VIOLENCE AND FEMALE INCLUSION:
ELECTIONS AND FEMALE POLITICAL PARTICIPATION IN AFGHANISTAN

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ABSTRACT

The 2010 Afghan Parliamentary “Wolesi Jirga” Election occurred during a tumultuous time in post-Taliban Afghanistan. The Taliban was growing as a destructive, insurgent group while the young government was struggling to implement democratic institutions and reverse many Taliban-era ideals. This election was distinct, in that numerous women ran for office, as female political participation became a growing priority for Hamid Karzai’s western-backed administration. In this study, I evaluate whether elections served as focal points of violence for the Taliban’s activity, and whether they targeted their activities towards districts that boasted a stronger female political presence. I used several methodologies including an event window analysis, several regression models including fixed effects, simple OLS, Poisson and Negative Binomial, as well as cursory T-Tests. I find strong evidence that the election itself attracted violent attacks, and marginal evidence that districts that voted in the highest numbers for female candidates, experienced different levels of violence.
Many thanks to my professors at the McCourt School of Public Policy, particularly my thesis advisor, Andreas Kern, as well as Andrew, Taylor, Matt, and many other friends and family for their endless support.

And a special thank you to Eric and my parents, whose support and encouragement was integral to the development of this paper.
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Introduction

Many countries that transition to democracy often have troubled initial elections, particularly if democratic institutions were not developed through an organic process that originated from the people. Foreign-led democratization frequently suffers from turbulent elections that feature voter intimidation, ballot stuffing, and widespread corruption.

Afghanistan, in its implementation of elections, has suffered from significant backlash and violence from the Taliban’s insurgents. Unique to Afghanistan, is the role of women and how they are involved in political life. Under the Taliban, women were virtually excluded from all aspects of government and public life, and were brutally repressed by the regime’s strict conduct codes. Once the Taliban were ousted, women are slowly being re-introduced into political life, despite in violent backlash by the insurgents.

Presidential elections in Afghanistan have generally been high-profile events, with large-scale voter turnout and significant public awareness. Compared to this, there has been very little analysis of the country’s parliamentary elections. My motivation to conduct this analysis is that parliamentary elections can offer more insight into voter behavior and insurgent response, because of the local, district-level dynamics that emerge in these elections. Furthermore, I was keen to analyze this election due to the number of women running for office, which adds a gender component to this study. Finally, I wanted to pursue this study because the 2010 Afghan parliamentary election represents a more tedious version of democracy. Without the fanfare and excitement that surrounds inaugural elections or Presidential elections, behavior surrounding parliamentary elections can potentially offer deeper, and more nuanced insight on how democracy operates in a country at war.
Given the widespread violence that have occurred around elections in Afghanistan, this paper aims to find answers to the following questions. How does insurgent-driven voter intimidation, particularly in the form of violent attacks, impact elections with respect to gender? The critical element that will be analyzed in the 2010 elections is the introduction of women as candidates, and those that voted for them. The key questions that this paper will seek answers to are the following:

1. How does the Taliban react to new democratic processes that have been put in place since they were overthrown?
2. Within the context of the Taliban’s insurgency during parliamentary elections, does having women run in elections precipitate greater violence?
3. Does having voters that are willing to cast ballots for female candidates result in becoming targets for violence?

There are only a few cases that are comparable to Afghanistan that could help answer these questions. However, there is some evidence in literature that leads me to establish the following hypotheses. First, that elections in Afghanistan were used as a focal point for insurgent activity; they used democratically held events to pursue their campaign to undermine the fledgling government and reclaim power. The second hypothesis that I will test in this study is that women in political life represent the antithesis of the conservative ideology promoted by the Taliban, therefore they will increase activity in areas with greater female political participation and acceptance. My findings, as detailed
later on will showcase strong support for the case that elections served as a focal point for violent attacks in Afghanistan. The event windows also support the second hypothesis, that insurgent activity did react to female political participation. This is marginally supported by regression models that were conducted.

The genesis of these questions and hypotheses lie in the complex history of Afghanistan and its major political players. While many researchers have written about Afghanistan and the relationship between new democracies and insurgents, my research complements several strands of the existing canon. First, it focuses on Afghanistan’s parliamentary elections, which up to this point have only been analyzed by a few researchers. Second, it analyzes the relationship between the insurgent Taliban, and how it is responding to the changing social norms in the country it once governed, specifically the inclusion of women in government. Third, it analyzes how individual votes were cast by district, which provides insight into how Afghan’s public is approaching its new democratic institutions and advances towards gender equality.

Michael Callen and James Long also wrote a study that analyzes the relationship between political networks, weak institutions and election fraud during the 2010 parliamentary elections in Afghanistan.¹ The findings of this paper provide useful fodder for this analysis, particularly in understanding factors that impact elections and issues of trust in institutions. The authors found considerable evidence of aggregation fraud in favor of candidates that had connections to election officials. However, when new

election monitoring technology was announced, theft of election materials reduced by 60%, and vote counts for these candidates with connections reduced by 25%.²

Several articles have also been written about which conditions favor violent insurgency. This body of research provides a context explaining why Afghanistan is experiencing the issues they are in their ongoing political evolution. Madhav Joshi and T. David Mason wrote about the Maoist wing of the Nepal Communist Party, and how they mobilized peasants to support their insurgency, despite the fact that they were unable to mobilize them to vote for them in elections.³ They analyze the difference between mobilizing constituents through legitimate channels, i.e. elections, versus channels that lay outside typical government institutions, such as violent insurgency. They find a link between frustrations between land-owning elites and the rural peasants as a key motivational mobilizer for collective action from the peasantry.⁴

More theoretical articles stipulate on the differences between terrorism and insurgency, which is an important distinction to make when analyzing the impact and motivation of violent attacks. Mustafa Cosar Unal states that in Turkey, the PKK used characteristics of both terrorist attacks and insurgent violence due to varying factors and different motivations.⁵ In terms of assessing whether the counter-insurgency campaigns fulfill their intended outcomes, Monica Duffy-Toft and Yuri Zhukov detail the effectiveness of state coercion in fighting insurgent violence.⁶ They find that denial of

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² Callen and Long.
⁴ Joshi and Mason.
insurgent activity is the most useful method of containing insurgent violence, as it reduces the impact and controls the spread of the insurgent group’s message.7

Several studies also discuss how violence around elections are the results of shortcomings by security and that governments can take steps to ensure elections are held safely. Election-violence can be diminished when appropriate resources are devoted to securing the polls and monitoring the voting process. Several articles discuss why violence or fraud occurs during elections, and what missteps were taken which could have prevented violence. Jenna Kessler’s paper details the relationship between international aid and how it impacted Afghanistan’s 2009 Presidential Election. Her analysis showcases that voters were concerned about fraud and violence because Afghanistan itself does not have the capability required to implement and enforce its democratic structures.8 She includes numerous recommendations on how election observers can better monitor elections, and which legal frameworks are required to improve legal governance of elections.9

In the next section, the background and history of Afghanistan will be detailed. The ouster of the Taliban, the formation of the government, the role of gender, and the Taliban’s insurgency are all key factors that set up the theory and understanding behind the concepts being evaluated in this study. The methodology and research questions will then be expanded upon, as well as the findings. Finally, this paper will draw from the findings and propose several policy considerations based on what has been examined and analyzed.

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7 Duffy Toft and Zhukov.  
9 Kessler.
Background

Purpose Behind U.S. Invasion

In order to understand the background and genesis of elections in Afghanistan, it is necessary to detail how and why the United States became involved in this country. The U.S. invaded Afghanistan in 2001, after the September 11th attacks, in an effort to bring down al-Qaeda’s base of operations by removing the Taliban from power. The invasion was conducted with the U.K. as the chief ally, alongside Afghanistan’s Northern Alliance. The Northern Alliance had been engaged in an internal war against the Taliban since 1996, therefore the U.S. intervention was well-timed for their own goals. A persistent belief during the time of the invasion, that continues to have strong support today, was that as long as the Taliban remained in power Afghanistan would be a safe haven for terrorists. While the advent of online communication has reduced the need for a base of physical operations, the preparation and training required to carry out coordinated terrorist attacks necessitate the need for a home. The 9/11 Commission Report discusses that as the plot for 9/11 was forming, Khalid Sheikh Muhammad held a series of training courses along the Afghanistan-Pakistan border. Knowing this, removing the Taliban in Afghanistan, and replacing it with a strong, stable, and legitimate government was a crucial goal for the United States’ broader counter-terrorism strategy.

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12 “It’s time for war, Bush and Blair tell Taliban.”
The Invasion and the Initial Steps Towards Forming a Government

The United States’ invasion in Afghanistan, known as Operation Enduring Freedom, was launched on October 7, 2001. The U.S., with British support, began with air strikes on al-Qaeda and Taliban forces. Conventional forces arrived a few weeks later, and fought the Taliban on the ground alongside its Afghan opponents. The Taliban lost the northern city of Mazar-e-Sharif in November of that year, and the regime began to quickly unraveling. The Northern Alliance, without U.S. support or guidance, entered Kabul soon after to cheers and popular support.

The regime continued to fall, and by December of 2001, the Taliban and Mullah Omar had fled Kandahar, ending their rule over Afghanistan. At this point, the 2001 Bonn Conference of Afghan leaders declared Hamid Karzai as the leader of an Afghan Interim Authority as combat continued in the country. Karzai, a U.S.-backed Pashtun leader, appointed numerous anti-Taliban officials to senior posts within the government.

From 2001 – 2003, the United States, alongside local resistance fighters, continued its operations through a series of raids in hundreds of villages and communities, largely in southern Afghanistan along the border of Pakistan and in and around the city of Kandahar to root out remaining members of the Taliban and al-Qaeda. The U.S. had a relatively

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light footprint in terms of on the ground troops between 2001 – 2003, reporting less than 15,000 soldiers in-country. This number increased dramatically between 2003 and 2010 as the Taliban insurgence grew and became more strategic. On May 1, 2003, Donald Rumsfeld declared an end to major combat in Afghanistan. 21

Transitional Government and Constitution Formation

In 2002, the Afghan Interim Authority held a ‘loya jirga’, meaning grand assembly or council, to elect a Transitional Administration to shepherd Afghanistan through the process of forming a new government once the U.S. ousted the Taliban from the country. 22 The assembly included over 1,500 delegates, representing each district with additional representatives for districts with disproportionately large populations. The loya jirga is a unique Afghan tradition that is a roughly democratic way to settle tribal issues or to rally behind specific causes. 23 It is important to note, that even in this early stage of forming Afghanistan’s democratic government, about 200 seats in the assembly were reserved for women. 24  25 This assembly was marred by significant challenges; several delegates walked out claiming that their choices on issues were subject to bribery and intimidation. Regardless, the loya jirga elected Hamid Karzai as President of the Transitional Administration. 26

23 “Q&A: What is a loya Jirga?,”
24 “Q&A: What is a loya Jirga?,”
The purpose of this Transitional Administration was to form the government and manage it through the combat period for up to two years, before a more representative government could be established. This was a critical step in Afghanistan’s path to a constitutional, democratic government. In 2004, Karzai and his team established a new Afghan Constitution that established Afghanistan as a democratic Islamic republic, with separation of powers under a presidential system. This constitution established the Wolesi Jirga, the body whose elections are analyzed in this paper. The Wolesi Jirga, or the “People’s House” is the more powerful body of Afghanistan’s bicameral legislature. It constitutes around 250 representatives elected from Afghanistan’s 34 provinces in accordance with the population of each province.

Elections are Introduced

The first post-Taliban election held in Afghanistan was the presidential election in 2004. As with many founding elections, voter turnout was high. With heavy participation of international election monitors, intense security, and population support and jubilation, it was widely deemed a success. Hamid Karzai won the election, and became the first President of post-Taliban Afghanistan. Paul Miller, in his RAND report, discusses how founding elections enjoy significant popular support, resources, and domestic and international attention. He continues by noting that,

“Such advantages are missing during second and third elections, while many of the challenges remain. The initial excitement is gone, elites may become disillusioned upon discovering the true extent of their popular support, voters may be discouraged that an election does not automatically get the roads paved or spur

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immediate job creation, and international donors often move on to the next crisis—all while post-conflict conditions, such as unemployment and insecurity, endure.” (Miller, 3)\textsuperscript{30}

The results of the subsequent elections are therefore, important to analyze. These elections are more mundane, and usually have to be conducted without much international support. The 2009 Presidential election was the first one that the Afghans administered themselves, and they faced significant difficulties. These elections were tarnished by widespread violence, lower turnout, and accusations of corruption.\textsuperscript{31}

\textit{The Taliban’s Insurgency and Reemergence}

While Afghanistan was moving ahead with forming its new government and establishing its bureaucracy, the Taliban’s numbers in the country fell lower and lower. While the group officially lost power in 2001, they retained influence and sanctuaries in Pashtun-dominated portions of southern Afghanistan and western Pakistan.\textsuperscript{32} Their activity was most concentrated along the Afghanistan-Pakistan border, and they held targeted recruitment drives along that entire area. The rough, mountainous terrain makes this one of the toughest borders for international forces to secure, and therefore served as an ideal base for regrouping and resurgence.

The Taliban insurgents trained new recruits in guerilla tactics, and received support from various tribal groups. As reported by the BBC, these insurgents were also benefited when “ISAF air strikes led to civilian deaths and a ban on poppy cultivation destroyed

\textsuperscript{30} Democracy in Afghanistan: The 2014 Election and Beyond, RAND Corporation
\textsuperscript{32} “The Taliban Resurgence in Afghanistan, 2002-2006,” BBC History, http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/events/the_taliban_resurgence_in_afghanistan
many rural livelihoods.”  

During their insurgency in 2003 onwards, the Taliban began adopting newer tactics, including suicide bombings and the use of Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs). Both of these methods were extremely successful at hampering the combat efforts against them.

The resurgence of the Taliban has increased steadily; analyzing insurgent led attacks over the years showcases the timeline of the Taliban’s resurrection. This continuous growth and increase in attacks have hampered Afghanistan’s effort to govern effectively and hold elections safely. The graph below showcases how monthly attacks steadily increased from 2008 to 2010.

**Figure 1: Violent Attacks by Month, 2008 - 2010**

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33 “The Taliban Resurgence in Afghanistan, 2002-2006.”

34 “The Taliban Resurgence in Afghanistan, 2002-2006.”
Up until 2003, the United States had been engaged in a relatively low-level counter-insurgency initiative. During this time, U.S. engagement in Iraq had increased and between 2004 and 2006, many U.S. resources had been redirected towards the efforts. The Taliban, recognizing this, began aggressively working to undermine the government and regain control of strategic areas.

The Associated Press reported that the troop level in 2006 was just over 20,000; recognizing that the Taliban were regaining ground, the U.S. began re-directing efforts in the counter-insurgency and increasing forces on the ground.\textsuperscript{35} By the end of 2009, the security situation had deteriorated quite significantly; there was escalating violence and the number of American service members killed by the Taliban was growing.\textsuperscript{36} In December of 2009, with troop numbers surpassing 67,000, as American involvement was growing. Furthermore, the U.S. was concerned that the upcoming elections in 2010 would serve as a focal point for targeted attacks from the Taliban. President Obama called for a surge of troops, and by August of 2010 right before the parliamentary elections, U.S. troop levels reached 100,000.\textsuperscript{37}

The 2010 Wolesi Jirga Elections

The 2010 parliamentary elections, held on September 18, faced significant challenges for voters. Threats of violence from the Taliban insurgents was at an all time high, as well as concerns of widespread voter intimidation. At least 14 individuals were


\textsuperscript{36} “A timeline of U.S. troop levels in Afghanistan.”

\textsuperscript{37} Ibid.
killed on election day. In addition to the presence of Afghan soldiers and police, over 150,000 foreign troops were on alert at polling stations to prevent violence. Over 2,500 candidates ran for 249 seats in the parliament, and 406 of these candidates were women. Turnout was recorded at around 40%, lower than the 2005 parliamentary election which had a turnout of 50%. The reduction in turnout is attributed to widespread threats of violence and voters’ concerns of fraud and corruption. 38

Violence, while lower than expected given the level of threat, did permeate throughout the country. What this paper will analyze is how violence varied by each district, and whether voters voting for women, or women running for office had any relationship to how violence was targeted in the weeks running up to the election, and the weeks following.

The Role of Women in Afghanistan and its Politics

Until 1996, women in Afghanistan enjoyed relative freedom and independence. They had almost no restrictions on clothing or public appearances, and attendance at university and school was not uncommon, particularly for women in Kabul. As a result, the rapid crackdown on women’s rights once the Taliban took over was particularly shocking to Afghanistan’s women. Under their rule, women were effectively excluded from public life entirely. 39

Women were no longer allowed to be educated, they were banned from employment, and were basically banned from stepping outside of the house. If women were to go

outside, they had to cover themselves completely from head to toe in a burqa and be accompanied by a male relative. Windows of houses were covered so as to prevent passersby from seeing women inside. These highly restrictive measures were lifted once the Taliban lost power, and while life continues to be difficult for women in Afghanistan, steps were taken to restore their rights and improve their representation in government. 

The new Afghan Constitution established under the Transitional Administration articulated that 68 representatives of the Wolesi Jirga must be female (approximately a quarter of the seats). Despite constitutional incentives to encourage women to run and vote, the widespread violence, insecurity and social norms that were established while the Taliban were in power had an impact on female political participation. The 2009 UNAMA report recorded that, “although Afghan women are demonstrating an increased interest in political matters, they voted in much fewer numbers than men largely due to insecurity, and social-cultural constraints hindered the participation of women.”

40. “Buried alive: Afghan women under the Taliban.”
Theory of Change and Literature Review

In this section, I introduce a theory of change that I derived from existing literature to explore the relationships between voting and violence. The theoretical framework is underlined by two key points, which are that elections are a focal point of violence for insurgents, and that insurgent activity is more likely to occur when faced with an ideological shift away from their values.

The first point has wide support in literature, particularly in Afghanistan as it has been intensely studied. It is well-known that the Taliban used violence as a voter intimidation tactic leading up to the Presidential election in 2014. A study supporting this was written by Nils B. Weidemann and Michael Callen on countries experiencing internal conflict, and how that conflict impacted election fraud. The theory proposed in this paper supposed that candidates’ loyalty networks were agents of election manipulation. The paper discussed how networks of both the incumbent and challenger would react to violence differently in how they conducted their duties. The findings of Weidemann and Callen are important for this paper as it analyzes differences in voter turnout and voting results by district as it relates to violence.42

Numerous other articles have grappled with the relationship between violence and elections, using either Large-N analysis or other specific countries as case studies. The outcomes of these studies provide valuable context for understanding elections and violence. Joseph Robbins, Lance Hunter, and Gregg Murray study voter turnout after terrorist events.43 This is a large-N study about terrorism as a form of voter intimidation

and how voters behave in such circumstances. Their hypothesis is that increased terrorism is associated with increased voter turnout – stating that violence urge voters to assess their political environment and in fact urge them to take opportunities to change that environment.\textsuperscript{44} This theory indicates that if elections are used by insurgents as a focal point of violence, individuals are more likely to turnout and vote in order to enact change. This is an important analysis that details voter behavior and psychological impact of terrorist events.\textsuperscript{45} If violence is associated with greater voter turnout, then insurgents like the Taliban will be counter-productive with their activities.

Manuel Alvarez wrote about how political violence in 1936 impacted the Spanish general election, and how the characteristics of the violence impacted and resulted in democratic consolidation.\textsuperscript{46} Hannah Smidt discusses the role of election observers and how they handle violence. Her analysis showcases that observers can deter governments from using force during elections, but they have the opposite effect on opposition groups using violence. It is easier for opposition groups to deny connection to violence, while governments have a much harder time absolving themselves from those actions.\textsuperscript{47} In Egypt, David Fielding and Anja Shortland assess how politically motivated attacks by insurgents, and government-led counter-insurgency responses often incite and exacerbate violence overall, instead of reducing it.\textsuperscript{48} Given these studies, there is documentation to support the theory that elections serve as a focal point of violence, and are targets for insurgents looking to destabilize transitioning democracies.

\textsuperscript{44} “Voters versus Terrorists”
\textsuperscript{45} Ibid.
The second theory of change is that insurgent activity is more likely to occur when elections promote an ideological shift away from the normative theory proposed by the insurgent group. The basis of this theory is that when an election is proposing a major ideological shift that goes against the insurgent’s ideology, they will be more likely to react violently. In the case of Afghanistan, this would include the numerous women running for political office and the votes being cast for them. This underlines a concept that insurgents use violence and fear to limit the proliferation of competing ideologies. It suggests that insurgents believe the populace can be violently coerced to fall in line with their political values.

While there is support for this theory in past literature, it is important to note that many scholars do not consider the Taliban as a monolithic entity. Peter Dahl Thruelsen conducted an analysis about the Taliban, and how they differ throughout Afghanistan. He argues that the Taliban should not be seen as a unified, hierarchical actor that is to be treated generically.49 Thruelsen states that the insurgency is largely driven by local commanders and local area networks that report to that commander.50 Furthermore, there are also major differences in the insurgency between the Afghan and Pakistani Taliban. Differences in attack types or frequency can potentially be linked to deeper differences within the insurgents and the population themselves. This study suggests that insurgents do react to various political environments that they oppose, but the insurgent-population relationship differs across the country.

50 Ibid.
Empirical Analysis

Dataset and Key Variables

The variables detailed below are taken from data published from Afghanistan’s Election Commission and Uppsala University’s Department of Peace and Conflict Research. Uppsala University’s database on terrorism incidents provides comprehensive records of violent attacks and deaths for acts of violence in Afghanistan from 2009 to 2011. For a full variable list with explanation, please see Table 8 in the Appendix. The two key variables analyzed for this paper are the following: percentage of votes cast for females and violent attacks. The first is a pure percentage, by district, of votes cast for female candidates. In the analysis, I divide districts in two groups – districts that were in the 75% percentile and above for percentage of votes cast for female candidates, and those that were below the 75% percentile cutoff. Violent attacks represent each violent attack at a district level. The unit of analysis used in this study is the individual districts of Afghanistan; all data was analyzed across the country’s 398 districts, which are administrative areas below the province level. The time variable used was number of biweeks (every two weeks): to capture trends in the period of time analyzed, the date range was divided into 26 biweeks. Each district in the dataset is therefore entered 26 times as it is analyzed for each biweek represented in the year.
Descriptive Statistics

Included below is a table of descriptive statistics for several of the variables analyzed in this paper. These figures can help provide context the variables, and shape a picture of what the election results looked like, and describe the general level of violence that existed during this time.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics of Key Variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables (by district and biweek)</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Median</th>
<th>Min</th>
<th>Max</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Election votes for female candidates</td>
<td>1,211.79</td>
<td>474.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>39,973.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Election votes for male candidates</td>
<td>9,453.99</td>
<td>5,958.50</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>310,105.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Election votes</td>
<td>10,665.78</td>
<td>6,932.00</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>350,078.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female election candidates</td>
<td>13.42</td>
<td>10.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>99.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male election candidates</td>
<td>72.88</td>
<td>41.00</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>550.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Violent Attacks in 2010</td>
<td>0.15</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>16.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Violent Attacks in 2009</td>
<td>0.12</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>7.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Analyzing the descriptive statistics showcases two important points. First, there is a clear gap when comparing the number of votes cast for male and female candidates, as well as the number of male and female candidates running in each district. There are fewer female candidates and fewer votes cast for female candidates. The data provide a snapshot of the underlying assumption that women are largely underrepresented in Afghanistan’s political life. The second point to note is that comparing violent attacks from 2009 to 2010 showcases the increase in insurgent activity that was occurring during these two years. The Taliban were employing methods they had not ever used, such as suicide bombings and improvised-explosive devices. The steady increase in the level of violence from the insurgents contributed to the U.S. troop surge that occurred in 2010.
Correlations

To further explore the relationship between these variables, I ran several raw correlations. Understanding correlations between the key variables helped to determine the direction of basic relationships in the data.

Table 2: Correlations of Key Variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Correlation Coefficient of Violent Attacks in 2010</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Votes cast for female candidates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Votes cast for male candidates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female candidates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male candidates</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From the correlation coefficients, the direction of relationship between the independent variables and the dependent variable indicates that votes cast for candidates, regardless of gender have a slightly positive relationship with violent attacks, meaning that more votes cast for women is correlated with increased violence. Votes case for male candidates are associated with a stronger positive relationship with violence. Furthermore, we learn that there is no difference between the gender of the candidates in terms of how they are correlated with violence. Candidates of both genders are correlated with slightly negative relationships with violence.
Event Windows

The purpose of the event window analysis is to assess violent attacks in the time period around the election across all districts. The time periods used are biweeks, and violence is measured in the seven biweeks before the election and the seven biweeks after the election. The 15-biweek analysis for all three event windows represented attacks from July 10, 2010 to December 25, 2010. The event window compares violence to the norm level; the Y axis therefore represents deviations from the norm level of violent attacks. As stated in the introduction, the hypotheses being tested are:

1. **H1**: Elections in Afghanistan were used as a focal point for insurgent activity; they used democratically held events to pursue their campaign to reclaim power.

2. **H2**: Women in political life represents the antithesis of the conservative ideology promoted by the Taliban, therefore they will increase activity in areas with greater acceptance of female political participation.

The first event window tests the first hypothesis by analyzing violent attacks across all districts around the election, without any disaggregation of how votes were cast. To review, the black line represents violent attacks in terms of deviations from the norm in all districts across the specified time window. The vertical black line represents Election Day, and the dotted orange line represents the biweek during which election results were released. The graph along with key dates and a legend can be found on the next page.
There are several critical findings in this event window. The first is the major drop in violent attacks during the biweek of the election; this would seem to refute the first hypothesis stated in this paper. However, in news articles that covered Election Day, they note that violence was minimal compared to what authorities had expected. This reduction in violent attacks may have been due to heightened security that was put in place during the election. This increase in security measures may have effectively limited the chances for insurgents to attack. Not only were the Afghan military and police on
alert, they were backed up by 150,000 foreign troops. This formidable security team likely contributed to the Taliban’s decision making on how to conduct their activities. With limited ‘soft targets’, which are vulnerable or unprotected targets, the Taliban may not have felt it was worth it to mount large-scale attacks during this period.

However, while violent attacks during the election biweek were low, there is a huge spike in activity afterwards. This suggests that the Taliban were strategic in their planning, and perhaps chose to execute attacks after the election when security was less heightened or vigilant. Another key finding is that there is a major spike in violence in the biweek during which the election results were released. This indicates that while Election Day itself may not have been a focal point for violence, the release of the results served as the draw for violent attacks. This supports the first hypothesis, and showcases how election-related activity can be the focal point for violence.

To test the second hypothesis, the event windows will be disaggregated into two groups of districts. First the election votes were calculated as percentages of votes distributed between male and female candidates per district. Then I created a flagged variable that captured districts that were in the 75th percentile or above for the percentage of votes cast for female candidates. In other words, the flag variable captures districts that cast the most votes for women. All other districts (districts that cast a lower percentage of their votes for women) comprise the second group. Then the event window for violent attacks was generated for each of these two groups. The purpose of disaggregating the districts in this way is to assess whether violent attacks were differentiated amongst these two groups, and if acceptance for women in politics is an attribute that the Taliban targets.
Districts in the first group, above the 75th percentile of vote percentage for women, will be referred to as Group 1. Districts in the second group, below the 75th percentile, will be referred to as Group 2. We can see by comparing Groups 1 and 2 (Figure 3), Group 1 districts experience more volatility in attacks than Group 2. Before the election, it seems that Group 1 districts experienced somewhat reduced levels of violent attacks as compared to Group 2. After the Election Day biweek, Group 1 districts appear to have higher levels of violent attacks than Group 2. This supports the second hypothesis that states that the Taliban targeted their attacks in reaction to ideological shifts. Districts that are more receptive to female political representatives showcase distinct anti-Taliban political sentiments, and threaten the conservative social atmosphere propagated by the group. Additional graphs, including separate Group 1 and Group 2 disaggregated event windows can be found in the Appendix.

Figure 3: Violence Between Above and Below 75th Percentile Votes for Women (Group 1 vs. Group 2)
T-Tests

To back up the event windows with statistical evidence, an analysis is conducted to test the relationships between the key variables through a series of t-tests. These analyses tested violent attacks for districts that cast the highest percentage of votes cast for women (these districts were in the 75th percentile for percentage of votes cast for female candidates).

Table 3: T-Test of Violent Attacks Against Districts with Highest % of Votes Cast for Women

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Null Hypothesis</th>
<th>P-Value</th>
<th>Z-Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean violence for high female vote percentage districts is not statistically</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>1.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>different than mean violence for districts that do not have high female vote</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>percentages</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The result pointed to a statistically significant relationship at the 10% level, suggesting that mean violence was statistically different for districts with high female vote percentages, when compared to districts that did not have high female vote percentages.

I also conducted a t-test for violent attacks against female candidates running for office. This was to test whether districts that had a high number of women running for office were affected by a significantly higher level of violence. Again, the highest percentage of female candidates running is based on a cutoff at the 75th percentile.

Table 4: T-Tests of Violent Attacks Against Districts with Highest % of Female Candidates Running

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Null Hypothesis</th>
<th>P-Value</th>
<th>Z-Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean violence for districts with a high number of female candidates is not</td>
<td>0.37</td>
<td>0.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>statistically different than mean violence for districts that do not have a</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>high number of female candidates</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The result for this t-test is not statistically significant at conventional levels of statistical significance, and fails to reject the null. This result suggests that mean violence between districts that have a high percentage of female candidates running is not statistically different than mean violence for districts that do not have a high percentage of female candidates running. For this reason, I did not use the number of female candidates as a variable of interest in the event window analyses or the regression models.

Regression Models

In order to attain more robust results on the relationship between the female vote percentage and violent attacks, I ran several regression models to better understand this relationship. The purpose of these models is to showcase whether these models support the results in the windows, and to further test the stated hypotheses.

To more closely examine my first hypothesis, I created a set of models (Table 5) to assess the relationship between elections and violence, controlling for a series of variables including biweek fixed effects, lagged violent attacks, and the interaction between elections and the percentage of the female vote share. The variable of interest in these models is “election”, which is a dummy variable that represents the biweek in which the election was held in 2010. The formulas and output for this set of models can be found on the next page.
The formulas for the first set of models are as follows:

Model 1: \( \text{Violence} = \beta_0 + \beta_1\text{Election} + u \) (as simple OLS)
Model 2: \( \text{Violence} = \beta_0 + \beta_1\text{Election} + u \) (as fixed effects)
Model 3: \( \text{Violence} = \beta_0 + \beta_1\text{Election} + \beta_2\text{Biweek Fixed Effects} + u \)
Model 4: \( \text{Violence} = \beta_0 + \beta_1\text{Election} + \beta_2\text{Biweek Fixed Effects} + \beta_3\text{Lagged Violent Attacks} + u \)
Model 5: \( \text{Violence} = \beta_0 + \beta_1\text{Election} + \beta_2\text{Biweek Fixed Effects} + \beta_3\text{Lagged Violent Attacks} + \beta_4\text{Election*Percentage of Female Vote Share} + u \)

Table 5: Elections and Violent Attacks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VARIABLES</th>
<th>OLS</th>
<th>Model 2</th>
<th>Model 2</th>
<th>Model 3</th>
<th>Model 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DV = ( \log \text{of violent attacks} )</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Election</td>
<td>0.03*</td>
<td>0.03*</td>
<td>0.06***</td>
<td>0.06***</td>
<td>.07***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biweek Fixed Effects</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>fe</td>
<td>fe</td>
<td>fe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lagged Violent Attacks</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>0.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interaction (Election*Percentage of Female Vote Share)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-0.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>0.05</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*stat sig at 10% level
**stat sig at 5% level
***stat sig at near zero level

In each model, I added an additional control; the result was that the statistical significance between violence and elections grew stronger. Furthermore, the magnitude of the effect grew. By the fourth model, the biweek of the election was associated with a .07 increase in violent attacks, controlling for biweek fixed effects, lagged violent attacks, and the interaction between the election biweek and the female vote share percentage.

This result was statistically significant at the near zero level. The results of this set of models strongly supports my first hypothesis, which states that elections are a focal point for violence.
I ran this same set of models using a different dummy variable of interest. This new dummy, titled “Election Results”, represents the biweek during which the election results were released. In the event windows, we see a large peak in violent attacks during and after the biweek during which election results were released. The formulas for these five models are as follows:

Model 1: \( \text{Violence} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{Election Results} + u \) (as simple OLS)
Model 2: \( \text{Violence} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{Election Results} + u \) (as fixed effects)
Model 3: \( \text{Violence} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{Election Results} + \beta_2 \text{Biweek Fixed Effects} + u \)
Model 4: \( \text{Violence} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{Election Results} + \beta_2 \text{Biweek Fixed Effects} + \beta_3 \text{Lagged Violent Attacks} + u \)
Model 5: \( \text{Violence} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{Election Results} + \beta_2 \text{Biweek Fixed Effects} + \beta_3 \text{Lagged Violent Attacks} + \beta_4 \text{Election*Percentage of Female Vote Share} + u \)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VARIABLES</th>
<th>OLS</th>
<th>Model 2</th>
<th>Model 3</th>
<th>Model 4</th>
<th>Model 5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DV = log of violent attacks</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Election Results</td>
<td>-0.02</td>
<td>-0.02</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>0.02*</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biweek Fixed Effects</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>fe</td>
<td>fe</td>
<td>fe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lagged Violent Attacks</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>0.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interaction (Election Results*Percentage of Female Vote Share)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>0.09</td>
<td>0.09</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>0.05</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*stat sig at 10% level
**stat sig at 5% level
***stat sig at near zero level

The dummy for the election results biweek showcases a weak association with violent attacks. Without any controls, the biweek during which the election results were released was associated with .02 fewer violent attacks than during other bi-weeks. However, this relationship was not statistically significant at conventional levels. As I added controls, the direction of the relationship changed, indicating that the more violent attacks are
associated with the election results biweek. However, only the 4th model was significant at conventional levels, and by the time I included the interaction variable, the significance dropped as well as the magnitude of the effect.

To test the second hypothesis, in which I stated that violence would increase in areas in which more votes were cast for women, I created another set of regressions. In this third set of models (seen in Table 7) my main dependent variable is the log of violence, and my main independent variable is the female vote percentage, and I control for violent attacks that occurred in the same time period in 2009. The time period analyzed is the same 15-week window around Election Day that was observed in the event window analysis in the previous section.

Model: \( \log(\text{Violence}) = \beta_0 + \text{Election_votes_femal} + \text{Violent_Attacks_2009} + u \)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VARIABLES</th>
<th>OLS Model</th>
<th>Poisson Model</th>
<th>Negative Binomial Regression Model</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of Votes Cast for Female Candidates</td>
<td>-1.54 (13)†</td>
<td>-1.02 (03)</td>
<td>-1.14 (12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Violent Attacks in 2009</td>
<td>0.98 (00)</td>
<td>0.15 (00)</td>
<td>0.40 (00)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>0.51 (00)</td>
<td>0.15 (12)</td>
<td>-0.51 (00)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

† All figures in parentheses represent p-values

This model was tested using three types of models: OLS, Poisson, and a Negative Binomial model. Three models were tested to see which model worked best for the data, which included count data with a large number of zero results. After running all three models and then conducting a likelihood ratio test to assess which of these three were most appropriate, the negative binomial model was determined to represent the data most
accurately. The results for the key variable of interest, the female vote percentage, are not significant at convention levels. However, it is close to the 10% level of significance, and can be interpreted as follows: that a percentage point increase in votes cast for women is marginally associated with a 1.139 decrease in violent attacks at the 12% level of significance. This marginally supports the event window analysis, during the time prior to the election when districts seem to experience less violence. Furthermore, while the negative binomial model does not rise to a conventional level of significance, the results are consistent in sign and magnitude across all three models, demonstrating a somewhat robust effect.
Policy Recommendations and Conclusion

Afghanistan has undergone periods of rapid ideological change, from its more liberal, pre-Taliban roots, to the extreme conservative regime of the Taliban, to its current state. Women are still widely underrepresented in political life, and the country is still largely tribal in its composition and governing. But in the context of a transitioning democracy struggling with insurgent activity, the goal of this analysis was to understand how the inclusion of women in political life, and the expression of support for women, affected insurgent activity and their strategy to reclaim power.

Parliamentary elections can offer particular insight into voter behavior and insurgent response because of their local element. To date, substantial literature has assessed how elections in transitioning democracies interface with violence and shifting ideology. However, little is known about female involvement and the role of women in this context, and very little quantitative data has been published on Afghanistan regarding how their elections interface with the Taliban.

In order to attain a better understanding of the electoral involvement of women in Afghanistan, I asked the following several questions: Within the context of the Taliban’s insurgency during parliamentary elections, does female inclusion in political life increase insurgent attacks from the Taliban? Furthermore, in transitioning democracies, how much of a target are elections themselves? My research findings showcase that elections and election-related activity do in fact have an association with violent attacks. While the Taliban may not have been particularly active on Election Day itself, there was considerable violence around this time period. The event window analysis, backed up by

fixed effects models broadly supported the stated hypotheses. Furthermore, the difference in violence pre-election and post-election between high female vote districts versus non-high female vote districts suggest that insurgents were potentially targeting districts that were shifting away from their ideology, as suggested in the second hypothesis. Since female political participation and inclusion in political life is highly antithetical to the beliefs of the Taliban, their inclusion in politics served as a draw for the insurgents.

There are several policy recommendations that can be derived from this analysis. First, transitioning democracies struggling with insurgency benefit from a strong security apparatus. Security forces however, not only need to be active on election day, but need to stay engaged throughout the election lifecycle. Second, policymakers and strategists need to have an enhanced awareness of key, election-related deadlines and dates and coordinate security forces around these events, as insurgents can revise their strategies based on available soft targets. Third, even though short-term security measures and enhanced awareness can mitigate the effectiveness of adversaries and immediate onset of violence, these efforts have to be complemented through long-term economic and security support to areas that are liberalizing, or moving away from insurgent ideologies. These non-military investments into building self-sustained civil societies can be beneficial to ensure that targeted campaigning does not intimidate or reverse progress in key areas. In Afghanistan, while these measures were enacted to increase female political participation, more external economic and security-related support is needed to give women the ability to remain in politics.

A fundamental lesson that should be recognized, particularly in Afghanistan, is that as a largely tribal country that has experienced decades of war, finding a peaceful,
lasting solution is incredibly challenging. Democratic transition and counterinsurgency requires extensive long-term investments, and without a sufficient security capability within Afghanistan, external support is crucial. Foreign security and aid is necessary to ensure progress is not reverted, and it can require particularly strong measures to reverse the negative political shifts that were implemented under previous regimes. Women in Afghanistan have a long way to go before they will be represented equitably in Afghanistan’s body politic, but given the progress already achieved, continued support can help achieve empowerment and inclusion. The next Afghan Wolesi Jirga are scheduled to be held sometime in 2017, and ensuring that this next election is free, fair, and rightfully representative of women is critical for the future of the nation.
Appendix

Full Variable List

Below is a list of variables from this analysis along with details and definitions for each variable. Several of these variables are referenced throughout this paper either using their formal variable names, or a paraphrased version of what they signify.

Table 8: Full Variable List with Explanations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable Name</th>
<th>Explanation of Variables</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>province</td>
<td>Name of Afghan province (n=34)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>district</td>
<td>Name of Afghan district, which is a sub-division of the province (n=398)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>election_votes_female</td>
<td>The number of votes cast for a female candidate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>election_votes_male</td>
<td>The number of votes cast for a male candidate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>biweekid</td>
<td>ID numbers for each 2-week period, years 2009 and 2010. ID number repeats per year, January – December.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>election_candidates_female</td>
<td>Number of female candidates running; recorded at a province level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>election_candidates_male</td>
<td>Number of male candidates running; recorded at a province level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>violence_attacks_2009</td>
<td>Number of violent attacks in 2009, recorded per attack, at the district level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>violence_attacks</td>
<td>Number of violent attacks in 2010, recorded at the district level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>violence_deaths_2009</td>
<td>Number of deaths from attacks in 2009, recorded per death, at the district level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>violence_deaths</td>
<td>Number of deaths from attacks in 2010, recorded per death, at the district level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>district_num</td>
<td>The district variable is a string variable, and several districts have the same name; this variable assigns each district a unique numeric identifier</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>election_candidates_female_perc</td>
<td>Percentage of female candidates running for office out of total candidates, at a province level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>candidates_flag</td>
<td>75% percentile of the female candidate percentage by province, this flag was created to highlight provinces with a high number of women running for office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>election_votes_female_perc</td>
<td>Percentage of votes cast for female candidates out of total votes, at a district level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>votes_flag</td>
<td>75% percentile of the percentage of votes cast for female candidates by district, this flag was created to highlight provinces with a high percentage of votes cast for women.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Additional Event Windows

Figure 4: Violence Across Districts above 75th Percentile of Percentage of Votes Cast for Female Candidates Across 15 Biweeks (Group 1)

Figure 5: Violence Across Districts Below 75th Percentile of Percentage of Votes Cast for Female Candidates Across 15 Biweeks (Group 2)
Bibliography


http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/perspectives/PE100/PE120/RAND_P E120.pdf.


