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Citizen Evaluation of Government and Confidence in Public Institutions in Emergent Islamic Democracies: Evidence from Afghanistan

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Extant literature on citizen evaluation of government and confidence in public institutions is anchored on findings largely derived from the rich and enduring democratic traditions of Western industrialized democracies. This research explores whether this literature informs and can be generalized to similar phenomena in a developmental Islamic democracy, such as that in Afghanistan. Analyzing national probability survey data of adult Afghans, we find that prevailing theories of citizen evaluation of government and confidence in public institutions do offer viable explanations, although the effect of each factor varies according to both level of government and institution. Also, the effects of perceptions of performance are very salient. Overall, the theories provide more potent explanations of citizen evaluation of government and confidence in public institutions vis-a-vis demographic factors. We contend that the prospects for democracy in Afghanistan may well depend on democracy's ability to deliver both on its stated ideals and expected dividends.

In explicating incrementalism theory, policy scientists assert that problem-solving is largely a ritual in which what we already know becomes the prism through which solutions are imagined—however daunting the problem (Lindblom 1959). This ritualization and its implicit instinctive response to issues explain why, once knowledge on any political phenomenon survives the initial vetting, a persistent question that arises is to what extent the central tenets of that knowledge can be extrapolated beyond the immediate realms covered by the studies that produced it. This stubborn emphasis on interrogation of reach or, more technically, adjudication of external validity, to codify what we know, is critical because it is both the cornerstone of theory building and paradigm-making (Kuhn 2012), and, ultimately, the certifier of the extent of practical utility of the knowledge (Steckler and McLeroy 2008). This question of extrapolability now looms for the extensive research that has accumulated on citizen evaluation of government and confidence in public institutions with regard to its applicability to developmental democracies (e.g., Aydin and Cenker 2012; Cenker and Çarkoğlu 2011).

Strands of research on citizen evaluation of government and confidence in public institutions abound (see Ecevit and Karakoç 2015). As Aydin and Cenker (2012) and Wang (2015) observe, though, much of it is anchored almost exclusively on studies of Western and advanced industrial nations (see Ecevit and Karakoç 2015; Lühiste 2006; Mishler and Rose 2001; Pharr et al 2000, for some exceptions). This locus casts doubt on its veracity in divergent contexts. One of these divergent contexts pertains to emerging democracies in Islamic states. Even with the nation-building quagmire in Afghanistan and Iraq, political scientists are still not used to, nor are they comfortable with, mentioning democracy and Islam in the same breath. However, the impulse for self-determination throughout the Islamic world (e.g., Anderson, 2011) may alter that, carrying to the fore the question of the relevance of the cumulative literature to understanding events in these countries.

We ask the following questions in this research: Are theories of citizen evaluation of government and confidence in public institutions viable in emergent democracies in Islamic states? If such theories apply, which ones are most promising, and what are their implications for entrenching democracy in such settings? The Islamic Republic of Afghanistan is a particularly important case study. Besides its divergent historical, social, and cultural experience, not excluding its peculiar rendition of Islam, Afghanistan is one of two fledgling Islamic states (Iraq is the second) where the U.S. and its coalition allies continue to experiment with implantation of Western-style democracy. Embedding democracy in these improbable contexts has met with enormous difficulty (Manganaro and Alozie 2015). Thus, interrogating the viability of these theories in such embryonic democracies should neither be an afterthought, nor should it be a matter of fleeting curiosity.

Positive citizen evaluation of government and confidence in public institutions, although largely perceptions, are fundamental to representative democracy (Wang 2015; Cook and Gronke 2005; Hardin 2000; Hetherington 1998). These positive evaluations and confidence are the linchpin between the governors and the governed—directly influencing such core derivatives as legitimacy, governability, regime-change, responsiveness, peace and stability, and the overall development and sustenance of the democratic form of government (Ecevit and Karakoç 2015; Aydin and Cenker 2012; Wang et al 2006; Hetherington and Nugent 2001). While both the evidence and repercussions of eroding political support for government and confidence in public institutions appear to be largely established (Catterberg and Moreno 2006; Hetherington 2005; Howard 2003; Norris 1999; Nye et al 1997; Easton 1975)—especially their causal linkage to preservation of the overall health of the political system (Putnam 2002; Neustadt 1990; Berelson 1952)—the etiology of that declining support remains a matter of serious inquiry and is now fairly well recognized (Hetherington and Rudolph 2008; Chanley et al 2000). I begin with explication and clarification of the theories.

Theories of Government Evaluation and Confidence in Public Institutions

Several theories exist on citizen evaluation of government and confidence in public institutions. Each derives from the prism of its influence on the individual. Some research may compel the collapsing of these factors into broader or narrower categories (e.g., Newton and Norris 1999), but the taxonomy we adopt is dictated by the fact that citizens' responses to phenomena are not unidimensional (Newton 1999).

The Social-Psychological Theory

Personality traits instilled early in life have repercussions for the entire life-cycle

(Delhey and Newton 2003). Those traits may manifest in what early theorists, such as Emile Durkheim and Max Weber, generally thought of as a "cooperative man": an individual of friendly disposition and interpersonal trust who accentuates positive societal macro-outcomes. These traits can also produce a cynical prototype with deep mistrust of others, orchestrating negative macro-outcomes (Nannestad 2008). The theory proposes that people with high levels of generalized trust tend to extend it to many facets of their interactions, including government and public institutions (Keele 2007; Newton and Norris 1999, 6). Thus, citizens with high levels of generalized trust can be expected to be more positive in their evaluation of government and have more confidence in public institutions (Zmerli and Newton 2008; Catterberg and Moreno 2006).

The Social and Cultural Theory

A corollary of the social-psychological theory is the social and cultural theory, associated with the question of whether citizen evaluation of government and confidence in public institutions arise out of actual cognitive distinctions that citizens make, or whether they are a matter of broadly preconceived notions and value orientations toward government (Kelleher and Wolak 2005, 5; Anderson and Tverdova 2001). Here, those who "look favorably on government will approve all manifestations of it," while those ordinarily averse to government will equally disapprove of all manifestations of it (Kelleher and Wolak 2007, 712; Aberbach and Rockman 2000). Such diffuse disposition toward government as a civic institution could emanate from a myriad of sources, including civic education, socialization, and lived experience, especially the gap between expectation, promise, and actual performance (Van Ryzin 2004; Newton and Norris 1999). Preconceived orientation could become a decisive factor in Afghanistan—where ethnic-group competition is high and political parties are numerous, particularistic, and less developed (Cole and Kincaid 2012, 2).

The Social Capital Theory

A different research genre links social capital endowment to citizenship (Heggart 2015; Boix and Posner 1998; Putnam 1993). Measurement of social capital remains nebulous (Newton 1997), sometimes denoting cultural acquisition and awareness, educational attainment and general enlightenment, and participating in social groups and other community processes (Knack 2002; Hardin 2000; Granato et al 1996), but the theoretical rendering is simple. At the margin, higher levels of social capital produce "better citizens;" at the aggregate level, populations with higher levels of social capital exhibit higher levels of virtue, cooperation, civic participation, and governability (Putnam 2000; 1995). They are also more likely to approve of government's role, as well as exhibit active and better quality interaction with government and public institutions (Knack 2002)—part of what Putnam (2000) calls reciprocity. Boix and Posner (1998) aptly define better quality interaction broadly to include: 1) the presence of rational voters able to articulate expectations and hold government accountable for those expectations; 2) increased compliance with rules and regulations keeping down the cost of government; 3) civic virtue, re-orientating citizens from self-based pecuniary priorities to broader community concerns that enhance collective action; 4) improved bureaucratic solidarity to advance governance; and 5) increased elite accommodation of one another.

The Proximity Theory

Proximity of government and public institutions to the citizens is important (Wolak

and Kelleher 2010; Kelleher and Wolak 2005; Schneider and Jacoby 2003; Hibbing and Theiss-Morse 1995). This is particularly true in federal systems with their tiered governments. As Kelleher and Wolak (2005) note, "subnational governments are responsible for many of the programs and services that have the greatest impact on citizens' day-to-day lives—including education, public utilities and services, welfare, and crime and corrections. Being able to see local impacts of government may increase both perceived importance of subnational governments, as well as perceptions of the success of states in representing citizen interests" (p. 6). Moreover, closer proximity may improve specialization to deal with unique local issues/demands, which can increase citizen buy-in and loyalty (Levy 2007; Hetherington and Nugent 2001). It also may bring greater transparency and better information about government activities (Roeder 1998) and greater efficacy about one's ability to compel responsiveness from government and public institutions (Jennings 1998). Together, these factors alter the dynamics of the interaction between citizens and governments and public institutions.

The Performance Theory

Whether citizen evaluation and confidence in public institutions reflect government performance and institutional outcomes is a locus of discussion (Kampen et al 2006; Jennings 1998; Evans and Whitefield 1995; Citrin 1974). The theory emanates from the underlying rational choice contention that "political trust arises from rational responses by individuals to the performance of political institutions" (Wang 2015, 2). Thus, "Government institutions that perform well are likely to elicit the confidence of citizens; those that perform badly or ineffectively generate feelings of distrust and low confidence" (Newton and Norris 1999, 7). Decades of data chronicling erosion of public confidence in government have spawned the New Public Administration Movement aimed at repositioning government for citizen trust and confidence (O'Leary et al 2010). The movement peaked following publication of Osborne and Gaebler's 1992 celebrated book on reinvention of government, with its doctrinaire prescription to run government like a business by incorporating "total quality management" and developing "citizen-as-customer" values.

Citizen-as-customer values targeted responsiveness, while total quality management focused on government priorities, resource deployment, waste minimization, and corruption. An underlying question is whether citizens possess sufficient information for their evaluations to reflect actual performance (Kelleher and Wolak 2007). True, citizen evaluation anchors on a myriad of factors, including personal contact, often with street-level bureaucrats (Lipsky 1980), government inefficiency (Steinmo 1994), corruption, and waste (Marien and Hooghe 2011; Kampen et al 2006; Anderson and Tverdova 2003). However acquired, even if it is the constructivist complex of one's perceptions becoming one's reality (Gergen 1985), the foundation of the performance theory is that performance is a product of some perception of output—and, it matters.

The Gender Exceptionalism Theory

Boys and girls are socialized differently, and the effects of differential socialization are carried into adulthood (Chodorow, 1974). Boys are nurtured into the "public" and "masculine" sphere of toughness, individualism, self-interest, self-reliance, and competition. Conversely, girls are prodded toward the "private" and "feminine" sphere of gentleness, community, egalitarianism, and collectivism. These gender values are combined with sexual division of labor and sex roles to produce two gender identities with

dramatically different life experiences, worldviews, and priorities which Gilligan (1982) designated as a "different voice." For men, personal and economic success and independence, opportunism, confidence, self-importance, risk-taking, rules, power and control, traditionalism, and self-preservation become a preoccupation. For women, altruism, liberalism (openness to change), social justice, collaboration, and social production become dominant (Dietz et al 2002).

Women are therefore socialized to embrace the use of extra-market mechanisms to pursue collective goals (Norrander and Wilcox 2008). Evidently, because of their "vulnerability" to discrimination and other forms of market failure, women profit from government activist programs (Schlesinger and Heldman, 2001), even if policy tends to be more responsive to men's preferences (Boyd 2002, 74). This leads to general support of government by women. Afghan women have even more reasons to be supportive of government (Zulfacar 2006). Although women's citizenship has been a contested issue throughout Afghanistan's history, that contestation assumed more perilous dimensions for women during the Taliban era (1996-2001) of extreme *purdah*—social exclusion of women (Moghadam 2002). With the forced exit of the Taliban in 2001, governments and public institutions, as they did in much of Afghanistan's past (Emadi 2002), have once again become the custodians of women's rights. However, progressive policies to advance Afghan women remain a formidable challenge given the country's entrenched patriarchal order (Haidari 2005).

We have so far discussed the various theories of citizen evaluation of government and confidence in public institutions. With that general explication of the theories now complete, we turn to the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, the setting of the empirical study.

Testing the Theories in Afghanistan's Democracy

Afghanistan is a landlocked multiethnic nation of 35 million population nestled in Southern Asia. Its emergence as a democracy and an Islamic Republic had its genesis in 2001. Until that decisive date, the most popular attribution of Afghanistan in the West was the 1979 Soviet invasion, "designed to subdue a raging civil war and maintain a friendly and socialist government on its border" (Office of the Historian 2013). The summary departure of the Soviet Union a decade later in 1989 left in its wake both a 'shattered Afghanistan and the rise of the Taliban, an Islamic fundamentalist group which seized power and made Afghanistan a base from which Osama bin Laden trained and launched terrorist attacks worldwide'" (Office of the Historian 2013). President George W. Bush fulfilled his dramatic pledge following the 9/11 terrorist attacks in the U.S. to "hold responsible those who provided safe haven for the terrorists" when America and its coalition allies invaded Afghanistan in 2001. While the initial impetus for the invasion was to purge the Taliban from power, once accomplished, it became clear to the coalition allies that immediate withdrawal was not an option as there was no organized governance structure to sustain the fragile nation (Felbab-Brown 2012). Thus began inadvertent occupation and nation-building Western-style.

Hamid Karzai, following his selection in the Bonn Conference as Interim Administrator and subsequent transformation as Transitional Administration in 2002, was elected President in the 2004 nationwide elections—fully birthing Afghanistan's democratic dispensation in America's prototype of a federal presidential system. Unsurprisingly, implantation of such an alien system in an orthodox Islamic state requiring complete rethinking and overhaul of the social contract has been onerous (Maley 2012). While reports from the widely acclaimed Asia Foundation's annual national surveys (from which the data

for this research originate) clearly indicate that Afghans understand democracy and its sundry offshoots, and even admire and embrace it, the intractable challenges posed by multiethnicity and competing loyalties remain insurmountable. The major impediment has been the lack of control of the nation's federating sub-districts by the central government, undermining its legitimacy. As Felbab-Brown (2012, 5) observes, these caustic factors have precluded "consensus-building and broad-based good governance steadily eroding the legitimacy of the government at the center, at the same time that other power arrangements offer no viable alternative to stability." Moreover, democratic institution-building in a traditionalitarian theocracy offers its own complexity. Felbab-Brown (2012, 5) relays the enigma vividly:

> [Afghans] are profoundly dissatisfied with Kabul's inability and unwillingness to provide basic public services and with the widespread corruption of the power elites....The initial post-Taliban period of hope and promise did not last, as governance in Afghanistan became rapidly defined by weakly functioning state institutions unable and unwilling to uniformly enforce laws and policies.

Afghanistan faces challenges as it has moved into an uncertain post-conflict period of reconciliation, reconstruction, and modernization (Maley 2012; 2011), including institutionalization of the rule of law and human rights, infrastructure development, economic growth and expansion, and stemming corruption (Katzman 2014). However, the West has made pursuit of certain deliverables the benchmarks of its nation-building efforts in the country and the Asia Foundation surveys and other assessments suggest that considerable progress has been achieved. One area of such stride is the embedding of abstract democratic ethos and evolution of democratic institutions, including the establishment of the Ministry of Women's Affairs (MoWA). These are preconditions without which further progress in democratic development cannot be attained. Another area of visible momentum has been on women's rights. Many punitive gender laws have been abrogated and other enabling ones enshrined in the Constitution. Citizens' perceptions of basic questions such as gender rights, girl-child education, and women's social and political participation continue to evolve (Manganaro and Alozie 2011; 2015).

This budding Afghan democratic milieu of transformation and ambiguity presents an unusual testing platform for the theories of citizen evaluation of government and confidence in public institutions for several reasons. First, while these theories are typically verified in jurisdictions of robust private-sector life, where government and public institutions are largely ancillary considerations to ordinary citizens, government and public institutions are dominant in every aspect of contemporary Afghan life (World Bank 2005). Thus, Afghan citizens are paying close attention to government and public institutions (Felbab-Brown 2012). Moreover, there is the persistent question of, when citizens are asked about performance and confidence in public institutions, whether their response pertains more to the 'incumbent regime' or to 'government as a democratic institution' (Aydin and Cenker 2012, 235). At the time of collection of these data, Afghanistan was in the 8th post-Taliban year of implementation of its democratic blueprints. Karzai, as both the elected Chairman of the interim and transitional governments and Afghanistan's first democratically elected President, had governed since the forced exit of the Taliban. Thus, Karzai's regime was not only the singular democracy Afghans had known, leaving no

prospect for blurring of two or more democratic dispensations, but it was as well the only democracy Afghans had known until then both in principle and in practice. Karzai vacated the Presidency in 2014 after exhausting his constitutionally mandated two five-year terms, six years after the data for this study were collected in 2008.

Will these theories of citizen evaluation of government and confidence in public institutions be viable explanations for such phenomena in the Afghan setting? We now turn to the empirical analyses testing the theories.

Data and Methods

The national probability survey data used for the research come from the 2008 edition of Asia Foundation's *Survey of the Afghan People,* the 4th installment in the series (Asia Foundation, 2008). The 2008 survey was chosen because it contains questions required to build key variables, especially questions on interpersonal trust. While the Asia Foundation has endeavored to maintain consistency in its survey items in order to develop comparable time-series data, the questions adjust occasionally to reflect shifting priorities. The data generated in these surveys are appropriate for academic work as the methodology employed meets rigorous standards of design, field work, and data collection. Moreover, except in a few cases where newly vetted questions were affixed to capture the specifics of the Afghan context, the questions used in the survey are standard items routinely deployed by political scientists in such work.

In-person interviews were conducted among a multi-stage random sample of 6,593 adults 18 years and older across all 34 Afghanistan provinces in a single wave by 543 trained interviewers. The Foundation reports that 96.8 percent of the interviews were completed on the first, while another 3 percent came on the second, with just 10 interviews fielded on the third attempt. This, obviously, is a spectacular response rate for a population with relatively low literacy rate. The Foundation attributes its success to both the high rate of unemployment that left many adults idling at home and the fact that the surveys are "home-grown," capturing even the minutest nuance of Afghanistan's social scene. For instance, women (n=267) interviewed women, and men (n=276) interviewed men, and all interviews were conducted in the country's local languages, primarily Dari and Pashto. Also, the Foundation has acquired much experience and trust in previous administrations of the survey. By the 4th consecutive cycle, Afghans had become used to the survey and were apparently satisfied that the promise of anonymity meant just that, as no one had suffered adverse effects by responding to the interviews. The 6,593 interviews were weighted to national characteristics using official Afghan Central Statistics on the population as defined by the Sheharwali (municipal administration). The margin of sampling error at the 95% confidence interval is +/- 2.4 percent.

The dependent variables examined throughout the analysis are *evaluation of government* and *confidence in public institutions*. The independent variables are the six theories explicated above: *social-psychological, social and cultural, social capital, proximity, performance, and gender exceptionalism*. Given the complexity of these theories, we begin with establishing measures. As already noted, many of these measures are standard items per the literature, but some new items are tailored to the unique realities of the setting. For instance, because of Afghanistan's recent history of violence, protection of personal freedoms, provision of security, and delivery of basic amenities become crucial in discourse on government performance. Admittedly, these issues are essential everywhere, but they are particularly salient within Afghanistan's contemporary context.

Measuring Citizen Evaluation and Confidence

To measure citizen evaluation of government, we focus on a question that asks: "Do you think that overall the following is doing a very good job, somewhat good job, somewhat bad job, or a very bad job?" [national, provincial, urban (municipal), and rural (district) government]. The question for measuring confidence in public institutions asks: "Do you have a great deal of confidence, a fair amount of confidence, not very much confidence, or no confidence at all in" [the Afghan National Police, the government justice system, Independent National Electoral Commission, Community Development Councils, Provincial Councils, and Community Shuras/Jirgas]. More institutions were listed here, but we adopted the list of the ones with matching questions to measure their specific performance. This decision permits estimation of the effects of both governmental performance, generally, and institutional performance, specifically.

Measuring the Theories

We measure each theory using a multi-question construct subjected to dimensionality analysis through factor scoring. The factoring produced single dimensions for all constructs. Two questions are used to formulate the construct which measures the social-psychological theory: (1) "Generally speaking, would you say that most people can be trusted or that you need to be very careful in dealing with people?" (2) "Do you believe that in most instances people are only thinking about themselves or do you believe that in most instances people try to help others?" Two questions are used to produce the construct for the social and cultural theory: (1) "How much influence do you think someone like you can have over government decisions?" (2) "Do you think that voting can lead to improvement in the future or do you believe that no matter how one votes things never change?" To measure the social capital theory, consideration was given to its many dimensions, including cultural acquisition and awareness, educational attainment and general enlightenment, and belonging to as well as participating in social groups and other community processes. Obviously, these dimensions tap aspects of many other factors being considered in the analysis. To avoid duplication, we focus on three questions which reflect social and community embeddedness and civic virtue: (1) "Do you know how to register to vote? (2) "Are you aware that there will be elections in Afghanistan in the coming year?" (3) "Will you vote in future elections?" To measure the proximity theory, we focus on Afghanistan's federalism: Federal, Provincial (state), Urban (Municipal), and Rural (Local) governments. Only urban residents are asked the municipal questions and so too are rural residents on the locality questions.

Five attributes of government performance are considered. These include political performance (defense of democratic principles), competency, relevancy/responsiveness, service delivery, and impact on citizens' well-being. To measure political performance, we focus on freedom of speech and general performance of democracy. Three questions are culled: (1) "Do most people feel free to express their political opinions in the area where you live?" (2) "On the whole, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the way democracy works in Afghanistan?" (3) "Generally speaking, do you think things in Afghanistan are going in the right direction, or do you think they are going in the wrong direction?" Two items measure competency: (1) "If you were a victim of violence or any criminal act, how much confidence would you have that the governmental law-enforcing organizations and judicial systems would punish the guilty party?" (2) "In the past, elections were managed jointly by international donors and the Afghanistan government, but future elections will be managed entirely by the Afghanistan government. How confident are you that the Afghan

government on its own will be able to conduct free and fair elections?" Two questions measure relevancy/responsiveness: "Tell me if you agree or disagree: (a) "The Parliament is addressing the major problems of the people in our country," and (b) "My MP is addressing the major problems of my constituency in Parliament."

Two separate measures of service delivery are adopted, one for the national and provincial governments, the other for the urban and local governments. The former lists particular functions of upper governments (education, health care, job creation, relations with neighboring countries, economic development, fighting corruption, providing security) and asks respondents to rate government performance on each. The latter asks urban and rural respondents "about today's conditions in the village/neighborhood where they live" (about the availability of clean drinking water, water for irrigation, jobs, supply of electricity, the security situation, availability of clinics and hospitals, availability of medicine, availability of education for children, and freedom of movement—ability to move safely in your area or district). These items were combined into count indices measuring service delivery. Finally, on government impact on citizens' well-being: "compared to two years ago, would you say that the situation for your household has gotten better, remained the same or gotten worse with respect to the following: financial well-being of your household; employment opportunities; availability of products in the market; quality of your food diet; physical condition of your house/dwelling; health well-being of your family members; electric supply; and access to schools." The question was also converted into an index. Higher scores on these indices reflect greater marks for government.

Specific performance measures are also adopted to estimate the effects of institutional outcomes as perceived by citizens on confidence in public institutions. *The Afghan National Police (ANP).* A question asks respondents to respond to five items: a. whether ANP is honest and fair; b. whether operatives of ANP are professional and well trained; c. whether ANP needs foreign support and cannot operate on its own; d. whether ANP helps to improve security in Afghanistan; e. whether ANP is efficient at arresting those who have committed crimes. *The Government Justice System:* The question asks: "If you were a victim of violence or any criminal act, how much confidence would you have that the government law-enforcing organizations and judicial systems would punish the guilty?" *Independent National Electoral Commission:* "In the past, elections were managed jointly by International donors and the Afghanistan Government, but future elections will be managed entirely by the Afghanistan Government. How confident are you that the Afghan Government on its own will be able to conduct free and fair elections?"

Community Development Councils: One question is used: "Community Development Councils have been established as part of the National Solidarity Program and members of the Council are representatives of the various groups in your community. How satisfied are you with the job this Community Development Council is doing?" *Provincial Councils:* A two-segment interaction term: "Have you ever contacted a representative on the Provincial Council for help in solving any of your personal or local problems?" "If yes, did the provincial council try to help to resolve the problem?" *Village/Neighborhood Shuras/Jirgas:* Additive index of the following question: "Tell me do you strongly agree, agree somewhat, disagree somewhat, or strongly disagree with the following statements about the village /neighborhood based Jirgas and Shuras?" [accessible to me, fair and trusted, follow local norms and values of our people, effective at delivering justice, resolve cases timely and promptly]. Finally, the gender exceptionalism theory was measured using the single dummy variable for gender, which takes 1 for women and 0 for men.

Controls and Demographics

An important consideration is the extent to which Afghans are reacting to democracy per se and not government and public institutions specifically. To control for this possibility, we constructed a measure of "*support for democracy*". It consists of the following four standard questions: (1) "Democracy may have its problems, but it is better than any other form of government" (2) "Some people say: Democracy will bring Westernization and too much freedom and challenge Islamic values. Other people say: An Islamic country can be democratic without becoming too Western. It can still keep its Islamic values. Which is closer to your view?" (3) "On the whole, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the way democracy works in Afghanistan?" (4) "Religious leaders should lead people in obeying the obligations of their faith while political leaders should make decisions about how the government is run" [agree/disagree for separation of church and state]. Factor scores for the four questions loaded along two dimensions: Religion and Democracy being Islamic loaded along one dimension, while Democracy being the best form of government and satisfaction with the way democracy works loaded on a second dimension. Further diagnostic runs revealed that the two dimensions had virtually similar effects on the dependent variables. To pare down the number of independent variables, we combined all variables. The results of the combined construct remained consistent across specifications.

The demographic variables included are *age, employment status, occupation, education, literacy, marital status, household income, urban status, and ethnicity*. Ethnicity was coded 1 for Pashtun, 0 otherwise. The decision to code the ethnicity variable this way, comparing Pashtuns to all other ethnics has theoretical merit. Although the Pashtuns have their historical intra-group rivalries (as between the Duranni and the non-Duranni clans), they can be seen as facing a common enemy in non-Pashtuns in contemporary Afghanistan. They are the largest single ethnic group, and the top leadership of the Taliban, which held power until the U.S. invasion of 2001, was Pashtun. Thus, the forced exit of the Taliban and subsequent imposition of democracy dislodged the Pashtuns from their stranglehold on power. Now, there is a feeling of marginalization by the group as they seek political relevance in the present dispensation. This should fuel anti-government sentiments within the group. (The bivariate correlation between education and literacy is .82, $p<.001$. Diagnostics showed interaction between the two variables. We made the choice to use literacy as a better variable because the education variable was dormant in the models. Use of the literacy variable also makes more sense theoretically given the nebulousness of the definition of formal education in Afghanistan).

Two levels of analyses are performed. The first uses descriptive statistics to explore levels of citizen evaluation of government and confidence in public institutions. The second uses inferential statistics obtained from multivariate regression models to assess the utility of the theories on citizen evaluation of government and confidence in public institutions. All analyses are performed using SPSS version 22.0.

Empirical Findings

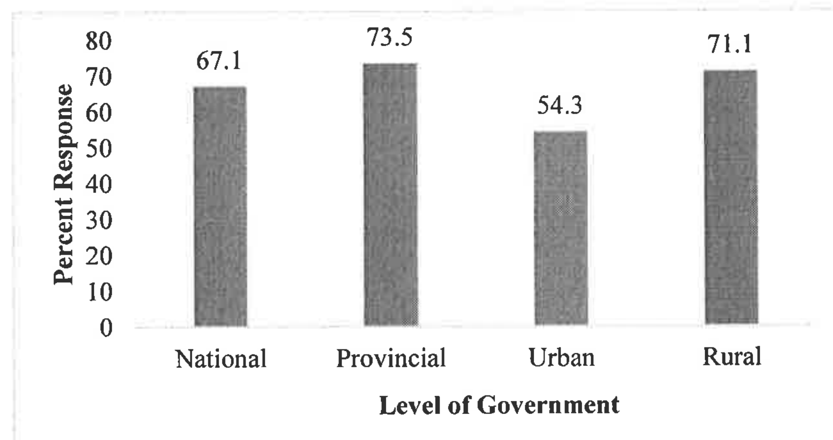
The survey questions, their coding, and descriptive statistics are displayed in the Appendix. The average respondent is 35 years of age and more likely married. Pashtuns composed 41% of the sample. Over half of the respondents answered that they lacked formal education, while almost half actually reported being illiterate (i.e., cannot read English or any major Afghan language). About 6.2% reported working in white collar

occupations. Finally, the mean score on the recoded family monthly income was 3.1, corresponding to the third category of between 3,000-5,000 Afs.

Citizen Evaluation and Government Proximity

The statistics on government evaluation are mapped in Figure 1. About 67% rated the national government as doing a "very good" or "somewhat good" job. The comparable figures for provincial (73.5%), urban (54.3%), and rural (71.1%) governments all indicate a moderate to high evaluation. The proximity thesis posits that Afghans will rate a government higher the closer it is to the people. Rural and urban are nearest to the people, followed by provincial governments. These evaluation scores do not corroborate the proximity expectation. While not statistically distinct from the rural score (71.1%), these figures suggest that provincial, at 73.5%, are rated better than any other level of government. Given the higher scores for provincial and rural vis-a-vis the national government, an alternative interpretation is to accept the proximity theory and to cast the urban result as an outlier, but that will still not explain why the evaluation of provincial would be higher than that of rural governments.

Figure 1: Evaluation of Government

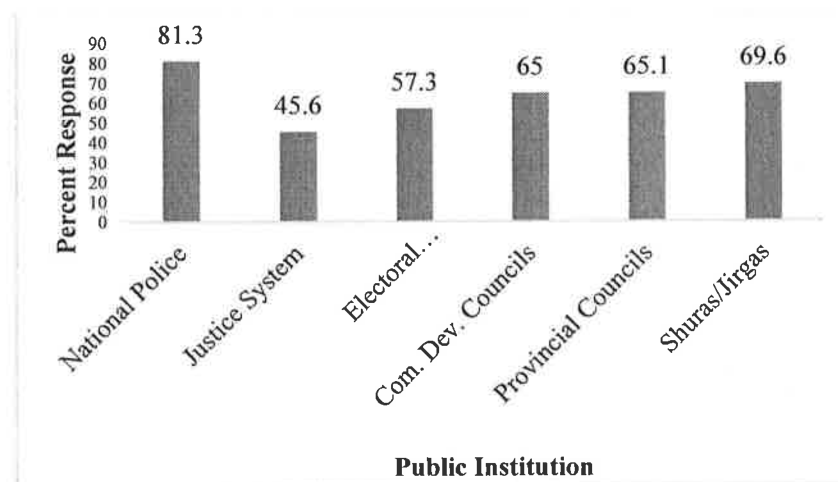


Citizen Confidence and Institutional Proximity

The data for confidence in public institutions are displayed in Figure 2. We begin with the cautionary note that proximity of public institutions in a developmental context such as Afghanistan is not as clear-cut as what obtains in much of the developed world and thus must be approached with care. For instance, the Afghan police, although clearly a national institution in Afghanistan, nonetheless has considerable reach at the provincial and local levels. Thus, designating it as a national institution may well be accurate conceptually but not practically. And truly, the data shown in Figure 2 (81.3%) clearly designate it as an outlier, as no other institution compares favorably to its high level of confidence. Incidentally, once the police are isolated, the rest of the data tend to lend some support to the proximity thesis. The institutions nearest to the people are community development councils (65.0%), provincial councils (65.1%), and community Shuras/Jirgas (69.6%).

These confidence ratings are clearly superior to those of the government justice system (45.6%) and the Electoral Commission (57.3%). This dynamic suggests that the proximity theory may be more relevant for understanding confidence in public institutions than they are to citizen evaluation of government. This makes sense, since citizens experience government primarily through their interaction with public institutions.

Figure 2: Confidence in Public Institutions



Are Theories of Citizen Evaluation Viable?

We now turn to substantive tests of the citizen evaluation theory displayed in Table 1. Two models are shown for each level of government. Model 1 estimates the effects of the demographic and control variables without the theories. Model 2 introduces the theories. This dual process permits observation of the macro-effects of the theories, showcases the marginal effects of each theory, and provides tests of robustness of the models.

The foremost observation in Table 1 is how dramatically the introduction of the theories transforms the specifications with respect to all macro-measures of robustness: R^2, the percent of cases correctly predicted, and the Model χ^2. Model 1 for national government initially produces an R^2 of 5.4% and correctly predicts 68.2% of the cases. Introducing the theories in Model 2 adjusts the R^2 to 34.7%, correctly classifying 76.3% of the cases. For provincial governments, Model 1 generates an R^2 of 4.4% and correctly predicts 73.6% of the cases. Specification of the theories in Model 2 alters the R^2 to 28.8%, correctly predicting 78.5% of the cases. In the urban runs, Model 1 produces an R^2 of 1.5% and correctly predicts 55.4% of the cases. The introduction of the theories in Model 2 revises the R^2 to 19.2% and yields 67.2% of correctly predicted cases. Finally, Model 1 in the rural specification generates an R^2 of 5.9% and 71.0% of correctly predicted cases. In turn, those results change to an R^2 of 21.3% and 74.1% of cases in model 2.

In each case, the Model χ^2 also adjusts markedly, showing better fit with the data. This dynamic suggests that, taken together, these theories are strong explanations of government evaluation at all levels, and are more powerful explanations than are demographic and other control factors.

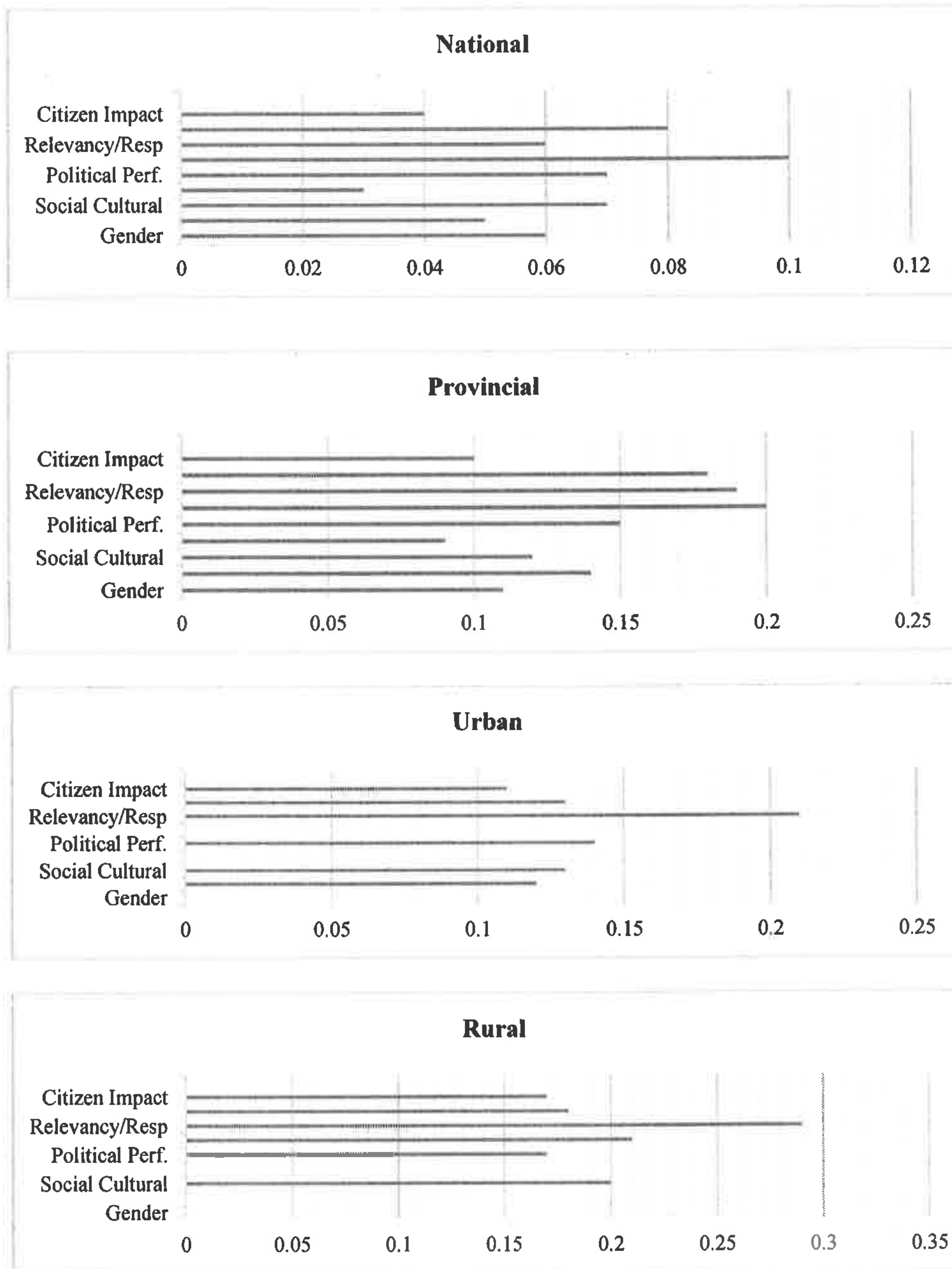
TABLE 1: Binary Logit Estimates of Determinants of Citizen Evaluation of Government

Variable	National		Provincial		Urban		Rural	
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2
Demographics								
Age	-0.00	0.00	-0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	-0.01	-0.00
	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)
Literacy (illiterate)	0.16**	0.12*	0.07	0.07	0.00	0.18	0.18**	0.26***
	(0.06)	(0.06)	(0.06)	(0.07)	(0.00)	(0.14)	(0.06)	(0.07)
Marital status	-0.14*	-0.11	-0.08	-0.06	-0.17	-0.11	-0.18*	-0.17
	(0.06)	(0.08)	(0.07)	(0.08)	(0.15)	(0.15)	(0.08)	(0.08)
Ethnicity (Pashtun)	-0.16**	0.07	-0.01	0.23***	0.08	0.07	-0.36***	-0.14*
	(0.05)	(0.07)	(0.06)	(0.06)	(0.13)	(0.13)	(0.06)	(0.07)
Occupation	0.12	0.02	0.32*	0.23	0.07	-0.09	0.49**	0.28
	(0.12)	(0.14)	(0.13)	(0.14)	(0.19)	(0.21)	(0.16)	(0.17)
Employment status	-0.27**	-0.04	-0.28**	-0.13	0.12	0.29	-0.11	-0.07
	(0.08)	(0.10)	(0.09)	(0.10)	(0.47)	(0.19)	(0.10)	(0.11)
Family income	-0.05**	0.00	-0.07***	-0.04*	-0.10**	-0.08*	0.01	0.02
	(0.01)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.03)	(0.04)	(0.02)	(0.02)
Urban status	-0.14*	-0.32***	0.19*	0.16*				
	(0.07)	(0.08)	(0.07)	(0.08)				
Support/democracy	0.37***	0.11***	0.33***	0.07*	0.14*	-0.03	0.34***	0.15***
	(0.02)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.07)	(0.08)	(0.03)	(0.03)
The Theories								
Gender (female)		0.25***		0.14*		-0.21		-.09
		(0.06)		(0.07)		(0.14)		(0.08)
Social/psychological		0.19***		0.23***		0.14*		0.03
		(0.04)		(0.04)		(0.09)		(0.04)
Social/cultural		0.34***		0.16***		0.19*		0.23***
		(0.04)		(0.04)		(0.10)		(0.04)
Social capital		-0.09**		0.06*		0.01		-0.01
		(0.03)		(0.03)		(0.06)		(0.03)
Performance								
Political		0.29***		0.26***		0.25**		0.09*
		(0.03)		(0.04)		(0.07)		(0.04)
Competency		0.52***		0.40***		0.06		0.25***
		(0.04)		(0.05)		(0.09)		(0.05)
Responsiveness		0.23***		0.37***		0.59***		0.52***
		(0.03)		(0.04)		(0.07)		(0.04)
Service delivery		0.41***		0.33***		0.15***		0.15***
		(0.02)		(0.02)		(0.03)		(0.01)
Citizen impact		0.07***		0.07***		0.06*		0.09***
		(0.01)		(0.02)		(0.03)		(0.01)
Intercept	-0.06	-3.26***	0.39**	-2.35***	0.13	-2.15***	0.29+	-1.75***
Nagelkerke R^2	5.4	34.7	4.4	28.8	1.5	19.2	5.9	21.3
% predicted	68.2	76.3	73.6	78.5	55.4	67.2	71.0	74.1
Model χ^2	259	1891	204	1451	14	194	210	803
N	6593	6593	6593	6593	1254	1254	4974	4974

Notes: The dependent variable is a dummy that takes a value of 1 if the government is scored as doing a very good or somewhat good job, and 0 if somewhat bad or a very bad job. Figures in parentheses are standard errors.

Significance levels: +p<.10; *p<.05; **p<.01; ***p<.001 (two-tailed test).

Figure 3: Predicted Probabilities at the Mean on the Effects of the Propositions on Citizen Evaluation of Government



Perusal of the specific results for the theories reveals equally powerful marginal effects. In Model 2 for the national government, except for the effect of social capital that is wrongly signed, an outcome we largely attribute to the difficulty of capturing the complexity of that particular measure, all other measures of the theories produce strong positive effects, as anticipated. Even the multiple sub-divisions of government performance produce the anticipated results. Model 2 for provincial governments replicates the results for the national government, albeit this time, the result for social capital is correctly signed. The two lowest governments also evince strong marginal effects for the theories, although the gender exceptionalism and social capital effects are not replicated for the urban specification. Moreover, the result for the competency measure was not reproduced. Finally, the social, cultural, and performance theories produce robust positive effects, but no effects for the gender, social-psychological, and social capital theories in the rural government specification.

These results advance something of a nuance, and correctly so, given the diverse priorities and subtleties of top and lower levels of government, where some factors may be more germane and salient at one level of government than another. For instance, the results for the urban and rural specifications yield what can be interpreted as a uniform outcome for governments at the lowest levels. At the same time that these results posit that gender and social capital may not be particularly relevant at the lowest levels, they propose that both predisposition and government performance are strong determinants of citizen evaluation at that level. Overall, then, two broad outcomes emerge from tests of the theories for government evaluation. The first is that these theories are viable to explaining citizen evaluation of government. The second is the well-founded nuance that some factors are more salient at some levels of government than others.

Are Theories of Citizen Confidence Viable?

The models estimating the effects of the theories on confidence in public institutions are presented in Table 2. Three models are estimated for each institution. Model 1, the baseline model, estimates the effects of the demographic and control variables absent the theories. The theories are introduced in Model 2. Finally, Model 3 introduces institution-specific evaluation measures. Thus, these models allow for three kinds of substantive observations: the macro-effect of the theories; the effect of institution-specific evaluation; and robustness of the specifications.

The results in Table 2 reveal very strong effects for the theories, including the institution-specific evaluation measures. The baseline model for the Police shows an R2 of 12.4% and 81.6% of correctly predicted cases. Introduction of the theories in Model 2 more than doubles the R2 to 26.6%, with 83.2% of correctly predicted cases. When the factor evaluating the performance of the Police specifically is added in Model 3, the R^2 rises to 35.1%, with 84.7% of the cases predicted. Moreover, the Model $\chi 2$s adjust dramatically as well. This pattern of dramatic adjustment in the models with the introduction of both the theories and institution-specific evaluation factors is consistent throughout, except in Model 3 for the Electoral Commission, where the introduction of institution-specific evaluation factor does not produce a significant result. Again, this non-performance may be due to the measurement challenges posed by the wording of the question, concerning the ability of the Afghan government to conduct elections, rather than the Electoral Commission per se. Unfortunately, that was the closest item measuring such an outcome on this specific survey. Overall, these observations make a strong case that the theories, including general perceptions of government and institution-specific performance, are germane to explaining

TABLE 2. Binary Logit Estimates of Determinants of Confidence in Public Institutions

Variable	National Police			Justice System			Electoral Commission		
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Age	-0.00	0.00	-0.00	-0.00	-0.00	-0.00	-0.00	-0.00	-0.00
	(0.00	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)
Literacy (illiterate)	0.32***	0.28***	0.26***	-0.09+	0.15*	-0.15*	-0.07	0.03	0.03
	(0.07)	(0.07)	(0.08)	(0.06)	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.05)
Married	-0.01	0.02	0.08	-0.05	-0.01	-0.00	-0.07	-0.03	-0.03
	(0.08)	(0.09)	(0.09)	(0.06)	(0.06)	(0.06)	(0.05)	(0.06)	(0.06)
Ethnicity (Pashtun)	0.65***	-0.52***	-0.45***	-0.45***	-0.35***	-0.35***	-0.57***	-0.49***	-0.49***
	(0.06)	(0.07)	(0.07)	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.05)
Occupation	0.01	-0.10	-0.06	0.05	-0.05	-0.06	0.22+	0.04	0.04
	(0.14)	(0.15)	(0.16)	(0.10)	(0.11)	(0.11)	(0.11)	(0.11)	(0.11)
Employment	-0.06	0.17	0.27*	-0.31***	-0.21*	-0.21*	-0.18*	-0.21*	-0.21*
	(0.11)	(0.11)	(0.12)	(0.08)	(0.09)	(0.09)	(0.08)	(0.09)	(0.09)
Family income	0.02	0.06*	0.07**	-0.02	0.01	0.01	-0.07***	-0.07***	-0.07***
	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.02)	(0.01)
Urban status	0.38***	0.31***	0.21*	0.19**	0.19**	0.19**	0.05	0.06	0.06
	(0.09)	(0.10)	(0.10)	(0.06)	(0.07)	(0.07)	(0.06)	(0.07)	(0.07)
Support democracy	0.55***	0.34***	0.29***	0.22***	0.05*	0.05	0.38***	0.24***	0.24***
	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.03)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)
Gender (female)		0.26***	0.17*		0.10+	0.09+		0.33***	-0.33***
		(0.04)	(0.08)		(0.05)	(0.05)		(0.06)	(0.06)
Social-psychological		0.05	-0.03		0.29***	0.29***		0.12***	0.12***
		(0.04)	(0.05)		(0.03)	(0.03)		(0.03)	(0.03)
Social and cultural		0.17***	0.14*		0.14***	0.15***		0.19***	0.19***
		(0.05)	(0.05)		(0.04)	(0.04)		(0.04)	(0.04)
Social capital		-0.01	-0.03		-0.02	-0.01		0.07*	0.07*
		(0.04)	(0.03)		(0.02)	(0.02)		(0.02)	(0.02)
Politic Performance		0.20***	0.18***		0.08*	0.08		0.09*	0.09*
		(0.04)	(0.04)		(0.03)	(0.03)		(0.03)	(0.03)
Competency		0.32***	0.19***		0.36***	0.18**		0.06	0.08
		(0.05)	(0.05)		(0.04)	(0.06)		(0.04)	(0.05)
Relevancy/Response		0.22***	0.14**		0.21***	0.21***		0.15***	0.15***
		(0.04)	(0.04)		(0.03)	(0.03)		(0.03)	(0.05)
Service delivery		0.29***	0.23***		0.22***	0.22***		0.17***	0.17***
		(0.02)	(0.02)		(0.01)	(0.01)		(0.01)	(0.01)
Citizen Impact		0.08***	0.07***		0.07***	0.07***		0.09***	0.09***
		(0.01)	(0.01)		(0.01)	(0.01)		(0.01)	(0.01)
Eval. National Police			0.63***						
			(0.03)						
Eval. justice system						0.36***			
						(0.01)			
Eval. Ele. Commiss									-0.04
									(0.09)
Intercept	0.06	-2.22***	-3.05***	0.44***	-2.57***	-2.54***	-0.24+	-1.70***	-1.69***
Nagelkerke R^2	12.4	26.6	35.1	4.5	20.2	20.4	8.9	18.2	18.2
% Predicted	81.6	83.2	84.7	57.6	66.2	66.4	63.4	66.7	66.8
Model χ^2	528	1186	1614	227	1079	1091	449	963	963
N	6593	6593	6593	6593	6593	6593	6593	6593	6593

Notes: The dependent variable is a dummy that takes a value of 1 if the institution is scored as having a great deal or a fair amount of confidence, and 0 if not very much or no confidence at all. Figures in parentheses are standard errors.

Significance levels: +p<.10; *p<.05; **p<.01; ***p<.001 (two-tailed test).

TABLE 2 (CONT'D). Binary Logit Estimates of Determinants of Confidence in Public Institutions

Variable	Provincial Councils			Comm. Development Councils			Community Shuras/Jirgas		
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Age	-0.00	-0.00	-0.00	-0.00	-0.00	-0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)
Literacy (illiterate)	-0.11+	0.02	0.06	0.06	0.07	0.08	-0.03	0.12*	0.17**
	(0.05)	(0.06)	(0.06)	(0.06)	(0.06)	(0.06)	(0.05)	(0.06)	(0.06)
Married	-0.02	0.02	0.01	0.01	0.05	0.06	-0.05	-0.02	-0.03
	(0.06)	(0.07)	(0.07)	(0.07)	(0.07)	(0.07)	(0.06)	(0.07)	(0.07)
Ethnicity (Pashtun)	-0.29***	-0.24***	-0.20***	-0.52***	-0.49***	-0.49***	-0.22***	-0.19***	-0.19***
	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.06)	(0.06)
Occupation	0.31	0.13	0.09	0.09	-0.11	-0.11	0.25*	0.06	0.09
	(0.12)	(0.12)	(0.12)	(0.11)	(0.12)	(0.12)	(0.12)	(0.12)	(0.11)
Employment	0.17+	0.13	0.10	0.17+	0.12	0.13	0.35***	0.22*	0.19+
	(0.08)	(0.09)	(0.09)	(0.09)	(0.09)	(0.09)	(0.09)	(0.10)	(0.10)
Family income	-0.05**	-0.05*	0.05**	-0.03+	-0.03	-0.03	-0.01	-0.01	-0.01
	(0.01)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.01)	(0.02)	(0.02)
Urban status	-0.24***	-0.25***	-0.13+	-0.24***	-0.26***	-0.22**	0.31***	-0.33***	-0.17*
	(0.06)	(0.07)	(0.07)	(0.06)	(0.07)	(0.07)	(0.07)	(0.07)	(0.07)
Support for democracy	0.28***	0.12***	0.09***	0.22***	0.07*	0.07*	0.23***	0.10***	0.07*
	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)
Gender (female)		-.43***	-0.29*		-0.41***	-0.40***		-0.48***	-0.31***
		(0.06)	(0.06)		(0.06)	(0.06)		(0.06)	(0.06)
Social-psychological		0.13***	0.13***		0.05	0.05		0.02	0.01
		(0.03)	(0.03)		(0.03)	(0.03)		(0.03)	(0.03)
Social and cultural		-0.03	-0.02		0.01	0.00		0.01	-0.00
		(0.04)	(0.04)		(0.04)	(0.04)		(0.04)	(0.04)
Social capital		0.08**	0.10***		0.13***	0.12***		0.10***	0.08*
		(0.03)	(0.02)		(0.03)	(0.02)		(0.02)	(0.03)
Political performance		0.08*	0.09**		0.10**	0.09**		0.04	0.03
		(0.03)	(0.03)		(0.03)	(0.03)		(0.03)	(0.03)
Competency		0.20***	0.21***		0.16***	0.16***		0.14***	0.14***
		(0.04)	(0.04)		(0.04)	(0.04)		(0.04)	(0.04)
Relevancy/Responsive		0.22***	0.31***		0.15***	0.14***		0.10**	-0.02
		(0.03)	(0.03)		(0.03)	(0.03)		(0.03)	(0.03)
Service delivery		0.19***	0.16***		0.19***	0.19***		0.19***	0.16***
		(0.01)	(0.01)		(0.01)	(0.01)		(0.01)	(0.01)
Citizen Impact		0.04***	0.05***		0.05***	0.05***		0.05***	0.04**
		(0.01)	(0.01)		(0.01)	(0.01)		(0.01)	(0.01)
Eval. Prov. Councils									
Contacted Council			0.17						
			(0.15)						
Council Tried to help			0.23						
			(0.19)						
Contacted*helped			0.21***						
			(0.01)						
Eval. Co. Council						0.56***			
						(0.10)			
Eval. Shuras/Jirgas									0.32***
									(0.01)
Intercept	0.22+	-1.11***	-1.59***	0.35***	-0.82***	-0.82***	0.25+	-0.68***	-1.37***
Nagelkerke R^2	2.7	10.6	17.0	4.4	13.9	14.5	8.9	18.2	18.2

% Correctly predicted	69.9	69.2	65.1	65.2	68.6	69.0	69.0	71.2	72.9
Model χ^2	200	804	969	213	699	732	126	514	843
N	6593	6593	6593	6593	6593	6593	6593	6593	6593

Notes: The dependent variable is a dummy that takes a value of 1 if the institution is scored as having a great deal or a fair amount of confidence, and 0 if not very much or no confidence at all. Figures in parentheses are standard errors.

Significant levels: +p≤.10; *p≤.05; **p≤.01; ***p≤.001 (two-tailed test).

confidence in public institutions, which is reflective of the development of public management in an emergent democracy such as Afghanistan.

The marginal effects of the variables expose some important nuances on the trajectory of some factors as well. First, of the theories, only government performance produces a steady positive effect across the board. This is in addition to the stable positive effects observed for institution-specific factors. Social capital appears not to be an issue in confidence in the Police and justice system, while predisposition to government fails for Shuras/Jirgas, Community Development Councils, and Provincial Councils. The expected positive gender effect occurs for the police and justice system, but the results are reversed elsewhere.

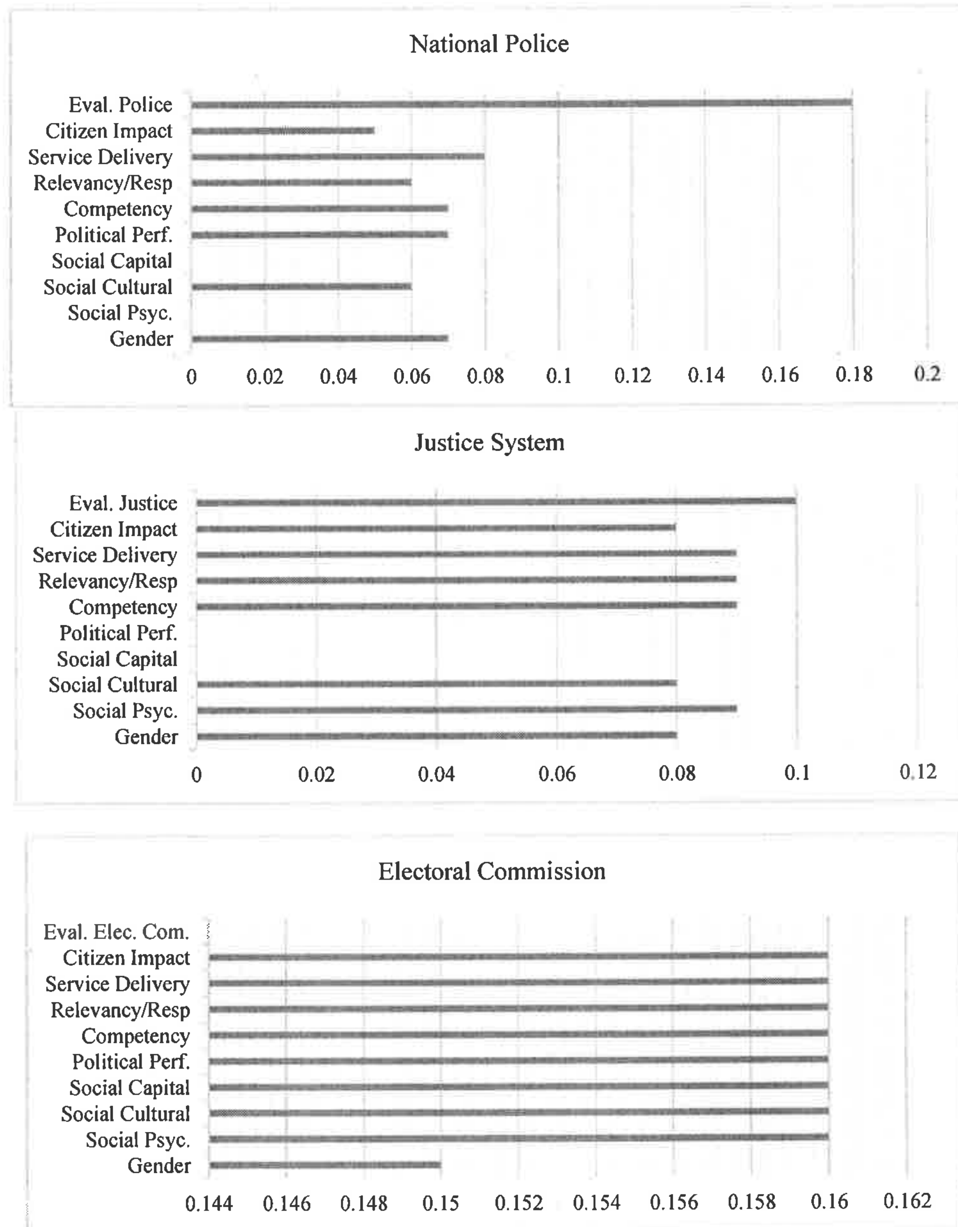
Results of Other Factors

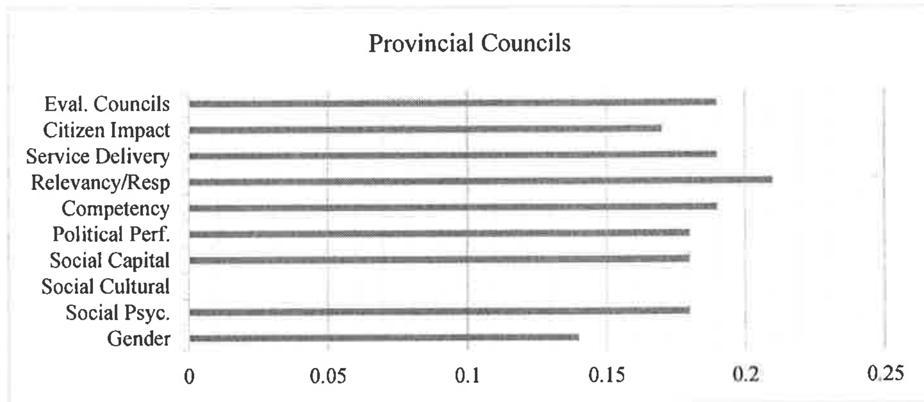
The results of two variables are consistent and potentially consequential enough to warrant attention. The first is ethnicity. We hypothesized that because of their forfeiture of political power, precipitated by the 2001 invasion and subsequent wresting of power from the Taliban, the leadership of which were principally Pashtun, Pashtuns would not accept the country's current governance arrangement. While the results in Table 1 are clearly tenuous on that expectation, the data in Table 2 magnify it, manifesting a wholesale rejection of all six institutions by Pashtuns. This negative outcome remains regardless of the combination of other factors in Table 2. An important question is: why would the Pashtun rejection of current arrangements manifest more in their nation's public institutions than on the governments themselves? This is perhaps because, as already noted, citizens experience government mostly through public institutions. The second factor worthy of attention is support for democracy. Democracy's imposition is still keenly contested in Afghanistan. Thus, it is not surprising that this factor produces such a vigorous effect.

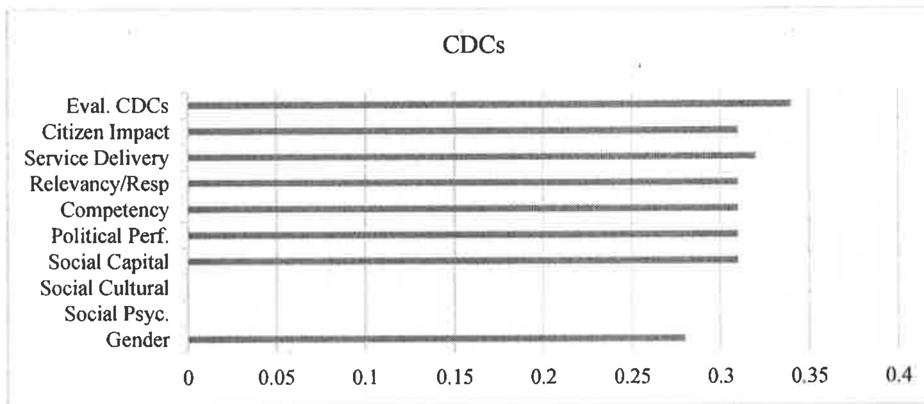
Summary and Conclusions

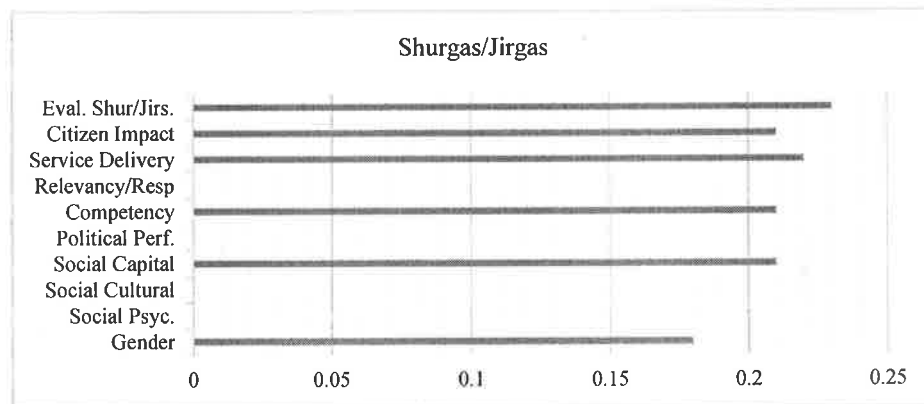
We have explored the viability of existing theories of citizen evaluation of government and confidence in public institutions, developed and polished largely within established Western democracies, to explain the same phenomena within Afghanistan, an emergent democracy in an Islamic setting. We situated the research mostly as a complement and extension (as opposed to challenge) of the prevailing literature. The broad sketches of our findings are clear. Foremost among these compelling findings are the following. First, while the marginal importance of the theories may vary depending on level of government and the particulars of each public institution, dominant theories of citizen evaluation of government and confidence in public institutions are entirely viable for understanding similar phenomena in Afghanistan's evolving democracy. Second, together, these theories appear more spectacular in predicting citizen evaluation of government than they are to understanding confidence in public institutions. Third, and finally, perceptions of government and institutional performance are the most stable predictors of confidence in public institutions.

Figure 4: Predicted Probabilities at the Mean on the Effects of the Propositions on Citizen Confidence in Public Institutions









These findings have significant implications for both theory-building and the already tasked practical efforts to embed democracy and stabilize governance in Afghanistan with good public management. First, about theory-building, the research has delivered on its primary objective of aligning extant literature to an emergent democracy in

an Islamic setting with its unique history, religion, and social traditions. It has provided a firm empirical basis for extending extant literature to such a setting. Moreover, the research also highlights another crucial question that has occupied this research genre for some time. That question is this: when citizens evaluate government and public institutions, to what extent are those evaluations driven by thoughtful, rational, and pragmatic considerations of governments and public institutions—as opposed to abstract considerations and bandwagon derivatives? This question is fostered by lingering uncertainty over how much the average citizen really knows about the workings of government to really make informed evaluations. While apprehension over what the average citizen actually knows about government and public institutions, how he or she comes to know it, and whether or not that knowledge is well-informed continues to distort the utility of public opinion (Fridkin and Kenney 2014), and can certainly be fallible, the results we report here leave little doubt that the average Afghan hardly acts in a vacuum when reacting to government and public institutions.

Second, about practical efforts to deepen democratic governance and improve citizen-government relations in Afghanistan, three policy imperatives are evident. Obviously, some of the significant factors of citizen evaluation and confidence in institutions are abstract features that preclude practical government policies that can alter citizens' stance, at least not immediately. Specifically, factors associated with the social-psychological and social cultural theories may be more amenable to the success of long-term indoctrination, cohort replacement, and generational change. However, the two most persistent and positive predictors of citizen evaluation and confidence in public institutions are fungibles well within government's purview, which government can act to influence. One is performance, as characterized by the several dimensions we assessed here. Quite simply, Afghans will rally behind a government and public institution that deliver on the twin pillars of democracy and service. This includes delivery of democratic rudiments, such as personal freedoms. It also involves display of competency and relevancy/responsiveness, and orchestrating change that impacts directly on citizens' lives.

A corollary practical imperative is to consolidate democracy by continuing to highlight its virtues as both a social ethos and foundation of Afghanistan's burgeoning political culture. The vast performance of "support for democracy" underscores this imperative. The third practical import is perhaps the most stressful: multi-ethnicity, which continues to stoke discord, foment violence, and deny Afghanistan of its national identity. No serious nation-builder in Afghanistan can be oblivious to the explosive negative effect of ethnicity, and its dire costs for instilling a sense of common destiny among Afghans. As Elazar (1987, 192) has noted, "There is no federal system that is commonly viewed as successful ...whose people do not think federal, that does not have a federal political culture and strong will to use federal principles and arrangements" (as quoted in Cole and Kincaid 2012). Admittedly, any call for practical policies that lure Afghans out of their comfortable ethnic silos and other constituent polities to pledge first loyalty to the national whole could be construed as a parody of vacuous utopia, but emphasis on building bridges across the strident ethnic divide in the country should remain a national policy priority.

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***Appendix:* Question, Coding, and Summary Statistics**

Variable	Question /Coding	Factor Loading	Mean	*SD*
Demographics				
Age			34.6	12.8
Marital status (Married = 1)			76.7%	
Education			55.1%	
Literacy (Illiterate = 1)			48.8%	
Ethnicity (Pashtun = 1)			41.2%	
Employment status (Unemployed = 1)			10.3%	
Occupation (White Collar = 1)			6.2%	
Household income (Coding: 1-10 for 10 different groupings)			3.1	1.5
Urban (urban=1)			19.0%	
Government Evaluation (Very good/somewhat good = 1)				
National			67.1%	
Provincial			73.5%	
Urban (Urban Residents Only)			54.3%	
Rural (Rural Residents Only)			71.1%	
Confidence in Public Institutions (Great deal/fair deal = 1; not very much/no = 0)				
National Police			81.3%	
Government Justice System			45.6%	
Independent National Electoral Commission			57.3%	
Community Development Councils			65.0%	
Provincial Councils			65.1%	
Community Shuras/Jirgas			69.6%	
The Theories				
Social-psychological.	1. Most people can be trusted	.82	34.5%	
	2. People are only thinking about themselves	.82	31.6%	
	SPSY INDEX (Min=o, Max=2)		0.66	0.7
Social and cultural.	1. Influence over government decisions	.81	64.8%	
	2. Voting can lead to improvement	.81	65.6%	
	SCULT INDEX (Min=0, Max=2)		1.30	0.7
Social capital.	1. Knows how to register to vote	.76	48.1%	
	2. Aware of upcoming elections	.76	53.3%	
	3. Likely to vote in coming elections	.64	76.7%	
	SOCC INDEX (Min=0, Max=3)		1.78	1.0
Proximity.	Federalism.			
Performance. Political Performance				
	1. Things in Afghanistan today are going in the right direction	.51	36.9%	
	2. Most people feel free to express their political opinions	.74	40.1%	
	3. Satisfied with the way democracy works in Afghanistan	.64	67.8%	
	PPI INDEX (Min=0, Max=3)		1.76	0.9
Competency.	1. Government judicial system would punish the guilty party	.79	56.8%	

2. Afghan government on its own can conduct elections	.79	72.1%	
CI INDEX (Min=0, Max=2)		1.29	0.7
Relevancy/Responsiveness. 1. Parliament is addressing the major problems	.86	65.4%	
2. My MP is addressing the major problems	.86	55.9%	
RR INDEX (Min=0, Max=2)		1.21	0.8
Service delivery (national level). ISD INDEX (Min=0, Max=7)		3.57	1.8
Government impact on people's well-being FS INDEX. (Min=0, Max=8)		5.01	2.0
Service delivery (local level). SDLL INDEX (Min=0, Max=9)		4.5	2.2
Institutional Performance Measures			
National Police. ANP INDEX (Min=0, Max=5)		2.97	1.2
Justice system. Government judicial system would punish the guilty		56.8%	
Independent Electoral Commission. Afghan government can conduct elections		72.1%	
Community Development Councils. Satisfied with the job CDC is doing		34.8%	
Provincial Councils. 1. Has contacted Rep. the Provincial Council		11.2%	
2. Provincial Council tried to help		7.1%	
Community Shuras/Jirgas. NSJ INDEX (Min=0, Max=5)		3.47	1.7
Gender exceptionalism. Female		49.2%	
Control Variable			
Support for democracy. 1. Democracy is better than any other form of government	.67	75.5%	
2. Everyone should have equal rights under the law	.63	83.6%	
3. Separate religion and government	.53	74.8%	
4. An Islamic country can be democratic/keep its Islamic values	.53	65.8%	
SDA INDEX (Min=0, Max=4)		2.99	1.0
N = 6593			