



The Fall of the Republic Government in Afghanistan and the Current Taliban Rule: A Survey of Public Attitudes

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the factors that led to the fall of the Republic government and the subsequent rise of the Taliban to power. The paper takes a quantitative approach to analyze public attitudes towards the current situation. Its questionnaires use a descriptive-analytical method, and the participants include social media activists, students, and university professors. An online survey collected the data on WhatsApp, Facebook messengers, telegram, email, and other social media groups from different ethnic groups. The research findings identified several pivotal factors contributing to the ascent of the Taliban to power. These include the US-Taliban agreement in Doha, Qatar; political disparities; administrative and financial corruption within the Republic's administration; Pakistan's support for the Taliban; the previous government's accord with the Taliban; ethnic dominance; the robust military morale of the Taliban; and proficient war management by the Taliban. Most respondents disapprove of the Taliban system of government. They are pessimistic about the future. Their foremost concerns about the current situation, in order of importance, are poverty, the severe restrictions on women's education and employment, the escalation of civil unrest, monopolization of power by one ethnic group, the emergence of ISIS, ethnic marginalization; violations of civil rights; the lack of political participation and the government's legitimacy crises. This study also found a broad consensus in society about the political system that should replace Taliban rule: a republic with elected leadership and greater regional autonomy to accommodate the interests of the other major ethnic groups that form most of the population and live in compact geographies.

KEYWORDS

Taliban, public views, political legitimacy, ethnic domination, women's rights, corruption, poverty, political systems.

INTRODUCTION

Afghanistan's history is characterized by a series of violent conflicts and ongoing tensions, making it a focal point for political disputes involving domestic, regional, and global powers. The political challenges in Afghanistan are highly intricate and have multiple dimensions. On the one hand, internal tensions within ethnic groups and factions contribute to the complexity. On the other hand, neighboring countries, regional actors, and global powers engage in their strategic games, further exacerbating the situation. As a result, Afghanistan has become a quagmire of warfare and terrorism. Throughout the past four decades, Afghanistan has never experienced a sustained period of political stability or a system that is genuinely independent. Instead, the country has witnessed frequent changes in governance and the overthrow of regimes. The absence of a cohesive national identity has allowed ethnic politics to dominate, often leading to devastating and inhumane ethnic conflicts. Each political system that has governed Afghanistan has ultimately been replaced or overthrown within a short period of time.

Consequently, the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, despite its two-decade existence, was unable to establish solid foundations. Various factors contributed to the eventual collapse of the republic government, which will be further discussed. Overall, Afghanistan's political landscape is marked by complexity, constant change, and a lack of enduring stability. The country's history is characterized by the absence of a united national identity, with ethnic politics and frequent regime changes playing significant roles in shaping its tumultuous trajectory. This research intends to answer the question 'of what factors led the Taliban group to come to power and assess the impacts of the political and economic crises on citizens. Additionally, it aims to depict the citizens' perspective on the current government and the future outlook of Afghanistan.

Factors of the Downfall of the Democratic System in Afghanistan

Throughout modern history, Afghanistan has been a battleground for internal conflicts and a stage for regional and global power struggles. Various powers, such as the British, the Soviet Union, and the United States, have exerted their influence in Afghanistan, only to be eventually defeated or forced to withdraw through agreements. Internally, Afghanistan has experienced bloody wars among different tribes and ethnic groups, perpetuating a culture of ethnic and tribal politics that has hindered the establishment of a democratic and law-based system. Nation-building efforts in Afghan society have failed to gain traction due to this institutionalized ethnic politics.

The ethnic-centric perspective of political leaders and the ethnic lens through which politics is viewed in Afghanistan have also contributed to the collapse of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan. The most significant challenges leading to its downfall include administrative and financial corruption, dictatorship and monopolization, discrimination and ethnocentrism, ongoing war, insecurity, and terrorist activities. These problems, coupled with personal gain, lawlessness, lack of rule of law, injustice, incompetence of officials, poverty, and partisanship, collectively led to the demise of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan. Additional factors that accelerated the government's collapse include the managerial weaknesses of top officials,

political dependence on foreign countries, economic dependence on foreign aid, lack of meritocracy, social and political divisions, reliance on inaccurate security force data, a crisis of political legitimacy, centralism, an unorganized economy, a focus on major cities at the expense of rural areas, the ineffectiveness of the judicial system, and a weak army. In August 2021, the Taliban group surprised the world with its rapid advances in Afghanistan, effectively taking control of the entire country from the Afghan National Defense Security Forces. President Mohammad Ashraf Ghani was compelled to flee, ultimately resulting in the collapse of the republic government. Overall, a combination of internal and external factors, including ethnic politics, corruption, insecurity, and a lack of effective governance, contributed to the downfall of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, paving the way for the Taliban's takeover.

This article analyzes the key factors contributing to the republic's fall in Afghanistan. One significant factor is the country's ethnic and tribal structure. Ethnocentrism is deeply ingrained in Afghanistan's political culture and permeates social, cultural, and political relationships (Irfan, 2020). Weak governance, ethnic and tribal divisions, ethnic politics, and a lack of mutual understanding among different ethnic groups have posed challenges to the democratic system, ultimately leading to its collapse and the rise of the Taliban (Nasiri, 2021).

Ethnic differences have been a major driver of ongoing war and violence in Afghanistan, with significant events and conflicts often rooted in ethnic interests. These divisions have led citizens to align themselves along ethnic lines and participate in political interactions based on their ethnic affiliation. Ethnic discrimination has further alienated people from the government and the republic. According to a report by the Independent Human Rights Commission of Afghanistan, ethnic discrimination was cited by 52% of government officials, 10% of non-governmental administration officials, and 38% of ordinary people as a cause for the gap between the government and the nation (Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission, 2018). This discrimination peaked during Ashraf Ghani's presidency and became an official aspect, eroding trust between the government and the people.

Furthermore, the widespread violation of the constitution played a significant role in the republic's collapse. The Afghanistan Freedom House report highlights numerous instances of constitutional violations, with government institutions themselves being the primary perpetrators (Mazidi & Raja, 2016). The executive branch, legislature, and judiciary have all been implicated in these violations, with the executive branch being the most frequent offender. This widespread disregard for the constitution by government institutions and officials led to its marginalization. Family, ethnic, and tribal relations often took precedence over constitutional principles, resulting in the erosion of the rule of law. The concentration of power in the hands of the president, beyond the limits set by the constitution, further delegitimized the government and weakened its foundations, ultimately leading to its collapse. In conclusion, the fall of the republic in Afghanistan can be attributed to factors such as the country's ethnic and tribal structure, ethnic politics and divisions, ethnic discrimination, widespread violation of the

constitution, and the erosion of trust between the government and the people. These factors collectively contributed to the collapse of the republic and the subsequent rise of the Taliban.

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Another significant factor contributing to the collapse of the Afghan government and system was the Doha agreement between the United States and the Taliban. This agreement provided internal, regional, and global legitimacy to the Taliban group. Following the start of negotiations between the US and the Taliban, various countries, including Iran, Russia, China, Uzbekistan, and others, hosted the Taliban and treated them as legitimate actors. The United States placed the Taliban on equal footing with the Afghan government. As the Taliban saw the conditions for their acceptance and interaction with the people within the country, they began engaging with external powers. They sought to strengthen their relations with leaders in the Arab world, particularly Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates while maintaining contact with Zalmay Khalilzad, the US representative in Afghanistan, who is also Pashtun like the Taliban. They conducted most of their negotiations in Doha, Qatar, involving not only the US but also Pakistan and Qatar, who were seen as representing Western countries. Pakistan has been a long-standing supporter of the Taliban. Still, other regional rivals of the United States, such as

China, Russia, and Iran, have also played a role in supporting and expanding the Taliban group over the past two decades. These countries capitalized on their rivalry with the US to strengthen the Taliban. Another crucial factor in the collapse of the republican system was the weakness of the Afghan army. Due to poor management and corruption, the security forces could not take responsibility for providing security independently. Despite more than 20 years of training and support from the US and an expenditure of over \$80 billion, the well-equipped Afghan security forces were unable to prevent the rapid takeover of the country by the Taliban (BBC, 2021). In summary, the Doha agreement granting legitimacy to the Taliban, support from regional powers, and the weakness of the Afghan army due to mismanagement and corruption all played significant roles in the collapse of the republican system in Afghanistan.

Corruption played a significant role in the downfall of the Republic in Afghanistan. During Ashraf Ghani's presidency, corruption reached unprecedented levels, with various institutions reporting financial and administrative corruption. The United Nations reported that many Afghans had to pay bribes when dealing with administrative issues, with over half of Afghans having paid a bribe to a government employee in the past year— individuals made around five bribe payments a year (UNODC, 2010). Corruption eroded the foundations of the Republic, which eventually collapsed after two decades of investment. In addition to administrative corruption, a crisis of political legitimacy also contributed to the downfall. The legitimacy crisis stemmed from citizens' dissatisfaction with the government and had political, social, and economic dimensions (Haywood, 2011). The widespread problem of legitimacy had a long-term impact on the collapse of the republican system. The profound crisis of legitimacy in Afghanistan was a fundamental cause of the frequent disasters experienced in the country.

Major political controversies marred the 2014 and 2019 presidential elections in Afghanistan. Extensive electoral fraud undermined the protection of people's votes, leading to power-sharing agreements and bilateral deals between the two solid electoral teams. The people's vote was disregarded, and the system's legitimacy declined. This lack of faith in the electoral process contributed to eroding the Republic's structure and people's belief in the system. In summary, corruption, particularly during Ashraf Ghani's presidency, and the crisis of political legitimacy, exacerbated by flawed electoral processes, were significant factors in the collapse of the republican system in Afghanistan.

According to the Office of the Special Inspector General for the Reconstruction of Afghanistan (SIGAR), there are six main factors identified as the causes of the collapse of the Afghan government in August 2021.

- Administrative corruption: SIGAR considers administrative corruption as a significant cause of the republic's fall. Widespread corruption within the government undermined its credibility and weakened its foundations.
- Attempted integration of the Taliban: The Afghan government's efforts to integrate the Taliban into the government structure are seen as a contributing factor. This approach

aimed to bring the Taliban into the political process but ultimately failed to achieve stability and peace.

- Exclusion from peace talks: SIGAR highlights the exclusion of Afghanistan from the peace talks between the United States and the Taliban as another factor. This exclusion limited the Afghan government's ability to shape the peace process and negotiate a sustainable agreement.
- Excessive power monopoly: The excessive concentration of power within a small circle is identified as a reason for the downfall of Ashraf Ghani's government. This concentration of power limited inclusivity and hindered effective governance.
- Taliban cooperation and non-cooperation in peace negotiations: The Taliban's cooperation or lack thereof in the peace negotiations influenced the stability of the republic. The dynamics of the peace process, including the Taliban's actions and positions, contributed to the collapse of the government.
- Unpreparedness for NATO withdrawal: The Afghan government's unpreparedness for the withdrawal of NATO forces from the country is considered a factor in the collapse. The sudden withdrawal of international forces created security challenges and weakened the government's ability to maintain control.

These factors, as identified by SIGAR, played a significant role in the collapse of the Afghan government in 2021. They highlight issues such as corruption, exclusion from peace talks, power dynamics, and the challenges posed by the withdrawal of international forces (Kabiri, 2022).

Investigating the Current Situation Under the Taliban Rule in Afghanistan

Following the fall of the Republic government and the Taliban's takeover, Afghanistan has faced numerous challenges in the political, social, economic, and cultural spheres. It has been a year since the Taliban regained control, and during this time, the people of Afghanistan have experienced significant difficulties. Regarding political and decision-making processes, the government marginalized the population. The Taliban has yet to gain national or international legitimacy, and no country has officially recognized their government. This has further isolated the people from the political system, limiting their ability to participate in decision-making processes and shape the future of their country.

The Taliban's restrictions on women and girls have been a significant concern. Over the past year, the Taliban has imposed severe limitations on women's rights, including banning girls' education and women's employment. Secondary and high schools remain closed to girls, universities are inaccessible to female students and professors, and women are prohibited from working. Restrictions on clothing choices and travel without a veil have intensified, further limiting the freedoms and opportunities available to women. These measures have significantly impacted the lives of Afghan women and girls, curtailing their access to education, employment, and personal freedoms. In addition to the social challenges, there have been significant economic hardships. The Taliban's takeover has resulted in the loss of thousands of jobs, leading

to high levels of unemployment and increased poverty rates. More than half of the population lives below the poverty line, struggling with severe economic difficulties (Hosseini 2022).

Overall, the past year under Taliban rule has brought about numerous challenges for the people of Afghanistan. The restrictions on women's rights, economic hardships, and political marginalization have compounded the difficulties faced by the Afghan population. The situation remains complex, and the international community continues to monitor and respond to the evolving situation in Afghanistan (Hosseini, 2022).

The economic crisis in Afghanistan has indeed worsened under Taliban rule, exacerbating the existing challenges faced by the country. Before the Taliban's takeover, Afghanistan's economy was already in decline due to various factors. These included a severe and prolonged drought, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, widespread corruption, a decrease in trust in the performance of the previous Afghan government, the flight of human capital, and ongoing conflicts. The Taliban's assumption of power further exacerbated the economic crisis. Immediately after their takeover, all foreign aid to Afghanistan, which amounted to more than \$8 billion annually, equivalent to 40% of the country's gross domestic product (GDP), was cut off (Hamshahri News, 2022). Afghanistan's economy was heavily dependent on this aid, and its sudden cessation had a severe impact on the country's financial stability. The halt in foreign aid has led to a sharp decline in government revenue and the availability of funds for essential services and infrastructure development. This has resulted in a further deterioration of public services, including healthcare, education, and infrastructure.

Additionally, the withdrawal of international organizations and businesses from Afghanistan following the Taliban's takeover has resulted in a loss of investment and job opportunities. The flight of human capital, including skilled professionals and entrepreneurs, has further weakened the country's economic prospects. The combination of these factors has led to an intensification of the economic crisis in Afghanistan, resulting in increased poverty, unemployment, and a decline in living standards for the Afghan people. The situation remains a significant challenge for the country and its people, requiring urgent attention and support from the international community to address the economic hardships faced by the Afghan population.

The situation in Afghanistan has indeed worsened significantly, leading to a severe humanitarian crisis with dire consequences for the population, particularly children. According to UN statistics, over 20 million Afghans, almost half of the people, are at risk of severe hunger. This represents a 65% increase compared to the previous year. The World Bank's report highlights that 69% of Afghan people cannot provide their daily food, and 16% of families consume less than one meal a day. These alarming figures indicate the extent of food insecurity and acute hunger faced by the Afghan population. Global statistics also suggest that 59% of Afghans are in immediate need of humanitarian assistance. Without urgent action, it is projected that by the end of the year, 97% of the Afghan population will fall below the poverty

line (Hamshahri News, 2022). This demonstrates the rapid and severe deterioration of living conditions and the economic situation in Afghanistan.

Children in Afghanistan are among the most vulnerable victims of this crisis. The United Nations has reported that over 1.1 million children under the age of 5 are at risk of severe malnutrition (Hamshahri News, 2022). Unfortunately, the country lacks efficient and appropriate medical services to address the needs of these affected children adequately. The combination of widespread poverty, hunger, and limited access to medical services has created a dire humanitarian situation in Afghanistan. Immediate and coordinated efforts from the international community are necessary to provide essential aid, address food insecurity, and ensure access to healthcare for the Afghan population, particularly vulnerable groups such as children.

Contrary to the initial claims made by the Taliban, it is evident that they have quickly implemented repressive measures, mainly targeting women and girls, which contradicts their earlier promises. Women were swiftly marginalized and removed from the political and social sphere in Afghanistan. The Ministry for Preaching and Guidance and the Propagation of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice, established by the Taliban, began enforcing former extremist policies, imposing severe restrictions on women's presence in society. This has resulted in a significant rollback of the progress made in women's rights and their participation in public life. One example of these restrictions is the ban on secondary school girls returning to school. Despite the start of the school season, the Taliban prohibited the attendance of female students in secondary schools. This has had a detrimental impact on the education sector, leading to the closure of more than 400 private schools due to a decrease in the number of students and the ban on girls' education. These actions have further marginalized and limited the opportunities available to Afghan women and girls. It has undermined their access to education, which is crucial for their empowerment and the development of Afghan society. The restrictions imposed by the Taliban have not only perpetuated gender inequality but have also contributed to the overall decline in the education sector and the impoverishment of Afghan society. The international community continues to monitor these developments closely and advocate for the protection of women's rights and the restoration of educational opportunities for all Afghan citizens.

Crisis of Political Legitimacy

The concept of legitimacy is crucial in political philosophy, as it serves as a justification for citizens' obedience to the ruling power. Legitimacy determines whether political power in its legislative, executive, and judicial dimensions is justified or unjustified (Mohammadi, 2015 p. 65). According to Max Weber, legitimacy is based on "belief" and requires obedience from the people. Power is effective only when perceived as legitimate (Alam, 2012 p. 105). Legitimacy is closely tied to the satisfaction of citizens and the provision of justice within society (Alam, 2012 p. 105). If dignity and justice are not achieved, the legitimacy of the government decreases, and if it persists, its legitimacy may be questioned (Effrat, 2010 p.155).

The legitimacy crisis arises when citizens are dissatisfied with the government, which can have political, social, and economic dimensions (Heywood, 2011 p.222). This crisis of legitimacy played a significant role in the collapse of the republican system in Afghanistan. The frequent disasters experienced in the country can be attributed, in part, to the deep crisis of legitimacy. The foundations of the collapse of the republican structure can be traced back to the presidency of Ashraf Ghani, with the crisis intensifying during his second term. The lesson learned from these failures is that a government can only effectively rule a united and peaceful Afghanistan if it has legitimacy in the eyes of the majority of Afghans. The accumulation of challenges over the past two decades has further exacerbated the fragility of the republican system in Afghanistan. The fall of the Republic and the establishment of the Islamic Emirate by the Taliban did not resolve the issue of political legitimacy. Instead, the crisis of legitimacy deepened. Currently, the Islamic Emirate has not gained domestic or international legitimacy, as it has not been recognized by any country or international organization (Rahimi, 2021). Therefore, it is essential to analyze the political legitimacy of the fall of the Republic in two parts: internal and external. The internal aspect pertains to the perception and acceptance of the Taliban's rule by the Afghan population. In contrast, the external aspect relates to the recognition and legitimacy granted by the international community. Both elements play a crucial role in determining the overall political legitimacy of the current situation in Afghanistan.

Both internal and external factors determine the legitimacy of a political system. Internally, it relies on citizen satisfaction, political participation, power-sharing among different ethnic and political groups, and the effectiveness of people's votes in shaping the system. However, since the Taliban's establishment of the Islamic Emirate, this system has yet to gain internal legitimacy. The Taliban came to power without elections or the consultation of the people, and their rule is primarily composed of individuals who have worked with the Taliban in the past. Consequently, power and decision-making are concentrated among the Pashtuns, with little representation or participation from other ethnic groups such as Tajik, Hazara, Uzbek, Turkmen, and other minorities. Political parties from the republican era have been unable to play a significant role in political affairs, as many rulers and political leaders, including the president, have fled the country, and sought refuge in foreign nations.

Foreign legitimacy is another crucial aspect of governance in the modern era, and it is one that the Taliban has yet to attain. The recognition of the Taliban by the United Nations and foreign nations is contingent upon the group's adherence to civil rights, political participation of ethnic groups, inclusive governance, and the protection of women's rights. However, the Taliban has not responded positively to the international community's expectations. Instead, they have imposed increasing restrictions and centralized control, particularly targeting women. Even international organizations tasked with serving the people of Afghanistan are constrained by the laws of the Islamic Emirate, which prohibit women from working in such institutions. As a result, many of these organizations have ceased their operations.

Research Methodology

The current research is quantitative research based on the relevance of the issues posed, and regarding the method of direct communication, it takes a descriptive-analytical approach. The data collection was a type of field method, with an online questionnaire using Google Forms and administered to the participants according to targeted sampling through Facebook, Messenger, WhatsApp, E-mail, and Telegram. This was because, being abroad, we could not access the respondents in the field. The population in this research included social network users who answered the questionnaire according to the researcher's request based on their satisfaction and interest. The sample population consists of males and females through voluntary response sampling, and 225 participants with an equal percentage of different ethnic groups answered the questionnaire. A shortcoming is the underrepresentation of women, partly a result of their lower level of activity on social media following Taliban crackdowns on their rights. This research used SPSS to analyze the data.

Data Analysis

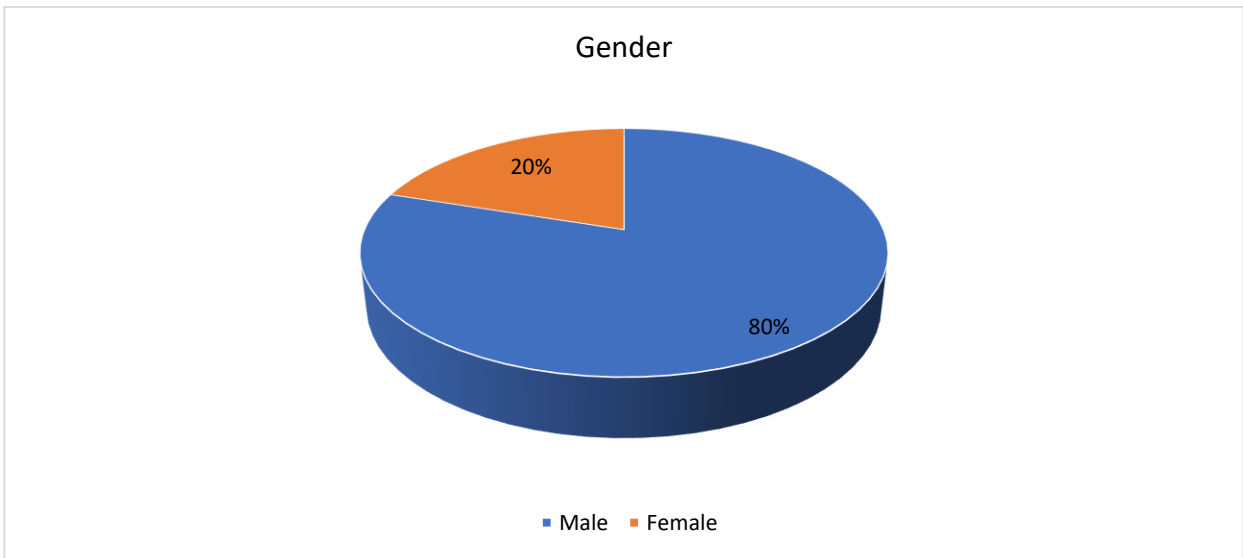
Quantitative information was collected by administering a questionnaire from May 1, 2022, to June 30, 2022, and the data was analyzed using SPSS tools and tested by descriptive statistics that include frequencies and the Chi-Square Test. The data collection mode of this research was online, and the participants answered the questions based on their satisfaction and desire.

FINDINGS

The findings of this research represent the opinions of educated individuals such as university professors, students, social activists, social media influencers, and social media users who can analyze the current situation in Afghanistan. While most participants are residents of Afghanistan, some are studying abroad or have left the country after the fall of the republic state and reside outside Afghanistan.

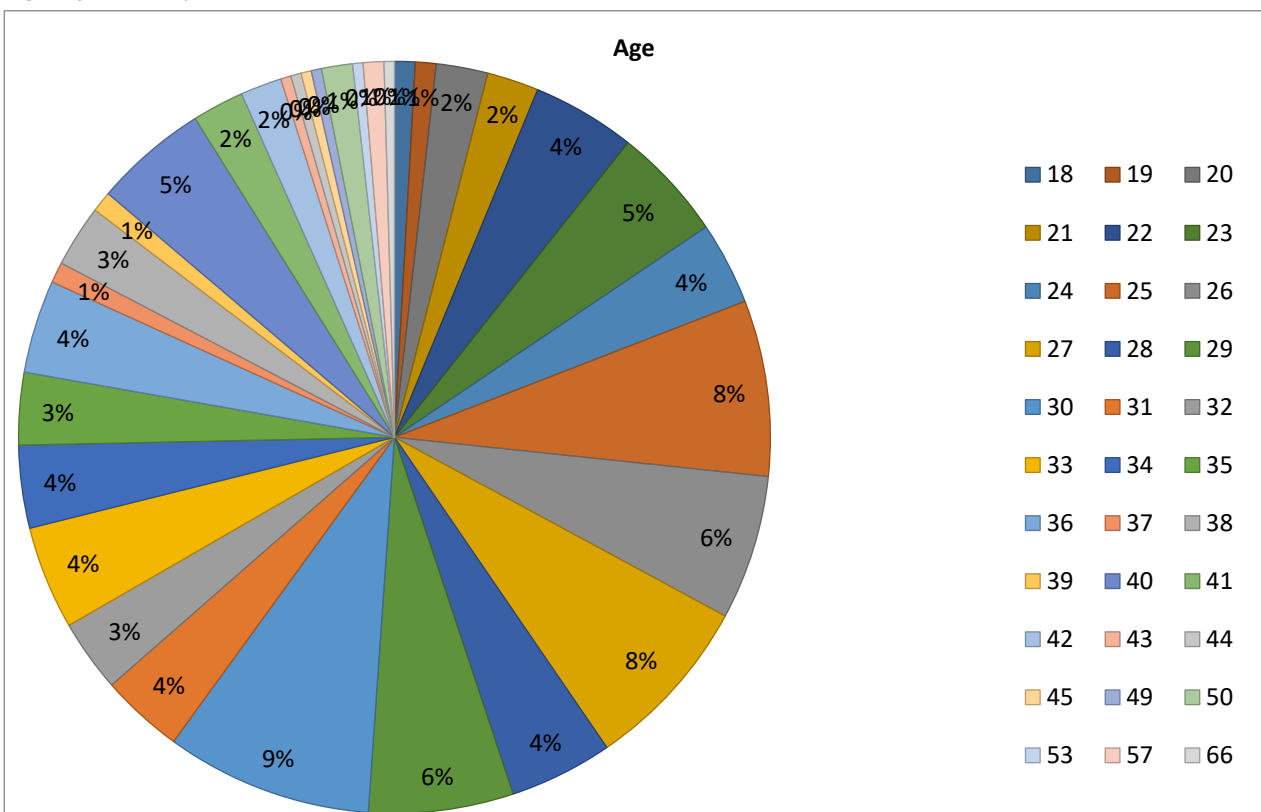
In this research, most participants are men because men are more present in social networks. Also, the social restrictions of the Afghan society have limited the use of social networks for women. Moreover, the literacy rate of men is higher than that of women. In this research, 80% of the respondents are men, and 20% of the respondents are women, as shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1.
Gender of Pariticipants



The respondents of this research include different age groups between the ages of 18 and 66. Figure 2 shows the opinions of different age groups.

Figure 2.
Age of Participants

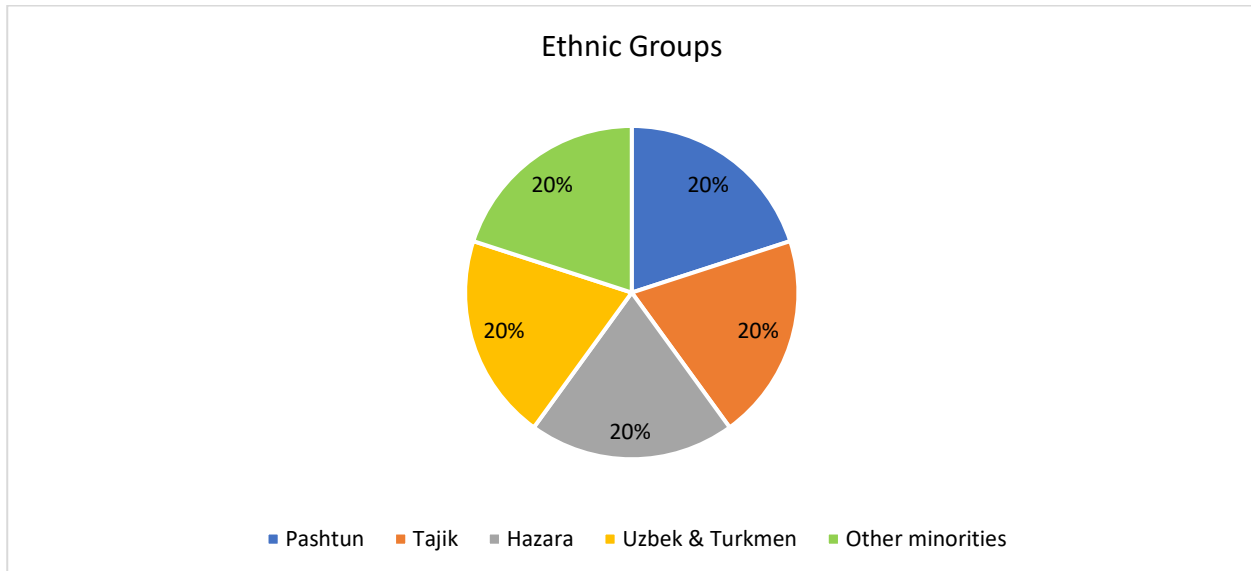


Afghanistan is ethnically diverse, and ethnicity plays a vital role in politics. This research tried to include different ethnic groups that participate and are involved in the country's politics. The major groups, the Pashtuns, Tajiks, Hazaras, Uzbeks, Turkmens, and other ethnic minorities,

are considered equitably, as shown in Figure 3, with each group forming 20 percent of the respondents.

Figure 3.

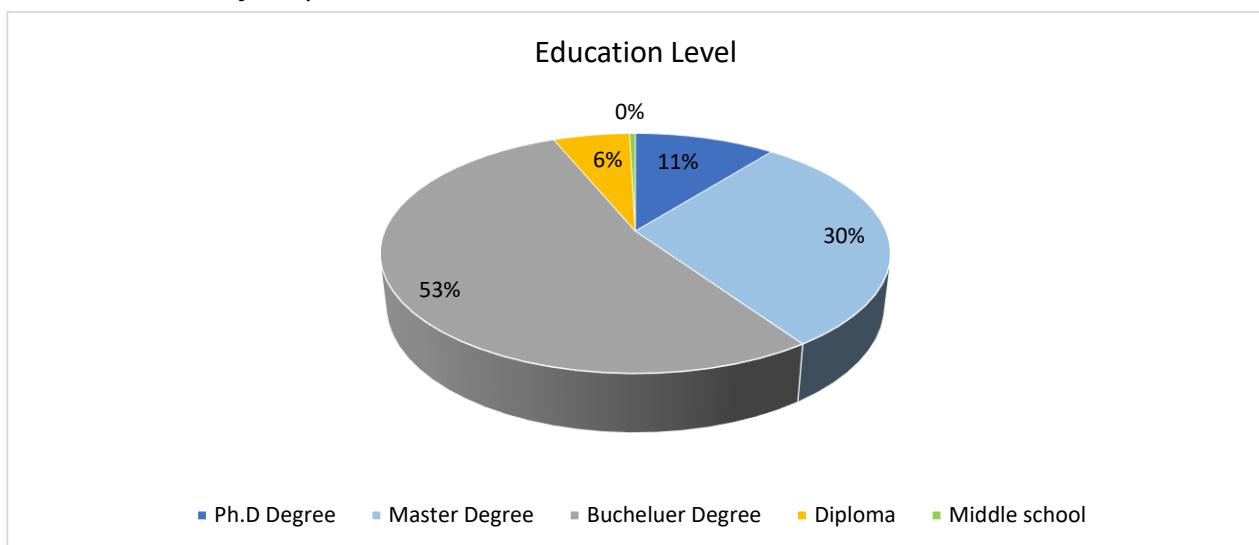
Ethnic groups of Participants



This research included the literate population with various levels of education. According to Figure 4, most respondents hold a bachelor's degree, i.e., 53%, followed by a master's degree (30%), doctorates (11%), graduates from the twelfth grade 6%, and one percent who did not complete secondary school. People in these academic categories represent critical human resources of society, with sufficient understanding of social and political affairs to provide informed answers.

Figure 4.

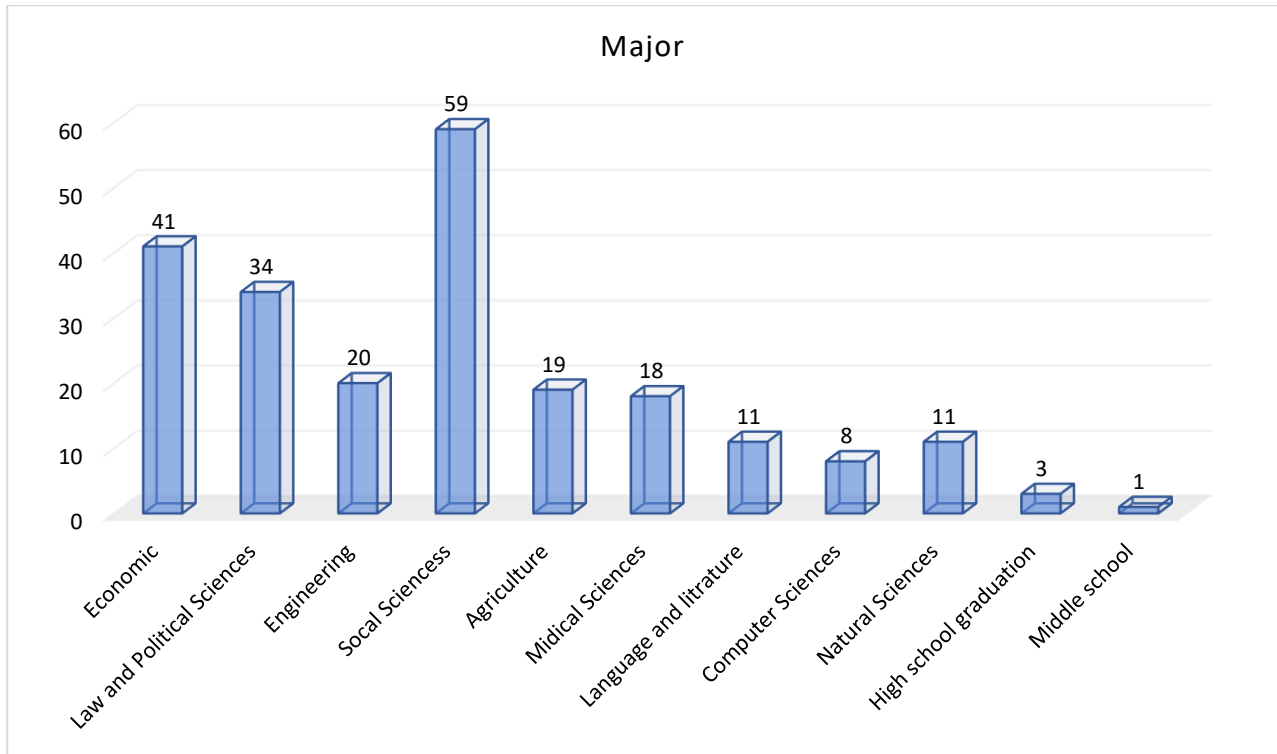
Education Level of Respondents



The respondents are graduates or current students in a variety of fields. See Figure 5. The diverse educational backgrounds provide a broader spectrum of perspectives when answering questions.

Figure 5.

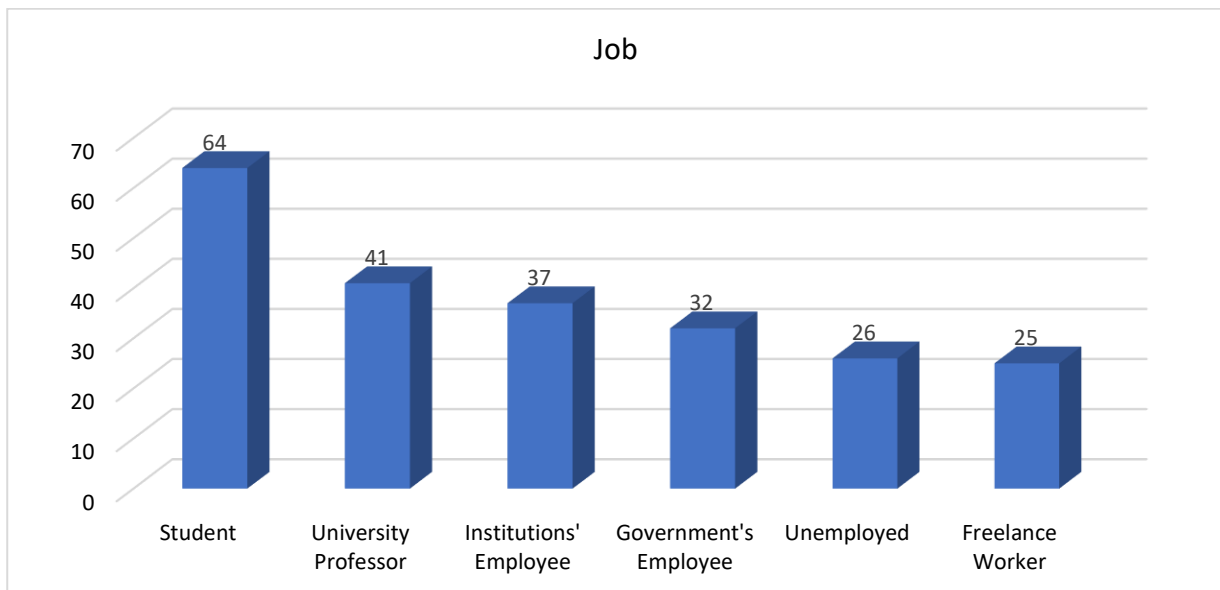
Field of Study of Respondents



Based on the level of education, educated people are the active and effective force of society and work in many spheres. Students form the largest group.

Figure 6.

Job of Participants



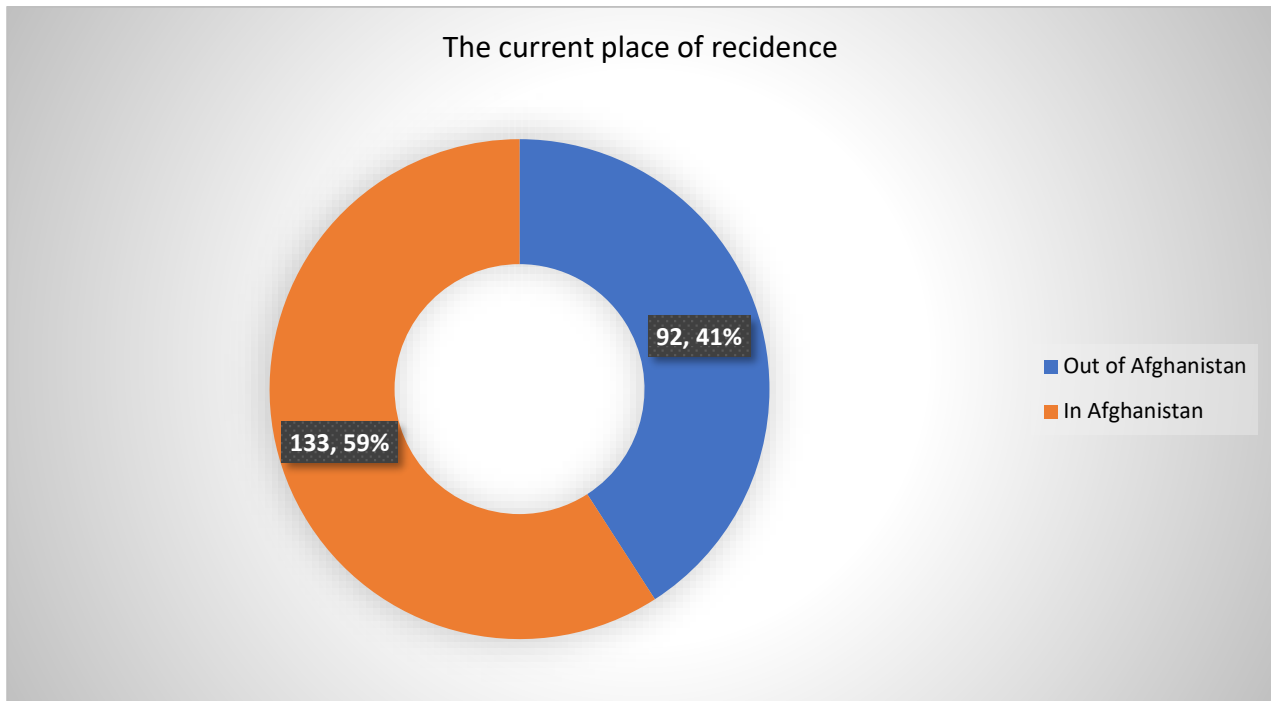
Afghanistan has 34 provinces, 31 of which are represented in this study. Table 1 shows its frequency and percentage. Since ethnic groups are concentrated geographically, including a large number of provinces ensures a balanced ethnic representation.

Table 1.

Provinces of Participants

Name of Provinces	Frequency of Participant	Percent
Uruzgan	2	.9
Badghis	1	.4
Bamyan	27	12.0
Badakhshan	9	4.0
Baghlan	6	2.7
Balkh	16	7.1
Parwan	1	.4
Paktia	5	2.2
Panjshir	8	3.6
Takhar	4	1.8
Jawzjan	9	4.0
Khost	2	.9
Daikundi	5	2.2
Zabul	1	.4
Sarpol	9	4.0
Samangan	7	3.1
Farah	3	1.3
Kandahar	6	2.7
Kabul	31	13.8
Kapisa	5	2.2
Kunduz	5	2.2
Kunar	3	1.3
Laghman	5	2.2
Maydan Wardak	8	3.6
Nangarhar	7	3.1
Nuristan	1	.4
Harat	3	1.3
Hilmand	2	.9
Ghazni	15	6.7
Ghor	6	2.7
Faryab	13	5.8
Total	31	100%

Since the data was collected through social networks, the respondents were located inside and outside Afghanistan, and those who lived outside Afghanistan were either studying or left Afghanistan during the fall of the Republic. Figure 7 shows that 59% of respondents live inside Afghanistan, and 41% percent of respondents live outside Afghanistan.

Figure 7.*Current place of residence of the respondents*

The sudden fall of the republic government shocked people, and the prevailing disorder increased concern about the political situation and the future of the country. Given the circumstances, the research analyzes the respondents' opinion about the future of Afghanistan and asks whether the current situation in Afghanistan is improving or will remain the same and there will be no change. 77% of the participants think the situation is deteriorating and social, political, and economic problems will increase; 18% believe things will remain the same and there will be no change in political, social, and economic affairs, and 5% of the respondents feel that the current situation in Afghanistan is improving and social, political and economic problems will decrease (See Figure 8).

The change in the political system raised many questions in the minds of citizens, and some of the most critical were factors that enabled the Taliban to seize power. Respondents mentioned several factors, but the most crucial was the agreement between the United States and the Taliban in Doha, Qatar; 181 out of 225 people consider this agreement the primary cause. The second factor, identified by 148 out of 225 people, was the political differences between the political rulers of the Republic era. The third, noted by 140 people, was administrative and financial corruption in the administration. The fourth was Pakistan's role as the leading supporter of the Taliban. The secret deal between the Republic authorities and the Taliban and the Taliban's project of ethnic domination were considered significant drivers. The Taliban's military morale, capable management of the war, and support of people were lesser factors in descending order of importance. Arrangements with external actors and various behind-the-scenes agreements were the leading causes of the Taliban's seizure of power, with people's choices playing an insignificant role.

Figure 8.

Respondents' view and attitude towards the future of Afghanistan

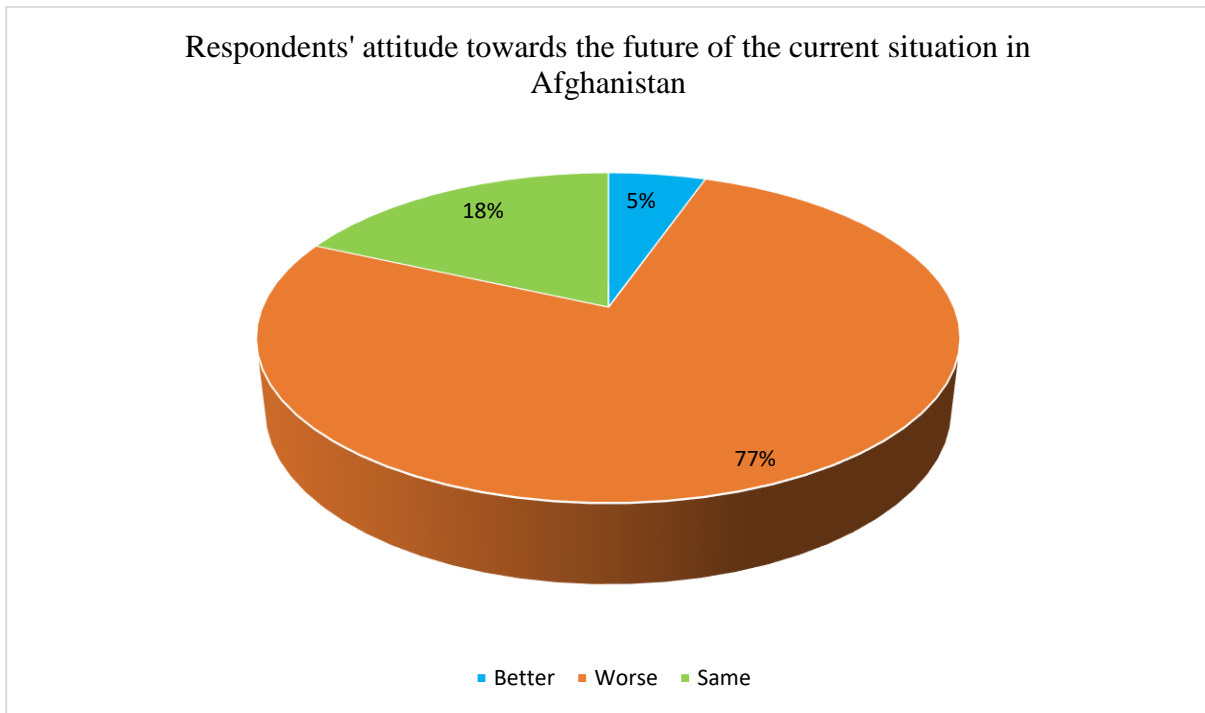
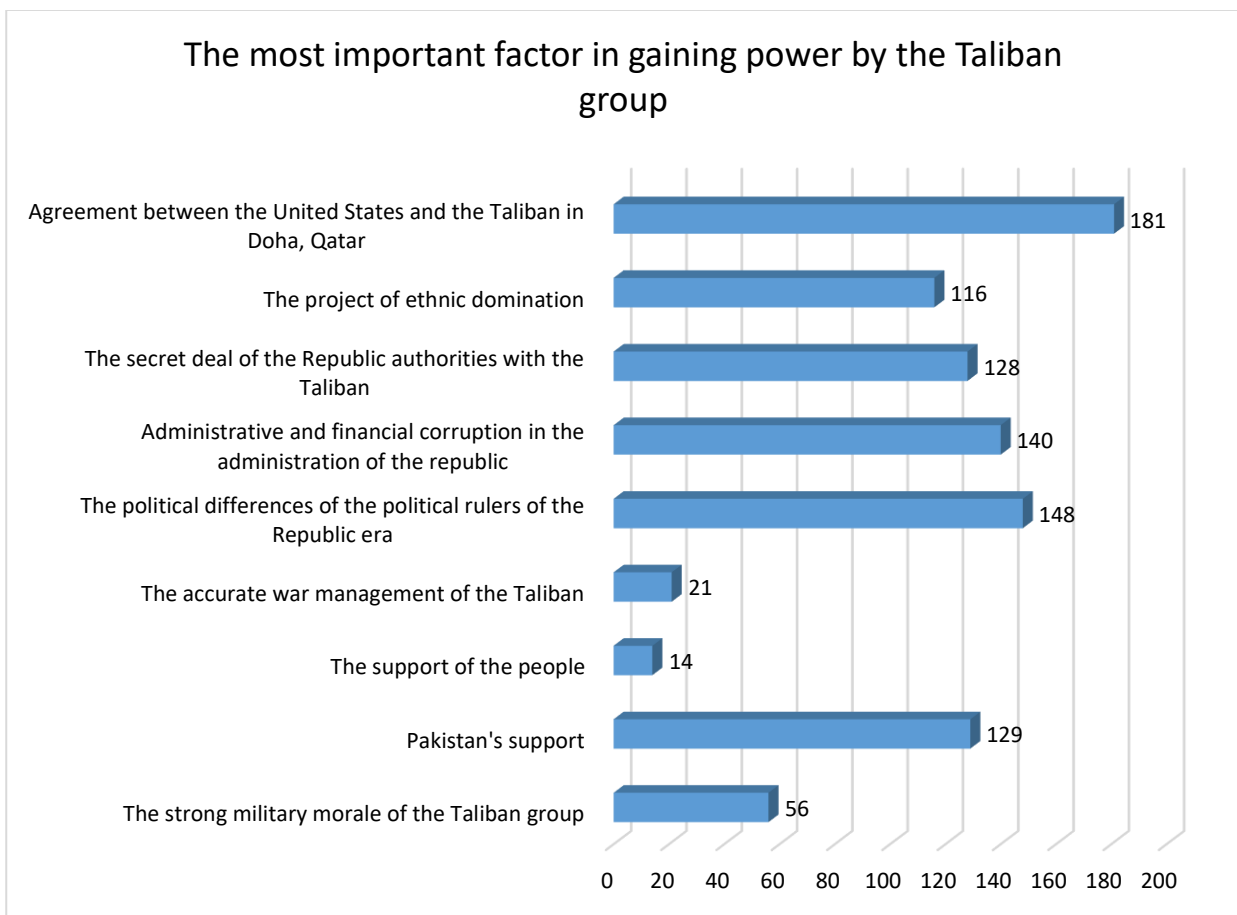


Figure 9.

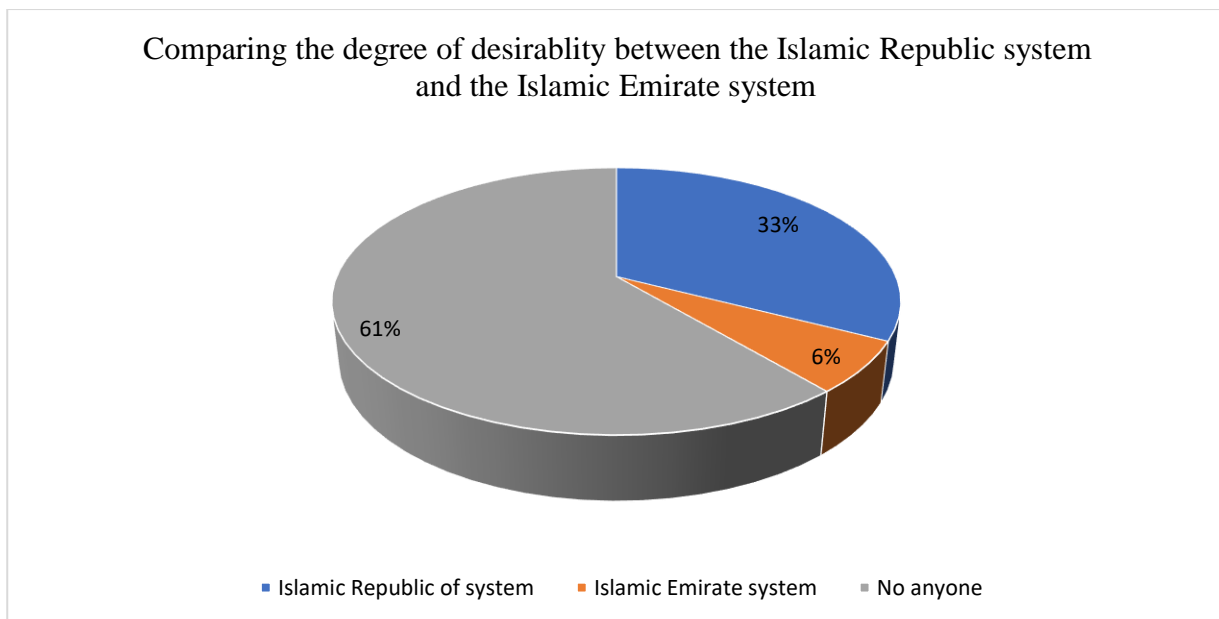
The most important factors for the Taliban to come to power



With the fall of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and the formation of the Islamic Emirate, the governance system also changed. Each system has its principles and mission and shapes the ruling groups' design and implementation of policy. Respondents who experienced both systems were asked which one they preferred. Figure 10 shows that 61 percent of the respondents said neither was desirable, with 33% picking the Republic and only 6%, the Taliban.

Figure 10.

The degree of desirability between the Islamic Republic and the Islamic Emirate



Political systems generally fall into two categories. One is based on the people's will and derives legitimacy from the people, often through direct voting or representation. The other type involves a forcible seizure of power without regard for peoples' choices. Respondents were asked whether the Taliban represents the people. The majority of respondents, as shown in Figure 11, think that the Taliban does not represent the people. Out of the 225 respondents, only three believed that the Taliban fully represents the people, 14 thought they somewhat represent the people, 88 stated that the Taliban does not represent the people, and 76 believed that the Taliban does not at all represent the people, and 71 were uncertain.

As mentioned earlier, Afghanistan has long been characterized by ethnically based politics and tensions. Given that the Taliban leadership and followers are overwhelming Pashtuns, it is not surprising that respondents from this ethnic group have a more positive view of the current government than the rest of the population (See Figure 2). However, even among Pashtuns, only ten respondents feel the Taliban represent the people, far less than the 21 who said they didn't represent the people.

The establishment of Taliban rule meant a change in the political system with people pushed to the sidelines. The flight abroad of the Republic's political class meant no group was left that could contest Taliban policies. The research wanted to examine the level of satisfaction of citizens with the current situation in the country. Figure 12 shows that 56.4% of the

respondents are completely dissatisfied, 16.4% are simply dissatisfied, 19.5% of neither satisfied nor dissatisfied, and only 6.2% are satisfied, and 1.3% of the respondents are very satisfied.

Figure 11.

Respondents' views on the Taliban group's representation of the Afghan people

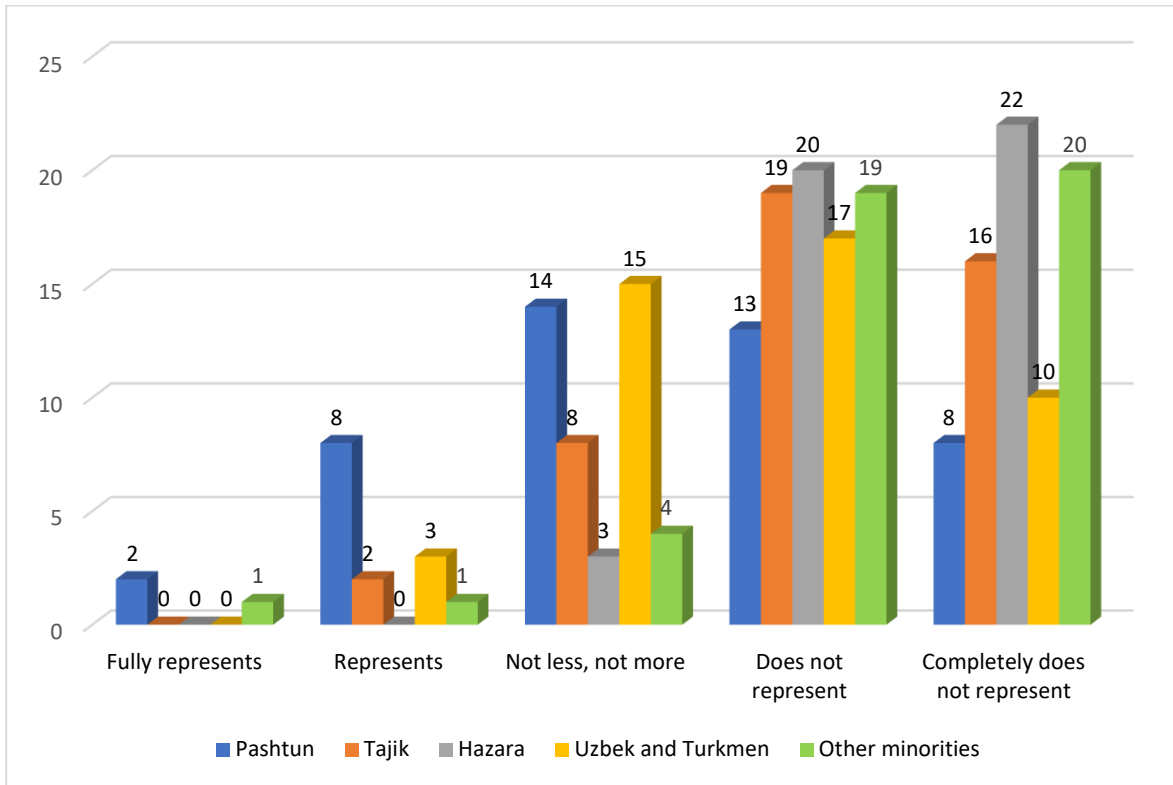
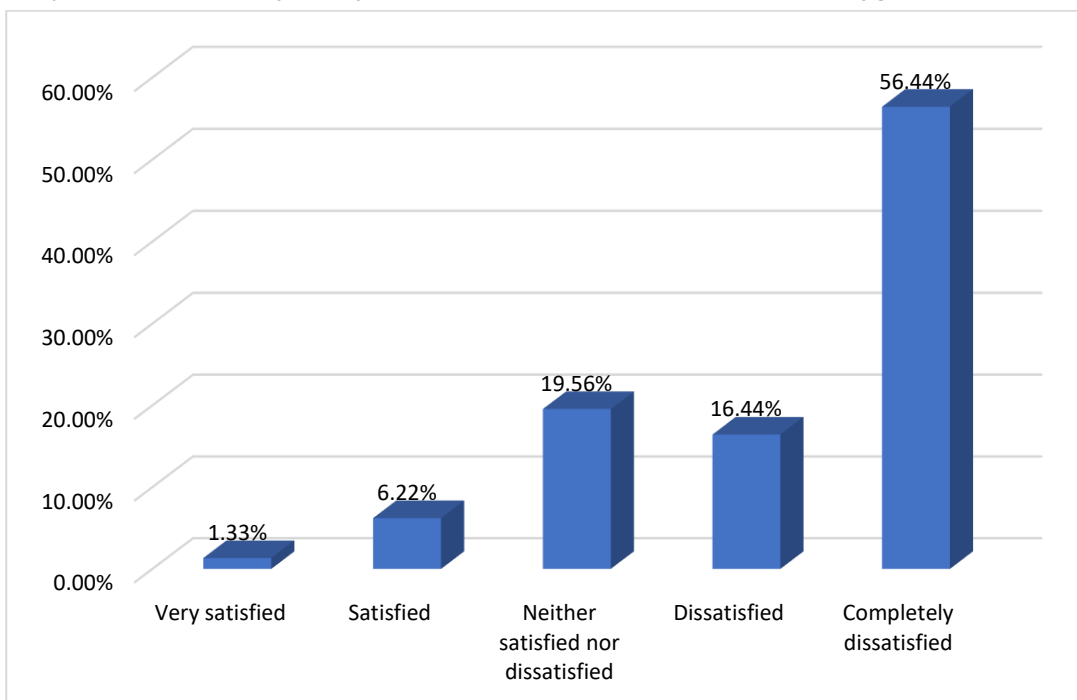


Figure 12.

Respondents' level of satisfaction with the current situation in Afghanistan

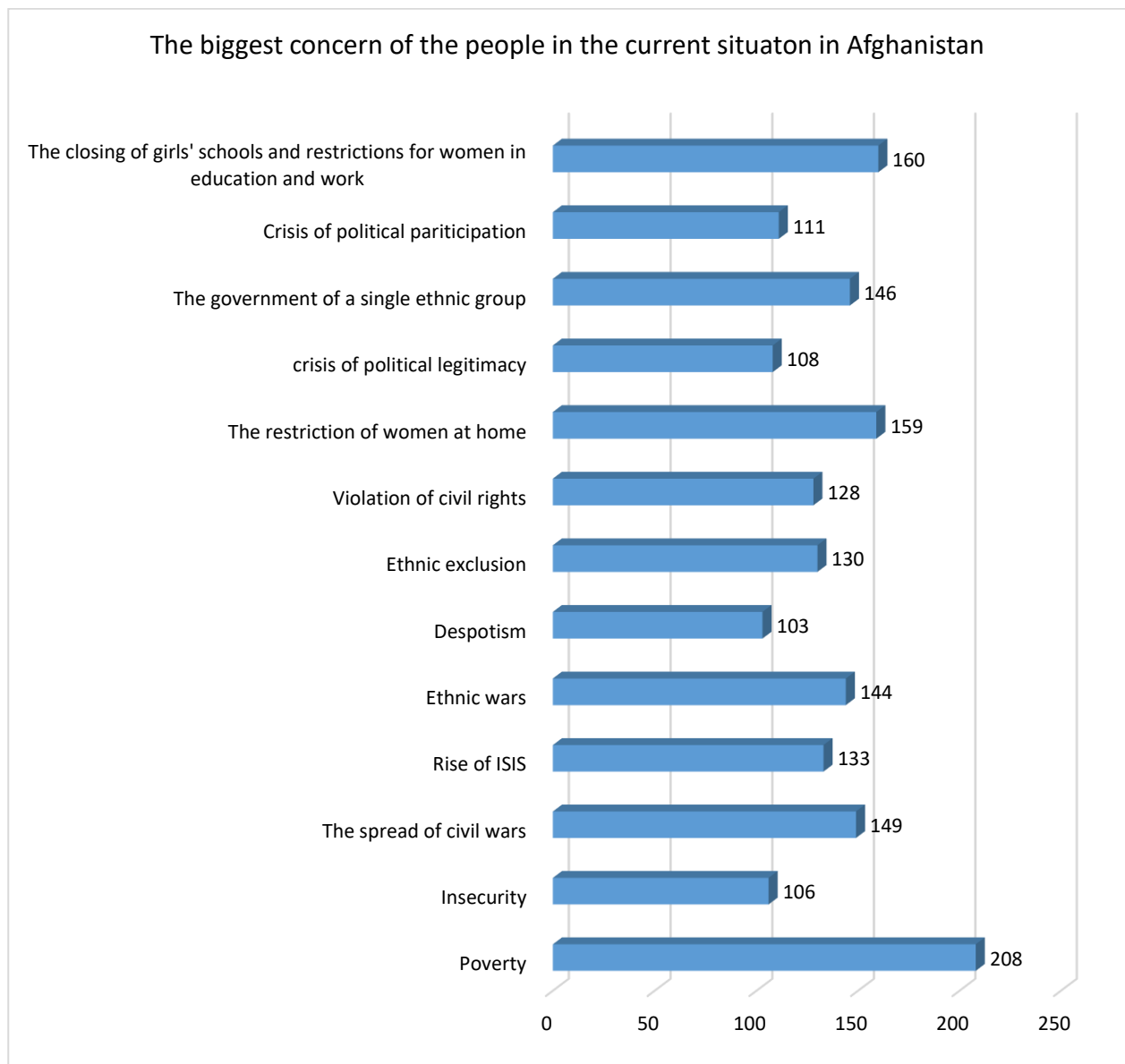


After more than a year, the political, economic, social, and cultural problems in Afghanistan have become more acute. There is still no hint of a more inclusive, participatory

government. The economy is in dire straits, and unemployment and poverty are increasing by the day. Women have been banned from education past grade six and prohibited from holding most jobs. Poverty was the biggest concern identified by most respondents - 208 out of the 225 total. Second were the severe restrictions on women's rights in education and employment (160 respondents). Third, the confinement of women to their homes (159). The monopoly of political power ranked fourth (146). It was closely followed by the threat of ethnic conflict (144). The level of concern about the rise of ISIS and other issues is presented in Figure 13.

Figure 13.

People's greatest concerns in the current situation in Afghanistan

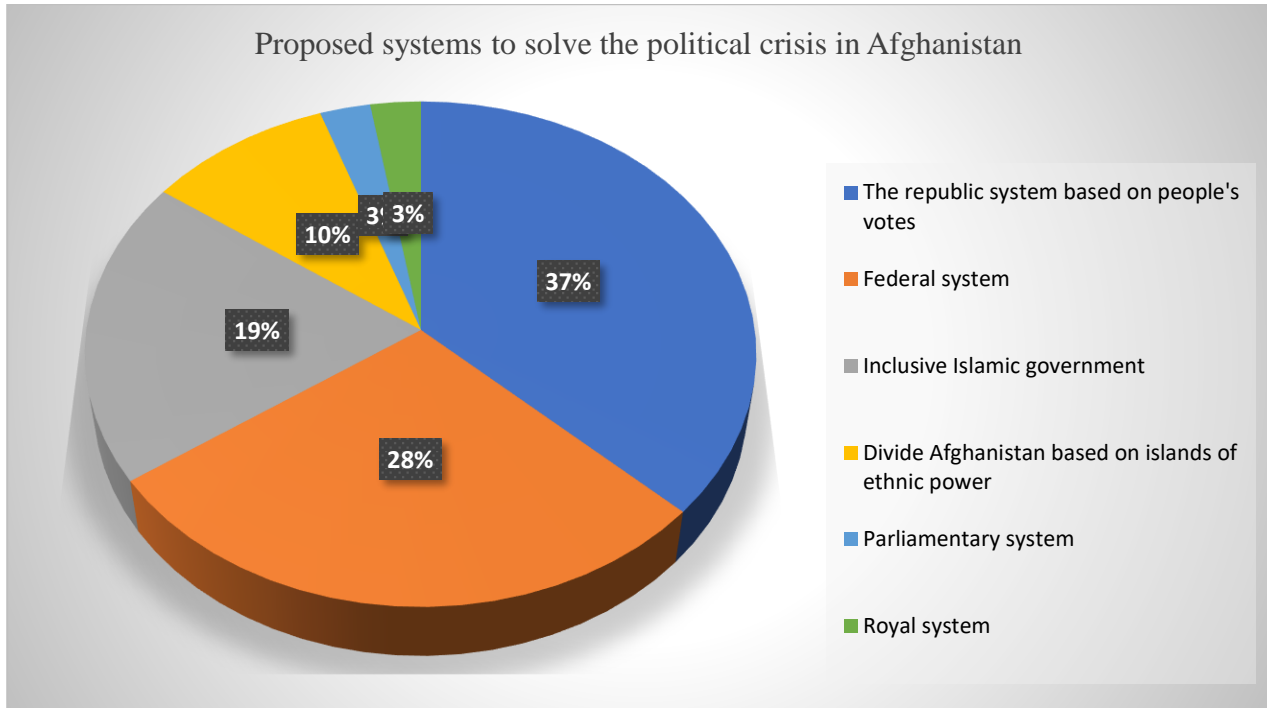


The concerns raised in Figure 13 are not only the concerns of the Afghan people but also the concerns of the United Nations and the international community. Afghanistan is in a critical situation: the Taliban government has yet to gain domestic and international legitimacy. There are calls for the Taliban to form an inclusive government and respect civil rights. The current authoritarian theocratic government is unlikely to deliver on these goals. A different political

order is required. When asked what type of political system respondents prefer, 37% of respondents indicated a republic based on elections, 28% opted for a federal system, 19% an Islamic government, 10% of the respondents suggested dividing Afghanistan into ethnically compact regions, 3% of the respondents, a parliamentary system and 3% a monarchy.

Figure 14.

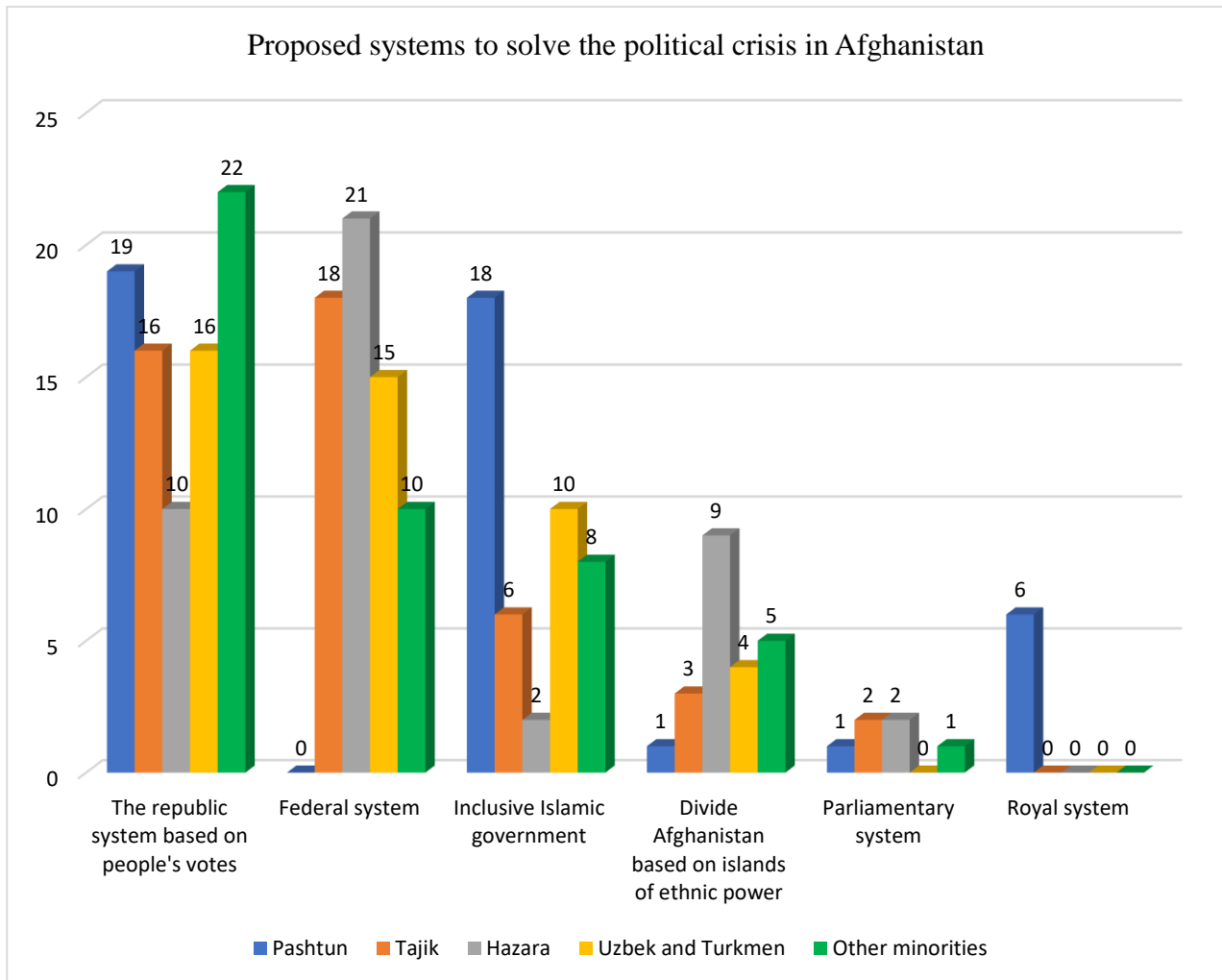
Political solution to the current situation in Afghanistan



Ethnic groups differ according to their preferred political system. A political order with a republic and elections was selected by 83 of the 225 respondents. The Pashtun cohort was almost equally divided between this option and that of an inclusive Islamic government, and apart from a small number who favored a monarchy, rejected all other alternatives. Significantly, not a single Pashtun supported a federal system. In the case of Tajiks, a federal system was favored by 18 respondents and a republic by 16. The Hazara, on the other hand, strongly preferred federalism. Unlike the Pashtun, few Tajiks opted for an inclusive Islamic government. Dividing the country according to regions of ethnically compact populations received very little support, except for a small group of Hazara. Other minorities overwhelmingly support the republic as a political system. (See Figure 15) The results show a divide between the Pashtun, who support a centralized government, be it a republic or Islamic, and the rest of the population want a republic or a federal system.

Figure 15.

The political solution of the current situation in Afghanistan with the analysis of ethnicity



CONCLUSION

The factors which brought about the collapse of the Republic and the rise of the Taliban have been much debated. Individuals like Ali Nasiri and organizations like the Independent Human Rights Commission have identified national and tribal differences as significant. Others (Mazidi & Raja) suggest that the Republic's leaders' disregard of constitutional and legal provisions played an important role. SIGAR, as mentioned above, provided six causes, ranging from administrative corruption to the hasty withdrawal of NATO troops. This research is perhaps the first to examine the question by canvassing citizens' views. As noted earlier, prominence is given to the agreement between the United States and the Taliban in Doha, political rifts within the Republic leadership, corruption under President Ghani, and Pakistan's support of the Taliban. The least relevant factor was the popular support of the Taliban.

Afghanistan under Taliban rule is experiencing a grave economic and humanitarian crisis, with 77% of respondents feeling that the situation will remain the same and 18% it will get worse. If not for the large volume of humanitarian assistance coming into the country, society would face mass hunger. Yet, this condition could be avoided if the Emirate government secured

international recognition. Poverty, the attack on women, and ethnic discrimination are some of the significant issues of concern that respondents identified. The Taliban government does not have a mandate from the people; only 6% of respondents support the Emirate system.

There are no apparent alternatives on the horizon to Taliban rule. Some hope the international community's preconditions for international recognition, such as a more inclusive government and respect for human and women's rights, may shift the needle in the right direction. This study suggests that there is broad consensus in society about the political system that should replace Taliban rule: a republic with elected leadership and greater regional autonomy to accommodate the interests of the other major ethnic groups that form most of the population and live in compact geographies (see map in Appendix 1). Hopefully, unlike in the past when opaque deals were made that decided the country's fate, this time, people will have a voice in determining the outcomes.

Research Statement

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Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interests.

Informed Consent

This study was non-interventional, and the participants were adults aged 18 or above. Each participants received a copy of the informed consent document before their involvement in the study.

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APPENDIX

Appendix 1.

Map of the Ethnolinguistic Groups in Afghanistan

