afghanistan's elections?

No-one is using the age-old electoral mantra "free and fair".

It is hard to find anyone who expects Afghanistan's third major poll since 2001 to be fully free or fully fair.

"Good enough" is a phrase that slipped into conversation after the last parliamentary elections in 2005, amid disappointment over some of the candidates allowed to run and persistent allegations of vote rigging.

Western officials involved in the process now admit there was "very significant fraud".

The question may be "good enough" for whom?

For all the talk of promoting democracy in Afghanistan, the ball was dropped after the 2005 polls

Doubts persist about the preparedness and impartiality of the Independent Election Commission.

Still, many Afghans cynically insist the result is "fixed" either in Washington or their own "wolaswali", their district.

"Do you believe there will be fraud?" I asked an Afghan businessman in Kabul. "Yes!" he declared emphatically, as if it was abundantly self-evident.

Afghans and foreigners are now vowing to start work on the 2010 parliamentary elections as soon as this round is over.

But if Election 09 fails the test of legitimacy, it could drag on for months, bogged down in vote challenges and controversy.

Afghan elections: Bombs on one hand, empty ballot boxes on the other | World news | guardian.co.uk

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2009/aug/20/afghanistan-voter-turnout>

Presidential poll day sees low turnout amid bombings, fraud claims and 'indelible' finger markings that wash off



The classrooms serving as polling stations across the relatively secure and prosperous plains north of the Afghan capital were crammed full of people – but precious few of them were there to cast their vote.

Election workers and campaign observers milled about with little either to do or to observe

In one school in Kalakan, a solitary presidential ballot paper sat in the bottom of the translucent voting box reserved for a nearby community of Kuchi nomads.

at a mosque in a busy part of eastern Kabul the officer in charge was preparing to close down on time and start counting ballots. "We haven't seen anyone for an hour,"

Alex Strick van Linschoten, a Dutch academic who lives in Kandahar, said turnout in the city had been "extremely low".

"Until 10 o'clock people were coming, but about half as much as 2004. But later no one was coming as the situation got worse and worse,"

In Uruzgan, another southern province, a UN official said some districts had recorded "barely 100 voters".

audacious insurgent attacks, low turnouts in the south and inevitable allegations of fraud. In other words, everything that had been feared.

To try to allay fears, the UN boss in the country, Kai Eide, held a press conference last month in which he tried to prove that he could not remove it from his finger with a range of domestic cleansers. Few people believed the foreigners could spend hundreds of millions of dollars on an election and let it happen again.

"This wouldn't matter if just one of the safeguards worked – if the ink stuck, if polling stations were secure, and if people had not been given more than one voter card each. But with all three of them so compromised, people can abuse the process."

Violence was not confined to the south – there was a major shootout between police and insurgents in Kabul and perhaps as many as a dozen bombings in the city.

The **Taliban** <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/taliban>> also laid siege to the capital of Baghlan province, an event that on its own would have dominated the headlines on any other day.

Ethnic tension a factor in Afghan vote: envoy | Reuters

<http://www.reuters.com/article/GCA-Afghanistan-Pakistan/idUSTRE57E0D620090822?sp=true>

U.S. envoy Richard Holbrooke met Karzai and former foreign minister Abdullah Abdullah in Kabul on Friday, a day after presidential elections went ahead amid sporadic violence and despite **Taliban** <<http://www.example.com/news/globalcoverage/afghanistanpakistan>> threats to disrupt the vote.

"Everybody understands there is an ethnic issue in the country," Holbrooke said.

"It's a factor, it's not a concern. Is it a factor that gives us heartburn? No, but it is a factor," he said.

"Over the last few days, particularly yesterday, we've seen acts of violence and intimidation by the **Taliban** <<http://www.example.com/news/globalcoverage/afghanistanpakistan>>, and there ... may be more in the days to come," he said at the White House.

the relatively peaceful election

- *Reuters has consistently downplayed the violence, making it an exception among all the foreign news media covering the election.*

Taliban insurgents attack Afghan election vehicle | Reuters

<http://www.reuters.com/article/GCA-Afghanistan-Pakistan/idUSTRE57K0LM20090821?sp=true>

MAZAR-I-SHARIF, Afghanistan (Reuters) - **Taliban** <<http://www.example.com/news/globalcoverage/afghanistanpakistan>> insurgents attacked a vehicle carrying boxes of ballot papers, killing one election official and setting fire to the boxes in northern Afghanistan, an official said on Friday.

The Afghan government said nine civilians and 14 members of the security forces were killed in a total of 135 incidents

countrywide on polling day.

The insurgents attacked the vehicle carrying counted ballot papers in northern Balkh province on Thursday night

"An IEC (Independent Election Commission) official was killed and all the ballot papers were burned," Ali said.

Taliban <<http://www.example.com/news/globalcoverage/afghanistanpakistan>> militants failed to mount a single spectacular strike

- o *Note British coverage instead, that discusses how the Taliban laid siege to a major town on election day, what would have made headline news on any other day.*

Can good war in Afghanistan survive bad headlines? | Special Coverage | Reuters

<http://www.reuters.com/article/gc05/idUSTRE57F0VK20090817?sp=true>

"We all feel the impatience and pressure of the American public and the Congress, which legitimately wants to see progress," Said Richard Holbrooke, U.S. special envoy for Afghanistan and Pakistan.

Asked to define success in that campaign, he said: "In the simplest sense ... we'll know it when we see it."

"They (the Obama administrations) haven't fully developed exactly how they are going to demonstrate to the American people and Congress that they're using the money and resources effectively to achieve progress," said Brian Katulis of the Center for American Progress, a liberal Washington think tank.

In the first major survey after a record 44 U.S. troops were killed in Afghanistan in July, a CNN/Opinion Research Corp poll showed popular support for the war at an historic low, with 54 percent opposed to the war and 41 percent in favor.

Other polls have shown a similar slide in support for the war in Afghanistan this year, which had consistently enjoyed greater support than the Iraq war.

"Americans have sort of soured on the 'good war' concept as Afghanistan doesn't seem to be getting any better," said Nick Mills of Boston University's journalism department.

Violence has surged recently, with the **Taliban** <<http://www.example.com/news/globalcoverage/afghanistanpakistan>> stronger than at any time since they were driven from power eight years ago.

"What they're hoping for at the very least is increased legitimacy for Afghan leaders at the presidential level and then in the provinces,"

Helmand Blog - Afghanistan

<http://helmandblog.blogspot.com>

Afghanistan's Helmand Province Becomes Electoral Litmus Test

<http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/library/news/2009/08/mil-090819-rfer105.htm>

Helmand Governor Gulab Mangal traveled to Nawzad on August 17 to claim victory, hoist the Afghan national flag, and

urge locals to participate in presidential and provincial-council elections set for August 20.

"We should [all work together] to expand this victory achieved by the valor, hard work, and sacrifice of the armed forces of the Islamic Republic of [Afghanistan](#) <#>

and international forces," he told a crowd of turbaned Pashtun peasants, adding that the move will ensure that "all corners of Nawzad district can experience peace and all its residents can live in security and participate in the election."

But a local elder, responding from the crowd in a choked-up voice, said that if the government wants to secure participation in the election, it will have to deliver sustainable peace and key services.

"Without ensuring security, nobody can come to you to get [voter-registration] cards. And nobody dares cast their votes in ballot boxes," the man said.

Roughly as big as the Switzerland, holding successful elections in Helmand is seen as the critical test for the success or failure of stabilization efforts in Afghanistan because it will signal which way the insurgency-plagued Pashtun heartland of the country might go.

- *Media forgot this litmus test: if this was it, then it has been a massive failure. Helmand saw the tiniest minority come out to vote.*

Out of the planned 222 polling centers in the province, only 107 are expected to open

Despite the presence of some 6,000 British troops, which later rose to 9,000, the Taliban crept back into the province and took control of most of it until U.S. Marines, British, and Afghan forces launched their effort in early July to establish security for the August vote.

Helmand Vote Marred by Rockets and Alleged Fraud - TRCB

<http://trcb.com/news/Afghanistan/General/Helmand-Vote-Marred-by-Rockets-and-Alleged-Fraud-14732.htm>

The city was a ghost town as election day, August 20, dawned. Very few people were on the streets, the shops were all closed, and the roads were blocked.

Lashkar Gah

The rockets continued throughout the morning – eight in all.

"Why are the foreign forces not preventing these rockets?" asked Hezbollah, a resident of the Kart-e-Lagan district of Lashkar Gah. "People here are afraid. Nobody is going to vote."

Helmand, the centre of poppy and the insurgency, is also now the centre for international forces. More than 10,000 United States troops arrived over the summer, joining the nearly 8,000 British soldiers already stationed there.

The two groups have been conducting major offensives over the past two months, designed to clear the area of the Taleban.

Judging by residents' complaints, it is not working.

"I cannot vote because they have not made any polling stations here. The Taleban won't let them."

"It's already 9.30 and we have had only three voters," he told IWPR. "People are very angry, because the foreigners have not managed to bring security to Sangin."

At 11, news came in that the polling centre in Bolan, a district immediately adjoining Lashkar Gah, was under attack and had to be closed down.

Several polling centres are said to have refused to allow journalists access, giving rise to speculation that they were hiding something.

In at least one polling centre, election workers are alleged to have interfered in the vote, reportedly telling older voters to cast their ballot for a specific candidate. In one case, an election worker is claimed to have taken the ballot from the hand of an elderly man and ticked the box himself.

In a number of polling stations, there were large posters of incumbent president Hamed Karzai, newly hung. According to the election law, no campaigning is allowed within 72 hours of the election.

"I have reported this to the IEC, but they say these pictures are everywhere, and there is nothing we can do about it," he said.

Taleban Tactics Take Their Toll - TRCB

<http://trcb.com/news/Afghanistan/General/Taleban-Tactics-Take-Their-Toll-14745.htm>

Kabul, Herat, Balkh, Wardak, Ghazni, and Helmand

very low voter turn-out in the war-ravaged south of the country

While the ink is supposed to take days to wash off, multiple reports from various provinces suggested that people were able to clean their fingers with cloths, water, or a little spit.

the international community – which funded the vote as well as overseeing much of the electoral process

Voter turnout ranged from high in the relatively stable north to almost non-existent in the war-ravaged south.

"We expected 4,200 people to vote at this centre," said Nasir Ahmad, head of a polling station in the Chel-Metra district of Helmand province, speaking on the morning of the election. "But it's already 10.30, and we have only registered 83 people."

In parts of Wardak, Ghazni, Logar, and eastern Herat, as well as Helmand and Kandahar, residents had almost no possibility to cast their ballots.

"In Jalrez district, there have been rocket attacks, and everything is closed," said one resident of Wardak province. "In Sayedabad and Jighatu as well, there is fighting. Everyone is staying home."

Five rockets struck Wardak's provincial capital, Maidan Shahr, early in the day.

According to the election law, campaigning is supposed to stop 72 hours before the vote. But in several polling stations, campaign workers reportedly refused to comply.

In Helmand province, reporters said they saw election workers actually marking ballots for older voters.

In Balkh, three election workers had to be dismissed on polling day because of suspicions of blatant fraud.

Another election worker, Najiba, is said to have been found with five voter registration cards under her election paraphernalia. A photographer claimed to have caught her trying to enter the numbers onto the voter register, in order to be able to cast extra ballots for Abdullah.

Afghanistan's Election Day: Don't Be Fooled By This Facade of Democracy | World | AlterNet

http://www.alternet.org/world/142092/afghanistan%27s_election_day:_don%27t_be_foiled_by_this_facade_of_democracy

We Afghans know this election will change nothing. It is merely a show of democracy put on by and for the West, to legitimize its future puppet in Afghanistan.

In a country ruled by warlords, occupation forces, Taliban insurgency, drug money and guns, no one can expect a legitimate or fair vote.

Among the people on the street, a common sentiment is, 'Everything has already been decided by the U.S. and NATO, and the real winner has already been picked by the White House and Pentagon.'

Hamid Karzai has cemented alliances with brutal warlords and fundamentalists in order to maintain his position. Although our Constitution forbids war criminals from running for office, he has named two notorious militia commanders as his vice-presidential running mates -- Qasim Fahim, who was, at the time of the 2001 invasion, the warlord who headed up the Northern Alliance, and Karim Khalili.

As Human Rights Watch recently said, "Karzai has made an unthinkable deal to sell Afghan women out in return for the support of fundamentalists in the August 20 election."

For example, pro-Iranian extremist Haji Mohammad Mohaqiq, who has been accused of war crimes, has been promised five cabinet positions for his party, and so he has told the media he's backing Karzai. A deal has even been done with the dreaded warlord Rashid Dostum -- who has returned from exile in Turkey to campaign for Karzai -- and many other such terrorists.

The two main contenders to Karzai's continued rule, Ashraf Ghani Ahmadzai and Abdullah Abdullah, do not offer any change; both are former cabinet ministers in this discredited regime

Abdullah has run a high profile campaign, in part due to the backing and financial support he receives from Iran's fundamentalist regime.

the values of real democracy, human rights and women's rights will only be won by the Afghan people themselves.

Your governments in the West that claim to be bringing democracy to Afghanistan ignore public opinion in their own countries, where growing numbers are against the war.

What Happened to the Afghan Elections? | World | AlterNet

http://www.alternet.org/world/140110/what_happened_to_the_afghan_elections?page=entire

After a series of well-known Afghan politicians announced their candidacy, the upcoming presidential election was widely believed to be a turning-point in the country's history. But most of the big names declined to register, leaving what critics allege is a weak opposition to President Hamid Karzai.

Critics allege that the opposition to Karzai -- a motley collection of former government officials, businessmen and warlords -- were unable to come together and decide on a united stance.

Moreover, many candidates may have lacked international backing as well. In an age where political support from international countries is crucial, this may have further discouraged some from running.

"The candidates' resignations show that important decisions in Afghanistan cannot be made independently," says Ghulam Mujtaba Rasoli, an Afghan political expert. "The support of powerful countries has a role in every decision made in Afghanistan, including the presidential election."

"we can not deny the influences of some foreign and neighboring countries. Considering the decades of war in Afghanistan it is impossible to make decisions independently, which is a striking example of what I am talking about."

No U.S. Interference in Afghan Elections ... Except James Carville and the U.S. Occupation | Politics | AlterNet

<http://www.alternet.org/blogs/politics/142091>

[/no_u.s._interference_in_afghan_elections_..._except_james_carville_and_the_u.s._occupation/?obref=obnetwork](http://www.alternet.org/blogs/politics/142091/no_u.s._interference_in_afghan_elections_..._except_james_carville_and_the_u.s._occupation/?obref=obnetwork)

Secretary of State Hillary Clinton just released a **statement** <http://www.state.gov/secretary/rm/2009a/08/127987.htm> on the Afghan elections

"The United States of America remains impartial in this election. We do not support or oppose any particular candidate. Like the Afghan people we want to see credible, secure and inclusive elections that all will judge legitimate. We hope that, from top to bottom, every effort will be taken to make election day secure, to eliminate fraud, and to address any complaints fairly and quickly."

How is it not just a wee bit of interference to have James Carville, one of the Clintons' top consiglieri, acting as a **campaign advisor** <http://www.google.com/search?q=carville+advising+afghan+candidate&ie=utf-8&oe=utf-8&aq=t&rls=org.mozilla:en-US:official&client=firefox-a> to one of the leading candidates?

Carville, who says he is working as a "private citizen" for candidate Ashraf Ghani, a former World Bank official, was an advisor to Hillary Clinton in the 2008 election and has deep ties to Obama's current Afghanistan/Pakistan envoy Richard Holbrooke.

For his part, Karzai has little leg to stand on in criticizing anyone over their use of U.S. advisors. His entire claim to

power is based on U.S. dictates, instructions and approval from Washington -- oh, and his personal safety as well.

Not to mention 48,000 U.S. troops and 70,000 private contractors on the U.S. government payroll. And remember, Karzai reportedly held talks recently with neocon all-star Zalmay Khalilzad, his old buddy from Unocal, about Khalilzad becoming the **CEO** [<http://rebelreports.com/post/110083050/mastercard-istan-ex-bush-henchman-wants-to-be-ceo-of>](http://rebelreports.com/post/110083050/mastercard-istan-ex-bush-henchman-wants-to-be-ceo-of) of Afghanistan (**literally** [<http://www.nytimes.com/2009/05/19/world/asia/19diplo.html?_r=3&partner=rss&emc=rss>](http://www.nytimes.com/2009/05/19/world/asia/19diplo.html?_r=3&partner=rss&emc=rss)). After the *NY Times* reported the story, Karzai tried to **re-spin** [<http://www.wired.com/dangerroom/2009/05/diplos-heart-afghanistan-ceo-khalilzad-not/>](http://www.wired.com/dangerroom/2009/05/diplos-heart-afghanistan-ceo-khalilzad-not/) his intentions.

Mass abstention and vote rigging in Afghanistan election :: www.uruknet.info :: informazione dall'Iraq occupato :: news from occupied Iraq :: [- it - 57161]

<http://www.uruknet.info/?p=57161>

Conducted under the guns of 100,000 foreign troops, the vote had nothing to do with democracy and was instead designed to provide a veneer of legitimacy for the US-led NATO forces' increasingly bloody counter-insurgency campaign against those resisting the occupation.

Turnout was zero or near zero in parts of Afghanistan's Pashtun-majority south, areas that have seen the worst of the US-NATO onslaught in recent months. The Taliban and other militant groups fighting the occupiers now effectively control large swathes of the country, and were able to enforce their call for a boycott of the presidential election in several areas.

The British *Independent* reported from a polling station in Nad-e-Ali, the most populous area of Helmand province: "Call it the mystery of the invisible voters ... just over 400 people had voted by 1 p.m. Three hours later, the figure had apparently surged to some 1,200. This despite the fact the streets were empty, all shops and businesses were shut and an Afghan army officer saying his men standing guard had hardly seen any civilians heading to these particular voting booths.... Election officials were later seen counting piles of ballot papers, without even checking the choices, simply declaring the votes had been cast for incumbent president Hamid Karzai."

Taliban militants cut off fingers of 2 Afghan voters - AP

http://news.yahoo.com/s/ap/20090822/ap_on_re_as/as_afghanistan

Taliban militants cut off the ink-stained fingers of two Afghan voters in the militant south during the [presidential election](#)

President Hamid Karzai's leading challenger accused him of using the Afghan state to "rig" this week's election and detailed allegations of cheating by government officials in an interview Saturday with The Associated Press.

the country's top election monitoring group said Saturday

Nader Nadery, the head of the Free and Fair Election Foundation of Afghanistan

The accusations, which Karzai's spokesman denied, are the most direct Abdullah has made against the incumbent

A Taliban spokesman had said militants would not carry out such attacks, but the Taliban is a loose organization of

individual commanders who could carry out the threat on their own.

Nadery said his group saw widespread problems of election officials who were not impartial and were pressuring people to vote for certain candidates

Election monitors also saw voters carrying boxes of voter cards — so many votes could be cast — to polling sites, he said.

Abdullah said during the interview that government officials in Kandahar and Ghazni provinces, including a provincial police chief and a No. 2 provincial election official, stuffed ballot boxes in Karzai's favor in six districts. He also said his monitors were prevented from entering several voting sites.

Karzai's campaign spokesman Waheed Omar dismissed Abdullah's allegations

Omar said. "We have documented violations that were made by Abdullah's campaign team. But we believe our job is to report to the elections complaint commission ... We do not want to make a media propaganda campaign out of the violations we have documented."

The European Union on Saturday said the election represented a "victory for democracy,"

An Afghan monitoring group, the Free and Fair Election Foundation of Afghanistan, said Saturday that its observers saw widespread problems from election officials who were not impartial and were pressuring people to vote for certain candidates. Election monitors also reported seeing voters carrying boxes of voter cards — so that multiple votes could be cast — to polling sites and saw many underage voters, according to the foundation head Nader Nadery.

The National Democratic Institute, a U.S.-based democratic group, said Saturday the vote "involved serious flaws" and pointed to the fact that members of the Independent Election Commission are appointed by Karzai, suggesting a likelihood of bias.

Brian Katulis (Katulis) on Twitter

<http://twitter.com/katulis>

Some friends and former colleagues are up there, and Ken states obvious: international observers were limited in deployment bc of security

When asked about how many people they had at how many polling centers, they offered anecdotes, but didn't answer

EU head of mission lectures the journalist 'not to take that tone' in a french accent. Hello neo-imperialism.

Afghan journalist asks an aggressive question in an animated way, but it wasn't translated, and the EU head defends the risks they taken

Press seems puzzled by why they are here at EU election observer press conf, and it feels like someone is slowly sucking air out of room

Is it really news to say that it is up to the Afghan people to decide whether the results are viewed as legitimate??

"We will wait for the results" head of the EU mission says, then why have press conference? Is it really news to say they had observers?

Am at a press conference by the EU Election Monitors where they are releasing a preliminary statement, not sure what new I am learning

Election observers note flaws in Afghan elections

<http://www.nationalpost.com/news/story.html?id=1920615>

The European Union's election mission to Afghanistan would not be drawn on whether the vote was credible but said it was generally fair, although not free in all areas.

It did however say that the day was a "victory for the Afghan people".

"Free was not the case in some parts of the territory due to the terror installed," Philippe Morillon, a former French general heading the EU mission, told a press conference.

"Fair -- generally what we have observed was considered by our observers with their methodology good and fair," he added.

Human Rights Watch was scathing of the EU mission's assessment, saying it would be hard to swallow for "millions of Afghans in insecure parts of the country who experienced one of the highest numbers of violent incidents in one day since the fall of the Taliban."

"Any attempts to deny the full extent of the flaws in this election would only serve to further disenfranchise the Afghan electorate," researcher Rachel Reid said in a statement.

Reid charged that the EU observers had little ability to monitor the elections in large parts of the country where there were "high levels of violence and intimidation".

EU and German leaders praise Afghan election as success | World | Deutsche Welle | 20.08.2009

http://www.dw-world.de/dw/article/0,,4586536,00.html?maca=en-en_nr-1893-xml-atom

"Our assessment is that, in general, these elections went much better than we anticipated," Ettore Sequi, the European Union's special representative to Afghanistan, told AFP.

German Chancellor Angela Merkel called the election "an important chapter in the democratic development of the country."

NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen said the election was "a testimony to the determination of the Afghan people to build democracy." He congratulated the voters for their courage in the face of Taliban threats.

"Seen from a security point of view, the election has been a success," he said. "The most important thing is that the

election will be considered credible in the eyes of the Afghan people."

As voting continued across the country during the day, Taliban militants stormed a town in northern Afghanistan, launching a multi-pronged assault that left at least eight of them dead and kept polling stations from opening, officials said.

"Terrorists attacked from several directions. Fighting has been going on since morning," provincial police chief Mohammad Kabir Andarabi told reporters in Baghlan.

Azimi said polling stations did not open in the small town on the highway between Pul-i-Khumri, the capital of Baghlan province, and Kunduz province. "No elections there. I don't think there will be because fighting is ongoing," he said.

Residents confirmed to local media that no polling stations were open.

Headed by Philippe Morillon, a former French general and now a member of the European Parliament, the mission has been monitoring the election campaign and is now focusing on polling, counting and tallying the results.



EU observers cry foul over Afghan elections - Elections : news, world | euronews

<http://www.euronews.net/2009/08/22/eu-observers-cry-foul-over-afghan-elections>

There are increasing claims and accusations over fraud in Afghanistan's presidential election.

EU monitors say the poll was generally fair but not free – a verdict backed by presidential candidate, Abdullah Abdullah.

BBC NEWS | UK | Britain's part in election run-up

http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/8208543.stm

British civilians have also been assisting in the run-up to the election, liaising with Afghan election officials and helping to provide EU election monitors.

The head of the provincial reconstruction team in Lashkar Gah, British diplomat Hugh Powell, says expectations should not be pitched too high.

"I do not expect anything like the turnout that happened in the first elections of 2004, which was just over 70%," he said.

"I suspect it will be significantly below 50% and to achieve 50% would be quite something. The Taliban have clearly sent out messages that they intend to try and disrupt and deter people from participating."

Karzai way ahead in vote count

<http://www.pajhwokelections.af/viewstory.php?storyid=521>

President Hamid Karzai is cruising toward a first-round victory in Afghanistan's presidential election, tallying 71 percent of the 4.5 million votes counted so far, knowledgeable sources revealed on Saturday

As of 4pm today, one source confided to Pajhwok Afghan News, more than 4.5 million ballots had been calculated. Of the 4,514,084 votes counted, the incumbent has collected 3,244,196.

Another two million votes remain to be tallied

But Independent Election Commission officials would not comment on the information, pending announcement of the initial result on Tuesday.

The information was reported to Pajhwok by a high-level party official who is watching the vote count. It was confirmed by a source from Karzai's office, who is also watching the count.

A United Nations worker in Kabul

, meanwhile, believed the voter turnout worked out at approximately seven millio

Avoid the rush to judgment | The AfPak Channel

http://afpak.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2009/08/22/avoid_the_rush_to_judgment



Yet there's been a quick push to frame the post-election debate coming from two main groups -- the competitors in the elections here and the United States government.

The United States government has also been quick to frame how these elections are interpreted. U.S. President Barack Obama was quick to offer his judgment, saying **on Election Day** [<http://www.reuters.com/article/asiaCrisis/idUSN20526524>](http://www.reuters.com/article/asiaCrisis/idUSN20526524) that, "We had what appears to be a successful election in Afghanistan, despite the Taliban's efforts to disrupt it."

The day after the elections, Obama made another **statement** <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the_press_office/Remarks-by-the-President-on-the-recent-elections-in-Afghanistan/>

concluding that the elections were an "important step forward in the Afghan people's effort to take control of their future, even as the violent extremists stand in their way."

Both statements were aimed at putting the best face on an election that appears to have had mixed results at best -- that Obama did this is understandable given that the American public appears to be increasingly skeptical about additional investments in Afghanistan.

The danger President Obama faces is that an election that he called the "most important event of the year" in Afghanistan and now has quickly judged as a step forward might not be viewed by Afghan political actors and the public in the same light, and the U.S. government might find itself in an awkward position in the coming weeks trying to adjust its position on these elections.

First, it is clear that a significant number of Afghan voters were disenfranchised by the violence and intimidation.

How many were disenfranchised, we won't know until more data is available, but it looks like the turnout was considerably lower than the 2004 and 2005 elections.

also voter apathy about the candidates that has contributed to lower turnout

Second, it appears that there were several instances of voter irregularities and fraud in certain parts of the country, particularly with voter identification cards and the voter registry.

Voting Day in Afghanistan | Foreign Policy

http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2009/08/20/voting_day_in_afghanistan?page=full













US envoy 'expects' disputes over Afghan election - AP

http://news.yahoo.com/s/ap/20090823/ap_on_re_as/as_afghanistan

Charges of fraud in Afghanistan's presidential election are extensive enough that they could sway the final result, and the number is likely to grow, the commission investigating complaints said Sunday.

Richard Holbrooke says there are disputed elections in the United States and he wouldn't be surprised if there are questions of fraud raised in Afghanistan. Holbrooke said Sunday, "I expect it."

- *Desperate to make everything sound normal, "nothing unusual here, no big deal!"*

The independent Electoral Complaints Commission has received 225 complaints since the start of Thursday's vote, including 35 allegations that are "material to the election results," said Grant Kippen, the head of the U.N.-backed body. The figures include complaints about both the presidential balloting and provincial council polls.

Abdullah Abdullah, widened allegations of fraud against Karzai and his government Sunday, saying ballots marked for Karzai were coming in from volatile southern districts where no vote was held

turnout was being reported as 40 percent in areas where only 10 percent of voters cast ballots.

He said a border security commander in the Spin Boldak district of Kandahar province, Gen. Abdul Raziq, used his house as a polling station and stuffed the ballot box for Karzai. Other polling sites were in border police posts that Raziq controls, Abdullah said.

the chief of the Afghan Independent Election Commission, a Karzai appointee

Another presidential candidate has displayed mangled ballots that he said were cast for him in Spin Boldak and then thrown out by election workers.

Outside observers have said the voting process was mostly credible, but have also listed numerous incidents of fraud and violence.

The top Afghan monitoring group has said there were widespread problems with supposedly independent election officials at polling stations trying to influence the way people voted

That group, the Free and Fair Elections Foundation of Afghanistan, also catalogued violations such as people using multiple voter cards so they could vote more than once, and underage voting.

Afghanistan: The Courage to Vote. But Twice? - TIME

<http://news.yahoo.com/s/time/08599191797500>

As inspiring as these accounts of voting may be, the fact is Afghans did so in lesser numbers than the last presidential elections

Intimidation and Fraud Observed in Afghan Election - NYTimes.com

<http://www.nytimes.com/2009/08/23/world/asia/23afghan.html?em>



A particular concern was the notably low turnout of women, who election observer organizations said were disproportionately affected by the violence and intimidation.

The reported problems also included voter intimidation, by the Taliban and also by some powerful candidates, in particular local candidates running for provincial council seats

Voter turnout appeared to be low, especially in the volatile south where the Taliban is strongest.

But women voters seemed to have faced disproportionate obstacles, election observer groups said.

Hundreds of polling stations for women (stations throughout the country were segregated to keep men and women from publicly mingling) did not even open in some areas where Taliban influence is high

women also suffered discrimination and intimidation in some places in central and northern Afghanistan

Female candidates received threats and were largely ignored in news coverage of the elections, the observers said

“The disproportionate effects of poor security conditions, widespread cultural opposition to women in public life and a number of attacks clearly aimed at deterring women’s activities all created significant obstacles,” the **European Union** http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/organizations/e/european_union/index.html?inline=nyt-org observer mission said in its preliminary statement on Saturday.

Women are already restricted by the conservative culture in many parts of rural Afghanistan, but the growing instability has further consolidated the opinions of many families and communities that it is not appropriate for women to be active outside the home, the statement said.

At least 650 women’s polling centers planned did not open on the day, according to Free and Fair Elections in Afghanistan, known as FEFA, the largest Afghan observer organization

Oruzgan, of the 36 centers for women that were planned, only 6 opened

In certain polling centers in the south and southeast of the country almost no women voted

Women received almost no coverage in news reporting, and topics concerning women's rights were virtually never featured in news coverage of the electoral campaign, the European Union mission said.

A lack of women in the Election Complaints Commission, and the location and attitude of some of its staff members, also made it difficult for some people, particularly women, to make use of the complaints process.

the European Union observer mission also criticized the appointment of election officials, unbalanced news media coverage during the campaign and irregularities in voter registration that increased the potential for fraud

multiple registration of voters and subsequent fraud

misuse of state resources in campaigning

proxy voting

Germany's Steinmeier proposes Afghan pull-out talks | International | Reuters

<http://www.reuters.com/article/worldNews/idUSTRE57L12B20090822?sp=true>

German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier, who is bidding to oust Angela Merkel as chancellor of Germany in an election next month, said he wanted a timetable for a military pull-out from Afghanistan.

once it became clear who would lead Afghanistan after last Thursday's election there, talks should begin over how long foreign troops should stay

Merkel this week tried to quash a public debate about pulling troops out of Afghanistan that has grown louder as violence surged.

most voters want the 4,200 German troops in Afghanistan as part of a six-year-old NATO mission to return home

hope of preventing debate over the deployment from coloring the election race

Defense Minister Franz Josef Jung, a party ally of Merkel's, said on Thursday that he expected German troops to stay in Afghanistan for another five to 10 years and dismissed calls for troop cuts once the Afghan election was over.

Afghanistan election: Would you risk your life to cast a vote? - Telegraph

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/comment/columnists/janetdaley/6072915/Afghanistan-election-Would-you-risk-your-life-to-cast-a-vote.html>

People who make pains to deride the Afghan election are deliberately missing the point, says Janet Daley.

just

under half of those eligible to vote in Afghanistan appear to have turned out at polling stations last wee

same as the percentage

of British voters who participated in our last round of local elections

What should we conclude from that? That we are wasting our time in helping to defend its population from the tyranny of a hateful and life-destroying ideology? Or that democracy is a local phenomenon suited only to Western cultures whose idiosyncratic history has given rise to rarefied ideas about the worth of the individual, which it is fatuous – or downright wicked – to try to export to other countries?

There are a good many people whose answer to both these questions would be "yes". Which is where the significance of the Afghan elections comes in. Are those who argue this way, who see the whole attempt to (as they would have it) "foist" democratic processes onto an alien culture as a waste of time, prepared to tell those Afghan voters that they were wasting theirs?

Are the people who risked their lives to vote to be written off: told that they are unworthy or unready (which is really the same thing) to determine their own political fate?

I am amazed by commentators on the Left who assume this patronising, ex-colonial attitude, which declares whole countries, whole populations, to be incapable of self-government even in the face of this astoundingly moving evidence: the Afghan voters defied the threat of death and mutilation to participate in the electoral process.

Taliban failed miserably to crash election: Top soldier

<http://www.vancouversun.com/news/Taliban+failed+miserably+crash+election+soldier/1915942/story.html>

After "some pretty grand pronouncements" the Taliban "failed miserably" to make good on their boast to destroy Afghanistan's presidential election, Canada's top soldier in Afghanistan said Thursday.

"There was not one single suicide attack today in Kandahar province on a day where suicide attacks were threatened on a massive scale by the insurgency," said Brig.-Gen. Jon Vance, who commands Canada's 2,800 troops in South Asia.

The Taliban also harmed their reputation by firing rockets "indiscriminately" at Kandahar City and by hitting a revered Islamic shrine in Arghandab with a rocket, the general said.

An election official in Kandahar, which is at the heart of the insurgency, said about 60% of the province's 790,000 voters had cast ballots, with relatively heavy voting in urban areas and lighter voting in the Taliban-infested countryside.

More than 50 insurgents engaged troops from the Quebec-based Royal 22nd Regiment battle group in a gunfight that lasted several hours at Forward Operating Base Wilson, to the west of Kandahar City, while other Canadians mentoring Afghan troops in Arghandab were also involved in serious battles, Vance said. In both cases the insurgents had been

trying to reach the provincial capital and had been "stopped cold," he said, adding there were no Canadian casualties.

Prime Minister Stephen Harper commented: "For all its warts, when you look at a country that had virtually 30 years of civil war without any real history of democratic governance, what is taking place in Afghanistan, in spite of all its challenges, is remarkable. And I think we owe all of our Canadian personnel in Afghanistan -- our military people, but also our civilian personnel as well -- a tremendous credit for the progress that has been made for this to happen."

VOA News - Afghanistan May Delay Announcing Winner of Presidential Election

<http://www.voanews.com/english/2009-08-23-voa6.cfm?rss=topstories>

The September target date for announcing the official results of Afghanistan's presidential election may be in jeopardy, as numerous complaints of voting fraud have emerged.

Independent Election Commission

Electoral Complaints Commission

By Sunday, the commission had received 225 claims of voting fraud for Thursday's election, including charges of ballot stuffing and voter intimidation.

VOA News - Observer Group Describes Afghan Poll as 'Credible'

<http://www.voanews.com/english/2009-08-21-voa30.cfm>

A U.S.-funded group that observed Afghanistan's presidential poll says despite reports of serious fraud, the election has so far been credible

Richard Williamson from the International Republican Institute told reporters in Kabul Friday that its observers were present at 250 polling stations during Thursday's vote.

Williamson also said there were serious problems, including poor security, which he said affected voter turnout.

Other

irregularities cited by the group included reports of voter registration cards being sold

problems with the indelible ink used to prevent voters from casting more than one ballot

Afghan state media coverage of the elections heavily favored incumbent President Hamid Karzai

Williamson described the abuse of state resources as "alarming."

Algorithms to stop fraud in medieval Afghanistan - AP

http://news.yahoo.com/s/ap/20090824/ap_on_re_as/as_afghanistan

medieval Afghanistan

Forty-five of the complaints are serious enough that they could affect the election outcome, said Grant Kippen, the head of the U.N.-backed body.

Ajmal Amin Rabmal, one of three experts overseeing the commission's computer monitoring, said he's confident his team can spot fraud cases

"Ninety percent (of fraud) we are going to catch," Rabmal said Monday.

On Monday, Finance Minister Hazrat Omar Zakhilwal said Karzai handily won with close to 70 percent of the vote, according to Zakhilwal's top adviser, Najibullah Manalay.

The Obama administration hopes the election will produce a leader with a strong mandate to confront the Taliban insurgency.

"There's a process to deal with these fraud allegations and we need to wait patiently while that process moves forward," said Timothy Michael Carney, a retired U.S. ambassador in charge of the U.S. election team.

could lead to a protracted period of claims and counterclaims that could delay formation of a new administration and poison the political atmosphere at a time when the United States and its NATO partners are trying to bring together ethnic, political and social groups opposed to the Taliban in order to roll back the insurgency.

One in five Afghan ballots may be illegal, UN warns | World news | guardian.co.uk

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2009/aug/24/afghan-elections-fraud-karzai>

Fraud in **Afghanistan** <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/afghanistan> 's presidential election may have compromised as many as one in five ballots, a UN official warned today

ballot-stuffing, intimidation and other irregularities could have a decisive impact on the vote

concerns were mounting that electoral fraud in the south and east of the country, where few election monitors dared to tread, could help push the number of votes cast for the president, **Hamid Karzai** <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/hamid-karzai>, over 50%

One UN official predicted that anywhere between 10% and 20% of the votes cast were illegal, and that negotiations would have to be made to "massage down" Karzai's victory margin

around 50 of which were earmarked for immediate investigation because of the risk they could change the outcome

almost 700 complaints had been received

But the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC), which will publish a small portion of the results tomorrow, said the

reported cases of fraud "could not affect the result of the election".

"We have reached the conclusion that 35 cases of reported fraud and violations is not widespread, given the number of polling centres is 6,300," said Zekria Barakzai, the IEC deputy head. "Whoever makes claims that there is widespread fraud should show evidence."

A separate body, the Electoral Complaints Commission, said a steady flow of official complaints had been received. Among a list of 38 complaints lodged by Ashraf Ghani, the former finance minister, were claims that people were forced to vote for the former foreign minister Abdullah Abdullah at gunpoint in the northern province of Balkhm, and of ballot box-stuffing in the western city of Herat.

The ECC, which is run by a board made up mainly of foreigners, has wide-ranging powers to cancel the results from individual polling stations where fraud has been detected.

Mirwais Yaseni, the deputy speaker of Afghanistan's lower house of parliament, and a presidential candidate, claims thousands of votes cast for him were removed from ballot boxes and earmarked for destruction before being discovered by his supporters

Taliban attacks leave poll soaked in Afghan blood - Times Online

<http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/Afghanistan/article6806415.ece>



Only 15, he had registered to vote in Lashkar Gah, the capital of Helmand province, albeit illegally, for the first time in his life and he was eager to be the first to arrive at the polls.

He was 200ft from the football field where election staff had set up tents and cardboard polling booths when a Taliban rocket exploded, slicing half his face away.

European Union observers passing in a fleet of armoured Land Cruisers ignored him and his wounded 18-year-old brother, Najubullah, and raced on.

an election that included the registration of thousands of phantom women voters by husbands or village elders, the widespread sale of voter registration cards and the coercion of voters by regional chiefs working for President Hamid Karzai or his primary rival

Abdullah Abdullah, the former foreign minister.

Afghanistan is a deeply corrupt feudal society at war with itself

Making Helmand safe to vote had been Britain's military priority this summer, the bloodiest since 2001. The aim of the five-week operation Panther's Claw, involving 3,000 British troops, was to push the Taliban from the north of Lashkar Gah.

Ten British soldiers died in the campaign. Lieutenant-Colonel Gus Fair, commander of the Light Dragoons battle group, wrote in his diary afterwards that, as a result, people who had been subject to the rule of the Taliban could now live without the fear of them "visiting in the middle of the night".

With some optimism he added that they now had "the freedom to vote ... the chance to look forward to enjoy some of the rights and privileges that we are lucky enough to take for granted".

In Babaji district, where the British claimed they had brought 80,000 villagers under government control during daylight hours at least, only 150 people cast their vote.

"There were supposed to be three polling stations but they were closed," said Sardar Mohammed, 54, who lives in the district.

Rachel Reid, of Human Rights Watch in Afghanistan, disagreed. "This was one of the most violent days witnessed in Afghanistan in the past eight years," she said.

Statements by the Afghan government and western officials that it was a "good day" and a "success" did not ring true for many Afghans in the south, east and centre of the country, where Taliban intimidation was worst.

Afghan election chart and map

http://www.timesonline.co.uk/multimedia/archive/00603/TIM332GM20_603363a.jpg

Hamid Karzai accused by rival candidate of rigging Afghanistan election - Times Online

<http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/Afghanistan/article6807248.ece>

The scale of the alleged fraud now threatens to undermine the entire election process, which is seen as a test of international efforts to defeat the Taleban and build democracy in Afghanistan.

“Widespread rigging has taken place by the incumbent, through his campaign team, and through the state apparatus,” Mr Abdullah, a former eye doctor and Foreign Minister, said. “This has to be prevented. That’s critical for the survival of the process and that’s critical as far as the hope for a better life of the Afghan people is concerned.”

The Times discovered further discrepancies yesterday in figures being reported from Helmand province, where British Forces have been since 2006 and launched Operation Panther’s Claw in June to allow 80,000 more people to vote.

Engineer Abdul Hadee, the local head of the Independent Election Commission (IEC), told *The Times* on Thursday evening that fewer than 50,000 people had voted in Helmand, but changed that figure yesterday to 110,000.

He also said that turnout in the district of Garmsir was 20,000, compared with zero as he had claimed on Thursday. In Nawa district his estimate had risen from zero to 3,000.

Mr Hadee also said that 18,000 people had voted in Musa Qala district. He had not given an earlier estimate, but a Western official monitoring the election said that turnout in the district was only 9,000.

“There was big fraud in the election here,” a local journalist told *The Times*. “I think only 10 or 15 per cent of people in Helmand voted.”

The ECC said that it had received 416 complaints as of last night, of which 46 had been categorised as high priority because they could affect the outcome of the election.

Grant Kippen, the ECC chief, said that the allegations mostly involved ballot stuffing, but also included violence, intimidation and problems with the indelible ink that marked voters’ fingers.

Low turnout for Afghan election is victory for Taleban intimidation - Times Online

<http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/Afghanistan/article6804560.ece>

British soldiers

in Sangin spent Afghanistan’s election day defending their main base in the town from almost ceaseless Taleban assaults.

By the time polls closed and the final echoes of air strikes, artillery and gunfire died away, barely 500 Afghans had managed to vote in a district of 70,000 people, a number signifying victory for the Taleban’s power of fear

and intimidation.

“It’s a bad day,” said Sangin’s governor, Haji Faisal Haq, glowering in anger as the polls closed to the rattle of machinegun fire. “My people were not able to come out and vote. I would never wish a day like this upon them again.”

“I can’t say how they feel about it,” he added, as the deep-throated rip of A-10 cannon fire cut the sky above him. “I don’t even know how I feel about it yet.”

Barely five minutes elapsed between the 7 am opening of the town’s four polling stations and the impact of the first Taleban mortar rounds in Forward Operating Base Jackson, headquarters to the 2 Rifles battle group in Sangin. T

Airstrikes were called throughout the day as jets, A-10 tank busters and Apache helicopters strafed insurgent positions a few hundred metres away from the camp perimeter: an escalation which saw fighting in the area multiply fourfold over its usual levels. At least three insurgent teams were killed in the action.

The first handfuls of voters appeared less perturbed by the din of combat than by the Taleban’s pre-election campaign of intimidation which had discouraged the majority of Sangin district’s 16,400 registered voters from turning out.

- *Appeared? How did that appear? Is this just the journalist’s impression? Were voters not interviewed?*

Others arrived with multiple voting registration cards, hoping to be able to vote on behalf of family members too frightened to attend themselves. They were also turned away.

Abdullah Abdullah under pressure to concede to Hamid Karzai in Afghanistan - Telegraph

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/asia/afghanistan/6081952/Abdullah-Abdullah-under-pressure-to-concede-to-Hamid-Karzai-in-Afghanistan.html>

Hamid Karzai’s main rival has come under international pressure to accept defeat in the presidential elections, his main backer has said.

Ustad Atta Mohammed Noor, governor of Balkh province, said the international community feared a defeat for Mr Karzai would worsen violence in the Taliban heartlands.

He said he and Abdullah Abdullah's campaign were being urged to making a deal with the president.

He said: "They have come to the conclusion that if Mr Karzai doesn't win, insecurity will increase in the south.

"Because of the insecurity situation, they are insisting we should go and work with the government. It's very difficult for us. They are saying we should not accept the will of the people."

Mr Noor said he had met with Richard Holbrooke, US envoy to Pakistan and Afghanistan, on Sunday and been left with the "impression" he wanted the Abdullah campaign to accept defeat.

A strong, credible result in Afghanistan's second presidential elections is a key plank in western efforts to stabilise the country.

The United Nations and Barack Obama moved quickly to praise the poll on Thursday despite signs Taliban intimidation had scared off many voters.

The European Union election observer mission declared the process generally "good and fair", though Afghan observers catalogued instances of multiple voting, intimidation and underage voting.

Mr Noor added: "The government is corrupt, the opium is rife also, but unfortunately fraud and the view of the international community suggest otherwise."

Abdullah Abdullah's Unmentioned History

<http://www.thenation.com/doc/20090831/crossette>

Abdullah, born in 1960, was a close adviser to **Ahmed Shah Massoud** <<http://www.thenation.com/doc/20011022/massing/>>

Abdullah was also an informal chief spokesman for the loose coalition of mujahedeen warlords known as the **Northern Alliance** <<http://www.thenation.com/doc/20011126/trillin>>

laying waste to large swaths of Kabul and creating so much havoc and violence in the countryside that by 1995-1996 Afghans greeted the arrival of the Taliban with relief. Trust of the people?

The mujahedeen "government" of the post-Soviet, pre-Taliban 1990s was known for its efforts to deprive women, particularly urban women, of the gains they had made under communist governments.

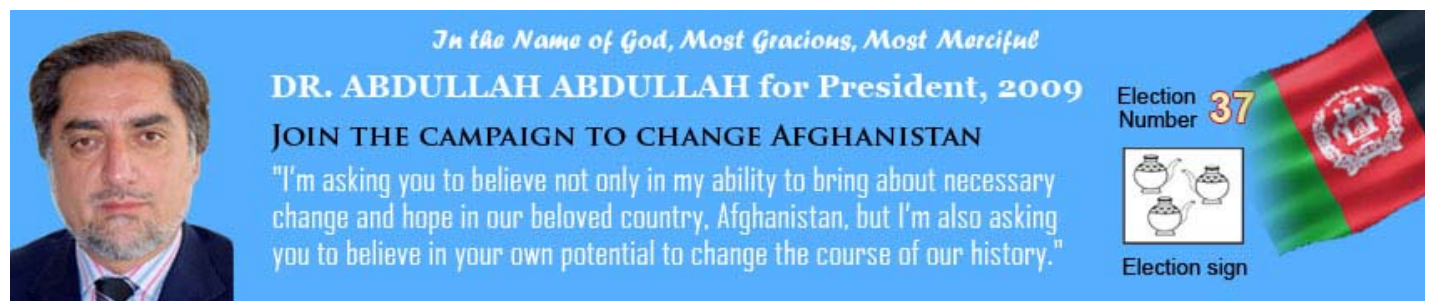
When the **United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women** <<http://www.thenation.com/blogs/edcut/1893#maathai>> was held in Beijing in 1995, Afghan women were forbidden to send a delegation.

One of the most conservative of the mujahedeen leaders, Abdul Rasul Sayyaf (who tried to ban all female journalists from his news conferences), not the Taliban, was the first to welcome Osama bin Laden to Afghanistan, according to Kathy Gannon, a Canadian who reported from Afghanistan for eighteen years and wrote one of the best books on the events of recent decades, *I Is for Infidel* <<http://www.amazon.com/Infidel-Terror-Years-Inside-Afghanistan/dp/1586483129>> .

After the United States invaded Afghanistan in 2001 and essentially gave Kabul back to the murderous mujahedeen, Abdullah became part of the team charged with rebuilding the country. Later, when a transitional government was formed and an election held, he was Karzai's foreign minister. Now he is his most outspoken foe.

Official Website of Dr. Abdullah for 2009 Presidential Elections

http://www.drabdullah.af/index.php?page=en_Home



In the Name of God, Most Gracious, Most Merciful
DR. ABDULLAH ABDULLAH for President, 2009
JOIN THE CAMPAIGN TO CHANGE AFGHANISTAN
"I'm asking you to believe not only in my ability to bring about necessary change and hope in our beloved country, Afghanistan, but I'm also asking you to believe in your own potential to change the course of our history."
Election Number **37**
Election sign

Afghanistan: Did the Taliban Lose the Vote? / ISN

<http://www.isn.ethz.ch/isn/Current-Affairs/Security-Watch/Detail/?ots591=4888CAA0-B3DB-1461-98B9-E20E7B9C13D4&lng=en&id=105007>

While Taliban threats did succeed in keeping vote counts down in many areas, voter turnout in remote districts of some of Afghanistan's most restive provinces is being taken by some observers as an example of how the Taliban ultimately lost its effort to derail the country's elections through violence and intimidation.

"we can say that Afghanistan's young state and democracy have emerged successfully from this test and trial. The Taliban has been defeated in the psychological war."

...Or did Afghans voters lose?

Wahid Muzda, an independent Kabul-based analyst who lived for years in the capital when it was under Taliban control, doesn't go that far. Pointing to the low turnout in the southern Pashtun heartland, he notes that the Taliban effort did find some success.

"It's true that the Taliban were unable to completely disrupt the elections, but they have largely been able to prevent elections that could have delivered a clear result," Muzda says. "When you look at the situation now, the front-runner

and his rivals are compelled to strike a compromise."

Muzda claims that the Taliban initially supported the election process by allowing people to register to vote. In some cases, even Taliban members received voter-registration cards.

Muzda says the surge of U.S. troops this spring and summer and talk of taking back Taliban-controlled regions essentially turned the election process into a battleground between the Taliban and the U.S. led coalition.

"This was a military contest and the election process turned into a battlefield," he says. "In the end neither the Americans nor the Taliban could win it, but the Afghan people were the main losers because they were deprived of freely choosing their leader with a clear majority."

"There were attacks in 15 Afghan provinces. On the basis of reports from our Interior Ministry there were 73 [violent] incidents," President Hamid Karzai, the incumbent president who was favored to win a second term, said on August 20.

ECC officials ask media to share fraud proof

<http://aliveinafghanistan.org/reports/view/223>

KABUL (PAN): The Election Complaint Commission (ECC) has asked all media outlets to immediately report to the commission if they have any proof about rigging in the recently-held presidential and provincial council elections in the country.

Talking to Pajhwok Afghan News on Monday, member of the commission Fahim Hakim said fraud cases reported by media could help the commission in investigating the allegations leveled by various candidates.

Demonstration Postponed

<http://aliveinafghanistan.org/reports/view/219>

Postponed: Demonstration against Karzai in Boldak likely to be staged after ten days when votes are counted

We insult Afghans by calling their election a real success | Havana Marking | Comment is free | The Observer

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2009/aug/23/havana-marking-afghanistan-election>

The west's rose-tinted view of the events in Afghanistan on polling day threatens to undermine the democratic process and alienate locals

In the excitement of **Afghanistan** [<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/afghanistan>](http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/afghanistan) 's elections last Thursday, there was a moment of clarity for me. At lunchtime, the news came that the UN was declaring the day a success. "I am pleased," said Kai Eide, the UN's secretary-general's special representative here. "In general, it seems to be working well."

This was despite the fact that in Kabul alone there had been seven bomb attacks, two gun battles, the first allegations of fraud and a city-wide scandal about the so-called indelible ink used to ensure no one could double vote. And there were still four hours of voting to go.

It became clear to me that whatever the outcome, whatever events unfolded, the UN, the EU, the US, the west in general, would declare the day an unmitigated success.

he fact that reports were only just filtering in from the rest of the country, rockets were falling across the south and turnout was incredibly low clearly meant nothing to those in their bulletproof, dark-glass fortresses.

This is insulting to Afghans and incredibly short-sighted. In their desperation to report a success to their superiors, the Afghan UN mission is undermining the fragile checks and balances that so need their support.

It is undermining the process of democracy itself, adding to the perception that we are propping up a corrupt and ineffective government in Kabul and threatening to alienate huge numbers of Afghan voters for the future.

We in the west are investing billions into Afghanistan; shouldn't we be supporting them rather than the "state"?

the low voter turn-out, estimated to be around 30% in Kabul, 40% across the country

voter apathy and disillusionment with the democratic government "we" support were just as important

"This is a just a drama for you people in the west. Karzai will win and there will be no change."

The buzz "question" of this election among the international community is just how much fraud is acceptable

the problems of voter registration cards was so big (an estimated 3 million fakes are in circulation)

Kai Eide went on TV –widely on the Afghan news – and stated that the ink would save the day.

By 9am on Thursday, young men were bleaching their fingers and voting twice. We filmed a cafe full of young men laughing and deciding who they would vote for the second time.

The UN/EU etc must not send out press releases declaring it a success to the international media before anyone has a moment to breathe and certainly not before they have spoken to Fefa, the Afghan body set up to check for a free and fair election.

Al-Ahram Weekly | International | Fixing up Afghanistan

<http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/2009/961/in1.htm>

Reality Is Its Own Caricature for U.S. in Afghanistan and Pakistan - FOX 17

<http://www.fox17online.com/news/politics/sns-200908201854tmswpfafftr--v-a20090820aug20,0,2955859.story>

The problem with U.S.-sponsored elections in Asia and elsewhere in the non-Western world, as in Afghanistan Aug. 20, is that they are sponsored by the United States primarily to legitimize its own presence in the country.

A poll sponsored by the Qatar-based satellite broadcaster Al Jazeera recently asked respondents in Pakistan to identify

what they considered the greatest threat to Pakistan today

Eleven percent said it was the Taliban militants

59 percent said that the United States was the biggest threat to Pakistan

The new administration's under secretary of state for public diplomacy and public affairs, Judith A. McHale, met a group of Pakistani journalists, including Ansar Abbasi, an important commentator critical of U.S. policy. She spoke warmly of U.S.-Pakistani relations, and Abbasi politely listened, thanking her for coming. He then, according to McHale afterward, said, "You should know that we hate all Americans. From the bottom of our souls, we hate you."

Under Secretary McHale also reported that Abbasi went on to explain that Americans "are no longer human beings because (their) goal was to eliminate other humans." He said that "thousands of innocent people had been killed because (Americans) are trying to find Osama bin Laden."

The New York Times report on this press conference was headlined "U.S. Turns to Radio Stations and Cell Phones to Counter Taliban's Propaganda," emphasizing what would seem to be a star project of Holbrooke's "counterinsurgency expert," Vikram Singh. It is to build a communications and media system that can reach into every Afghan village to deliver an anti-Taliban message.

As Afghanistan is a very large and mountainous country, and one of the poorest in the world, one would like to know his plan for regularly delivering replacement batteries necessary to millions of peasants to power the new cell phones they have been given, as well as supplying guards (from Blackwater?) to protect from the Taliban the thousands or tens of thousands of satellite receivers or relay stations necessary to deliver the Voice of America into Afghan homes.

Suppose the Taliban tap into the network and deliver their own messages? A learned friend of mine quoted Herbert Marcuse on this plan: "Reality is its own caricature."

Karzai, top rival run about even in Afghan returns - AP

http://news.yahoo.com/s/ap/20090825/ap_on_re_as/as_afghanistan

KABUL – President Hamid Karzai and his main rival, former Foreign Minister Abdullah Abdullah, were running virtually even Tuesday in the first fragmented returns from last week's Afghan election, raising the possibility of a runoff that could drag the process out for months.

The figures came from 10 percent of the more than 27,000 polling sites nationwide — too small a sampling either to draw a conclusion about the outcome or silence criticism that the ballot was marred by fraud and Taliban violence.

The U.S. and its NATO partners had hoped Thursday's election would produce a clear winner with a strong mandate to confront the growing Taliban insurgency, widespread corruption, narcotics and a stagnant economy.

The allegations threaten to discredit the eventual winner, stoke violence and cast doubt on the credibility of the Afghanistan democracy at a time when President Barack Obama and other Western leaders are considering investing more resources in an increasingly unpopular war.

Underscoring the crisis, a cluster of vehicle bombs detonated nearly simultaneously near a Japanese construction

company in the southern city of Kandahar, killing at least 41 people, flattening buildings and sending flames shooting into the sky. The thundering explosion occurred just after nightfall Tuesday in a district that includes U.N. facilities and an Afghan intelligence office.

Also in the south, a bombing killed four U.S. service members Tuesday.

The Independent Election Commission announced that Karzai was leading with 40.6 percent and Abdullah was trailing with 38.7 percent of the roughly 525,000 valid votes counted so far.

The U.S. government urged candidates to wait for more complete results. U.N. officials have also urged caution, fearing that a drumbeat of allegations and recriminations will poison the political atmosphere at a time when the part of society opposed to the Taliban must draw together.

"We call on all parties to refrain from speculation until national results are announced," State Department spokesman Ian Kelly said.

Abdullah showed reporters a packet of ballots with an official stamp on the back — used to mark cast ballots — nearly all checked for Karzai. He also showed video of what he said were Karzai supporters in eastern Ghazni province marking dozens of ballots for their candidate, and a picture of a polling site in the south showing people he said were Karzai campaign officials looking over the shoulders of voters.

"If the widespread rigging is ignored, this is the type of regime that will be imposed upon Afghanistan for the next five years and with that sort of a system, a system that has destroyed every institution, broken every law," Abdullah said at a news conference just before the results were announced.

The election commission said it fired four election workers in northern Balkh province for attempted fraud. Photographs showed three trying to vote with multiple cards, while the fourth was ordering voters to cast ballots for a specific candidate, said Daoud Ali Najafi, the commission's chief electoral officer.

The six other presidential candidates who cited fraud said in a statement that dozens of complaints filed could affect the outcome of the election "to the point that many are seriously questioning the legitimacy and credibility of the results."

"Fraud in the elections could result in increased tension and violence," the six added

Assessing the Afghanistan Election - The Numbers

<http://blogs.abcnews.com/thenumbers/2009/08/assessing-the-afghanistan-election.html>

Final estimates from good-quality pre-election polls conducted very close to election day typically do predict election outcomes accurately

But the two pre-election polls we saw out of Afghanistan appear so problematic

One of these polls was released Aug. 9 by an outfit called Glevum Associates, which appears from its website to be a military contractor engaged in producing psychological operations data as part of a U.S. Army counterinsurgency program, the Human Terrain System. The New York Times identified its poll as "financed by the United States

government,” with no details; AP and Reuters did similarly.

Glevum did not return our repeated calls and e-mails for details, both methodological and in terms of the survey’s sponsorship, at the time of its release.

Its full questionnaire, essential in discerning bias, was not released (rather, we got a PowerPoint summary).

The other pre-election poll was released Aug. 14 by the International Republican Institute, described in the Times’ pickup of the poll as “a nonprofit pro-democracy group affiliated with the Republican Party and financed by the American government.” The IRI puts out a fair amount of polling, and has steadily refused our requests over the years for greater details about its methodology, questionnaires and results.

IRI’s release does not indicate that it asked respondents whether or not they were registered to vote – seemingly an important criterion – yet goes on to identify a “likely voter” population.

Both polls produced estimates of support for Karzai, in early to mid-July, in the mid-40s.

leave open the question of whether that’s confluence, or mere coincidence.

Having been covered as meaningful pre-election estimates, these polls might now be used as part of the assessment of the election outcome itself

Doing so would require confidence in the estimates – something that should be based more than simply on a release of results, but on full disclosure of sponsorship, methodology, questionnaire and relevant data, with a willingness by the data providers to answer follow-up questions.

Karzai widens lead in Afghan vote count - AP

http://news.yahoo.com/s/ap/20090826/ap_on_re_as/as_afghanistan

President Hamid Karzai extended his lead over his top challenger in Afghanistan's presidential election, new vote results showed Wednesday, but remains short of the 50 percent threshold that would allow him to avoid a two-man runoff.

The latest returns boost Karzai's standing to 44.8 percent. Abdullah, a former foreign minister, now has 35.1 percent. The count is based on returns from 17 percent of polling stations nationwide, meaning the results could still change dramatically.

Although millions of Afghans voted last Thursday, apathy and fear of militant attacks meant turnout was down on the nation's first direct presidential election in 2004 that was swept by Karzai.

President Barack Obama ordered an additional 21,000 troops to the country this year, in part to help secure the elections. But violence has continued to rise.

- *That is precisely why the violence has continued to rise, the two things are not disconnected.*

NATO said two U.S. troops died Wednesday in two separate attacks, keeping August on pace to be the deadliest month

of the war for the U.S. military

The Taliban on Wednesday denied any responsibility for the attack in Kandahar

"We are denying responsibility, and condemn this attack in which innocent civilians were killed," [Taliban spokesman Qari Yousef Ahmadi](#) wrote in a text message sent to an Associated Press reporter.

Kandahar Gov. Tooryalai Wesa said officials could not yet say who was responsible.

An opinion poll taken in July showed 44 percent of Afghans would vote for Karzai, and 26 percent for Abdullah. The poll of 2,400 people was funded by the International Republican Institute, a non-governmental organization that receives funding from U.S. government aid arm USAID.

Ramazan Bashardost — a candidate likely to come in third in the election — stood up at Wednesday's news conference and told officials they were breaking the law by announcing results before the Electoral Complaints Commission carries out its work.

The complaints commission has received more than 1,400 complaints, more than 150 of which could affect the vote's outcome, said spokeswoman Nellika Little.

August deadliest month for US in Afghanistan - AP

http://news.yahoo.com/s/ap/as_afghanistan

An American service member died Friday when his vehicle struck a bomb in eastern Afghanistan, making August the deadliest month for U.S. forces in the nearly eight-year war

An airstrike by U.S. fighter jets that appears to have killed Afghan civilians could turn into a major dispute for NATO allies Germany and the United States, as tensions began rising between them Sunday over Germany's role in ordering the attack

Afghan officials announced an 80 percent increase in the number of major fraud allegations submitted after last week's disputed presidential election

both German and U.S. officials already appeared to be trying to deflect blame

deep challenges facing the U.S. and its allies in shoring up a legitimate Afghan government capable of withstanding the Taliban insurgency, corruption and drug trafficking.

[German Defense Minister Franz Josef Jung](#) said the Taliban's possession of the two tankers "posed an acute threat to our soldiers." German officials have said the tankers might have been used as suicide bombs.

"If there were civilian casualties or injuries, of course we deeply regret that. At the same time, it was clear that our soldiers were in danger," Jung said in comments to German broadcasters. "Consequently, I stand clearly behind our commander's decision" to order the air strike.

Meanwhile, Rear Adm. Gregory J. Smith, the top U.S. and NATO spokesman in the country, said German troops let too

many hours pass before visiting the site of the bombing Friday.

He explained that it's important to hold the ground after a strike and determine what happened before the enemy comes out with its own version of events.

"Why didn't RC-North come here quicker?" McChrystal asked Col. Georg Klein, the commander of the German base in Kunduz.

"I can honestly say it was a mistake," Klein answered, in a discussion witnessed by an Associated Press reporter.

On Sunday, Smith said that in McChrystal's judgment the response time "was probably longer than it should have been."

German troops in Afghanistan have long been criticized for avoiding combat operations, even as militants have increasingly infiltrated northern Afghanistan the last year, destabilizing the once-peaceful region.

At least 732 U.S. service members have died in the Afghan war since the U.S.-led invasion of late 2001. Nearly 60 percent of those deaths occurred since the Taliban insurgency began to rebound in 2007.

Whether the German commanders or the U.S. pilot are at fault for any civilian casualties may turn into an inner-NATO tussle.

a pilot can refuse an order to drop a bomb

A German Joint Terminal Air Controller, or JTAC

the rules for ordering an attack clearly state that the ultimate decision rests with the ground commander

But rules also require that both the pilot and the JTAC get a good positive identification of the target before the commander can order a weapon deployed, the JTAC said.

On Friday, the U.N.-backed Electoral Complaints Commission said the number of major fraud complaints which could "materially affect" the outcome had soared to 270. On Wednesday, the commission said it had received 150 major complaints, which could delay announcement of the final results.

he German Defense Ministry, meanwhile, pushed back against a story published in the Washington Post that German officials said painted their commander in a poor light and played up the U.S. version of events. The ministry said the article "will definitely influence at least the preliminary investigation by the various bodies."

The lengthy election process has added to strains in U.S.-Afghan relations, which had already cooled since the Obama administration took office.

"The Defense Ministry is very surprised about the unusual procedure of using a journalist as a source to reveal initial investigation results," the ministry said.

On Friday, two officials said Karzai angrily accused the U.S. of pushing for a runoff vote during a heated meeting with

the special envoy to the region.

According to officials familiar with the encounter, the verbal exchange occurred the day after the Aug. 20 vote during a meeting in Kabul between Karzai and U.S. special envoy Richard Holbrooke. The officials were briefed about the meeting and spoke on condition of anonymity because of the sensitivity of the information.

Karzai assured Holbrooke he would accept the election results but bristled when Holbrooke asked if he would also agree to a runoff.

An angry Karzai accused the U.S. of urging a second round before all votes had been counted. Karzai said he would accept the election commission's tabulation as long as it reflected the facts. He did not elaborate, according to the officials.

The director of an Afghan human rights group criticized NATO's International Security Assistance Force for the deaths. "It was carelessness in terms of ISAF using force without doing enough to investigate whether this is a civilian location," Ajmal Samadi of Afghan Rights Monitor said.

"They're as oriented toward staying in their armored vehicles as any group I've met," Cordesman said. "They're not active enough to present much of a threat to the Taliban most of the time."

The New York Times reported this week that the Obama administration is alarmed at the prospect that Karzai's running mate, Mohammad Qasim Fahim, may be linked to the drug trade.

Quoting an unidentified administration official, the newspaper said if Fahim becomes vice president, the U.S. would likely consider imposing sanctions such as refusing him a U.S. visa or going after his personal finances.

A U.S. official in Washington confirmed the essence of the report, saying there were "a number of individuals" whom the U.S. would not like to see in a future Afghan government.

Karzai widens lead in Afghan election race - AP

http://news.yahoo.com/s/ap/20090829/ap_on_re_as/as_afghanistan

President Hamid Karzai widened his lead over his main challenger in election returns released Saturday, creeping toward the 50 percent mark that would enable him to avoid a run-off in the divisive presidential contest.

Karzai's top challenger Abdullah Abdullah stepped up his fraud charges, raising doubts whether the former foreign minister's followers would accept the incumbent if he wins in the first round.

Fraud allegations from Abdullah and other presidential candidates as well as low turnout in the violent south could strip the election of legitimacy, not only among Afghans but also among the United States and its international partners that have staked their Afghan policies on support for a credible government.

A widely accepted Afghan government is one of the pillars of President Barack Obama's strategy to turn the tide of the Taliban insurgency.

Figures released Saturday show Karzai with 46.2 percent of the votes against Abdullah's 31.4 percent. The results are based on 35 percent of the country's polling stations, meaning the percentages could still change dramatically.

By contrast, Abdullah has been stepping up his charges, telling Italy's RAI television that Karzai was responsible for "state-crafted, massive election fraud."

"If we allow he who robbed the votes of this country to move forward, we would give the Afghan people a future that they do not want to see, and I think this goes also for the international community," Abdullah said in the Italian interview.

International officials — including Obama, the top U.N. official in [Afghanistan](#) and the European Commission — were quick to congratulate Afghans for pulling off the vote in the face of Taliban threats and violence.

But the massive fraud allegations that have surfaced since then have cast a dark shadow over the process, and some officials are withholding judgment on whether the election was credible.

Senior officials from 27 countries — including special U.S. envoy Richard Holbrooke — are to meet in Paris on Wednesday to discuss Afghanistan, and the disputed election is likely to dominate the agenda.

Let me pay tribute to the courage, bravery, professionalism and patriotism of our forces," Brown told the troops at the British base in [Lashkar Gah](#), capital of Helmand province. "I think our forces have shown extraordinary courage during this period. They know the reason why we are here and that is our security at home depends on a stable Afghanistan, no return of the Taliban, and no role for al-Qaida in the running of Afghanistan."

Major fraud allegations in Afghan vote top 550 - AP

http://news.yahoo.com/s/ap/20090830/ap_on_re_as/as_afghanistan

Major allegations of fraud in Afghanistan's presidential election have topped 550, more than doubling the figure investigators reported just two days earlier, officials said Sunday.

ballot box stuffing and voter intimidation

A delay could create a power vacuum in Afghanistan and the volume of allegations could foment violence if people feel they have been cheated.

On Sunday, an election official was attacked in the south. Gunmen on motorbikes drove up to the home of the second-highest electoral official in Kandahar province and shot him as he walked out of his front gate to go to work, said Mohammad Samimi, a spokesman for the provincial electoral commission.

The independent Electoral Complaints Commission has received more than 2,000 allegations of fraud and intimidation on voting day or during the subsequent counting of ballots, said Nellika Little, a spokeswoman for the group.

Of those, 567 have been deemed serious enough to affect the outcome of the poll if proved true

The widespread fraud allegations have raised concerns about whether Afghans will accept the certified results. Voting day was marred by low turnout amid Taliban threats and attacks.

Several presidential candidates have leveled accusations of fraud, including allegations that electoral officials forced voters to cast ballots for certain candidates and marked unused ballots for their candidate after election day.

Abdullah and other candidates have produced videos documenting many allegations.

Abdullah Abdullah warns survival of Afghanistan is at risk - Telegraph

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/asia/afghanistan/6105494/Abdullah-Abdullah-warns-survival-of-Afghanistan-is-at-risk.html>

Abdullah Abdullah, the main challenger to Hamid Karzai, said he had been shocked at the scale of vote-rigging in the August 20 poll, which threatened to remove all legitimacy from the government.

He said he would exhaust all legal avenues to counter what he alleged was "state-engineered fraud", but said if that was unsuccessful he would not recognise the elections.

His comments will heighten fears that if the election is widely perceived to be stolen, the country could be shaken by destabilising demonstrations or unrest.

Election officials have said they have contingency plans to deal with "Iran-style" protests

Dr Abdullah told the Daily Telegraph: "I think if the process doesn't survive, then Afghanistan doesn't survive.

"Because what does that mean? The same sort of regime that crafted this massive, massive rigging will be imposed upon Afghanistan for another five years.

"On top of whatever problems this government, this administration had, there will be its illegitimacy.

"We will exhaust all legal avenues. But finally, if it worked, all well, if it didn't we will not accept the legitimacy of the process and then this regime will be illegitimate."

A Western diplomat said a regime thought to be fraudulently elected would struggle to bring security in the face of a worsening Taliban insurgency.

"Abdullah is enough of a diplomat that he knows he cannot threaten protests while the count is under way, even if in political discussions he lets it be known that such developments would be difficult to stop."

He said: "They cannot pressure me to be part of a mafia system, a 'narcostate' as they themselves defined it.

He added: "The international community must be aware of the conduct of this regime and I don't think they would like me to be part of this."

Ballots, bullets and bombs in Afghanistan - The Big Picture - Boston.com

http://www.boston.com/bigpicture/2009/08/ballots_bullets_and_bombs_in_a.html































Hamid Karzai in fiery row with US official - Times Online

<http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/Afghanistan/article6814965.ece>

EXPLOSIVE details have emerged of an encounter between Hamid Karzai, the Afghan president, and Richard Holbrooke, the US envoy to Afghanistan and Pakistan.

At one point the Afghan president whipped off his distinctive karakul sheepskin hat and slammed it onto the table where the two men were having dinner, a day after the disputed August 20 election.

“For an Afghan man to do that, it’s a big gesture,” said a local businessman. “It’s like throwing down the gauntlet.”

When the two men clashed, Karzai’s campaign team had already claimed victory, fuelling accusations that the election was rigged. At that point there had been no official results.

When Holbrooke raised the possibility of a run-off, Karzai flew into a rage and accused Holbrooke of forcing a second round “against the interests of Afghanistan”.

“They were discussing different scenarios and one of them was the possibility of a run-off,” said a Karzai insider. “That’s when there was a misunderstanding. There were strong words from both men.”

a spectacularly low
turnout in the war-torn south

A good national turnout: between 40 and 45 percent | The AfPak Channel

http://afpak.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2009/08/21/a_good_national_turnout_between_40_and_45_percent

turnout had already declined from 70 percent to 50 percent between 2004 and 2005

Already in 2005 many of the voters I interviewed blamed that decrease on growing frustration and disillusionment with the poor performance of the Karzai government

Given the 50 percent turnout rates of 2005, and the much worse security environment and disillusionment in 2009, any turnout rate between 40 and 45 percent in 2009 would seem to be quite good, and much higher than that bordering on suspicious

If there isn't massive ballot box stuffing, and voters only vote once, turnout rates should also be lower simply due to the implausibly high voter registration figure of 17 million voters.

In discussions about turnout rates in the south, it's important to note that turnout for the 2004 presidential election was only 53 percent, which declined sharply to 29 percent for the 2005 parliamentary election

Zabul and Uruzgan had the lowest 2005 turnout rates in the country of 20 and 23 percent respectively.

I would be surprised if overall turnout in the south was much higher than 20 percent in 2009

The 55 percent turnout rates in 2005 in the southeast were suspiciously high given the security situation, and support the reports of massive ballot box stuffing (or "proxy voting") in the female polling stations

The central region dominated by Kabul had a 60 percent turnout rate in 2004, which declined to 36 percent in 2005. The turnout rate in Kabul province in 2005 was only 33 percent, not much higher than the rates in the insecure south.

Low Kabul figures could also partly reflect a better educated and more cynical and disillusioned electorate

Paktika also had suspiciously high female turnout rates, so much so that in 2005 the JEMB did not post the figures on its website (which is why those figures are missing from the table).

Reports of large-scale ballot box stuffing in female polling stations, is probably an even more important factor (especially in the southeast).

Several of the candidates I interviewed highlighted their concerns about ballot box stuffing in the female polling stations

They noted that outside of Kandahar city they and their polling agents hardly saw any female voters on election day, and in some stations none at all, but then the ballot boxes came back to the counting center in Kandahar full.

Registration of new voters highlights that use of female voter registration cards to rig the elections is a high risk

Tribal Leaders Say Karzai's Team Forged 23,900 Votes - NYTimes.com

http://www.nytimes.com/2009/09/02/world/asia/02fraud.html?_r=3&hp=&pagewanted=all

Just a week before this country's presidential election, the leaders of a southern Afghan tribe called Bariz gathered to make a bold decision: they would abandon the incumbent and local favorite, **Hamid Karzai** http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/people/k/hamid_karzai/index.html?inline=nyt-per , and endorse his challenger, **Abdullah Abdullah** http://topics.nytimes.com/topics/reference/timestopics/people/a/abdullah_abdullah/index.html?inline=nyt-per .

The leaders of the tribe, who live in a district called Shorabak, prepared to deliver a local landslide.

But it never happened

Instead, aides to Mr. Karzai's brother Ahmed Wali — the leader of the Kandahar provincial council and the most

powerful man in southern Afghanistan — detained the governor of Shorabak, Delaga Bariz, and shut down all of the district's 45 polling sites on election day. The ballot boxes were taken to Shorabak's district headquarters, where, Mr. Bariz and other tribal leaders said, local police officers stuffed them with thousands of ballots.

At the end of the day, 23,900 ballots were shipped to Kabul, Mr. Bariz said, with every one marked for President Karzai.

"Not a single person in Shorabak District cast a ballot — not a single person," Mr. Bariz said in an interview here in the capital, where he and a group of tribal elders came to file a complaint. "Mr. Karzai's people stuffed all the ballot boxes."

the number of complaints about vote stealing and other forms of fraud had reached 2,615.

Mr. Karzai's campaign is accused of forging ballots, stealing votes and preventing people from going to the polls.

An election widely perceived as having been stolen **could deal a serious setback to the Obama administration**

<http://www.nytimes.com/2009/08/22/world/asia/22kabul.html>

When election day finally came, the ballots were never delivered to the polling centers in Shorabak, said two Bariz tribal leaders who were charged with overseeing the sites. Instead of going to the polling places, all the ballots and ballot boxes were delivered to the district government's headquarters. That place, the tribal leaders said, had been commandeered by the Afghan Border Police.

"The border police were stuffing the ballots, hundreds of them, into the boxes," he said. "And there were other people who were counting the ballots and keeping the records."

Calls for Afghan election run-off as fraud concerns grow | World news | The Guardian

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2009/sep/02/afghanistan-elections-vote-run-off>

Britain is coming under pressure to back a risky and potentially violent run-off in the Afghan elections because of evidence of vote-rigging and fraud that has led critics to claim the results are unreliable.

the scale of the fraud would make it impossible to believe that a **Hamid Karzai** <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/hamid-karzai> election victory was fair, or that the results would be seen as legitimate in **Afghanistan** <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/afghanistan>

The prime minister has suggested that the election be seen in the context of the violent disruption caused by **Taliban** <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/taliban> fighters.

Richard Holbrooke, the US special envoy, has not stated whether there should be a fresh poll but is reported to have the support of the French, Germans and British for a run-off between President Karzai and his chief challenger, Abdullah Abdullah, if the results are not clear.

Figures show Karzai is creeping up to the 50% threshold; the commission reported today that he had won 47.3% of the vote, while Abdullah had 32.6%. More than 60% of the vote had been counted.

Greg Pope, a **Labour** [<http://www.guardian.co.uk/politics/labour>](http://www.guardian.co.uk/politics/labour) member of the foreign affairs select committee, said: "The point of British forces being in Afghanistan is that there is a free, stable, and democratic country."

Growing Accounts of Fraud Cloud Afghan Election - NYTimes.com

<http://www.nytimes.com/2009/08/31/world/asia/31fraud.html?pagewanted=all>

A Kabul teacher assigned to run a polling station in this village arrived at 6 a.m. on Election Day to find the ballot boxes already full, well before the voting was to start.

Western officials say they are increasingly ill at ease with the prospect of a national government in limbo even while American and **NATO** [<http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/organizations/n/north_atlantic_treaty_organization/index.html?inline=nyt-org>](http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/organizations/n/north_atlantic_treaty_organization/index.html?inline=nyt-org) troops are pressed by the **Taliban** [<http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/organizations/t/taliban/index.html?inline=nyt-org>](http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/organizations/t/taliban/index.html?inline=nyt-org) in a new phase of war that commanders concede is not going well.

"It does indicate there were a lot of allegations that have to be taken seriously, and if fraud did take place, that it was systematic," said Martine van Bijlert, an analyst with The Afghanistan Analysts Network, an independent policy research organization.

Yet this election has surpassed previous ones in the scale of bribery, corruption of election officials, ballot stuffing and altering the count, election observers and political analysts said.

Opponents of Mr. Karzai have accused the local member of Parliament, Hajji Mullah Tarakhel Mohammadi, of organizing the ballot stuffing in Pul-i-Charkhi in order to deliver thousands of votes in favor of Mr. Karzai. The scale is such that it will change the overall result for Kabul Province, they said.

Mullah Tarakhel is a leader of the Kuchi tribe, traditionally nomadic Pashtuns estimated to number more than a million people, and he boasted that across 18 districts of Kabul Province, Kuchis produced 180,000 votes for Mr. Karzai. Just in this dusty settlement on the eastern edge of the capital city, nearly 50,000 people voted, so many that they needed more ballots, he said.

claims were put in doubt after a British journalist, Tom Coghlan of The Times of London, visited the settlement, just half an hour from the center of the city, on the morning of the elections

Mr. Coghlan arrived at the Hajji Janat Gul High School an hour after the polls had opened, and found no voters. But he did find 12 ballot boxes already full. The lists indicated 5,530 people had already voted, an impossibility in such a short time.

A week later there were few traces of the election at the Hajji Janat Gul High School, except for a broken ballot box seal and a pink sheet posted on a classroom wall showing the ballot count.

The numbers had been visibly altered and did not tally.

The total ballots cast were 600, but Mr. Karzai was shown to have 996 votes. Two other candidates won 4 votes and 1.

“We will give them a chance to see how they announce the results; otherwise, if the results are announced with fraud, then our people will go out on the streets all over the country to protest,” he said.

Mr. Abdullah, whose main aim is to win enough to force a runoff, accused Mr. Karzai last week of “state-engineered fraud,” and challenged the world not to turn a blind eye. On Saturday his campaign team posted video clips of reported instances of fraud.

Other suspicious cases have been found in places like Paktika Province, where the votes counted have outnumbered the registered voters in some areas, said one of the election commission chairmen, Fahim Hakim.

In Helmand Province, where the heaviest fighting against the Taliban is happening, even the province’s election commissioner, Abdul Hadi, expressed surprise in an interview at how high the reported turnout had been.

International election observers who have been working for months in Afghanistan said the problem was not just individual cases of ballot stuffing, but systemic and institutional corruption. The election commission, supposedly independent, is heavily politicized, from the chairman down to local district officials appointed by the government, said one election observer, who spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to talk publicly about the process. “The whole mechanism is flawed and the people in the system will perpetuate the fraud,” he said.

Setback in Afghanistan: The Right Response Is Not a Retreat. - washingtonpost.com

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/09/02/AR2009090203083.html?hpid=opinionsbox1>

LAST MONTH **we expected** <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/08/19/AR2009081903425.html> that Afghanistan's elections would mark a modest step forward for the country. Now it appears that they could be a major reverse.

Election Day itself is emerging as a disaster of relatively low turnout and **massive irregularities**

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/08/23/AR2009082300411.html>

Unless the fraud can be reversed or repaired through a U.N.-backed **complaints commission**

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/09/01/AR2009090102843.html> or a runoff

vote, Mr. Karzai may emerge as a crippled winner, his already weak and corruption-plagued administration facing further discredit or even violent protests.

This grim prospect is particularly worrisome because the United States and its allies were counting on the election to provide the Afghan government with a new lease on public support

They hoped the vote would be followed by a drive to reform both national and local administrations and extend their authority to areas where only the Taliban has been present.

That construction of government capacity -- call it nation-building if you like -- is essential to the counterinsurgency strategy adopted by U.S. commanders during the last year and embraced by President Obama in March.

'Britain's view of the Afghan election is nonsensical and dangerous' | Bronwen Maddox: Commentary - Times Online

It is a dangerous position for Britain to maintain that the Afghan election is legitimate until proved otherwise.

Mr Abdullah was talking to foreign governments, said Zalmay Younosi, his campaign chief in six northern provinces. "But if there is no result, then it is protest and violence," he warned. Hence the new notion of a national unity government, which would shoehorn Mr Abdullah and some of his chosen ministers into a Karzai Cabinet, as the price of peace. But that is a long, long way from the vision of "rough and ready" but credible elections that British officials thought was possible just a fortnight ago.

BBC NEWS | South Asia | Afghan election fraud row mounts

http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/8236450.stm

The leader of Kandahar's Bareez tribe says that nearly 30,000 votes were cast fraudulently for President Hamid Karzai instead of a challenger.

Speaking to Daud Qarizadah of the BBC's Persian television service, the Bareez tribal leader, Haji Mohammed Bareez, said that ballot boxes from one district were "stuffed" with fraudulent votes in favour of Mr Karzai.

On election day it says its district polling stations were shut down and the ballot boxes brought to district headquarters in Kandahar where they were stuffed with votes in favour of Hamid Karzai.

Mr Bareez said: "Nobody participated in the polling from Shorabak district. No ballot box was brought here. They themselves filled the boxes with ballot papers. As I know 29,823 ballots went into the boxes from this district."

More than 400 insurgent attacks on polling day, Nato says

A result is scheduled for 17 September but fraud allegations must be cleared before it is made official.

Western powers have played down concerns over fraud although they have stressed a fair outcome is vital.

US envoy to Afghanistan and Pakistan Richard Holbrooke said at a meeting on Afghanistan in Paris on Wednesday that irregularities were normal in any democracy.

A few brave Afghan women managed to vote despite the obstacles, but this is only the first step - By Mona Sarika | The AfPak Channel

http://afpak.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2009/09/03/they_came_they_voted_but_did_they_conquer

Votes thrown out at 447 Afghan polling sites - AP

http://news.yahoo.com/s/ap/20090906/ap_on_re_as/as_afghan_election

Afghan election officials say they have thrown out votes at 447 voting sites across the country because of fraud allegations

The Aug. 20 ballot has been marred by accusations of vote-rigging and election officials said they threw out results from 447 out of more than 26,000 polling sites because of fraud allegations

With 74 percent of [polling stations](#) counted, Karzai is leading with 48.6 percent. Top challenger Abdullah Abdullah has 30.1

Former Foreign Minister Abdullah on Saturday urged the election commission to stop announcing preliminary results because of "highly suspicious numbers" in tallies released so far.

He said a number of polling stations posted nearly identical numbers for Karzai and none for any other candidate. The challenger alleged electoral officials were beholden to Karzai, who appointed them.

"It is state-engineered fraud. It is not violations here and there," Abdullah said.

Afghanistan: Will the U.S. Settle for Karzai? - TIME

<http://www.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,1920280,00.html?xid=rss-fullworld-yahoo>

Having made no secret of its dissatisfaction with Karzai's performance as President, the White House may now have to deal with an ally who feels slighted and scorned — and who has little incentive to go along with U.S. goals in Afghanistan

He was feted as an Afghan Mandela by the Bush Administration and enjoyed unparalleled access to the White House. Bush and Karzai routinely chatted in videoconferences. Obama, however, has treated the Afghan leader like spoiled fruit.

An early portent of the change came during the presidential campaign last year, when Joe Biden visited Karzai in Kabul. The two men got into a verbal duel over questions of corruption in the Afghan government; Biden stormed out in the middle of dinner. In a society where decorum is paramount, this was deeply humiliating for Karzai — especially since word quickly got to the press.

After Obama's Inauguration, things got worse. Officials in the new Administration made no secret of their contempt for Karzai, whom they viewed as spineless and inefficient, too tolerant of drug smugglers

Secretary of State Hillary Clinton has described Karzai's administration as a "narco-state."

And last week, another meeting with a visiting American — special envoy Richard Holbrooke — descended into angry words.

"The challenge is to ensure that the election doesn't end up dividing the country," says a U.S. official familiar with Afghan policy.

"We need to turn the clock back — take Karzai back to where he was in 2003-'04," says the U.S. official. That was before the Afghan leader had made questionable deals with warlords and tribal chieftains and looked the other way as drug smugglers grew ever more powerful.

Karzai, however, may be in no mood to go back. If he wins the election, it will be in no small part because those very warlords and chieftains delivered big blocks of votes. If anything, he will be even more indebted to them.

But Afghanistan experts worry that Karzai will be passive-aggressive: not openly opposing the U.S. but deliberately

dragging his heels when it comes to cleaning up corruption and reforming his administration.

rampant corruption has contributed to the resurgence of the Taliban in the past two years. "If Karzai continues down the same path, it will be hard to fight the insurgency," says Tellis.

"He understands that continued support from the West is contingent on some accommodation,"

- *One of the writer's erroneous assumptions: Karzai does not need to accommodate the West, because if he wins they are forced to deal with him for as long as they choose to continue their occupation. Karzai knows that he is a middleman, and will still be in a position to make most use of the NATO presence.*

Afghanistan's Election Vote Count: Room for Mischief? - TIME

<http://www.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,1918850,00.html>



One video, allegedly shot in Ghazni province, showed a man stuffing a ballot box. Another featured a child at a table marking ballots for the same candidate. Additional footage appeared to show Karzai campaign officials looking over the shoulders of voters as well as a polling station that apparently remained open two days after election day.

Abdullah warned that if such evidence is ignored, "this is the type of regime that will be imposed on Afghanistan for the next five years. With that sort of system — with a system which has destroyed every institution, broken every law — Afghanistan cannot succeed."

There are also those who say the entire tabulation process is inherently flawed. **Ramazan Bashardost**

<http://www.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,1916541,00.html>, the parliamentarian and anti-corruption maverick who ran third in exit polls, says the Electoral Complaints Commission is breaking the law by releasing figures before completing its investigation into alleged vote-rigging.

Bashardost suspects there is a plot to gradually increase one candidate's margin of victory; by stretching it out over an extended period of time, it may dampen the anger of rivals.

"It's a preparation," Bashardost says. He contends that the U.S. is playing a role in manipulating the outcome and that Washington is planning to broker a deal among the leading candidates to get the process over with.

Election Day in Afghanistan - Photo Essays - TIME

http://www.time.com/time/photogallery/0,29307,1917614_1923346_last,00.html

Why a Contested Afghan Election Result Could Help the U.S. - TIME

<http://www.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,1918110,00.html>

U.S. advisers had made clear that regardless of who won the election, Washington planned to use the leverage derived from the dependency of any Afghan on Western military and financial support to reorganize the way the country is governed

- *That works both ways: the US is dependent on having a government leader in place and can't afford to make the situation look like a form of direct colonial rule that renders the elections utterly meaningless. Committed to the process of "creating democracy," the West is now stuck with the results.*

The last thing the U.S. counterinsurgency effort needs is for Karzai to be returned on a winner-takes-all basis, owing countless political favors to local level warlords whose interests run counter to good governance — and using a popular mandate as a basis to resist U.S. efforts to weed out corruption and cronyism

Afghanistan's current system of government, in U.S. thinking, requires the proverbial re-break and reset in order to create a regime sufficiently responsive and accountable to its own citizenry to give the counterinsurgency campaign a better chance of defeating the Taliban

Observers say neat Afghan vote totals show fraud - AP

http://news.yahoo.com/s/ap/20090907/ap_on_re_as/as_afghan_election

At the Afghan polling station called Haji Nehmetullah House, every one of the 725 votes cast during the country's Aug. 20 election went to President Hamid Karzai. At another site, Haji Akhtar Mohammad House, the incumbent got each of the precisely 400 ballots cast.

An Associated Press examination of returns shows what officials said Monday appear to be highly suspicious — and improbable — results.

Stations across Afghanistan's south gave Karzai 200, 250 or 500 votes, according to figures compiled by the Independent Election Commission.

A senior Western diplomat alleged Monday that a majority of the votes in three provinces — Kandahar, Paktika and Khost — are fraudulent.

At the Zoor District Center in Paktika province, Karzai got 300, 250, 200 and 200 votes at four of the center's six polling stations. As of Monday, the votes were still listed as part of the overall tally.

A Western elections expert in Kabul called such returns "illogical."

Afghan and international officials had predicted that vote fraud would occur, but hoped the election would be credible overall. Instead, the scale of the accusations and the questionable returns has thrown the ballot process in doubt.

The elections expert, meanwhile, said many of the suspicious results came from voting stations that didn't exist, supposedly located in remote parts of the country that Afghan tribal chiefs knew observers couldn't reach and where security forces would not be posted.

He said there were likely as many as 800 such fake polling sites.

"The amount of allegations indicate that there has been massive fraud, but we need to wait for the Election Complaints Commission to do its investigations," said Haroun Mir, the director of Afghanistan's Center for Research and Policy Studies.

A U.S. Embassy spokeswoman, Caitlin Hayden

"A legitimate electoral process is vital to the ability of the international community to partner with a newly elected Afghan government."

The Independent Election Commission on Monday took down results it had previously posted on its Web site that showed Karzai won 4,085 and 4,049 of votes cast at two polling stations in Kandahar province.

These were among about 12,000 votes once counted for Karzai that the IEC has withdrawn, according to an Associated Press review of voting data.

the panel is also studying allegations that election officials have received returns from polling stations that were never approved to open, or shut down by violence or closed for other reasons on [election day](#).

After adding high levels of vote fraud, "you have to ask what are our sons and daughters dying for. It's hard to make the case it's for democracy."

In an interview published Monday in the French newspaper Le Figaro, Karzai said "the Americans" were attacking him secretly because they would like him to be more docile, but that "nobody has an interest in the Afghan president becoming an American puppet."

One government official, the diplomat said, told him tribal voting patterns explained the overwhelming margin of victory Karzai had in some voting centers. The diplomat responded: "Is it also true that you always organize yourself into groups of 500?"

Among the 12,000 Karzai votes withdrawn on Monday were 950 votes from the Hasti village mosque in [Paktika](#) province. Karzai had received 350, 350 and 250 votes at the mosque's three polling sites — 100 percent of votes cast.

Afghanistan: Hamid Karzai's supporters 'set up 800 fake polling stations' - Telegraph

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/asia/afghanistan/6151162/Afghanistan-Hamid-Karzais-supporters-set-up-800-fake-polling-stations.html>

Up to 800 fake polling stations were set up by Hamid Karzai's supporters to give him thousands of fraudulent votes in

the Afghan presidential elections, it has been alleged.

The "ghost" polling stations were reported by the *New York Times* to have returned thousands of votes for Mr Karzai when in fact they existed only on paper.

His followers also commandeered a further 800 polling stations and used them to report tens of thousands more fake votes, Western officials told the New York Times.

The rigging was so profound that in some provinces the number of pro-Karzai votes could be ten times the actual turn-out.

One senior Western diplomat told the newspaper: "We think that about 15 percent of the polling sites never opened on election day.

"But they still managed to report thousands of ballots for Karzai."

In Kandahar, Mr Karzai's home province, more than 350,000 votes have supposedly been cast, while Western officials estimated about 25,000 actually voted there.

The international community rushed to declare the Aug 20 poll a success and has since kept a public silence over the vote rigging claims.

Fake Afghan Poll Sites Favored Karzai, Officials Assert - NYTimes.com

http://www.nytimes.com/2009/09/07/world/asia/07fraud.html?_r=2&hp=&pagewanted=all



Afghans loyal to President **Hamid Karzai** http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/people/k/hamid_karzai/index.html?inline=nyt-per set up hundreds of fictitious polling sites where no one voted but where hundreds of thousands of ballots were still recorded toward the president's re-election, according to senior Western and Afghan officials here.

The fake sites, as many as 800, existed only on paper, said a senior Western diplomat in Afghanistan, who spoke on the

condition of anonymity because of the political delicacy of the vote.

“We think that about 15 percent of the polling sites never opened on Election Day,” the senior Western diplomat said. “But they still managed to report thousands of ballots for Karzai.”

Besides creating the fake sites, Mr. Karzai’s supporters also took over approximately 800 legitimate polling centers and used them to fraudulently report tens of thousands of additional ballots for Mr. Karzai, the officials said.

in some provinces, the pro-Karzai ballots may exceed the people who actually voted by a factor of 10

American officials hoped that the election would help turn Afghans away from the Taliban by giving them a greater voice in government

Instead, the Obama administration now faces the prospect of having to defend an Afghan administration for the next five years that is widely seen as illegitimate

“This was fraud en masse,” the Western diplomat said.

Most of the fraud perpetrated on behalf of Mr. Karzai, officials said, took place in the Pashtun-dominated areas of the east and south where officials said that turnout on Aug. 20 was exceptionally low. That included Mr. Karzai’s home province, Kandahar, where preliminary results indicate that more than 350,000 ballots have been turned in to be counted. But Western officials estimated that only about 25,000 people actually voted there.

A senior American official said Sunday that they were looking into the allegations behind the scenes. “An absence of public statements does not mean an absence of concern and engagement on these issues,” the official said.

But a different Western official in Kabul said that there were divisions among the international community and Afghan political circles over how to proceed.

the next four or five days would decide whether the entire electoral process would stand or fall. “This is crunch time,”

Adding to the drumbeat, on Sunday the deputy director of the Afghan Independent Election Commission said that the group was disqualifying all the ballots cast in 447 polling sites because of fraud.

Officials in Kabul say it will probably take months before the Election Complaints Commission, which is dominated by Westerners appointed by the **United Nations** [<http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/organizations/u/united_nations/index.html?inline=nyt-org>](http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/organizations/u/united_nations/index.html?inline=nyt-org) , will be able to declare a winner

Such an interregnum with no clear leader in office could prove destabilizing

Many of the allegations come from Kandahar Province, where Mr. Karzai’s younger brother, **Ahmed Wali Karzai** [<http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/people/k/ahmed_wali_karzai/index.html?inline=nyt-per>](http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/people/k/ahmed_wali_karzai/index.html?inline=nyt-per) , is the chairman of the provincial council and widely regarded as the most powerful man in the region

Last week, the governor of Shorabak District, which lies in Kandahar Province, claimed that Hamid Karzai’s allies shut

down all the polling centers in the area and falsified 23,900 ballots for Mr. Karzai.

“Now people understand who has come to power and how.”

Hajji Abdul Majid, 75, the chief of the tribal elders council in Argestan District, in Kandahar Province, said that despite the fact that security forces opened the town's polling place, no one voted, so any result from his district would be false.

“If Karzai is re-elected, people will leave the country or join the Taliban.”

More evidence of fraud has emerged in the past few days. In Zangabad, about 20 miles west of Kandahar, local residents say no voting took place on Aug. 20. The village's single polling site, the Sulaiman Mako School, is used by Taliban guerrillas as their headquarters, the residents said

Despite the nonexistent turnout, Afghan election records show that nearly 2,000 ballots were collected from the Sulaiman Mako School and sent to Kabul to be counted by election officials

Haji Agha Lalai is a senior member of the provincial council in Kandahar, where Panjwai is located. As a candidate for re-election, he sent election observers across the area, including to Panjwai. In an interview, Mr. Lalai said that only “five or six” polling centers were open in Panjwai District that day — far fewer than the 16 claimed by the Afghan government.

Western hypocrisy - elections in Iran vs... | Gather

<http://www.gather.com/viewArticle.action?articleId=281474977803058>

The "evidence" that Iranian election were stolen was the fact that the results were released too quickly.

This was enough for Western politicians and media to condemn the Iranian regime and cause rage and protests of the Western public.

On the other hand, the overwhelming evidence that Hamid Karzai, the Western puppet in Afghanistan, has clearly stolen the election is not causing any rage and protests.

Nearly 20 percent of the voters <<http://www.gather.com>

</viewArticle.action?articleId=281474977791529>> registered for the recent Afghan election were under age - in many cases as young as 12 years old.

Thousands of voting cards have been offered for sale and thousands of dollars offered in bribes to buy votes two days before the elections.

According to the most recent allegations <<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews>

[/asia/afghanistan/6151162/Afghanistan-Hamid-Karzais-supporters-set-up-800-fake-polling-](/asia/afghanistan/6151162/Afghanistan-Hamid-Karzais-supporters-set-up-800-fake-polling-stations.html)

<stations.html>> , "up to 800 fake polling stations were set up by Hamid Karzai's supporters to give him thousands of fraudulent votes."

In the case of Iran, no one waited to see if the allegations were true. The politicians and the media in the West attacked the Iranian regime without seeing any real proof of vote rigging.

In the Afghan case, **we are told by the British ambassador** <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/8207315.stm> to Afghanistan that any election, even the stolen election, is better than not having an election at all.

BBC NEWS | South Asia | Afghan election fraud is unearthed

http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/8207315.stm

An investigation by the BBC has found evidence of fraud and corruption in Afghanistan's presidential election. Thousands of voting cards have been offered for sale and thousands of dollars have been offered in bribes to buy votes.

An Afghan working for the BBC went undercover, posing as a potential buyer. He was offered 1,000 cards on the spot. Each one would cost about \$10 (£6).

Others have also offered to sell us thousands of votes



The Free and Fair Election Foundation of Afghanistan (FEFA), an independent monitoring group, has collected evidence of fraud, in particular during the registration process.

It found that in many places people were being issued with more than one voting card, that children were being given them and that stacks of cards were issued to men who falsely claimed they were for women in their household.

Government workers - supposed to be impartial - have actively and illegally campaigned for candidates.

Shahzad Akbar, a senior analyst with FEFA, says that because they were only able to investigate a few parts of the country, the abuses could be even more widespread.

"We couldn't observe how it went in every single district or village. I am sure that there are cases of multiple card distribution that we don't know about.

"If one candidate gives \$10,000, then the other gives \$20,000 and a third one offers even more. It has become such a lucrative and competitive business. I don't know where they get their money from."

Mark Sedwill, the British ambassador to Afghanistan, insists that whatever the problems, it is still better than not having an election at all.

"If this was a western European country with a population at peace, then the kind of difficulties we're going to face wouldn't be acceptable," he said.

"But we're working up from zero. And this election will be better than the last one, it's run by the Afghans themselves and I suspect - and hope - that the parliamentary election next year will be better and that the next presidential election

will be better again.

"So it's not a question of reaching some standard that's unobtainable - we have to remember the situation we're in."

200,000 Afghanistan ballots rejected due to fraud | World news | guardian.co.uk

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2009/sep/08/afghanistan-election-ballots-rejected-fraud>

Results from 447 polling stations thrown out as UN calls for further measures to counter vote-rigging

Around 200,000 ballots in **Afghanistan** [<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/afghanistan>](http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/afghanistan) 's troubled presidential election have been rejected because of fraud, officials revealed today as the UN called for further measures to counter widespread vote-rigging in the poll.

He added: "In some areas the turnout was higher than the number of ballots we sent to the polling station."

There could be as many one million fraudulent votes in the poll [<http://abcnews.go.com/International/us-call-karzai-vote-fraud-allegations/story?id=8510990>](http://abcnews.go.com/International/us-call-karzai-vote-fraud-allegations/story?id=8510990) , western officials told the US broadcaster ABC News. It reports that UN and US summoned Karzai to an emergency meeting to object the count of "knowingly" fraudulent votes.

A senior Western diplomat told Associated Press that a majority of the votes in Kandahar, Paktika and Khost are fraudulent.

BBC NEWS | South Asia | Recount clouds Karzai poll lead

http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/8244215.stm

Latest results from Afghanistan's presidential election show President Hamid Karzai with 54.1% of the vote after 92% of polling stations declared.

atest results from Afghanistan's presidential election show President Hamid Karzai with 54.1% of the vote after 92% of polling stations declared.

The results push President Karzai past the 50% threshold needed to avoid a run-off with rival Abdullah Abdullah.

But the figures were thrown into doubt by the UN-backed election complaints commission ordering a number of recounts and audits of votes.

It warned that it had found "clear and convincing evidence of fraud".

8 Sep: Poll complaints body orders some recounts nationwide

8 Sep: IEC says votes from 600 polling stations "quarantined"

3 Sep: Claims 30,000 fraudulent votes cast for Karzai in Kandahar

30 Aug: 2,000 fraud allegations are probed; 600 deemed serious

20 Aug: Election day and claims 80,000 ballots were filled out fraudulently for Karzai in Ghazni

18 Aug: Ballot cards sold openly and voter bribes offered

Results from a number of polling stations showed President Karzai winning 100% of the vote.

Analysts say that a second round of voting, if needed, would be difficult to hold beyond the end of October because of Afghanistan's extreme weather.

Panel Orders Recount as Tally Gives Karzai 54% - NYTimes.com

http://www.nytimes.com/2009/09/09/world/asia/09afghan.html?_r=2&hp



The **United Nations** [<http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/organizations/u/united_nations/index.html?inline=nyt-orq>](http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/organizations/u/united_nations/index.html?inline=nyt-orq) -backed commission serving as the ultimate arbiter of the Afghan elections announced Tuesday that it had found “clear and convincing evidence of fraud” in a number of polling stations and ordered a partial recount even as election officials declared that President **Hamid Karzai** [<http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/people/k/hamid_karzai/index.html?inline=nyt-per>](http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/people/k/hamid_karzai/index.html?inline=nyt-per) had won a majority in the preliminary vote count.

With 91.6 percent of the polling stations counted, they said, Mr. Karzai had won 54.1 percent of the vote, and his main challenger, the former foreign minister **Abdullah Abdullah** http://topics.nytimes.com/topics/reference/timestopics/people/a/abdullah_abdullah/index.html?inline=nyt-per , won 28.3 percent.

But officials from the **Independent Election Commission** <http://www.iec.org.af/> said they had set aside results from hundreds of polling stations where irregularities were suspected, and it appeared possible that the investigations into fraud could change the results.

the **Electoral Complaints Commission** <http://www.ecc.org.af/en/> , an Afghan and international panel that will certify the final count, said it had found a “clear pattern” of fraud in the polling stations it investigated in the southern and eastern provinces of Kandahar, Paktika and Ghazni.

The ballot boxes, the commission said, were tainted in one of two ways: either they were stuffed with an “exceptionally high number of presidential votes” in relation to the number of ballots available, or they contained an “exceptionally high percentage of votes” cast for one candidate, or both

The audits, which affect an unknown number of polling stations, will be conducted in the presence of international and Afghan observers, and ballots ruled to be fraudulent will be discarded, the commission said. The process is expected to take weeks.

About 5.7 million votes have been tallied so far, but some 224,000 have been thrown out because the candidate had withdrawn or because of technical problems with the ballot, like a vote cast for not one but two presidential candidates. The elections commission said Tuesday that an additional 200,000 votes were discarded because of fraud

The confirmation of significant fraud places the Obama administration in a difficult position as it seeks to shore up domestic and international support for the expanding Afghan war

American officials have said little publicly about how they will respond to the vote-rigging accusations

Afghans loyal to Mr. Karzai set up hundreds of fictitious polling sites where no one voted but where hundreds of thousands of ballots were still recorded toward the president’s re-election

Besides creating the fake sites, Mr. Karzai’s supporters also took over approximately 800 legitimate polling centers and used them to fraudulently report tens of thousands of additional ballots for Mr. Karzai, the officials said.

in some provinces, the pro-Karzai ballots may exceed the people who actually voted by a factor of 10

a senior Western diplomat said. “This was fraud en masse.”

In Mr. Karzai’s home province, Kandahar, preliminary results indicate that more than 350,000 ballots have been turned in to be counted, but the Western officials estimated that only about 25,000 people actually voted there

More than 2,300 complaints of electoral misconduct have been lodged with the commission

Al Jazeera English - CENTRAL/S. ASIA - Karzai 'wins Afghan poll majority'

Hamid Karzai has won 54.1 per cent of the vote in the race for the Afghan presidency - above the 50 per cent needed to avoid a run-off poll, partial results indicate.

Al Jazeera's James Bays, reporting from Kabul, said: "If these results were to stand, that would mean this is all over - no second round and President Karzai is once again the president of Afghanistan.

"But things are not that simple."

The Associated Press: Afghan recount ordered; Karzai nears outright win

<http://www.google.com/hostednews/ap/article/ALeqM5gH6zTk0ZvJG1jIu7bpEh3P2uECEwD9AJ7AAG0>

A U.N.-backed commission Tuesday ordered a recount of tainted ballots from the Afghan presidential vote, saying it had "convincing evidence of fraud," even as President Hamid Karzai for the first time surpassed the threshold needed to avoid a run-off and win re-election.

Doubts are growing about the Aug. 20 election's credibility, a key step in U.S. and European efforts to strengthen the Afghan government and bolster declining support for the almost eight-year war against a spreading Taliban insurgency.

recounting votes could take "two months or three months," suggesting the already overextended election is likely far from over

The Afghan-run election commission has already quarantined ballots from more than 600 polling stations ruled to have been suspected of fraud, out of more than 26,000 stations.

The election commission has tallied dozens of voting sites where Karzai won neatly rounded blocks of ballots — 200, 300 and 500 votes — results that one Western official labeled "illogical."

Stations showing 100 percent turnout or with a presidential candidate receiving more than 95 percent of the vote will need to be audited and recounted, the commission said in a statement.

Grant Kippen, a Canadian and the chairman of the Electoral Complaints Commission, said the irregularities found include ballots not being folded — meaning they would not fit in a ballot box slot — identically marked ballots and overly large counts at polling stations.

Kippen said he saw a ballot box with 1,700 ballots in Kandahar, even though the maximum should be 600. He stressed that the commission is making its decisions without considering the impact on the election.

Najafi, of the Afghan-run Independent Election Commission, said some vote numbers were "suspicious" and that the results "did not match with the reconciliation form" used to double-check results.

"In some areas the turnout was higher than the number of ballots we sent to the polling station," Najafi added. He said the ballots have been sent to the U.N.-backed complaint commission, which will decide if any can eventually be

included in the official count.

The top U.N. representative in Afghanistan, Kai Eide, called on Afghan election officials to exclude ballots from the vote count that have "evidence of irregularities."

A senior Western diplomat alleged Monday that a majority of the votes in three provinces — Kandahar, Paktika and Khost — are fraudulent

Others have said there have been as many as 800 fake polling sites from which tallies came in.

Afghan recount ordered because of fraud charges - AP

http://news.yahoo.com/s/ap/20090909/ap_on_re_as/as_afghan_election

The image of a crooked Afghan president rigging the vote threatens to discredit the entire U.S.-led mission here at a time when NATO casualties are mounting and American, European and Canadian voters are fatigued and disenchanted with the war.

"The perception of fraud will shorten the length of time that one can expect foreign support," said [Ronald E. Neumann](#), a former U.S. ambassador to Afghanistan. "People will just get disgusted. They'll say, `Why do I sacrifice my son for a leadership that cannot rally the country fairly?'"

Four more U.S. troops were killed Tuesday during what the military labeled a "complex attack" in eastern Kunar province. August was already the deadliest month of the eight-year war for both U.S. troops and the entire NATO force at the hands of a resurgent [Taliban](#) in southern Afghanistan.

Obama ordered 21,000 additional troops to the country this year with the immediate goal of ensuring a safe and credible election

Daoud Ali Najafi, [chief electoral officer](#) of the Afghan-run election commission, said recounting votes could take "two months or three months."

Election monitors cry foul as Karzai vote hits 54 per cent - Times Online

<http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/Afghanistan/article6825972.ece>

David Cameron condemns 'naked' corruption in Afghan election | Politics | guardian.co.uk

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/politics/2009/sep/09/cameron-condemns-naked-corruption-afghan>

In remarks recorded by the BBC, Tory leader goes much further than Gordon Brown in criticising conduct of poll

Britain and other countries involved in the Nato mission in Afghanistan have been reluctant to condemn the irregularities strongly, partly because supporters of the president, Hamid Karzai, have been blamed for the worst abuses and partly because corruption undermines the case for military intervention.

he BBC broadcast comments Cameron made about the election yesterday when he was being filmed having a supposedly private conversation with William Hague, the shadow foreign secretary.

"The things that seem to have happened are so naked, you know, you just saw the number of voters and the number of people who actually turned up at polling stations, it just couldn't possibly be right," Cameron said.

Hague said that he remembered the same thing happening in an election in Nigeria in 1979. Cameron then said: "We should be very clear about that."

Hague did not demand a second round of voting in Afghanistan, but he suggested that this could become necessary.

"We are very concerned about the widespread reports of irregularities and fraud in the elections in Afghanistan. It is very important for the success of what our troops are doing in Afghanistan that the Afghan people accept the legitimacy of the government," Hague said.

Hague said that the UN-backed Electoral Complaints Commission should be allowed to finish its investigation into fraud and that Karzai should not declare victory until its work was over, "even if it means delaying the provisional result of the election".

He went on: "If the Electoral Complaints Commission requires some elections to be rerun, that should happen. Nor should a full second round of the election be ruled out if that proves necessary."

in a letter also signed by Angela Merkel, the German chancellor, and Nicolas Sarkozy, the French president, Brown was much more positive about the elections.

"With the holding of its second presidential elections Afghanistan marks an important step in its democratic history," the three leaders said, in a letter addressed to the UN secretary general, Ban Ki-moon.

"This is not only a time for the Afghan people to look back and be proud of their achievements of the last years, but also to look ahead and express their hopes and expectations."

Afghanistan's Abdullah warns of instability after poll | World | Reuters

<http://uk.reuters.com/article/idUKLA62691320090910?feedType=RSS&feedName=topNews&sp=true>

The main challenger in Afghanistan's disputed election has accused the commission counting the vote of bias in favour of President Hamid Karzai.

Abdullah Abdullah said the Independent Election Commission was corrupt and helping to rig the vote in favour of Karzai.

"It's not independent at all; it's on President Karzai's side," he said. "It has been corrupt, and their malpractice is now widespread.

Western officials initially hailed the election as a success because the Taliban militants failed to scupper it.

Fraud commission excludes ballots in Afghan vote - AP

http://news.yahoo.com/s/ap/20090910/ap_on_re_as/as_afghan_election

The U.N.-backed commission investigating fraud in Afghanistan's election issued its first orders Thursday to exclude

some ballots from the final tally.

A U.N.-backed fraud commission threw out votes Thursday from 83 polling stations and ordered recounts at hundreds of others in three provinces that form Afghan President Hamid Karzai's political base, reducing his chances of avoiding a runoff.

A U.S. monitoring group has said "large numbers of polling stations" had more than 100 percent turnout

All ballots from five polling stations in Paktika province should be voided because they show clear evidence of fraud, the Electoral Complaints Commission said in a statement

Decisions by the commission are final under Afghanistan's electoral law. The group is releasing decisions from each province as investigations finish.

International censure of the vote has increased since Tuesday, when election officials released preliminary results from 92 percent of polling stations showing Karzai had finally passed the 50 percent threshold needed to avoid a runoff. The voiding of ballots Thursday could change these results.

if the U.N.-backed Electoral Complaints Commission invalidates enough votes, Karzai's margin could drop below 50 percent, forcing him to face Abdullah one-on-one in a second round of voting.

Decisions by this fraud commission are final under Afghanistan's electoral law. The group — comprised of one American, one Canadian, one Dutch, and two Afghans — is releasing decisions from each province as investigations finish.

The complaints commission ordered an audit and recount countrywide of stations where turnout was at or above 100 percent, or where one candidate won more than 95 percent of the vote.

On Thursday, the commission threw out ballots from 51 polling stations in Kandahar province, 27 in Ghazni and five in Paktika

Although it did not say how many ballots were invalidated, thousands are likely involved. It ordered election officials to recount votes in hundreds of other voting centers across the three districts in the presence of observers, commission members and representatives of the candidates.

The Washington, D.C.-based National Democratic Institute said its analysis of results found large numbers of stations with more than 600 votes — the 100 percent mark — in Nuristan, Paktia, Helmand and Badghis provinces, along with others.

The Karzai-appointed Independent Election Commission, which is conducting the count, says it has deducted questionable votes from its totals.

But that commission's Web site still lists results from one polling center in the Kandahar city of Spin Boldak where Karzai received exactly 3,000 votes, 600 from each of the five polling stations.

"Of course there were fears and concerns about the possibility of fraud or rigging," Abdullah told the AP. "But ... when you investigate it, then you see that the whole thing was state-engineered and unfortunately in collaboration with the IEC (Independent Election Commission), in most cases."

The Electoral Complaints Commission has received more than 2,800 complaints about polling day and the counting process, of which 726 have been deemed serious and specific enough to affect polling station results.

Investigators examined only a portion of the ballots in voting centers where there were complaints. In Kandahar's Shorabak District they examined 15 out of 41 polling stations. Officials found evidence of ballot stuffing in every one they looked at.

Election officials have said they are holding back suspicious results, but they appear to be using a different metric than the complaints commission because voting center results in which candidates won more than 95 percent of the vote have been posted, along with stations that have tallies higher than 600.

In Spin Boldak, investigators found "clear and convincing evidence of ballot stuffing" in 17 of 27 polling stations checked, resulting in the invalidation of more than 6,000 ballots.

A top official with the IEC, the Karzai-appointed Afghan election commission, has said that recounting ballots at so many polling sites could take months. That raises the question of when a second-round election could even be held, given Afghanistan's harsh winters.

Some Western officials have floated a national unity government led by Karzai as a way to ease the electoral crisis and avoid a potentially messy runoff. But Abdullah ruled out that possibility Thursday, telling the AP that he would not accept a position in a new Karzai government.

Asked if that meant no, Abdullah loudly spelled out his response: "N-O."

U.S. Embassy Kabul: September 8, 2009: U.S. Statement on Election Process | Facebook

http://www.facebook.com/note.php?note_id=134935462530

Ashraf Ghani for President » Joint Statement from Afghan Presidential Candidates

<http://ashrafghani.af/campaign/archives/1236>

Don't dismiss the Afghan election | Jawed Ludin | Comment is free | guardian.co.uk

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2009/sep/02/afghan-election-fraud-politics>

To be sure, despite the low turnout and the many complaints, this election was a hugely successful experiment for Afghanistan in every other respect

To begin with, we saw, for the first time, a transition away from ethnic politics in Afghanistan

The top four presidential candidates did not correspond to the four main ethnic groups of the country, nor did any of them solely appeal to their individual ethnic group for support

The very idea of a serving president being challenged while still in office is a tremendously important legacy for the future of democratic politics in Afghanistan.

As far as the question of fraud is concerned, the reported scale, if substantiated, would indeed be tragic – even though the actual reality may be more mixed than its overblown portrayal in the media

I'd like to be positive and optimistic, but the assumption that "one size democracy" suits all has gone wrong in more places than Afghanistan. The foreign forces in Afghanistan initially seemed happy to admit it was mostly about closing down Al Qaeda training camps - and the notion of "democracy" seems like a bit of an afterthought. A useful hook on which to hang the occupation.

"the operation was a great success but the patient died....."

This election has been a farce and the more you try to defend it as a success the deeper you expose its failure

Democracy my arse. A tacky smokescreen for western mainstream media to confer legitimacy on another bloody resource war of choice.

People seem to be forgetting that Karzai is a stooge placed in position by the neocons, and ex-employee of Unocal (anyone remember them? The ones who wanted to build the oil pipeline through Afghanistan). Even if the Afghans elect a radical, secular leader instead of him who wants to unite the country, bring peace and change, the Americans will decide that he's not the *right kind* of elected democratic leader and intervene the way they have done (and continue to do) in Latin America as we speak...

A complete waste of our youngmen's lives. we capture the culprits at great loss, only to have the Afghans let them go. its not worth the bother.

Not a bad effort but I am reminded of the definition of an ambassador

An honest man sent abroad to lie for his country

The assertions of Jawed's article is refuted by a multitude of articles in the international press, and therefore has no need of my adding comments as to its merits.

Afghanistan and its Election on Twitter: The Macro Picture : Web Ecology Project

<http://www.webecologyproject.org/2009/09/afghanistan-and-its-election-on-twitter-the-macro-picture>

Data Summary

- 111,741 tweets posted between August 11, 2009 and September 9, 2009
- 11,255 tweets on August 20, 2009, Afghanistan's presidential election day
- 29,642 users talked about Afghanistan in our dataset

- Top 10% of tweeters contributed 65% of tweets (same as Iran Election)
- Number of retweets for a user was not correlated to their tweeting volume (same as Iran Election)
- 483 hashtags were used at least 3 times
- No single, dominant hashtag (differs from Iran Election)
- 3 most used hashtags: #Afghan09, #Afghanistan, and #AfghanElection

Here at the Web Ecology Project, we wondered if Twitter would play as significant a role in reporting the election as it did in Iran

In a country where mobile phone subscriptions add up to **an estimated 50% of the population**

<https://www.budde.com.au/Research/Afghanistan-Telecoms-Mobile-Internet-Forecasts.html> , but **internet access was roughly 1.5%** <http://www.internetworldstats.com/asia/af.htm> at last estimate with the status of **network expansion [pdf]** <http://www.mcit.gov.af/Documents/RunningProjects/Fiber.pdf> unclear, could the available ICT infrastructure and awareness of social media prompted by the “twitter revolution” in Iran enable a similar phenomenon post-August 20?

Using these search terms, we have archived 111,741 tweets posted between 11:00pm EDT on August 11 and 11:00pm EDT on September 9, including a complete set of 11,255 tweets from the day of the election.

We also compiled a list of Dari and Pashto search terms that correspond with our English search terms. These have yielded only 3389 tweets over the same time period

August 20, election day, saw the most activity on twitter—over 10% of all tweets across our 28-day dataset

The spike on that day begins between 10:00pm and 11:00pm EDT (UTC-4:00) on August 19, which coincides with the opening of polls in Afghanistan at 7:00am AFT (UTC+4:30), August 20

The steepness of the above curve illustrates that the top 10% of users contributed 65.3% of all tweets, which is almost identical to the distribution found for the Iran Election tweets

The top tweeters on Afghanistan are more heterogeneous in their affiliations than the the top retweeted users. A number of high profile news organizations, individual journalists, and official and semi-official military channels comprise the list of top retweeted users

One significant difference between Iran and Afghanistan is the lack of a common hashtag like #iranelection

Although no protests have ensued, Twitter activity has been kept alive by regular **reports of official vote counts and allegations of voter fraud** <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/f3a03082-9cd7-11de-ab58-00144feabdc0.html> —spiking a more consistent conversation about the war

The next step in this project is to analyze the evolution of the conversation and its key players over time

Beyond quantitative analysis, this effort will require a qualitative classification of users to better understand the nature of the user population (Daniel Bennet's "**Who to follow: Twitter for the Afghanistan election**")

<http://frontlineclub.com/blogs/danielbennett/2009/08/tweeting-from-afghanistan.html> offers a good starting point)

Frontline Club - Daniel Bennett - Reporting War: Who to follow: Twitter for the Afghanistan election

<http://frontlineclub.com/blogs/danielbennett/2009/08/tweeting-from-afghanistan.html>

In Afghanistan

@ashrafghani <http://www.twitter.com/ashrafghani> - Dr Ashraf Ghani, Presidential candidate.

@KevinFlowerCNN <http://twitter.com/KevinFlowerCNN> - CNN Correspondent.

@hamishreporter <http://twitter.com/hamishreporter> - Hamish Macdonald, Al Jazeera English Correspondent and Presenter.

@itamena <http://www.twitter.com/itamena> - Helped her aunt vote **earlier** <http://twitter.com/itamena/statuses/3421578478> and has **a blog** <http://kabulem.blogspot.com> .

@jimsciuttoABC <http://twitter.com/jimsciuttoABC> - Jim Sciutto, Foreign Correspondent, ABC News.

@nickschifrin <http://twitter.com/nickschifrin> - Nick Schifrin, ABC News Reporter.

@W7VOA <http://twitter.com/W7VOA> - Steven Herman, Voice of America South Asia bureau chief, Kabul

@AfghanCorner <http://www.twitter.com/AfghanCorner> - **Bashir Ahmad Gwakh** <http://afghancorner.blogspot.com/> , freelance journalist.

@Orzala <http://www.twitter.com/orzala> - Human rights and civil society activist, Kabul.

@DemocracyIntl <http://www.twitter.com/DemocracyIntl> - **Election observation mission** <http://democracyinternational.com/afghanistan/> in Afghanistan.

@alextomo <http://www.twitter.com/alextomo> - Alex Thomson, Channel 4 News, UK.

@j_trainer http://www.twitter.com/j_trainer%20 - Lisa Schnellinger, Journalism Trainer in Kabul.

@strickvl <http://www.twitter.com/strickvl> - Frontline blogger **Alex Strick van Linschoten** <http://frontlineclub.com/blogs/alex/> .

@felixkuehn <http://www.twitter.com/felixkuehn> - Felix Kuehn - Kandahar City (just **across the table** <http://twitter.com/felixkuehn/statuses/3402841403> from @strickvl).

@tomafg <http://www.twitter.com/tomafg> - Researcher/aid worker Tom Shaw.

@camomillan <<http://www.twitter.com/camomillan>> - Camilla Fuhr Journalist and **blogger**
<<http://inthesandbox.wordpress.com>> .

@AtiaAbawi <<http://www.twitter.com/atiaabawi>> - Atia Abawi **CNN Correspondent**
<http://edition.cnn.com/CNN/anchors_reporters/abawi.atia.html> .

@ruthowen <<http://www.twitter.com/ruthowen>> - **Ruth Owen** <<http://drymouth.tumblr.com/>> in Kabul.

@pajhwok <<http://www.twitter.com/pajhwok>> - **Afghanistan news agency** <<http://www.pajhwok.com>> .

@Hairan <<http://www.twitter.com/hairan>> - **Abdulhadi Hairan** <<http://www.abdulhadihairan.com/>> ,
Journalist, translator (via **@mikewhills** <<http://www.twitter.com/mikewhills>>).

@AfghanOldBlue <<http://www.twitter.com/afghanoldblue>> - US Army Afghan veteran paying a visit.

@michael_yon <http://www.twitter.com/michael_yon> - Front line **blogging** <<http://www.michaelyon-online.com>> journalist.

@jeromestarkey <<http://www.twitter.com/jeromestarkey>> - journalist and photographer.

@waterflows <<http://www.twitter.com/waterflows>> - **Jennifer McCarthy**
<<http://waterflows.typepad.com/>> , PhD researcher.

@Peettv <<http://www.twitter.com/peettv>> - Peter ter Velde, war correspondent, NOS Dutch TV (via
@martijnkleppe <<http://www.twitter.com/martijnkleppe>>).

About Afghanistan

@AfPakChannel <<http://www.twitter.com/AfPakChannel>> - News from **ForeignPolicy.com**.
<<http://www.foreignpolicy.com/afpak>>

@2dayAfghanistan <<http://www.twitter.com/2dayAfghanistan>> - Updates from Thomas Willard.

@BaghdadBrian <<http://www.twitter.com/baghdadbrian>> - Brian Conley - Running **@SmallWorldNews**
<<http://www.twitter.com/SmallWorldNews>> and the **Alive in Afghanistan**
<<http://aliveinafghanistan.org/>> project.

@Anon_Cow <http://www.twitter.com/anon_cow> - Security consultant in Pakistan.

@Kabulistan <<http://www.twitter.com/kabulistan>> Jan Dimog (left Afghanistan a couple of days ago).

@AfghanNews <<http://www.twitter.com/AfghanNews>> - News updates

Military

@AFGMatters <<http://www.twitter.com/AFGMatters>> - NATO project officer, **Video Contest**
<<http://contest.afghanistanmatters.com/>> , **JFC Brunssum** <<http://www.jfcbs.nato.int/>> , (I didn't
know what this was either) US Army.

@odonnellm <<http://www.twitter.com/odonnellm>> - Martin O'Donnell, NATO Media Operations Officer in Kabul

@Afghanistanlast <<http://www.twitter.com/Afghanistanlast>> - Rex Temple, Senior US NCO **on mission** <<http://afghanistanmylasttour.com/2009/08/19/election-mission-air-force-style/>> - might not tweet 'til he gets back.

@natochannel <<http://www.twitter.com/natochannel>> - NATO journalists.

@nato_news <http://www.twitter.com/nato_news> - You can work this one out yourself.

@USEmbassyKabul <<http://www.twitter.com/USEmbassyKabul>> - Ditto.

@ISAFmedia <<http://www.twitter.com/ISAFmedia>> - International Security Assistance Force (NATO).

@usfora <<http://www.twitter.com/usfora>> - US Forces in Afghanistan.

@afghanistanwar <<http://www.twitter.com/afghanistanwar>> - Department of Defense US confirmed casualties.

@gregjulian <<http://www.twitter.com/gregjulian>> - Public Affairs Officer for US forces in Afghanistan.

@mediaops <<http://www.twitter.com/mediaops>> - Major Paul Smyth - British Forces, PJHQ in Northwood, UK.

'No winners' yet as Afghans examine vote fraud - AP

http://news.yahoo.com/s/ap/20090912/ap_on_re_as/as_afghan_election

The U.N. mission in Afghanistan warned Saturday there are "no winners" yet in the country's presidential election, as the Afghan [election commission](#) prepared to release full results for the first time.

results won't be certified as final until those investigations are complete.

"There are no winners in this election yet," said Aleem Siddique, a U.N. spokesman.

"Afghanistan's election commission still has to conduct a partial recount from suspect districts. The election commission is also required to annul returns from polling stations where there is clear evidence of irregularities, as ordered by the Electoral Complaints Commission. Only after these actions have been taken can any provisional results be finalized," he said.

threatening Afghanistan's political stability at a time of rising Taliban violence and an increased U.S. military presence

Afghans question what democracy has done for them - AP

http://news.yahoo.com/s/ap/20090914/ap_on_re_as/as_afghan_elections

Millions like Khan stayed home on Aug. 20, a sharp contrast to 2004, when Afghans jammed polling stations to give [President Hamid Karzai](#) his first term

Ominous warnings from the Taliban suppressed turnout, but some Afghans said they were also discouraged by the

government's failure to halt endemic corruption, spiraling unemployment and crumbling security.

Nearly a month after Afghanistan voted, the election's messy aftermath has exposed the difficulties of installing a Western-style democracy in a land that has never seen one — and raised questions over whether an electoral system can take root eight years after the U.S.-led invasion that ended Taliban's radical Islamist rule.

The country's election commission originally hoped to declare a certified winner this week, but claims of ballot-stuffing and phantom voters have pushed that timeline back weeks, if not months, leaving the country in political limbo at a time the Taliban is unleashing a record number of attacks

He's one of the few people he knows who voted at all. Last election, there were hundreds of people waiting in line at his polling station; this year, there were 10.

"I do not believe we can build a democratic state in Afghanistan," Sen. Diane Feinstein, a Democrat from California, told CNN on Sunday. She said American troops in the country should focus on preventing the Taliban from returning to power.

A six-month study by the Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit, an independent think tank in Kabul, indicates that Afghans are disillusioned with their experience of democracy so far.

Most of the dozens of Afghans interviewed defined democracy as a foreign import associated with Western values, Larson said. Many had expected the new system would automatically bring peace, prosperity and clean government — and expressed bitterness that it has not.

Preliminary numbers indicate turnout will be around 35 percent of the 17 million registered voters, down by half from the 70 percent who voted in 2004.

It's not yet possible to calculate the exact election turnout, but it appears to be low

Recount order affects 10 pct of Afghan vote sites - AP

http://news.yahoo.com/s/ap/20090915/ap_on_re_as/as_afghan_election

Ballots from about 10 percent of Afghanistan's polling stations must be recounted because of suspicions of fraud in last month's presidential election, according to an order from a U.N.-backed body, an official said Tuesday.

More than 2,500 polling sites from the Aug. 20 presidential election need to be recounted, said Grant Kippen, the head of the Electoral Complaints Commission, a U.N.-backed body headed by three international and two Afghan commissioners.

"We will press for an investigation of all fraud allegations," German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier said at a meeting of EU foreign ministers in Brussels on Tuesday. "It is important that the elected president is recognized and respected by the entire population of Afghanistan."

The 27-nation EU has already backed off its initial positive assessment of the Afghan elections. The bloc fears doubts about the Afghan regime's electoral legitimacy would make it more difficult to justify the military effort and spending billions in EU aid to taxpayers at home.

Spokesman Fazel Sancharaki said the Abdullah campaign believes 20 percent to 25 percent of polling stations should be voided for fraud. "We expected much more" than 10 percent, Sancharaki said.

Full preliminary results expected from Afghan vote - AP

http://news.yahoo.com/s/ap/20090916/ap_on_re_as/as_afghan_election

Afghan election officials plan to release the full preliminary results Wednesday from last month's presidential vote, though the much-delayed total has lost some significance in an election now likely to be determined by the outcome of fraud investigations.

With about 93 percent of preliminary results already released, President Hamid Karzai leads top challenger Abdullah Abdullah with 54 percent of the vote, comfortably above the 50 percent threshold needed to avoid a runoff.

a U.N.-backed group investigating fraud has ordered a massive audit and recount of at least 10 percent of voting stations, meaning that enough votes could end up being thrown out to push Karzai below 50 percent.

About 27 percent of results published so far indicate fraud, the European Union's election observation team said.

Spokesman Haseebullah Shinwary said the EU team counted about 1.5 million suspicious ballots among the 5.5 million released so far as valid, using fraud triggers such as overly high turnout or a preponderance of votes for one candidate.

Final, certified results cannot be released until all investigations, audits and recounts are finished, making results from the fraud-tainted election likely to be weeks away.

U.S. and U.N. election observers say they believe any potential runoff needs to be held before winter sets in to avoid a delay until spring that would leave the country with a potential power vacuum as the Taliban increases its attacks. Certified results originally were to have been released this week.

Outside monitors have accused the Afghan election commission, which is run by Karzai appointees, of loosening its own fraud-identification measures part way through the counting.

The deputy head of the U.N. mission here said the commission had voted 6-1 for a formula to root out corrupt ballots, only to reverse itself the next day, claiming it had no legal way to enforce those standards. The official, Peter Galbraith, left Afghanistan this weekend after a dispute with his boss, Kai Eide, over the U.N.'s best approach to the allegations of fraud.

Public Propaganda, The Human Terrain System, and Staged Democracy in Afghanistan « OPEN ANTHROPOLOGY

<http://openanthropology.wordpress.com/2009/09/17/public-propaganda-the-human-terrain-system-and-staged-democracy-in-afghanistan>

The World From Berlin: 'The Day Afghanistan Was Lost' - SPIEGEL ONLINE - News - International

<http://www.spiegel.de/international/world/0,1518,649640,00.html>



This week EU observers announced that at least a quarter of the votes cast in Afghanistan's presidential election were suspect.

filled with foreboding about the troubled nation's future

The results of Afghanistan's latest presidential election have become a serious problem for both the incumbent Afghan President Hamid Karzai and those Western governments invested in the war-torn country's future.

Of nearly 6 million votes, 1.5 million were suspicious, the European Commission announced. An election monitor said 1.1 million of the suspect ballots were votes for Karzai, and 300,000 for his closest opponent, former Afghan Foreign Minister Abdullah Abdullah.

The center-right daily **Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung** writes:

"As many as one-fourth of the ballots cast in Afghanistan's election were falsified or tampered with, according to EU observers. That is disastrous. It raises the question -- can the international community work with Karzai, apparently the main beneficiary of the fraud, in all good conscience? And it undermines the legitimacy of the country's central government externally as well as internally. Two questions need to be answered: Is there an alternative to Karzai? The Afghans themselves need to answer that question, with as little interference from outside as possible. But that could lead to violent conflict, which raises the second, and most important, question: Is it smart, in an unstable country with different codes of governance, to promote voting as the central tenet of political legitimacy? Instead of plunging the country into conflict with an election campaign, perhaps it would have been better to strengthen the rule of law and energetically fight corruption."

The left-wing **Berliner Zeitung** writes:

"The presidential election in Afghanistan on August 20 could go down in the history books as the beginning of the end. The day that Afghanistan was lost. The day a civil war developed. The day that the export of democracy at gunpoint ended. And the day that NATO underwent the biggest defeat since its inception. That is why western diplomats and military forces put so much energy into making sure the results were correct -- even though they didn't know what the correct results would mean for Afghanistan."

"But even when forgeries are spotted and votes recounted, even if there is a halfway clean election result, the country is still slipping steadily into a civil war. Karzai and his followers, mostly among the Pashtuns, would not accept a defeat.

The whole Karzai system of corruption, bribery and nepotism would collapse and many of his profiteers would lose their incomes. And the Pashtuns would never let themselves be ruled by Abdullah -- he is a Tajik, after all."

"In principle, this election is significant for two reasons: For one thing, it shows how bad the situation in Afghanistan really is. For another, it exposes the hypocrisy of western governments who consider the act of voting alone as a measure of democratic progress."

And the center-left **Süddeutsche Zeitung** writes:

"It would be better to leave the decision about what to do next to a Loya Jirga, a traditional Afghan council of elders.

Photo Gallery: The Afghan Disaster - SPIEGEL ONLINE - News - International

<http://www.spiegel.de/fotostrecke/fotostrecke-46581-7.html>



Afghan President Hamid Karzai: Even if many officials in his government are corrupt, the West should work as closely as possible with him to retain influence in the country. Less arrogance and more partnership, the involvement of the country's difficult neighbors, a crackdown on terrorists, protecting the population and providing systematic assistance to the Afghan people is the only way out of Afghanistan.

New evidence of widespread fraud in Afghanistan election uncovered | World news | The Guardian

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2009/sep/18/afghanistan-election-fraud-evidence>

The shaky footage shows two election monitors inspecting a book of 100 ballot papers that are still stitched together, as they were intended to arrive at the polling station in rural **Afghanistan** <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/afghanistan>. But something is wrong; instead of being pristine, ready for the voter to make his or her mark, each paper bears a large blue tick next to the name of one candidate: **Hamid Karzai** <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/hamid-karzai>.

As the monitors flick through the pad, the back of the ballots clearly show the authorisation stamp of election monitors, validating them as votes ready to be put in the ballot box and counted.

"We found it the day after the elections," one of the monitors in the footage told me. "They were trying to put it in one of the [ballot] boxes but didn't have time, so we took it home and filmed it. If we had given it back to the election committee they would have used it again, so we burned it, but filmed it to protect ourselves if they come and threaten us."

He showed me a series of photographs taken inside a brown cardboard voting booth in a village in Paktiya province of Afghanistan. One shows a man marking a big pile of ballot papers in the name of Hamid Karzai. Another shows a pile of election ID cards spread in front of an unidentified man wearing black shoes. "This man brought 120 cards and he used each of them to vote three times," said the official.

He had intended to hand his photographs to his superiors, he said, but as election day unfolded it became obvious that his superiors were themselves taking part in the fraud. "I thought I would give the pictures to the election committee. But they were all working for Karzai." Fearing he had been spotted taking the pictures, he fled to Kabul.

"Everyone was cheating in my polling station. Only 10% voted, but they registered 100% turnout. One man brought five books of ballots, each containing 100 votes, and stuffed them in the boxes after the elections were over."

"Personally on polling day I put in 10 ballots," said another. "I took my voting card and the cards of the women in my family and went to the polling station. No one said anything to me. All the women's votes were cast in this way."

"On polling day the people who did the cheating were the officials," he said. "They worked for the candidates." His family had voted, he said, but the women hadn't gone to the polling station. Their ballots were sold to the candidates' representatives. "Only four old women cast their votes."

"It was all cheating on election day," he said. "Each candidate had his men cheating for him in the polling station and they all knew the others were cheating. Even I cheated," he said. "I didn't want to, but when I saw everyone cheating, I put 20 ballots in for Ashraf Ghani [a former finance minister], and then I called all my friends in other villages and we collected more ballots for him."

"In the beginning I thought of selling my 20 cards to Karzai or Abdullah, but then I said no, they have enough votes." He showed me three identical voting cards with his name and picture. "It was so easy to get those," he said.

"Karzai and Abdullah had their men in the polling station, but there was no one for [Ghani], so we cheated for him. He is a very educated man and with good strategy for Afghanistan. Also we are all from his tribe in this area. I tried to put my extra ballots in our polling station, but I had some enemies who tried to take my picture so I went to another polling station and no one asked to ink my finger or anything, they just said bring cards and put them in the box. It was a very

happy day.

"Karzai's men were paying 1,000 Afghani per family and Abdullah's were paying 1,500 Afghani. But many people took money from Abdullah and voted for Karzai anyway."

"I was offered \$2,500 by Abdullah's team to work for them on election day, but I didn't," he said, describing a range of violations, from police ferrying voters so they could vote Karzai, to officials stuffing hundreds of ballots.

The village elders each took between \$8,000 and \$10,000, he said. "The election committee workers were very weak, so the representatives of each candidate took their 'own' boxes and started counting them."

Eight years after 9/11 Taliban now have a permanent presence in 80% of Afghanistan - International Council on Security and Development

http://www.icosgroup.net/modules/press_releases/eight_years_after_911

Eight years after 9/11 Taliban now has a permanent presence in 80% of Afghanistan

The Taliban now has a permanent presence in 80% of Afghanistan, up from 72% in November 2008, according to a new map released today by the International Council on Security and Development (ICOS). According to ICOS, another 17% of Afghanistan is seeing 'substantial' Taliban activity. Taken together, these figures show that the Taliban has a significant presence in virtually all of Afghanistan.

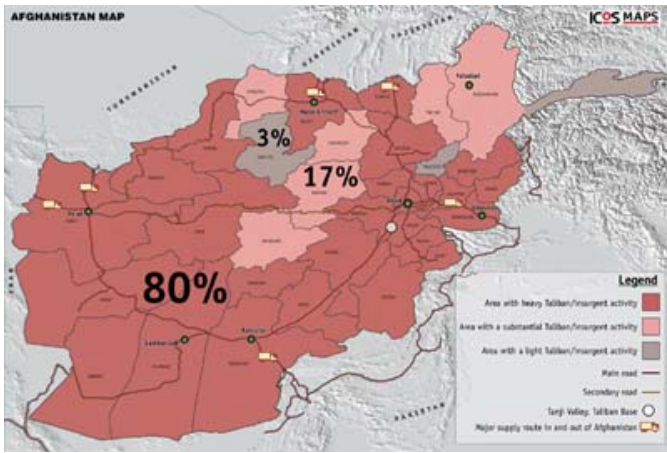
"Eight years after the 9/11 attacks, the Taliban has returned to touch almost every corner of Afghanistan", said Jackson.

The Afghan Electoral Law states an election run-off must be held "within 2 weeks after the announcement of the election results". However, a modified schedule had been organised stipulating a second round in the first days of October. As a result of the Electoral Complaints Commission stipulating recounts and audits, this schedule cannot be maintained and final results may well not be known for several weeks.

If a run-off or revote is necessary, this would be hampered in the next months by the harsh winter conditions in many areas of northern Afghanistan. This would delay the second round until spring – leaving Afghanistan in a constitutional vacuum for months. There are no provisions in the Afghan Constitution to allow President Karzai to continue in the Presidency in such circumstances.

"This raises the possibility of both a lack of legal authority in the Presidency and resulting political instability and government paralysis dragging on for many months," said MacDonald. "There are a lot of questions to be asked at the moment and no good answers being offered. Great uncertainties lie ahead."

"The Taliban has expanded its grip on Afghanistan to the point where holding another round of voting will be even more difficult. The Afghan people who did take the risk to vote in August may not be willing to risk their lives for a second round of voting - especially when the first round was so riddled with fraud", said Jackson.



Officials To Audit Sampling Of Suspect Afghan Ballots : NPR

<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=113184643>



Five weeks after Afghanistan's presidential elections, it's still unclear who will lead the country.

Afghan and international officials are now hoping to break the logjam by agreeing to review ballots at about 10 percent of the nearly 3,100 polling stations flagged as suspicious by a U.N.-backed watchdog.

Election officials will audit 313 polling stations to help determine which votes from the controversial election should be cast out. People who attended a closed-door meeting at the main United Nations compound Thursday say the polling stations where ballots will be reviewed are being kept secret for now to prevent tampering.

An Afghan pedestrian walks in front of a wall of torn posters of presidential and provincial candidates in Kabul on

Thursday. Five weeks after Afghanistan's presidential election, it's still unclear who will lead the country.

Saving time is crucial. Winter in this mountainous country is only a few weeks away, after which many roads will become impassable. That will make it impossible to hold a runoff election should enough votes be invalidated to require one.

The uncertainty is already paralyzing the Afghan government, which is seen by a growing number of people here as ruling without a legal mandate.

But like most other efforts by Afghan and international election officials here, the upcoming audit is generating nervousness and suspicion.

"What they've announced recently about the sampling, it is extremely unclear what they are talking about," said former Foreign Minister Abdullah Abdullah, Karzai's chief election rival. "We don't know. They say it has to be transparent, it has to be fair, but we don't know the details."

Many Western and Afghan election observers here say such grumbling is understandable. They argue allegations of fraud should have been dealt with more quickly and decisively by Afghan officials and the international community.

Afghan Election Mess Aiding Taliban's Propaganda - washingtonpost.com

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/09/20/AR2009092000995.html>

KABUL, Sept. 20 -- The big winner in the fraud-ridden, never-ending Afghanistan elections is turning out to be a party not even on the ballot: the Taliban.

A stream of revelations about systematic cheating during last month's vote has given the Taliban fresh ammunition in their propaganda campaign to portray President Hamid Karzai's administration as hopelessly corrupt

Infighting among U.S., U.N. and European diplomats over whether to accept the results with Karzai the winner or force a new round of voting has also fed the Taliban line that the government in Kabul is merely a puppet of foreign powers.

Mohammad Omar, the Taliban's reclusive leader, broke his silence Saturday to denounce "the so-called elections which were fraught with fraud and lies and which were categorically rejected by the people."

Omar also railed against what he called "the rampant corruption in the surrogate Kabul administration, the embezzlement, drug trafficking, the existence of mafia networks, the tyranny and high-handedness of the warlords," according to a translation by the NEFA Foundation, a terrorism research group.

the Taliban's rhetoric has been echoed in recent days by U.S. and European officials, as well as some Afghan leaders, who have characterized the Aug. 20 election as a debacle and Karzai's government as inept.

"They are benefiting enormously from all this," said Haroun Mir, a political analyst and director of Afghanistan's Center for Research and Policy Studies in Kabul.

"The credibility of this election has already been highly undermined, both by the opposition and by the international community itself," he added. "Now people have lost their trust, not only with the Afghan government, but also in the NATO forces."

Taliban leaders first tried to discredit the elections by intimidating voters to stay away from the polls. It largely worked: Only 39 percent of registered voters turned out, compared to 70 percent in the 2004 Afghan elections. But self-inflicted wounds by Karzai's government in counting and policing the vote have done at least as much damage, according to diplomats and analysts in Kabul.

On the streets of the capital, Afghans said they were increasingly worried that the Taliban -- whose forces now control more territory than at any point since they were toppled in 2001 -- would attract more support from Afghans angry with the weak performance of the central government.

"Every day they make more propaganda against the government. This election has been a gold mine for them," said Abdul Sawad Nawabi, a 52-year-old money changer, who opposes the Taliban.

Ghulam Abbas, 34, a clerk at a menswear store in central Kabul, said ordinary Afghans favor democracy but do not understand how an election monitored by tens of thousands of international troops and observers could have been bungled so badly.

"All the discussion about the fraud and the pressure will not help anyone, and it will only give the insurgents more opportunities," said Halim Fidai, the governor of Wardak province, just to the southwest of Kabul. "The longer this goes on, the more the enemy will try to exploit the situation."

Khalid Pashtun, a member of the Afghan parliament from Kandahar, said a dragged-out recount would only weaken the standing of the central government

"That's what we are trying to tell the commission: Please don't push this issue too much because the Taliban will just take advantage," he said. "They will constantly tell people that this is not a legitimate government."

"These Taliban are getting more and more powerful, so it's harder and harder to get them to come to the table," said Arsala Rahmani, a former Taliban deputy minister who now serves in the Afghan Parliament. "They have better weapons than ever and they think they are stronger than the 40 countries that are fighting against them."

VOA News - UN Warns Afghan Vote Results Could Spark More Violence

<http://www.voanews.com/english/2009-09-26-voa18.cfm>

United Nations chief Ban Ki-moon is warning that the announcement of Afghanistan's presidential election results could spark more violence in the country.

300 violent incidents were recorded on election day

More than two-thirds of the civilian deaths were due to militant attacks

- *Based on whose reports?*

Northern Afghanistan has seen a recent increase in militant activity following years of relative peace in the region.

The Afghanistan Analysts Network (AAN) / Blogs / Thomas Ruttig

<http://aan-afghanistan.com/index.asp?id=337>

What remained of a democratic process in Afghanistan had been brought to a halt with screeching brakes by the massive and systematic fraud on 20 August.

The range of fraud clearly has implications both on the outcome of the election and on its legitimacy, both in the eyes of the Afghan voters and the international community

The political chief analyst of the EU observer mission, former German ambassador Gunter Mulack, **states** <http://de.euronews.net/agenturmeldungen/18479-wahlbeobachter-sieht-laquoqrossflaechigen-betrugraquo-bei-afghanistan-wahl/> that fraud in the range of around 5 per cent of the vote would be 'acceptable' in countries like Afghanistan, but beyond the 10 per cent threshold it 'puts the election in doubt'. Most figures given on the 20 August vote are far beyond this threshold.

A 'senior Western diplomat' in Afghanistan was quoted as saying that about 800 'fake poll sites' (not specified whether polling stations, i.e. ballot boxes, or polling centres) did not open on election-day but delivered ballots into the counting process and, 'besides', that Karzai supporters took over 'approximately [other] 800 legitimate polling centers and us[ing] them to fraudulently report tens of thousands of additional ballots for Mr. Karzai'. The same source gives 350,000 votes counted for Kandahar province while only estimated 25,000 votes had been really casts there – this is a fraud surplus of 325,000 alone in one province (see: Dexter Filkins and Carlotta Gall, '**Fake Afghan Poll Sites Favored Karzai, Officials Assert**' http://www.nytimes.com/2009/09/07/world/asia/07fraud.html?_r=1&scp=3&sq=shorabak&st=nyt'), New York Times, 6 Sept 2009).

Suspiciously, we still have not been told by the IEC how many polling stations were open on 20 August.

If we took the IEC turn-out figure of 6 million for real, the 1.5 million votes called 'suspicious' by the EU observers would represent 25 per cent.

Sources close to the President admitted off the records that there might have been no more than 2 – 2.5 million real votes.

After the EU Observer mission's initially very weak statements that tried to paint the picture of a flourishing Afghan democracy – echoing what it obviously perceived to be the view preferred by most of the EU member-state governments at this point of time - the EU foreign ministers have taken a strong **position** <http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2009/09/15/world/main5311890.shtml> now. In their meeting on 15 September they demanded that the fraud allegations 'must all be dealt with' and expressed their hope 'that it will result in an election result seen as credible by the Afghans themselves'.

But there doesn't seem to be unanimous support for this in Kabul, in particular on the UN and the US side. UNAMA

needs to insist on a full investigation, too. But UNAMA deputy head Peter Galbraith who reportedly did do has been sent on a 'vacation' by SRSG Kai Eide. In the UN mission in Kabul, there was something like a **mutiny** [<http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/Afghanistan/article6834487.ece>](http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/Afghanistan/article6834487.ece) against a position to not publicly comment on voter turn-out figures, fraud etc.

This is particularly worrying because UNAMA with its field presence definitely has a lot of real figures, reports and other evidence of what really had happened on 20 August at its disposal

Richard Holbrooke goes into the same direction. He has recently repeated apologetic remarks that 'there are **imperfect elections** [<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/8249733.stm>](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/8249733.stm) throughout the west as well and that 'that **happens** [<http://www.voanews.com/english/2009-09-02-voa22.cfm>](http://www.voanews.com/english/2009-09-02-voa22.cfm) in every democracy'. As if Afghanistan were a democracy already.

At the same time, the IEC's announcement of the preliminary final result last Tuesday tries to establish a fait accompli which will be difficult to challenge. The presidential **spokesman** [<spokesman%20>](http://www.voanews.com/english/2009-09-02-voa22.cfm) Wahid Omar echoed the feeling of the inner circle in 'the palace' by saying: 'Unless a miracle happens, we are the winner.'

This hangs a sword of Damocles over the whole process. It keeps the option open that the IEC simply overrules the ECC. It already has ignored the call of the head of the EU observers MEP Phillipe Morrillon not to publish any further results before all accusations of fraud has been checked.

Meanwhile, President Karzai lashed out against foreign 'interference' by the ECC – as if it were an illegal body installed by a colonial power. But the ECC is based on current Afghan law after all; opportunities to change it beforehand were wasted by the parliament and under the eyes of the current executive.

Karzai [<Karzai%20>](http://www.voanews.com/english/2009-09-02-voa22.cfm) further defends 'the integrity of the election and the integrity of the Afghan people, and the integrity of the government in that process' and says that '[i]f there was fraud, it was small - it happens all over the world'. That sounds like what Holbrooke stated.

UN chief Peter Galbraith is removed in Afghanistan poll clash - Times Online

<http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/Afghanistan/article6834487.ece>

America's top diplomat at the United Nations mission in Afghanistan has been ordered out of the country after a row with his boss over how to respond to last month's fraud-riddled presidential elections, it has been alleged.

The alleged quarrel is threatening to spark a mutiny within the UN mission. At least a dozen senior staff are backing the American, Peter Galbraith, in the dispute with his Norwegian superior, Kai Eide.

Mr Galbraith, a close friend of the US special envoy Richard Holbrooke, left for Boston on Sunday after a heated meeting with Afghan election officials. His "pointed" questions to the Independent Election Commission (IEC) were evidence of a much tougher line towards the Afghan authorities than the "softly-softly" approach of Mr Eide, who heads the UN mission to Kabul.

“The relationship between Kai and Peter has completely broken down,” said a diplomat in Kabul. “Peter has left the country. The official line is that he’s on a three-week mission to New York. But Kai just turned round to Peter and said, ‘I want you out.’”

The apparent row illustrates the deepening divisions within the international community on whether to allow President Karzai to claim re-election in the flawed presidential poll.

Mr Galbraith wants the IEC to annul results from 1,000 of the total of about 6,500 polling stations and to recount results from another 5,000, diplomatic sources said. Mr Eide, a former UN envoy in Bosnia, seeks only a face-saving recount of some 1,000 polling places, the sources said.

Mr Galbraith’s wholesale recount would virtually ensure a second round in the election, denying Mr Karzai his claimed first-round victory.

Mr Eide’s solution would probably enable Mr Karzai to claim victory, although with a reduced margin.

Mr Eide introduced Mr Galbraith to the Norwegian anthropologist who became his wife

The row worsened when Mr Eide left Afghanistan to celebrate his wedding anniversary in Norway after the election and refused to cut short his break despite the fraud allegations.

Mr Eide, now back in Kabul, has urged his staff not to speak out against the fraud because he fears that it will destabilise efforts to build a democracy. He is also afraid that fraud investigations will be seen as foreign interference, because three of the five people in charge of the Election Complaints Commission are UN appointees.

“The one thing the UN should be doing, which it’s not doing, is speaking up on election fraud,” said a mission insider. “A lot of people in the UN feel that unless there’s space for someone to behave as Peter has behaved, then what are we doing here?”

BBC NEWS | South Asia | US urges caution on Afghan vote

http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/8249733.stm

The US envoy to Afghanistan has told the BBC that critics of last month's presidential election in the country should not "jump to conclusions".

He said a rerun of the election was not a viable option.

Mr Holbrooke told the BBC's Newsnight programme:

there are imperfect elections throughout the west as well

The British Foreign Secretary David Miliband also spoke to the BBC about the election and said he still had confidence that a fair result can be achieved.

"I think that we have always said that we want credible representation of the views of the Afghan people. This is a war-torn country and I am not going to over-claim for it, I don't talk about free and fair elections," Mr Miliband said.

VOA News - International Envoys Pledge Continued Support for Afghanistan

<http://www.voanews.com/english/2009-09-02-voa22.cfm>

U.S. Special Envoy for Afghanistan and Pakistan, Richard Holbrooke played down allegations of widespread election fraud.

"During that process, there are going to be many claims of irregularities; that happens in every democracy," said Holbrooke. "We recently had a senatorial election in Minnesota, which took seven months to determine the outcome. There were so many charges of irregularities. It certainly will not take that long in Afghanistan. But that happens in democracies, even when they are not in the middle of a war," he added.

Polling Day Fraud in the Afghan Elections

<http://aan-afghanistan.com/uploads/20090903pollingfraud.pdf>

How to Win an Afghan Election: Perceptions and Practices

<http://aan-afghanistan.com/uploads/2009%20AAN-MvB%20Afghan%20Election.pdf>

BBC NEWS | South Asia | Flaws overshadow Afghan outcome

http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/8252294.stm

With more than 90% of the votes counted in the Afghan election, President Hamid Karzai has secured more than 50% of the poll, and can expect to remain in power without facing a second round of voting.

But thousands of allegations of fraud are still being investigated amid growing international concern, particularly among those nations whose troops are currently fighting the Taliban in Afghanistan.

Violations included the registration of underage voters, registration of people from a list who did not attend in person, and lack of impartiality.

Irregularities witnessed by observers on polling day included ballot boxes that were already full as the polls opened, a higher number of votes than voters registered, and districts where there were an even number of votes, usually 500, in each ballot box.

votes had been counted from polling stations that were known to have been closed on 20 August - for security or other reasons.

Meanwhile, the Electoral Complaints Commission, an oversight body with a majority of internationally appointed members, has ordered an audit of the whole election.

It wants a recount where there was a 100% turnout or more than 95% of votes for one candidate. This could take up to two months.

But in a sign of growing tension between the Afghan-led Independent Election Commission, and the international-led Electoral Complaints Commission, the order was rejected when initially sent earlier in the week, in a row over translation.

BBC NEWS | South Asia | Afghan poll: Main fraud allegations

http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/8244125.stm

BEFORE THE VOTE

Voting cards were sold openly and candidates were offered thousands of dollars in bribes for votes.

An Afghan working for the BBC went undercover in Kabul to investigate reports that voting cards were being sold and was offered 1,000 cards, each costing around £6 (\$10).

Just two days before polling there were

<!-- S ILIN -->

multiple claims of fraud [<http://www.example.com/2/hi/south_asia/8206469.stm>](http://www.example.com/2/hi/south_asia/8206469.stm)

<!-- E ILIN -->

circulating.

POLLING DAY IRREGULARITIES

Supporters of presidential candidate Abdullah Abdullah said that 80,000 ballots were filled out fraudulently for President Karzai in the eastern province of Ghazni.

And presidential candidate Mirwais Yasini told the BBC that workers from his campaign discovered about 800 ballots with ticks next to his name discarded from the ballot box soon after the vote.

MONITORS' VERDICT

Days after the election, a leading group of observers said the poll was

<!-- S ILIN -->

marked by widespread fraud <http://www.example.com/2/hi/south_asia/8215612.stm>

<!-- E ILIN -->

and intimidation.

Stuffed ballot boxes, illiterate voters being told who to vote for and biased officials were cited by

<!-- S ILIN -->

Afghanistan's Free and Fair Election Foundation <<http://www.fefa.org.af/index.php>>

<!-- E ILIN -->

KANDAHAR BAREEZ TRIBE FRAUD CLAIMS

The leader of Kandahar's Bareez tribe in the south of the country says that nearly

<!-- S ILIN -->

30,000 votes were cast fraudulently

<!-- E ILIN -->

for President Hamid Karzai instead of Mr Abdullah.

The tribe believes it has been deprived of its votes and called for a full investigation by the

<!-- S ILIN -->

Electoral Complaints Commission (ECC) <<http://www.ecc.org.af/en/>>

<!-- E ILIN -->

, which has the power to discount the votes if they are proved invalid.

TRIBAL ELDER ADMITS TAMPERING

One tribal elder admitted to the BBC in early September that he

<!-- S ILIN -->

tampered with hundreds of ballots <http://www.example.com/2/hi/south_asia/8239500.stm>

<!-- E ILIN -->

in favour of the president in Zaziaryoub district, in the eastern province of Paktia.

The elder said that in a neighbouring village, his nephew saw one man fill in more than 2,000 ballots.

ABDULLAH ABDULLAH'S ACCUSATIONS

Mr Karzai's main challenger has repeatedly

<!-- S ILIN -->

alleged "massive, state-crafted" fraud. <http://www.example.com/2/hi/south_asia/8228443.stm>

INVALIDATED VOTES

Amid a growing chorus of disquiet,

<!-- S ILIN -->

the ECC invalidated votes cast in 83 polling stations <http://www.example.com/2/hi/south_asia/8248543.stm>

<!-- E ILIN -->

There was "clear and convincing evidence of fraud" in Paktika, Kandahar and Ghazni, mostly concerning votes cast in favour of President Hamid Karzai, the commission said.

It also ordered supervised recounts of votes in a number of districts within the provinces where irregularities had been suspected.

On 15 September ECC head Grant Kippen said ballots from 2,500 polling stations across the country - 10% of the total - needed to be recounted because of indications of fraud.

Electoral Complaints Commission

<http://www.ecc.org.af/en>

The Electoral Complaints Commission (ECC) is an independent Afghan body established under **Article 52** of the **Electoral Law** to adjudicate all challenges and complaints related to the electoral process. The ECC has been reestablished for the 2009 elections. The ECC can hear complaints related to violations of the election law as defined in **Article 53**, and it has the authority to impose sanctions, as identified in **Article 54**, if an offense has been deemed to have been committed. In addition, the ECC can consider challenges to the eligibility of nominated candidates.

Free and Fair Election Foundation of Afghanistan

<http://www.fefa.org.af/index.php>

UN official ousted after Afghan vote fraud dispute - AP

http://news.yahoo.com/s/ap/20090930/ap_on_re_as/as_afghanistan

The top American official at the U.N. mission in Afghanistan is losing his job after he disagreed with superiors over how to deal with widespread fraud charges from the presidential election, people familiar with the decision said Wednesday.

Two U.N. officials confirmed that Galbraith was being recalled by Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon from his job as deputy special representative for Afghanistan.

Afghanistan's Independent Election Commission, which is in charge of running the election, voted overwhelmingly to apply a set of fraud standards to their count that likely would have excluded tens of thousands of votes, only to reverse the decision next day, saying it lacked the authority to enforce the standards, said Galbraith, who had advised the commission. He said at the time the reversal was part of his reason for leaving.

White House Believes Karzai Will Be Re-elected - NYTimes.com

<http://www.nytimes.com/2009/09/28/world/asia/28military.html?ref=asia>

By **HELENE COOPER** <http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/people/c/helene_cooper/index.html?inline=nyt-per> and **MARK LANDLER** <http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/people/l/mark_landler/index.html?inline=nyt-per>

Published: September 27, 2009

WASHINGTON — The Obama administration has told the government of **Hamid Karzai** <http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/people/k/hamid_karzai/index.html?inline=nyt-per> that it believes he will be re-elected as president of **Afghanistan** <<http://topics.nytimes.com/top/news/international/countriesandterritories/afghanistan/index.html?inline=nyt-geo>> for another five-year term, two administration officials said Sunday, even though the results from the disputed Aug. 20 vote are still under review because of **evidence of widespread fraud** <<http://www.nytimes.com/2009/09/21/world/asia/21kabul.html>> .

<!-NYT_INLINE_IMAGE_POSITION1 -->

WASHI

also told Mr. Karzai's government that they have pledged to help him wage an expanded campaign to peel away insurgent fighters from the **Taliban** <http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/organizations/t/taliban/index.html?inline=nyt-org>

the ministers agreed that Mr. Karzai would likely prevail, either by his current victory margin of more than 50 percent, or by winning a runoff against his main competitor, **Abdullah Abdullah** http://topics.nytimes.com/topics/reference/timestopics/people/a/abdullah_abdullah/index.html?inline=nyt-per , the former foreign minister.

If a runoff were required and not held before the brutal winter starts in November, the consequences of a delay would be "catastrophic," said this official

Among those expressing particular concern about getting a final election result was Kai Eide, the **United Nations** http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/organizations/u/united_nations/index.html?inline=nyt-org special representative, who gave a presentation at the meeting, known as the "Friends of Afghanistan." The results of the meeting were first reported Sunday evening on **The Washington Post's Web site** <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/09/27/AR2009092703155.html?hpid=topnews> .

Many rural areas "would be better left to Predators," said an administration official, referring to **drone aircraft** http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/subjects/u/unmanned_aerial_vehicles/index.html?inline=nyt-classifier .

In an interview on Sunday on ABC's "This Week," Mr. Gates acknowledged that when General McChrystal arrived in Kabul and conducted his initial assessment, he found the situation on the ground in Afghanistan "worse than he anticipated."

NATO Officials Say They Will Back Afghan Effort to Turn Insurgents Against Taliban - washingtonpost.com

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/09/27/AR2009092703155.html>

By **Karen DeYoung** <http://projects.washingtonpost.com/staff/articles/karen+deyoung/>

Washington Post Staff Writer

Monday, September 28, 2009

The United States and NATO countries fighting in Afghanistan have told President Hamid Karzai's government that they expect him to remain in office for another five-year term and will work with him on an expanded campaign to turn insurgent fighters against the Taliban and other militant groups.

Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton and other NATO foreign ministers, meeting Friday in New York with their Afghan counterpart, reached "consensus" that Karzai would probably "continue to be president," whether through a runoff or as the legitimate winner of more than 50 percent of votes cast in disputed Aug. 20 elections, an Obama administration official said.

What Karzai has called "reconciliation" with insurgents who agree to lay down their arms is emerging as a major factor in administration deliberations about a way forward in Afghanistan

Along with plans to increase the size of the Afghan security forces, the U.S. military is developing programs to offer monetary and other inducements to insurgents it thinks are only loosely tied to the Taliban and other militant groups.

"I don't expect this to be a protracted process," Gates said on ABC's "This Week." On Tuesday, the White House will host the first of a series of National Security Council meetings to review the strategy President Obama laid out in March, along with McChrystal's recommendations for a stepped-up counterinsurgency effort. McChrystal, in an assessment sent to Washington late last month, said the current strategy will fail without more troops.

The number of troops McChrystal has requested remains unknown, although Sen. John McCain (R-Ariz.), who said he spoke with Obama on Saturday, called it "one of the worst-kept secrets in Washington. It's 30,000 to 40,000 troops." McCain also spoke on ABC.

Gates has said he is still thinking about his position on a troop increase. But he appeared to disagree with the view of a number of senior administration officials, led by Vice President Biden, that the U.S. effort should move away from full-fledged counterinsurgency toward a greater emphasis on targeted attacks on insurgents in Afghanistan and Pakistan with drone-fired missiles and other standoff weaponry.

That strategy, Gates said, "is only possible if you have the kind of intelligence that allows you to target the terrorists. And the only way you get that intelligence is by being on the ground. . . . You can't do this from a distance or remotely."

The imposition of a timeline for withdrawing troops, as some Democrats have proposed, "would be a strategic mistake" with "catastrophic consequences in terms of energizing the extremist movement, al-Qaeda recruitment, operations, fundraising, and so on," Gates said.

In addition to McChrystal's report, Ambassador Karl W. Eikenberry has submitted assessments of the political scene; they have reinforced longstanding U.S. judgments that elements of Karzai's government, including the president himself -- are incompetent and corrupt.

The major elements of counterinsurgency, including economic development and building the Afghan national force,

require an Afghan partner seen as legitimate by its citizens.

Deciding that they will have to deal with Karzai enables the administration and its allies to factor his limitations into their decision-making, officials said.

At the Friday meeting in New York, chaired by Canadian Foreign Affairs Minister Lawrence Cannon and attended by Afghan Foreign Minister Rangin Spanta, participants disagreed about the latest date a second presidential round could be held. Some said it could be as late as the first week in November before severe winter weather makes it impossible, but all agreed that delaying the election until spring would "only benefit the Taliban," an administration official said.

U.N. Special Representative Kai Eide gave the group, called the "Friends of Afghanistan," a 25-minute update on the political situation. All the foreign ministers spoke, including Spanta, Clinton, British Foreign Secretary David Miliband and French Foreign Minister Bernard Kouchner.

Afghan in Police Uniform Kills U.S. Soldiers - NYTimes.com

<http://www.nytimes.com/2009/10/04/world/asia/04afghan.html?ref=world>

By **SABRINA TAVERNISE** <http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/people/t/sabrina_tavernise/index.html?inline=nyt-per> and **RICHARD A. OPPEL** <http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/people/o/richard_a_jr_oppel/index.html?inline=nyt-per> Jr.

Published: October 3, 2009

KABUL, Afghanistan — An Afghan wearing a police uniform shot and killed two American soldiers and wounded two others during a joint patrol in eastern **Afghanistan** <<http://topics.nytimes.com/top/news/international/countriesandterritories/afghanistan/index.html?inline=nyt-geo>> on Friday, Afghan officials said. The man later escaped.

investigating whether the attacker was a police officer or a militant dressed as one the country's leading opposition political figure attacked the **United Nations** <http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/organizations/u/united_nations/index.html?inline=nyt-org>, accusing its top official here of refusing to properly investigate widespread voting fraud that seriously tainted the national election in August.

The man escaped, but local Afghan forces arrested two of his relatives, Mr. Shahid said.

Much about the episode was still unclear, but it raised the troubling specter of the risks of mentoring Afghan security forces, who often are poorly educated and sometimes have sympathies for the **Taliban**

<<http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/organizations/t/taliban/index.html?inline=nyt-org>> .

n Kabul, the main Afghan opposition candidate, **Abdullah Abdullah** <http://topics.nytimes.com/topics/reference/timestopics/people/a/abdullah_abdullah/index.html?inline=nyt-per>, asserted Saturday that the reputation of the United Nations had been harmed by what he said was a flawed investigation of the voting fraud during the Aug. 20 presidential election.

"I have no doubt in my mind that it has seriously damaged the U.N.'s credibility in Afghanistan," Mr. Abdullah, a former foreign minister, told reporters. In the preliminary tally, President **Hamid Karzai** <http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/people/k/hamid_karzai/index.html?inline=nyt-per> won 54.6 percent of the vote, but a partial recount and fraud review under way could reduce that to less than 50 percent, forcing a runoff against Mr. Abdullah.

Mr. Abdullah's comments followed a report in The New York Times about a letter the United Nations' No. 2 official in Afghanistan, Peter W. Galbraith, sent to the United Nations secretary general, **Ban Ki-moon** <http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/people/b/ban_ki_moon/index.html?inline=nyt-per>, days before Mr. Galbraith was fired last week.

In the letter, Mr. Galbraith, an American, accused the top United Nations official in Afghanistan, Kai Eide, a Norwegian, of concealing reports of electoral fraud that benefited Mr. Karzai, blocking efforts by United Nations officials to limit the fraud and admitting bias toward Mr. Karzai.

The UN has abandoned democracy

<http://www.ottawacitizen.com/business/abandoned+democracy/2067117/story.html>

The firing of its No. 2 official in Afghanistan shows how far the world body will go to cover up the fraudulent August election

The United Nations and Secretary General Ban Ki-moon have just made a mockery of the notion of free and fair elections by firing Peter Galbraith, the second-in-command at the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA).

Galbraith, responsible for political affairs and elections at the UNAMA, wanted a full investigation of the alleged irregularities and fraud in the August Afghanistan election. The UN staff observers supported such allegations, along with the EU Observation Mission, which considers close to 1.5 million out of five million votes cast to be fraudulent

Galbraith demanded a fuller recount, rather than a sample recount of votes that the Election Complaints Commission and the Independent Election Commission in Kabul decided to undertake.

It has been alleged that the Independent Election commission is not "independent" enough and the Complaints Commission is a UN-appointed body

It seems Galbraith's boss, Kai Eide, the special representative of the secretary general at UNAMA in Kabul, wanted a coverup of the fraud, as a full investigation would tell the tale of the failure of his own leadership representing the UN -- the overseer of the election on behalf of the international community.

Excerpts of the letter (published in the New York Times) that Galbraith wrote to Ban Ki-moon, clearly state that the special representative of the secretary general did not want western diplomats to know about the extent of the fraud.

The fear is that addressing the spirit of a free and fair election now might further weaken governance and destabilize the country, and bring international failure in Afghanistan more starkly out in the open. Thus, the UN wants a compromise.

It is suggested Afghanistan does not need a true election, it has never had a democracy.

A sham of an election as a "start" is considered good enough for Afghans, who after all know no better. It seems protecting the image of the UN is the priority.

The UN action is damaging to the very concept of democracy. The UN has failed to retain its neutrality in this election to protect its own interest. It has violated the accountability principle.

The western nations funded the election with more than \$220 million provided through the UN.

The UNAMA has violated the trust of the international community, which includes the tax-paying public of the countries that contributed to this pool of funds.

The Independent Election Commission, financed through international aid funds, is a failed institution.

It would be interesting to see how our own government explains to the Canadian public the objective of our mission in Afghanistan at this point.

Does the election fiasco affect our Afghanistan mission objectives (which remain muddled at best, in any case); and how do we accommodate addressing Canadian values while we're in Afghanistan, one of our foreign policy objectives?

Or do we simply join the UN "cover-up" process, undermining not only Canadian values and democratic principles but the Afghan population, which deserves a legitimate government confirmed through an open, free and fair process of election?

Fired UN envoy claims third of Hamid Karzai votes fraudulent | World news | The Guardian

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2009/oct/04/un-envoy-galbraith-afghanistan-karzai>

guardian.co.uk <<http://www.guardian.co.uk>> ,

Sunday 4 October 2009



Peter Galbraith accused his former chief at the UN, Kai Eide, of deliberately playing down the level of cheating in the election. Photograph: Toby Talbot/Associated Press

A former senior **United Nations** <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/unitednations>> diplomat in Kabul has

made a scathing attack on the UN's handling of **Afghanistan** <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/afghanistan>> 's disputed elections, claiming that almost one in three of the votes cast for president **Hamid Karzai** <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/hamid-karzai>> were fraudulent.

Peter Galbraith, the former deputy head of the UN mission in Afghanistan, singled out his former chief, Kai Eide, for criticism, saying he had deliberately played down the level of cheating in an election where, in one region, "10 times as many votes were recorded as voters actually cast".

Galbraith was sacked last week, after his disagreements with Eide, a Norwegian diplomat in charge of the UN mission, about how to deal with electoral fraud became public.

Galbraith said the extraordinary level of fraud in the August vote "has handed the **Taliban** <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/taliban>> its greatest strategic victory in eight years of fighting the **United States** <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/usa>> and its Afghan partners".

The election was a "foreseeable train wreck", he said, with Eide standing idle as Afghan election authorities and ministers loyal to the president avoided taking steps that could have reduced massive fraud.

On Saturday Abdullah accused Eide of "giving a green card for fraud to determine the outcome of the election".

In a letter to Ban, leaked to the New York Times, Galbraith made devastating allegations against Eide, including the claim that the latter ordered him not to hand to election officials information which showed turnout had been tiny in the south, where the Taliban intimidation campaign against voters was most effective.

Galbraith also said Eide told him to stop lobbying for the elimination of "ghost polling stations" — voting centres too dangerous to actually open, but which nonetheless received ballot papers that could be filled out by corrupt officials.

Galbraith writes: "President Obama needs a legitimate Afghan partner to make any new strategy for the country work. However, the extensive fraud that took place on August 20 virtually guarantees that a government emerging from the tainted vote will not be credible with many Afghans."

In his earlier letter to Ban, Galbraith also claimed Eide prevented him trying to stop the independent election commission, in overall charge of the vote, from abandoning its safeguards, which would have excluded fraudulent ballots, probably reducing Karzai's score to below 50%, forcing a second-round vote.

Eide told him to back off, Galbraith said, after Karzai ordered his foreign minister to protest that the American was interfering in Afghan affairs. He said the Afghan government threatened him with expulsion.

Peter W. Galbraith -- U.N. Isn't Addressing Fraud in Afghan Election - washingtonpost.com

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/10/02/AR2009100202855.html>

Before **firing me** <<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/09/30/AR2009093002302.html>> last week from my post as his deputy special representative in Afghanistan, U.N.

Secretary General Ban Ki-moon conveyed one last instruction: Do not talk to the press. In effect, I was being told to

remain a team player after being thrown off the team. Nonetheless, I agreed.

I asked only that the statement announcing my dismissal reflect the real reasons

Alain LeRoy, the head of U.N. peacekeeping and my immediate superior in New York, proposed that the United Nations say I was being recalled over a "disagreement as to how the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) would respond to electoral fraud." Although this was not entirely accurate -- the dispute was really about *whether* the U.N. mission would respond to the massive electoral fraud -- I agreed.

Instead, the United Nations announced my recall as occurring "in the best interests of the mission," and U.N. press officials told reporters on background that my firing was necessitated by a "personality clash" with Eide, a friend of 15 years who had introduced me to my future wife.

For weeks, Eide had been denying or playing down the fraud in Afghanistan's recent presidential election, telling me he was concerned that even discussing the fraud might inflame tensions in the country.

But in my view, the fraud was a fact that the United Nations had to acknowledge or risk losing its credibility with the many Afghans who did not support President Hamid Karzai.

I also felt loyal to my U.N. colleagues who worked in a dangerous environment to help Afghans hold honest elections -- at least five of whom have now told me they are leaving jobs they love in disgust over the events leading to my firing.

As many as 30 percent of Karzai's votes were fraudulent, and lesser fraud was committed on behalf of other candidates.

In several provinces, including Kandahar, four to 10 times as many votes were recorded as voters actually cast.

The fraud has handed the Taliban its greatest strategic victory in eight years of fighting the United States and its Afghan partners.

The election was a foreseeable train wreck.

this balloting was managed by Afghanistan's Independent Election Commission (IEC). Despite its name, the commission is subservient to Karzai, who appointed its seven members

The United States and other Western nations paid the more than \$300 million to hold the vote

In July, I learned that at least 1,500 polling centers (out of 7,000) were to be located in places so insecure that no one from the IEC, the Afghan National Army or the Afghan National Police had ever visited them.

Local commission staff members were hardly experienced election professionals; in many instances they were simply agents of the local power brokers, usually aligned with Karzai.

If no independent observers or candidate representatives, let alone voters, could even visit the listed location of a polling center, these IEC staffers could easily stuff ballot boxes without ever taking them to the assigned location. Or they could simply report results without any votes being in the ballot boxes.

Along with ambassadors from the United States and key allies, I met with the Afghan ministers of defense and the interior as well as the commission's chief election officer. We urged them either to produce a credible plan to secure these polling centers (which the head of the Afghan army had told me was impossible) or to close them down. Not surprisingly, the ministers -- who served a president benefiting from the fraud -- complained that I had even raised the matter.

Eide ordered me not to discuss the ghost polling centers any further.

On Election Day, these sites produced hundreds of thousands of phony Karzai votes.

At other critical stages in the election process, I was similarly ordered not to pursue the issue of fraud.

My staff collected evidence on hundreds of cases of fraud around the country and, more important, gathered information on turnout in key southern provinces where few voters showed up but large numbers of votes were being reported.

Eide ordered us not to share this data with anyone, including the Electoral Complaints Commission, a U.N.-backed Afghan institution legally mandated to investigate fraud.

Naturally, my colleagues wondered why they had taken the risks to collect this evidence if it was not to be used.

In early September, I got word that the IEC was about to abandon its published anti-fraud policies, allowing it to include enough fraudulent votes in the final tally to put Karzai over the 50 percent threshold needed to avoid a runoff.

After I called the chief electoral officer to urge him to stick with the original guidelines, Karzai issued a formal protest accusing me of foreign interference. My boss sided with Karzai.

If the Tajiks believe that fraud denied their candidate the chance to compete in a second round, they may respond by simply not recognizing the authority of the central government. The north already has de facto autonomy; these elections could add an ethnic fault line to a conflict between the Taliban and the government that to date has largely been a civil war among Pashtuns.

Since my disagreements with Eide went public, Eide and his supporters have argued that the United Nations had no mandate to interfere in the Afghan electoral process. This is not technically correct.

The U.N. Security Council directed the U.N. mission to support Afghanistan's electoral institutions in holding a "free, fair and transparent" vote, not a fraudulent one.

And with so much at stake -- and with more than 100,000 U.S. and coalition troops deployed in the country -- the international community had an obvious interest in ensuring that Afghanistan's election did not make the situation worse.

President Obama needs a legitimate Afghan partner to make any new strategy for the country work. However, the extensive fraud that took place on Aug. 20 virtually guarantees that a government emerging from the tainted vote will not be credible with many Afghans.

Afghanistan's pro-Karzai election commission will not do this on its own. Fixing those problems will require resolve from the head of the U.N. mission in Afghanistan -- a quality that so far has been lacking.

Excerpts - Galbraith's Letter to U.N. Secretary General - Text - NYTimes.com

<http://www.nytimes.com/2009/10/01/world/01text.html>

The following are excerpts of the Sept. 28 letter from Peter W. Galbraith, deputy special representative of the **U.N.** [<http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/organizations/u/united_nations/index.html?inline=nyt-org>](http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/organizations/u/united_nations/index.html?inline=nyt-org) secretary general at the U.N. mission in Afghanistan, to **Ban Ki-Moon** [<http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/people/b/ban_ki_moon/index.html?inline=nyt-per>](http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/people/b/ban_ki_moon/index.html?inline=nyt-per) , the U.N. secretary general in New York:

As you know, Kai Eide and I have had prolonged disagreement as to whether UNAMA should take action to prevent or mitigate fraud in the Afghanistan elections. Given our mandate to support “free, fair, and transparent” elections, I felt UNAMA could not overlook the fraud without compromising our neutrality and becoming complicit in a cover-up.

For a long time after the elections, Kai denied that significant fraud had taken place, even going to the extreme of ordering UN staff not to discuss the matter. And, at critical stages in the process, he blocked me and other UNAMA professional staff from taking effective action that might have limited the fraud or enabled the Afghan electoral institutions to address it more effectively.”

In July, I came to the realization that the greatest risk to the Afghan elections was from “ghost” polling stations, that is polling centers sited in areas so insecure that the centers would never open. In coordination with the Ambassadors from the US, UK, EU and **NATO** [<http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/organizations/n/north_atlantic_treaty_organization/index.html?inline=nyt-org>](http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/organizations/n/north_atlantic_treaty_organization/index.html?inline=nyt-org) , I pressed the Afghan Ministers of Defense and Interior either to secure these polling centers or to close them.

The Afghan Ministers, whose continued tenure in office was to depend on the fraud, complained about my intervention and Kai ordered me to drop the matter. As it turned out, most of the electoral fraud occurred in these ghost polling centers.

At considerable personal risk, UNAMA field staff collected data on turnout and fraud. Our data showed a miniscule turnout in key Southern Provinces, but these provinces were to report a large number of votes for Karzai.

Once it became clear to Kai that the output from our election center would be deeply disturbing to President Karzai, he ordered the staff not to share the data with anyone, including the Afghan institutions charged with preserving the integrity of the electoral process.

On September 2, I learned that the Independent Election Commission (IEC) was about to abandon its published safeguards so as to include in the final tally a large number of Karzai votes that it knew to be fraudulent (including those from polling centers that never opened).

As OIC, I spoke with the chief electoral officer to urge that the IEC stick with its established procedures.

President Karzai had the Foreign Minister protest my supposed interference in the electoral process and, as you know,

the Afghanistan Permanent Representative threatened to have me expelled from the country.

Kai sided with Karzai in this matter, seemingly indifferent to fact that these fraudulent ballots were the ones that put Karzai over 50%.

Shortly after the elections, Kai told President Karzai that "I am biased" in your favor and that "those who are out to get you are also out to get me."

Kai also told me the "those" referred to Ambassador Holbrooke.

I think this was an inappropriate conversation for the SRSG to have with the head of state and, in the context, likely interpreted as meaning that UNAMA did not share the concerns Holbrooke was then raising about electoral fraud.

This Fraud Is On You: The 2009 Afghan Elections and the U.N. Cover Up « OPEN ANTHROPOLOGY

<http://openanthropology.wordpress.com/2009/10/06/this-fraud-is-on-you-the-2009-afghan-elections-and-the-u-n-cover-up>

Al Jazeera English - CENTRAL/S. ASIA - 'False pretext' used in Afghan war

<http://english.aljazeera.net/news/asia/2009/10/2009106175023363406.html>

The leader of an Afghan political group wanted by the US has said that Washington used a false pretext to launch its war on Afghanistan, on the eve of the eighth anniversary of the conflict.

Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, who leads a faction of the Hizb-e Islami group, said that the war launched against the Taliban and al-Qaeda by the US in 2001 was not justified as the September 11 attacks had not been carried out by Afghans.

Hekmatyar said that the widely criticised election in Afghanistan has benefited Iran and Russia

"No Afghan has taken any military action against you in Europe and the US. The September 11 attacks were planned in Europe and the US and not in Afghanistan or Iraq," he said in a video released on Tuesday.

"Those who carried it out were people born in the US and Europe and they were trained there. They were not Afghans and they never got training in Afghanistan," he said.

"You tricked the world and the Afghans by making a funny election show ... Hundreds of millions of dollars were spent. What was the result? You admitted 20 per cent of Afghans took part.

"You have managed through your propaganda to turn Afghans against each other through highlighting language and tribal differences.

"Moscow and Tehran have already congratulated Karzai for winning."

Nato's International Security and Assistance Force (Isaf) said on Tuesday that Hizb-e Islami fighters loyal to Hekmatyar

were possibly involved in an attack in Nuristan province on Saturday, in which eight US soldiers were killed.

Hekmatyar, a Pashtun regional commander and former Afghan prime minister, has traditionally allied his forces to fighters who are opposed to the presence of foreign troops.