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SPECIAL REPORT

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ABOUT THE REPORT

This report assesses the contributions of political parties to, and their place within, the Afghan political landscape through transition and beyond and how they continue to navigate the limitations of their lack of formal political role. Part of broader United States Institute of Peace research on the 2014 Afghan elections, the report is based on more than fifty interviews conducted in 2014 with members of twelve political parties both before and after the presidential and provincial council elections.

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Political Parties in Afghanistan

Summary

- Political parties in Afghanistan have no historical precedent of a legal, formalized role within the political system. Since 2001, however, they have been able to register officially as organizations.
- Elections in Afghanistan, particularly those in 2014, have provided a stimulus for change within parties that has the potential to offer more than the simple collectivity of a common cause.
- Changes in party behavior include greater outreach to urban educated Afghans through greater use of communications technologies, greater influence among young people generally, more parliamentarians aligning themselves openly with parties, consolidated voting blocs, more space for women, more and earlier preparation for elections, and greater engagement in national-level debate.
- These changes, however, are opportunistic rather than strategic and do not look beyond 2015.
- Institutionalization of the changes taking place within parties will depend on the availability of resources and the political will of party leadership but also critically the new administration's approach and incentives created for parties' consolidation as political actors.
- A constitutional *loya jirga* apparently scheduled for some point before the end of 2016 may provide the necessary opportunity for parties to lobby for greater involvement in government.
- For lobbying to prove successful, parties will need to ensure that their voice is heard, possibly by gaining influence in the lower house of parliament in the 2015 elections.

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Introduction

Political party activity in Afghanistan in the twentieth century was confined to the fringes of national politics. Opposition movements and parties—whether communist left or religious right—were forced either underground or into exile. Since 2001, under a new and formally democratic constitution, however, former Islamist military factions, communist organizations, ethno-nationalist groups, and civil society organizations have transformed themselves into

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political parties. They represent a diverse cross-section of the political landscape and have all evolved as institutions in recent years. None, however, are organizers of political beliefs or mobilizers of voters in the way that parties in mature democracies are. The term *party* today thus encompasses a range of organizations with very different organizational and political backgrounds. Even so, key similarities in how they operate are evident. A number of them have been able to influence the executive and legislative branches of government, though not always with electoral victories.

Yet little research to date has focused on how Afghan parties generally are evolving. The election of a new president in 2014 and parliamentary elections scheduled for later in 2015, however, open the door to potential for change in both the formal and the informal roles of parties within the political system.

Parties prepared far more for the April 2014 presidential and provincial council elections than they had at any time previous, many aligning themselves openly with one candidate or another early on. New coalitions and parties with well-known personalities in their leadership councils—such as the Right and Justice Party (Hezb-e Haq wa Adalat) and the National Coalition of Afghanistan (Ettamad-e Milli)—consolidated even further in advance of the election. Several parties—such as Mahaz-e Milli (wa) Islami and Hezb-e Islami—both successfully narrowed the number of their provincial council candidates to one or two per province, so as not to split the vote between them, and attempted to make the most of the 20 percent quota for women's seats.

Only some of these technical preparations, however, appear to have translated into gains at the polls. For example, reducing the number of candidates in provincial council elections has not necessarily meant winning more seats. Parties also rely heavily on informal, old guard patronage politics—and sometimes fraud. The potential for longer-term changes to functionality and influence will depend to a significant degree on the new administration's approach to party politics.

As the dust from the 2014 elections settles and negotiations between key actors begin to reshape the balance of power, parties could come to play a significant role in bargaining to secure influence in the coming years.

Party Origins, Leadership, and Membership

A widely held view among the Afghan public is to associate today's political parties with the violence of 1979 to 2001: with the communist groups that seized power in 1978 and the mujahideen based in Peshawar and Quetta during the 1980s and 1990s and with the destruction of the civil war. Seeing parties as simple political entities rather than as fronts for military organizations is, at best, difficult for most Afghans.

Origins

Political parties in Afghanistan have their origins in the mobilization of the *mashrutiat* (constitutionalist) movement of the early 1900s, though development into the organizations of today was neither straightforward nor linear.¹ Groups of disaffected youth surfaced in opposition to the reign of Amanullah Khan (1919–29) and to successive constitutional governments. These groups included the Afghanan-e Jawan, or Young Afghans, who pushed for constitutional reform and were modeled on the Young Turks movement in contemporary Turkey. Much later, in the 1940s, the Wesh Dzalman movement headed a more general opposition to the ruling elite.² Under the premiership of Daoud Khan in the 1950s, opposition groups were forced underground but continued to meet to discuss and publish alternative views on the Afghan political system.

During the 1960s, both Islamist and leftist groups flourished on university campuses across the country, many of which were newly established under the government's policy of increased investment in higher education.³ These groups were also encouraged by the new constitution in 1964, which promised the ratification of the Parties Law to grant political parties the right to exist as officially recognized organizations. They were instead marginalized, first when Mohammad Zahir Shah refused to sign the law after parliament had ratified it and again in 1973 after Daoud's coup d'état and subsequent systematic quashing of any group that opposed his rule.

From their exile in Pakistan and Iran, *ulema*-run religious organizations and political groups that had sprung from student movements in the universities consolidated as armed militias and mobilized against the Soviet forces that invaded Afghanistan in 1979. A decade later, when these groups—with considerable international backing and input from regional players, most notably Pakistan—had secured the departure of Russian troops, they would earn a reputation for brutality and military excess during a destructive civil war. Their defeat by the Taliban led to a period of bleak political stability based on a rigid and theocratic vision of governance that left no room for party pluralism. Not until 2001 and the new democratic constitution did parties reemerge.

Legal and Electoral Limitations

Even at this point, however, political parties had little political space. As of 2003, they were officially recognized as legitimate entities and allowed to organize and speak publicly. The law, however, did little more than classify them—with no reference to a political role—alongside social associations and civil society organizations.⁴ The electoral system chosen for the 2004–05 presidential and legislative elections—the single nontransferable vote (SNTV) system—did not require candidates to be party members. In these early days, no space was allocated on the ballot paper for candidates to declare party affiliations.⁵ Candidates therefore had little incentive to stand with parties, just as parties had little incentive to back candidates' campaigns with resources. The selection of the SNTV electoral system by Afghan and international actors was a deliberate choice intended to exclude parties, partly because of the violent reputation parties had acquired in the war years and partly to stymie opposition to the new government.

Since then, several attempts have been made to change the electoral system but without success, given President Hamid Karzai's strong bias against political parties. In 2013, electoral reform proposals, including a provision for a mixed electoral system that combined SNTV with a party list, were put forward to parliament by the Cooperation Council of Political Parties and Coalitions and Civil Society Organizations. These were eventually rejected, however—unsurprisingly, perhaps, given that a change to the electoral system might well have jeopardized the chances of reelection for standing members of parliament (MPs).

In 2009, a new Parties Law was introduced, requiring all parties to reregister and including new conditions aimed at reducing their numbers. Instead of having to produce the signatures of seven hundred members, they were required to collect ten thousand—from all provinces of Afghanistan. This condition did reduce the number of officially registered parties, from more than one hundred to sixty-three, but appears to have done little to help consolidate party support bases or institutionalize party practices.⁶ Indeed, rather than facilitate party political activity, the law constrains it, for example, by stipulating that parties register not with an independent body but instead with the Ministry of Justice, effectively tying registration to compliance with either government policy or government officials. In spite of this, however, parties still consider official registration a valuable commodity and, at the time the new law

was introduced, actively sought to ensure that they reregistered in accordance with the new requirements. That they did so speaks to the way in which government accreditation is perceived as a critical aspect of parties' existence as legitimate actors and renders them far from informal organizations, despite a lack of any legal political role within the system or any formal influence in government.

Why Join a Political Party?

When parties have a limited political role, a fairly negative reputation, and do relatively little between elections, it is reasonable to ask why anyone would consider spending time or other resources joining one or working for one. Because the electoral system does not require that candidates for the parliament or provincial councils be party members, party membership offers no formal advantage to aspiring representatives, and the negative connotations that a party affiliation still may hold could harm an election campaign—though the mujahideen *tanzims* and former People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan membership also appear to have benefited candidates in terms of campaign support and notoriety within specific communities. Many party members work as volunteers, and financial incentives in the form of regular, salaried positions are few and far between. Yet more people, particularly in urban areas, are now willing to talk about their political affiliations with parties.

What is it then that draws members in? Some parties offer an attractive way for urban young people to move up the political ranks. This explanation was typical:

I have been a member of this party for around eight years, and I joined when I was a school student because I was interested in political and cultural activities and keen to attend the gatherings and meetings of representatives who joined the provincial council and parliament through this party. I am interested in party activities as a way of getting higher positions in the government through the party. —Wahdat-e Islami party member

The phenomenon of young people increasingly seeing parties as a vehicle for self-promotion and political career-making in Afghanistan has been documented elsewhere as well—how older, reestablished parties in particular have taken on the role of patron, providing facilities, such as university dormitories, and basic services for students in return for political support.⁷ This arrangement now appears to go beyond a simple patron-client relationship, however. Young people rise in the ranks relatively quickly on the basis of their English, computer, and social media skills. Parties increasingly recognize the value of these contributions and want to have more of an impact on young people. As a senior Hezb-e Islami member explained, “One real problem for us is that in Kunar [Province] our party still has little influence among young people, and the youth branch...was only recently registered with the Ministry of Justice.” Another member of a more recently established party talked about the need to create greater political space for young people in general: “We should try to change the current political structure to a more modern one in which educated youth should have the opportunity to come into power and have more space within the government.” Another sign of the evolving role of youth is the increasing comfort level in being openly critical of party leadership.

In the run-up to the 2014 elections, young people across all twelve parties studied seemed to be joining parties in greater numbers. This increase does not necessarily indicate a changing trend and could simply have been an attempt to align with a winning team. Young people were choosing carefully and were often keen to talk about the reasons behind their choices. Certainly youth cannot be lumped conveniently into a single category presumed to have liberal political leanings.⁸ Although some clearly stated their choice as against old-guard leadership—members of Hezb-e Millat, for example—others were keen to emphasize their support and admiration for the military heroes of their parents' generation. Parties that are prepared to make some changes in communication methods—such as an embrace of new communication

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Competing with registered political parties for youth membership, however, are new radical movements, such as Jamiyat-e Islah and Hizb ut-Tahrir. These organizations, established in Afghanistan only within the last five years, promote a conservative, anti-West, anti-democracy political stance and attract large numbers of urban, educated youth. In providing an urban, generally nonviolent alternative to insurgency, such groups attract members by providing Internet access and lessons in computer literacy. Additionally, given their growing popularity, they can mobilize large crowds relatively quickly. A recent Jamiyat-e Islah demonstration in Herat, for example, was reportedly attended by as many as forty thousand young people.⁹ These groups occupy a vacuum that the political parties have not been able to fill, in that they are at once technologically savvy, demonstrate an interest in and connection with international affairs, are well organized, and speak with a religious authority that resonates with many young Afghans. Although connections to the older tanzims are not explicit, potential exists for collaboration with some branches of Hezb-e Islami. For the most part, however, existing parties appear to be threatened by these newer and more radical groups.¹⁰

The increased willingness to associate with political parties points to the importance of the 2014 elections and is a function of the recent political climate. Political debate around the elections dominated most news media, and public interest was high. Of the twelve parties studied, nine took advantage of this situation, chose their presidential candidates quickly, and presented voters with clear affiliations at least a month before the first round of the polls. In doing so, these parties built trust among their supporters and were able to promise tangible rewards in the form of future patronage if their candidate won.

Women, particularly young women, also appear to be more interested in joining parties. This change is likely in part because parties are now offering more to women, if not substantively (such as contributions to internal decision making) then at least symbolically (support for provincial council campaigns). However, support for a campaign does not guarantee party allegiance, particularly given that many choose not to officially declare party affiliations on the ballot. For example, only thirty-six of 308 women candidates in the provincial council elections in 2014 were officially affiliated (see table 2). The advantage here is that women can simultaneously eliminate the risk to electoral success that the generally negative public image of political parties carries and still have their campaign costs covered yet not be held accountable once elected.

Women who do consider themselves party members have joined parties for other reasons as well. For example, international agencies working with parties often stipulate that women representatives be sent to training workshops as party delegates, that women hold positions within or at the head of women's councils or committees within the party, or that women be offered opportunities to run for provincial council or parliamentary seats. In some cases, though less common, parties also provide women the opportunity to stand for senior party leadership positions. One woman described the changes she had seen in the Jamhuri Khwahan party since she joined in 2008:

In the beginning when the party office opened in Herat, the number of women members was very few, but it has increased now. The party has more than ten thousand members, of which more than 35 percent are women. The number of women is increasing day by day as women understand that parties are the most appropriate space for their political participation and decision making in society. Women can claim their rights through parties. Women have a very effective role in the political activities of the party in this province, especially in elections. In this year's election, women's role was tremendous.

Thus, at least in the run-up to the 2014 elections, parties seem to be recognizing the value of a previously untapped resource—the ability of women to convince other women to vote.

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In some cases, parties' recognition of women's skills appears to go further, with senior figures in the party recognizing women's contributions to the substantive improvement of the party. Even in parties commonly associated with conservative social values, such as Hezb-e Islami, respondents mentioned the need for women observers in elections, for example. They also noted how, despite patriarchal norms in remote provinces, they were able to bring a significant number of female observers to the polls. These changes do not for the most part indicate any substantive or cognitive change within parties to promote women members and do not champion women's rights. They are instead largely opportunistic measures adopted to take advantage of the reserved seats system or to gain credit for the accomplishments of female provincial councillors (such as instigating service provision in their communities).

What Does Joining a Party Involve?

Although interest in parties and movements among educated urban youth is increasing, support for parties does not necessarily translate into formal membership. Joining a party can simply mean supporting its activities. Most parties claim to have member databases, but the membership counts that officials cite vary widely. Most parties do have formal membership procedures, but these procedures tend to be convoluted and involve character references from local officials or religious leaders. Some have a two-stage system that entails an initial probation period. Some provide membership cards, others only issue these after the probation period, and still others do not issue them at all for fear of misuse—being passed into the wrong hands and used to gain access to party meetings, for example. These provisions underscore the nature of the political environment in Afghanistan at the moment—an environment that is formally open to political organization but also highly insecure, providing anyone opposed to a party's activities with opportunities to disrupt or attack them. In such a context of deep distrust, it is not wholly surprising that across the board, regardless of either when a party formed or its particular political leaning, joining formally is a fairly arduous process. Despite this disincentive, however, the benefits of being connected to a party that might tap government resources by supporting a winning presidential candidate seem to override otherwise tedious formalities.

Rank-and-file members tend to have little say in party decision making and may have relatively little contact with party offices as a general rule, especially in the provinces, where offices are subject to closure if funds prove inadequate. This situation does not appear to have changed very much over the last ten years, though urban members in cities other than Kabul seem to have greater connection now with head offices in the capital than a decade ago. In an election year, however, party activities predictably increase. Provincial offices are tasked with getting out the vote, for which they often enlist the support of members on a voluntary basis. Kabul offers more opportunities for members to be involved in party activities on a regular basis: All of the parties studied maintain headquarters in the capital that are usually open to members. The frequency of events or meetings held at the party headquarters depends largely on funds available but also usually coincide with important events, government decisions, or situations to which the party must respond. A young party member with political ambitions would need to volunteer at party headquarters, for example.

Significant gaps remain that prevent parties from consolidating further as political entities. With the possible exception of the Right and Justice Party, party financing remains predominantly provided for and controlled by the party leader, along with the majority of key decision making. Policy stances remain ill-defined and usually formed in response to issues and events rather than made proactively ahead of time, and communication of party decisions to regional branches is generally minimal. These gaps relate to internal obstacles within the organizations but perhaps to a greater degree to the broader political context in

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which Afghan parties function. For this reason, many aspects of the old-guard political culture exist in newly established parties and coalitions as well as in their older counterparts, where one might expect resistance to change.

Leader-Dominated Politics

It is perhaps unsurprising that the former anti-Soviet jihadi figureheads of parties such as Wahdat-e Islami-e Mardum (Wahdat Mardum) and Junbesh-e Milli (wa) Islami continue to hold primary authority within their party, given their reputations as military leaders and the considerable influence they still wield among their supporters as a result.¹¹ Although members of these and other parties formed during or before the war years talked about the processes through which candidates could put themselves forward for council elections, most concluded that the leader made the final decisions. A Wahdat-e Islami (Wahdat Islami) party member explained:

For the nomination and support of provincial council candidates by our party, there are certain criteria, such as levels of education, being famous in their local community and so on. Internally we announce that nominations are open. Those members that see themselves as eligible request to be candidates for the provincial council, and then we shortlist those candidates that are the most eligible. Finally, it is decided by the leader who should run for the provincial council election.

This practice is also common in more recently formed parties, however, demonstrating a similar kind of leader deference. Some parties, such as Ensejam-e Milli, established in 2007, have a council of leaders who ultimately decide which provincial council candidates will run in the name of the party. According to one member, though, “For the presidential elections, it is up to the head of the council of leaders whom to support.” Decisions in this party, he explained, were becoming less participatory over time, and in fact the party greater success in the 2009 elections when other party members had a greater role in candidate selection.

Other parties and coalitions have rotating leadership systems. According to their members, for example, Right and Justice, Afghan Mellat, and Hezb-e-Millat all stipulate in their party constitutions the need to vote for a leader every five years at a party congress. These grand meetings, however, are expensive to hold for the smaller parties and are often put off indefinitely for this reason. Sometimes, as in the case of Jamiyat, they are never held because of divisions within the party. Such stipulations are also not coupled with a term limit, enabling a leader to stay in power indefinitely. One member of the Hezb-e-Millat, established in 2012 in response to issues with the old-guard Hazara leadership of the Wahdat parties, talked about this as a key problem:

Our party is newly established, mainly by educated youth. One of our goals is to bring young people together in the party. There are not any jihadi or traditional leaders in our party. We need to have a system in which people can come to power and then step down for others to take over. It should not be the case that leaders remain at the head of party forever.

A fundamental aspect of leader domination in Afghanistan’s political parties threatens their sustainability as organizations—financing. A Hezb-e Millat party member described the situation in his own party this way:

It is sometimes difficult to differentiate between the party’s property and the leader’s property. Commonly, ordinary members of parties depend on the financial support of the leaders. Also, when someone is going to be appointed to a government position, the head of the party should approve this. The leaders have a monopoly over financial and political resources, and this is a big challenge for parties.

Because no official government funding is available to parties, few parties charge significant membership fees, and sources of funding are limited; parties are left open to the speculation that they accept funds from outside or foreign forces—Iran, Pakistan, Saudi, Russia, India, the United States, or Turkey, for example.

Party Activities, Messages, and Strategies

A frequent criticism of Afghan parties by international and Afghan observers alike is their apparent lack of policy-based platforms and their reliance instead on the personality and patronage networks of the leader. A Jamhuri Khwahan member explained:

In other countries, elections offer a good chance for parties to communicate with people and get the support of people, but in Afghanistan it is individuals who run in the elections and just use the name of party as a means to their own ends. Individuals are important in Afghanistan, not parties....One of the principles of democracy is that candidates should introduce their plans and programs, but here candidates only try to gather the support of influential people and key leaders during the elections.

Although this statement rings true as a general rule, parties have made some progress in consolidating their ideological stances. Rough ideological divisions between groups of parties are well established, as Thomas Ruttig notes—Islamists, ethno-nationalists, leftists, and new democrats each generating different support bases depending on their stances on the relationship between religion and government, for example.¹² Islamist parties are more at liberty in the current political environment to make their views on this subject public than, say, those who believe that religion and government should be separate. However, in the run-up to the 2014 elections, parties sided with presidential candidates over a range of issues that complemented their general ideological positions and not simply over ethnicity or whether a member of their party was nominated as a vice presidential candidate.

The signing of the U.S.-Afghan Bilateral Security Agreement, for example, was important to many parties. The Hezb-e Millat party, the newest of the twelve studied, was, as noted, established in response to dissatisfaction among young Hazaras with the traditional leaders of other Hazara parties. It supported Zalmay Rassoul in the first round of elections as a moderate, educated choice. In the run-off, it then supported Ashraf Ghani, having negotiated with both candidates and having found Ghani's future plans—in particular his solution to the Kuchi-Hazara land dispute—the most convincing. Ordinarily this support would be surprising in light of Ghani's Kuchi heritage and his perceived Pashtun nationalist leanings in the 2009 elections. Apparently, however, when faced with the choice between Ghani and Abdullah Abdullah, Ghani's technocratic background and rhetoric over the Kuchi-Hazara issue swung the decision to overlook previous concerns over perceived ethno-nationalism.

Generally, however, none of the parties studied had clearly defined policy agendas that dealt with national-level developmental and social issues, such as health care, education, or economic growth. Rather than proactively pursue policy goals, parties tend to react in hindsight. This wait-and-see approach is partly also to do with lack of practical experience in government and lack of incentive. The phrase “once we are in government, we will decide how to move forward” was common in interviews. A representative of Junbesh expressed it clearly:

The success of the [presidential candidate] we support will have an important impact on the strength of our party, because the head of our party will then be the second most important person in the country. With the success of our team, we will have more chance to achieve the goals and objectives that our party has been fighting for. If our candidate is not successful, then our party will have a reaction, but I don't know at the moment what that reaction will be.

In some ways, the 2014 elections and the incentives they presented forced parties to be more proactive than usual, particularly in terms of determining well in advance the candidates they would support. This effect will be difficult for parties to recreate in 2015, however. Once again parties will not be required for candidacy, but the stakes over parliamentary seats will be higher than ever before as a result of the guaranteed place for all legislators in the constitutional *loya jirga* scheduled to take place within two years—part of the political deal brokered by U.S. secretary of state John Kerry to end the 2014 presidential electoral impasse.

Other incentives to secure a parliamentary seat include the precedent now established for MPs to make lucrative business deals through their parliamentary positions, the need for parties and communities more generally to make connections to the new central administration under Ghani, and new parliamentary privileges that make positions in parliament at once more desirable and less attainable. Parties' ability or lack of ability to maintain the seats they already have in the Wolesi Jirga—which for some parties, including Hezb-e Islami and the Wahdats, for example, is significant—and to gain more seats in the lower house will have a direct impact on their potential influence at the national level going forward.

What parties offer in place of clearly articulated policy platforms or publicly defined ideological stances speaks to the reasons people join parties and are doing so increasingly at the moment: opportunities for interest aggregation and representation in government. In making organizational gains ahead of the elections, parties have demonstrated their capacity to bring together bloc votes and represent interest groups. Interest groups remain for the most part ethnically or geographically based, some of the newer parties and coalitions excepted. Their increasing popularity indicates the extent to which (ahead of elections at least) interest group representation in government—a politics of presence—is important to the Afghan electorate.

Contemporary Party Activities

The 2014 elections clearly had a galvanizing impact on party organization and cohesion, providing impetus and momentum for campaign activities but also the collectivity of a common cause to hold groups together. Other changes in party behavior in the run-up to presidential elections in 2014 are also significant:

- greater influence among students and young people through the provision of literacy and computer courses or residential hostels—Hezb-e Islami, Junbesh, Jamhuri Khwahan, Hezb-e Millat
- more parliamentarians willing to align themselves openly with parties and generally aligned with the same parties over the last two years¹³—Hezb-e Islami, National Coalition, Right and Justice, Ensejam
- parliamentary seats consolidated into potentially reliable voting blocs within parliament—Hezb-e Islami, Wahdat Islami, Ensejam
- more space in general for women in party leadership structures, and women increasingly willing to align themselves publicly with parties
- more and earlier preparation for elections—all parties except Ensejam
- greater engagement with national-level debates on issues such as the Bilateral Security Agreement with the United States—Hezb-e Islami, National Coalition, Right and Justice, Ensejam, Hezb-e Millat, Wahdat Mardum
- paying administrative staff in nonpolitical roles—Wahdat Mardum, Wahdat Islami, Hezb-e Islami, Ensejam, Hezb-e Millat, National Coalition, Right and Justice
- holding internal elections to fill some positions—Hezb-e Islami, Right and Justice, National Coalition

These gains have contributed to the creation of more political space for parties at both local and national levels and to a more positive public view of parties than a decade ago.

Clearly, the extent of change within parties varies, but the factors that determine the most significant changes are not straightforward. Indeed, members of one new party—Ensejam—thought that its capacity to represent member interests and organize politically had regressed since its formation in 2007. Similarly, Hezb-e Islami—which is one of the most socially conservative parties in Afghanistan and has both a military background and a wide rural support base—has made several changes recently to maximize political gains

in the pre-electoral environment. Junbesh supporters appear to have been galvanized into political action by Ghani's nomination of Junbesh leader Abdul Rashid Dostum as his first vice president—the numbers of Junbesh-affiliated candidates on provincial council ballots, albeit in areas where they are traditionally well received, were higher than those of any other party (seventy-seven of 275, some 28 percent of the total). Other parties also had leaders on presidential tickets, but this did not have the same effect on provincial council candidates for any other party, efforts being concentrated on the presidential race instead.

What seems to determine whether new strategies are adopted is a combination of factors. Among these are the fervor of very recent party formation (Right and Justice, National Coalition, Hezb-e Millat); resources to bring about changes in a consistent fashion (Hezb-e Islami, Right and Justice); the likelihood of a prominent party figure making good connections in the new administration, either through election or appointment; and political will at the top to incorporate young people and women and their skills into party activities (Hezb-e Islami, Right and Justice, National Coalition, Hezb-e Millat).

Parties that have not adopted many of these strategies in recent years include Wahdat Islami, Mahaz, and Ensejam—members of which reported a lack of momentum, few readily available resources, and a disconnect between the leadership and other party officials and members. Although the electoral race and political environment have prompted greater activity within parties, only some of them have managed to use this context as a catalyst for change.

The changes described here are neither unidirectional nor indicative of permanent change in party behavior. Nonetheless, and though specific to the pre-electoral context, they have had a clear impact on the way in which particular parties (and the public in some cases) see themselves and their role in Afghan politics. Parties and coalitions with the capacity to adopt new strategies may be able to build on these in 2015 and possibly generate gains in political influence. Again, however, any potential will be limited by the lack of legal role for parties in the political system as it exists today.

Organizational Skills and Campaign Strategy

Some technical gains have been made relating to organizational capacity and skills within parties. Developing platform documents, planning regular outreach to urban constituents, and facilitating greater communication between central and regional branches have all featured to varying degrees over the last decade, constituting a form of institutionalization as these parties redefine themselves as legitimate, nonmilitary organizations. These activities peak in the months before an election, as they do in other countries. International funding for training and party resources increase during these periods, which helps bolster existing demand for change. Although many parties return to periods of relative inactivity between elections, largely due to a lack of sustainable funding sources, the cumulative effect of three successive rounds of elections in Afghanistan is that political parties are recognized as effective mobilization vehicles for promoting campaigns both within and beyond candidates' established support groups.

Some parties were more active than others in promoting campaigns. This activity was determined by the extent of access to large groups of young volunteers with time to spare and of the connection to the candidates and their teams. The National Coalition, for example, launched a formidable campaign for its leader, Abdullah—as did Hezb-e Islami, one of whose members was nominated as Abdullah's vice president. While drawing on historical tanzims to boost support bases and mobilize voters, as they had done in 2004 and 2009, parties did not rely solely on these groups as mobilization vehicles in 2014, trying to attract unaffiliated youth by organizing talks at universities, for example. This change marks a difference from the first round of post-Taliban presidential elections in which key ethnic leaders relied much more heavily on the tanzims and ethnic, wider family-based or localized support networks.

The cumulative effect of three successive rounds of elections in Afghanistan is that political parties are recognized as effective mobilization vehicles for promoting campaigns both within and beyond candidates' established support groups.

Table 1. Parties and Coalitions Interviewed, Presidential Candidates Supported

Party	Leader	Circa	1st Round	2nd Round
Afghan Mellat	Stanagul Sherzad	1966	Ghani	Ghani
Harakat-e Islami-e Mardum	Sayed Hussein Anwari	2005	Rahim Wardak, Rassoul	Ghani
Hezb-e Islami	Abdul Hadi Arghandiwal (moderate, elected 2008)	1975	Abdullah	Abdullah
Ensejam	Najibullah Sadeq Modaber	2007	Qayum Karzai	Abdullah
Jamhuri Khwahan	Adela Bahram	2003	Ghani	Ghani
Hezb-e-Millat	Jafar Mahdawi	2012	Rassoul	Ghani
Wahdat Islami (split into factions in 1995)	M. Karim Khallili	1992	Ghani	Ghani
Wahdat Mardum (split from Wahdat Islami after Mazari's death)	M. Mohaqqueq	1995	Abdullah	Abdullah
Junbesh	Abdul Rashid Dostum	1992	Ghani	Ghani
Mahaz	Pir Sayed Ahmad Gailani	1980	Rassoul	Ghani
National Coalition	Abdullah Abdullah	2011	Abdullah	Abdullah
Right and Justice	Leadership council, four spokesmen	2011	Ghani	Ghani

The kinds of campaign activities for the 2014 elections described by party members interviewed included door-to-door canvassing, organizing events and rallies, producing and distributing leaflets on presidential candidates' policies, and getting out the vote through social media. The following respondent from the Jamhuri Khwahan (Republican) party gave a fairly typical response when asked what his party had contributed to the presidential campaign:

To contribute to Ashraf Ghani's campaign, I prepared a policy for the campaign team, which included a profile for each province. [Our party leader] campaigned in most of the provinces for Ghani on behalf of the party. During the campaign we focused on those who were not supporting us or had not decided who to support. Also we campaigned through SMS; social media, such as Facebook; and through organizing TV debates.

Parties' approaches to provincial council elections also serve as useful indicators of changes that have taken place in their organizational and institutional capacities over the last decade. First, unlike in 2004, all parties interviewed stressed the importance of winning provincial council seats:

"The success of provincial council candidates has [a] very significant role for the further strengthening of our party in the community as through the provincial council the party can build more trust and support among people."

–Right and Justice

"Having a provincial council member is very important, as our representatives in the PC have been one of the only ways to help solve people's problems."

–Wahdat Mardum

"The success of our provincial council candidates is the success of our party. We will have more influence among people if we have winning provincial council candidates. We will work more for people in this province."

–Hezb-e Islami

"Provincial council members have a very important role in the good performance of the party in society. Provincial council members act as a bridge between the party, the government and the people. The provincial council members facilitate better access of parties to people. Unfortunately, under the new law the provincial councils have very little authority, but still the provincial council can help expand a party's role among people."

–Hezb-e Millat

Ensuring a provincial council member's continued party loyalty once elected has nonetheless been a challenge for many parties, and particularly newer ones, because no structural or formal incentives cement ties between councillors and their parties.

The Hezb-e Millat respondent refers to how recent amendments reduced the authority of provincial councils to oversee the activities of provincial governors.¹⁴ Nevertheless, no party member interviewed expressed any doubt that party provincial councillors were still a key asset, likely because a council seat has value beyond the formal powers attributed to the position. It is arguably more valuable for the access to government authority, revenues, and patronage than for the potential to keep checks on how the governor chooses to distribute resources, for example. Ensuring a provincial council member's continued party loyalty once elected has nonetheless been a challenge for many parties, and particularly newer ones, because no structural or formal incentives cement ties between councillors and their parties. Some parties had been more successful than others in the 2014 elections, some had lost seats, and some had emphasized campaigning for their chosen presidential candidate. Table 2 presents an overview of the party candidates who declared their party affiliation and were successful—fifty-seven of 275—and does not include those who ran as independent. The success of the declaration strategy was clearly quite limited, though this varied greatly from province to province depending, for example, on the strength of a given party in the region. Junbesh provides an example: The combination of the party's leader being nominated as Ghani's vice president and a known support base in provinces such as Faryab and Jawzjan appear to have bolstered its strategy of fielding many formally affiliated party candidates in these provinces (twenty-one and sixteen respectively) ending in electoral victories (five and ten, respectively). In locations where Junbesh has widespread support, flouting the conventional wisdom of narrowing the number of candidates in a given constituency to minimize the competition against one another under SNTV seems warranted. In other provinces, Junbesh was successful in running fewer candidates, so a mixed strategy based on a province-by-province assessment of support was clearly advantageous. If Junbesh is able to repeat this performance in the parliamentary elections, its elected representation could be significant.

Although some respondents attributed losses to fraud, which they considered higher in 2014 because the Independent Election Commission (IEC) attention was focused on the presidential race, a number of respondents also reflected on flaws in party strategy and attributed the problem to putting new, unknown candidates forward (Wahdat Islami) or to the leadership's being undecided on whom to support (Ensejam). Faulting the party rather than fraud or the electoral authorities is a significant change from accounts of the 2009 and 2010 elections.

Overall, parties are taking greater advantage of the SNTV system. Although many still complain that it is the principal obstacle to their development and expansion, election strategies in 2014 generally—save for those with regional support bases—involved reducing the number of party candidates, declared and undeclared, to minimize competition between them and, in theory, to win more seats in the provincial council. This approach worked for some parties in some places but was not universally successful. Wahdat Mardum, for example, attempted to keep numbers of candidates low and in the end fielded four party candidates and two independents in the Kabul race, but none were successful. Members attribute the failure to fraud and blame the IEC both for interfering and for overlooking fraud in the provincial council contest in order to focus on the presidential race. Clearly, however, the Kabul election was hotly contested, seats being valued far more highly than in many other provincial councils across the country.

The variables influencing which candidates were successful in which provinces for which parties are numerous, and identifying trends is especially difficult given that elections in Afghanistan are so highly personalized. Nevertheless, the information is useful to illustrate just how few candidates run officially as party candidates—none in Logar, Nimroz, Parwan,

Table 2. Official Party Candidates' Winning Seats

Province	Total on Ballot (W)	Party Candidates (W)	Affiliation Count	Winners (W)—Affiliations
Badakshan	118 (9)	4 (1)	Jamiyat 2 Hezb-e Azadagan 2	0
Badghis	32 (5)	2 (0)	Junbesh 2	1–Junbesh
Baghlan	152 (11)	11 (0)	Jamiyat 3 Junbesh 3 Hezb-e Islami 2 Ensejam 1 Paiwand-e Milli 1 Wahdat Mardum 1	2–Jamiyat, Paiwand-e Milli
Balkh	123 (17)	34 (5)	Jamiyat 17 Junbesh 6 Wahdat Islami 4 Wahdat Mardum 3 Ensejam 1 Harakat 1 Hezb-e Islami 1 Hezb-e Millat 1	7 (1)–Jamiyat 5 (1), Wahdat Mardum 1, Junbesh 1
Bamiyan	53 (13)	16 (2)	Wahdat Islami 5 Wahdat Mardum 4 Ensejam 3 Harakat 2 Hezb-e Millat 1 Right and Justice 1	3–Wahdat-e Islami 2, Wahdat Mardum 1
Daikundi	72 (14)	18 (6)	Wahdat Islami 6 Wahdat Mardum 5 Ensejam 2 Wahdat Milli Islami Afghanistan 2 Eqtedar-e Milli 1 Harakat 1 Kar wa Tawsea 1	4 (1)–Wahdat Islami 2, Wahdat Mardum 1, Wahdat Milli Islami Afghanistan (1)
Farah	30 (5)	5 (1)	Afghan Mellat 2 Right and Justice 1 Hezb-e Islami 1 Taraki Watan 1	1–Taraki Watan
Faryab	52 (6)	24 (3)	Junbesh 21 Jamiyat 3	5 (2)–Junbesh
Ghazni	84 (7)	14 (1)	Wahdat Islami 7 Wahdat Mardum 2 Ensejam 2 Unknown 3	3 (1)–Wahdat Islami (1), Ensejam, Unknown
Ghor	61 (12)	2 (0)	Junbesh 1 Ensejam 1	1–Ensejam
Helmand	99 (10)	1 (0)	Hezb-e Islami	0
Herat	166 (21)	5 (0)	Afghan Mellat 1 Junbesh 1 Wahdat Mardum 1 Ensejam 1 Wahdat Islami 1	0
Jawzjan	59 (6)	20 (1)	Junbesh 16 Jamiyat 4	10 (1)–Junbesh

Table 2. Official Party Candidates' Winning Seats cont.

Province	Total on Ballot (W)	Party Candidates (W)	Affiliation Count	Winners (W)—Affiliations
Kabul	457 (49)	35 (7)	Bawar-e Milli 5 Wahdat Islami 5 Dawat 4 Wahdat Mardum 4 Paiwand-e Milli 3 Etelaf-e Milli 2 Hezb-e Islami 2 Unknown 2 Adalat wa Tawsea 1 Ensejam 1 Harakat 1 Hezb-e Wahid Islami 1 Hezb-e Millat 1 Solh-e Milli 1 Tafahum 1 Wahdat Milli Islami Afghanistan 1	1–Dawat
Kandahar	74 (7)	2 (0)	Hezb-e Islami 1 Hezb-e Mutahid-e Milli 1	0
Kapisa	49 (4)	1 (0)	Etelaf-e Milli	1
Khost	63 (4)	2 (0)	Solh-e Milli 1 Unknown 1	0
Kunar	34 (6)	1 (1)	Hezb-e Islami	0
Kunduz	107 (5)	9 (0)	Junbesh 5 Hezb-e Islami 2 Ensejam 1 Right and Justice 1	1–Junbesh
Laghman	53 (5)	1 (0)	Hezb-e Islami 1	0
Logar	40 (4)	0	0	0
Nangarhar	118 (10)	10 (1)	Hezb-e Islami 4 Afghan Mellat 2 Dawat 1 Harakat 1 Hezb-e Wahid Islami 1 Jamhori Khwahan 1	1–Dawat
Nimroz	38 (8)	0	0	0
Nooristan	43 (6)	2 (0)	Bawar-e Milli 2	0
Paktya	66 (5)	2 (0)	Aquam-e Faqeer 1 Mahaz 1	0
Paktika	35 (5)	3 (0)	Mahaz 3	0
Panjshir	30 (5)	1 (0)	Junbesh 1	0
Parwan	86 (10)	0	0	0
Samangan	60 (8)	14 (1)	Jamiyat 5 Junbesh 3 Wahdat Mardum 3 Harakat 2 Wahdat Islami 1	3–Jamiyat, Junbesh, Wahdat Mardum

Table 2. Official Party Candidates' Winning Seats cont.

Province	Total on Ballot (W)	Party Candidates (W)	Affiliation Count	Winners (W)—Affiliations
Sar-e Pul	43 (6)	12 (2)	Junbesh 7 Jamiyat 2 Wahdat Mardum 2 Wahdat Islami 1	6 (1)—Junbesh 3, Wahdat Mardum 2 (1), Jamiyat 1
Takhar	117 (8)	15 (3)	Junbesh 11 Adalat Islami 1 Hezb-e Azadagan 1 Hezb-e Islami 1 Wahdat Islami 1	3—Junbesh 2, Hezb-e Islami 1
Uruzgan	33 (5)	1 (0)	Hezb-e Islami 1	0
Wardak	46 (7)	8 (1)	Wahdat Mardum 3 Ensejam 3 Wahdat Islami 2	5 (1)—Ensejam 3 (1), Wahdat Islami 1, Wahdat Mardum 1
Zabul	20 (3)	0	0	0
Total	2713 (308)	275 (36)	—	57 (8)

Note: Compiled from official IEC final candidate lists and final results lists.

and Zabul, for example. It also highlights the way in which very few women run officially with parties (thirty-six of 275) and also how few are successful (eight of fifty-seven). Kabul provides an interesting case with thirty-five official party candidates and only one eventually successful. This result perhaps points to urban disillusionment with elections in general or to the perceived lack of utility of the provincial council among voters, which varies greatly from province to province, partly shown by the numbers of votes gained by the candidates: In Kabul, the highest vote-getter came in at 9,409 votes; in Ghazni, at 18,417; in Balkh, at 20,825; and in Faryab, at 21,420, against the lowest in Uruzgan, at 2,034.

Cohesion and Fragmentation

The 2014 elections, then, have provided some incentive for internal party cohesion. At other times, however, parties have struggled to function as collective entities, and splinter groups have often enough broken off. Particularly since the assassination of Burhanuddin Rabbani in 2011, at least one party—the Jamiyat-e Islami, not featured in this study—has struggled to maintain cohesion in the face of prominent individuals vying for key positions within it.

The National Coalition is made up of political leaders who supported Abdullah's campaign but is also a reestablished version of Abdullah's earlier support group, Hope and Change, using a different name to appear more inclusive and less like Abdullah's personal party.¹⁵ The likelihood of the coalition continuing its activities will depend on whether key Jamiyat personalities that have pooled their support behind Abdullah in the elections continue to support him once key decisions over appointments to the new cabinet have been finalized. If they do not, the National Coalition may well suffer the same fate as a number of other attempts at coalition in Afghanistan in recent years and disappear into obscurity. Right and Justice may have a greater chance of remaining united following the resolution of the election, as it does not have the same history of internal division among members and is also not led by a single individual but by four spokesmen. Much could change also, however, if the new president adopts policies that favor party development and political activity, creating incentives that encourage parties and coalitions to remain united.

Looking Ahead

The changes in party behavior that seem to be taking place at the moment can be explained several ways. First, parties may simply be institutionalizing gradually over time, increasing levels of educated young people in urban areas joining their ranks but also demanding more in return for their skills.¹⁶ This change is true particularly of parties with largely Hazara support bases. Urban Hazara communities, such as Dasht-e Barchi in west Kabul, more than other communities across the capital, have seen numerous private educational institutions established over the last few years. This goes some way toward explaining party development but does not account for the way in which some aspects of party behavior have not changed. Even newly formed parties at times reflect an old-guard mentality of leader-dominated inactivity.

Changes in women's roles in parties seem to be a result of both the potential dividends their involvement in campaigning and observing could bring to parties in terms of voter support and monitoring fraud but also the incentives offered by international agencies providing support in return for the participation of female delegates.

Most critically, however, in the 2014 presidential election, unlike in 2009, the imminent departure of President Karzai promised a more open political playing field. It meant that parties had everything to play for and that it benefited them to make early decisions on which candidate to support. Further, the presidential election—at least until the second round of voting—proved a galvanizing force for party cohesion in that rallying around a candidate's campaign provided not only an urgent, common cause for members to work toward but also a clear way to define themselves vis-à-vis other parties. Since the drawn-out process of auditing ballots and negotiating results, however, this sense of urgency and momentum has quickly dissipated.

How the 2014 elections have played out goes some way toward explaining why major changes toward greater institutionalization of parties are not unfolding. If elections, for example, could be relied on as trustworthy exercises in which results are both transparent and quickly and clearly determined, parties would have good reason to mobilize, field candidates, and organize campaign strategies well in advance of the polls.

The expectation that 2014 might be different than earlier fraudulent elections meant that some of these preparations did take place and that parties did seem more organized. In the face of delays and ambiguity after the voting, however, it became clear that the outcome still seemed to depend on negotiations behind closed doors.

The deal brokered between run-off candidates Ashraf Ghani and Abdullah Abdullah by Secretary of State John Kerry in July 2014 included a contract outlining a power-sharing agreement to form a national unity government. Under this agreement, Ghani was appointed president in September 2014, and Abdullah took on the new position of chief executive officer. Additionally, a loya jirga will be convened, ideally within two years, to amend the constitution and potentially accommodate a parliamentary system.¹⁷ Even at this point, several months into the new administration's first term, speculation is considerable about how this new arrangement will be implemented, particularly in terms of dividing powers and reaching compromise. However, even if the contract does hold and a loya jirga is convened, the agreement provides little space for parties as political actors. In attempting to institutionalize a broad political coalition, the deal replicated a feature of previous eras of Afghan politics—delegitimization of a functioning, active opposition.

None of the parties had a strategy in place for parliamentary elections when interviewed, largely because the delays in the presidential electoral process and in the appointment of cabinet members have affected the momentum as well as both the willingness and ability to plan ahead. All respondents affirmed party intention to put forward candidates and were

If elections could be relied on as trustworthy exercises in which results are both transparent and quickly and clearly determined, parties would have good reason to mobilize, field candidates, and organize campaign strategies well in advance of the polls.

confident that parliamentary elections would take place, but preparations thus far seem to have been made more by potential candidates as individuals to make a name for themselves within parties during the presidential campaign.

Whether parties can put their experiences in the 2014 elections to good use in the parliamentary polls is yet to be seen. Fielding candidates in the name of the party rather than supporting independent candidates has had mixed results. It is therefore likely that most parties will opt for a mixture of the two and vary it across provinces. The stakes in 2015 will be higher, however, than for either the provincial council polls in 2014 or the parliamentary elections in 2010 because parliamentary seats will be both more desirable and more difficult to secure. Parties may well adopt as diverse a strategy as possible, attempting to make the most of both old-guard and newer political tactics to increase their chances.

Much will depend also on the approach of the new president and chief executive toward parties. Many interviewees seemed confident that both Ghani and Abdullah would improve the political scene for parties and allocate them a greater role in government, though few could articulate how. To date, neither Ghani nor Abdullah have indicated any intentions in this regard. Ghani has made no commitment to the formation of his own party—a move that would change the stakes completely for parties—though his alliance to Dostum, the head of one of the most organized political parties in Afghanistan, might prove instrumental in this regard. Much could change for parties if, for example, a loya jirga does amend the constitution in favor of a parliamentary system, and space is created for party involvement. At present, however, parties have not yet begun to lobby the new administration for change in any coordinated or strategic way.

Even before the results of the audit were announced, by early summer of 2014 it had become clear that elections had once again become just as much about negotiations and bargains between elites as they had been about voter preferences. It therefore remains strategic for parties to retain the connections of their leadership and mobilization along ethnic or regional lines to be better able to take advantage of both as political outcomes are negotiated. Parliamentary elections in 2015 will present a similar scenario in that deals and negotiations will play an important role in determining who wins. Some changes may be made to the way parties are run to make the most of new windows of opportunity—such as the influx of educated youth who demand more influence in party decision making or international training and support that requires female party delegates as participants. The outreach to youth will also become increasingly important as parties compete for young membership with other emerging groups and movements.

Parties that combine recent momentum—or draw on a long-standing reputation for political cohesion—with readily available financial and human resources and strategic, devolved, and engaged leadership will likely be able to institutionalize most effectively. However, any technical strategies adopted will remain superficial until large-scale contextual shifts in the political landscape reduce the advantages of old-guard politics. Such changes could include an electoral system that encourages greater party mobilization, parliament structuring to facilitate party-based interest groups, and opposition to government formally established as a legitimate political stance. These changes seem unlikely in a unity government. It is therefore even more important that parties lobby for change if and when the constitution is amended and that they acquire parliamentary seats for the influence in government and the loya jirga that such seats can afford.

Any technical strategies adopted will remain superficial until large-scale contextual shifts in the political landscape reduce the advantages of old-guard politics.

Notes

1. Thomas Ruttig, "Islamists, Leftists and a Void in the Center: Afghanistan's Political Parties and Where They Come From (1902-2006)," Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, 2006, 1, http://www.kas.de/wf/doc/kas_9674-1522-2-30.pdf?061129052448.
2. See Louis Dupree, *Afghanistan* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1980), chapter 19.
3. Antonio Giustozzi, "Between Patronage and Rebellion: Student Politics in Afghanistan," AREU Briefing Paper, February 2010, 1-2; Anna Larson and Noah Coburn, "Youth Mobilization and Political Constraints in Afghanistan: The Y Factor," U.S. Institute of Peace Special Report no. 341, January 2014, 6.
4. This continued sidelining of parties was a deliberate attempt on the part of Hamid Karzai and Lakhdar Brahimi to "preserve stability" by de-emphasizing the social divisions that parties represented. See Ahmed Rashid, *Descent into Chaos: The U.S. and the Disaster in Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Central Asia* (New York: Penguin, 2008), 258. Larson and Coburn have argued elsewhere that the political space in which opposition groups have been able to mobilize against government policy appears to have decreased over the last century, with executive control from one regime to the next becoming ever more overbearing ("Youth Mobilization," 7). This control has also shifted from the forms of overt authoritarian measures as enforced by Daoud to a more subtle manipulation of parliamentarians and party leaders through government patronage and the persistent, persuasive narrative presented by Karzai to enhance his own control over disorganized factions that parties represent division and conflict.
5. For more on the SNTV system and its drawbacks, see Andrew Reynolds and Andrew Wilder, "Free, Fair or Flawed: Challenges for Legitimate Elections in Afghanistan," AREU Briefing Paper, September 2004, 12-16.
6. Sixty-three parties are listed as officially registered with the Ministry of Justice on its website's Dari page, although only fifty are listed on the English version of the page. It is also possible that more parties have registered since the page was last updated.
7. Giustozzi, "Between Patronage and Rebellion." To some extent, this occurs within newer parties also, some of which, such as Jamhuri Khwahan, provide free English and computing classes for young people in return for their time volunteering for the party. Many newer parties simply do not have the resources of the old-guard parties however and so are less able to provide these kinds of services.
8. Larson and Coburn, "Youth Mobilization"; Borhan Osman, "Afghan Youth for Democracy? Not All of Them," Afghan Analysts Network, April 2, 2014, <https://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/afghan-youth-for-democracy-not-all-of-them>.
9. Interview with political analyst, Kabul.
10. For more on these groups and the radicalization of Afghan youth, see Osman, "Afghan Youth."
11. Significant attempts within Junbesh to minimize Dostum's role and devolve decision making have been largely unsuccessful. During this study, Junbesh respondents referred to Dostum very much as the figurehead of the party, and his new position as first vice president is likely to emphasize this further.
12. Ruttig, "Islamists, Leftists and a Void."
13. This is in contrast to the general practice of parliamentarians promising allegiance to a number of different parties but openly admitting to membership of none.
14. For details on how this came about, see Thomas Ruttig, "The Butter on The Bread: The Provincial Councils' Fight for Extended Authority," Afghan Analysts Network, March 23, 2014, <https://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/the-butter-on-the-bread-the-provincial-councils-fight-for-extended-authority/>.
15. For more on what he calls the Jamiat dilemma, see Thomas Ruttig, "National Coalition vs National Front: Two Opposition Alliances Put Jamiat in a Dilemma," Afghan Analysts Network, January 4, 2012, <http://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/national-coalition-vs-national-front-two-opposition-alliances-put-jamiat-in-a-dilemma>.
16. Statistics detailing the increase in the urban youth demographic are not available. However, combining the population between ages ten and twenty-five (34 percent) with the increase in the last ten years in urban populations gives some indication of the size of the group. According to Afghanistan's Central Statistics Organization, the urban population in Kabul alone rose by 46 percent from 2,435,400 in 2004-05 to 3,565,000 in 2014-15. Population Reference Bureau, "The World's Youth, 2013 Data Sheet," <http://www.prb.org/Publications/Datasheets/2013/youth-datasheet-2013.aspx>; Central Statistics Office, "Settled Population of Province by Civil Division," 2004-2005 and 2014-2015, <http://cso.gov.af/en/page/demography-and-socile-statistics/demograph-statistics/3897>.
17. Carlotta Gall, "Political Divisions Threaten Kerry-Brokered Agreement in Afghanistan," *New York Times*, July 25, 2014, http://www.nytimes.com/2014/07/26/world/asia/political-divisions-threaten-kerry-brokered-agreement-in-afghanistan.html?smid=tw-share&_r=1.

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