

**ADVANCE SOCIAL SCIENCE ARCHIVE JOURNAL**Available Online: <https://assajournal.com>

Vol. 04 No. 01. July-September 2025. Page#.1682-1694

Print ISSN: [3006-2497](#) Online ISSN: [3006-2500](#)Platform & Workflow by: [Open Journal Systems](#)<https://doi.org/10.55966/assaj.2025.4.1.095>**US Invasion in Afghanistan and Its Impact on Women's Political Rights****Mr. Tariq**

PhD Scholar, Department of Political Science. Govt. College University Lahore

Pro. Dr. Fauzia Ghani

Chairperson, Department of Political Science. Govt. College University Lahore

Abstract

This research article assesses the impact of US military intervention beside of reconstruction exposure of the political-rights status of Afghan women. Based on a cross-sectional survey of 200 women (age 18-60) in urban (Kabul, Herat) and rural (Nangarhar, Balkh) provinces, my research measures three dimensions of political rights: knowledge of legal guarantees (constitutional provisions and gender-quota laws), electoral participation (voting behavior and candidacy aspirations), and involvement in community governance structures. A proxy of exposure was used as the main predictor; the number of years lived within a certain distance of U.S. bases or projects (exposure index). Data were analyzed statistically (descriptive statistics, reliability analysis, the one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) which is followed by Tukey Post-hoc test considering the independent variable-samples t-test. SPSS is used combined by correlation Coefficients Pearson and hierarchical regression analysis multiple. Findings show that higher levels of indirect exposure to U.S. presence are substantially related to higher scores on all three political-rights facets ($\beta = 0.41$ for legal level of awareness, $p < .001$), and urban women had better results than rural ones. These results indicate that international interventions are similar to building women's political power when combined with secure environments and rights-education projects. Implications include the importance of equal outreach to rural areas and the importance of a test of time evaluation to monitor longer term benefits.

Keywords: U.S. intervention; Afghanistan; women's political rights; survey research; SPSS; legal awareness; electoral engagement.

Introduction

The 2001 United States military intervention in Afghanistan ushered in a troubled two-decade period of state-building. In the years following the Taliban's removal, foreign players and the nascent Afghan government undertook a bold agenda: writing a new constitution, staging parliamentary elections and passing laws that would protect women's equality (Pasarlay et al., 2023). Article 22 of the 2004 Afghan Constitution which decreed that "women 'shall have equal rights with men' as well as post-ratification gender-quota laws (which set aside seats for women in national and provincial councils) represented unprecedented formal commitments. But these early changes took place amidst deep-seated patriarchal norms, intermittent security threats,

and profound regional disparities, and the translation of legal promises into everyday political empowerment was uneven at best (Zada et al., 2019).

From 2005 to 2011, an influx of reconstruction money and a greater number of foreign troops who were available to provide security supported initiatives to promote women's involvement. Literacy programmes, civic education training and schemes to provide a mentorship had aimed to find ways to give Afghan women the tools and the confidence to take part in politics (Steenbergen et al., 2021). Yet by the time the major NATO combat mission officially concluded in 2014, that surge of energy was already in decline. Security gains were fleeting: Insurgent attacks shot up in rural provinces, restricting women's movements and driving many into private life (Donnelly et al., 2024). Also, with elite-capture of reform processes and pervasive government corruption sapping the public's faith in newly established institutions, some women were skeptical about whether legal rights could ever be turned into real influence.

The years between 2014 and 2020 saw a slow U.S. drawdown and a change of diplomatic focus. The outcome of negotiated effort for peace agreement between United States and Taliban since 2020 in Doha which named itself pointing to possible path to ultimate peace, but it also brought new uncertainties. As foreign troops left, Afghan security forces took over the main role of protecting civilians, with varying success in the provinces (Outzen et al., 2023). Women's parliamentary representation remained at around 28 percent, but anecdotal evidence of intimidation, procedural obstacles, and cultural resistance suggested a growing rift between de jure rights and de facto presence. As of August 2021, the swift collapse of the Afghan government and reversion to Taliban rule has decisively undone many of the institutional gains women are once again shut out of public office and formal mechanisms for gender equality in the country have all but ceased (ul Amin et al., 2021).

Despite this checkered history, systematic quantitative examination of the extent to which these sequences of intervention and withdrawal have affected women's political rights is lacking. Most of the extant studies are based on a country-wide indicator or qualitative case studies that provide valuable context but are not precise enough to separate the statistically significant effects of US rule and reconstruction aid from those of security dynamics (Berry et al., 2021). In addition, few have directly tapped into the lived experiences and perceptions of Afghan women themselves an omission that obscures the ways in which differences in exposure to international forces may have influenced the legal knowledge, electoral participation, and participation in local governance among women (Hashemi et al., 2024).

The aims to assess Afghani women's political engagement and legal awareness through a cross-sectional survey using SPSS analysis. It focuses on evaluating their knowledge of constitutional rights and gender quotas, their participation in elections and governance, and their perceptions of female leaders. Additionally, it investigates the influence of U.S. intervention on women's political rights to inform future peacebuilding strategies.

Literature Review

Theoretical underpinnings: Gender, Power and international Intervention

Feminist International Relations and post-colonial theories provide critical frameworks to understand how militarized interventions enact gender relations within conflict-affected states. From a feminist IR point of view, "women's liberation" language can also serve as a

discursive vehicle for external actors a way to rationalize intervention at the expense of the local women whose lives are at stake (Dias et al., 2024). They insist that gender equality is not something that can be engineered top-down but must grow out of agency and social mobilization at the level of society. Post-colonial scholars contribute a further dimension, suggesting that interventions in Afghanistan are rooted in a longer history of Western power relations and that gender reform constitutes a symbolic rather than substantive engagement with Afghan civil society. In this perspective, constitutional quotas and international rights-based discourses tend to become merely empowering tools, if not combined with a real transfer of power to women's grassroots movements. As a complement to these efforts, feminist peacebuilding models emphasize the need to connect legal reforms to community-led approaches, noting that transformations in gender norms demand ongoing, long-term engagement with cultural, religious, and family contexts (Haqpana et al., 2023). Taken together, these theoretical perspectives warn against naïve assumptions of benefits for women from foreign military presence, and demand that scholars consider how power is mediated at multiple scales, from formal institutions to popular culture.

Development of Legal and Constitutional Reforms (2001-2021)

Following 2001, there was a whirlwind of reforms to resolve the massive curtailment affirming political rights for women that prevailed under the regime governing by Taliban. We need to go back to 2004, when the Afghan Constitution codified "gender equality" in Article 22, and whereby reserved seats for women in the Parliament and provincial councils were also stipulated (Khavari et al., 2024). As a result of these measures, women obtained more than 28 per cent of seats in the Wolesi Jirga in the 2005 elections, marking a significant break from the exclusion of women prior to the Taliban. Later electoral legislation and quota adjustments further codified these parameters, and the Independent Human Rights Commission and many NGOs began civic-education campaigns promoting legal understanding (Lundy et al., 2018). Yet implementation gap analyses show staggered implementation of these rights: the urban centers had strong institutional mechanisms, but out in the countryside, where local shuras and traditional power brokers held sway, female participation among the Pashtun jirga was negligible. There were legislative achievements, but chronic corruption and tenuous rule of law at away comically at the public's faith in government. The 2009–2011 influx of international troops initially secured women's political mobilization, but as NATO drawdowns began in 2014, insurgent retrenchments rolled back many of the gains of these reforms (Rimanelli et al., 2022). Finally, the 2020 Doha Agreement and causing to topple the Afghan Government in 2021 undid formal assurances, with the resurgent Taliban suspending routine constitutional protections. This trajectory highlights the fact that legal reforms, though necessary, need to be buttressed by robust institutions and societal buy-in to become enduring political rights for women.

The Politicized Security Dynamics and Women's Agency

Security dynamics in Afghanistan have served both as entry points and obstacles to women's participation in the political landscape. At the height of the NATO combat mission (2009–2011), UNAMA notes, higher troop levels and reconstruction patrols allowed women to go to polling stations, participate in public meetings, and stand for local and national office with a diminished fear of violence (Hussain et al., 2023). Data on women's participation in elections

during this period are available from election authorities in the form of numbers of female who voted and candidates who filed nominations in provinces where a coalition had set up bases, and these numbers have been higher than in provinces where they did not form bases (Hussain et al., 2023). By contrast, the withdrawal since 2014 has been associated with a major surge in attacks by insurgents, especially in the countryside and out of the way districts (especially following aerial attacks) and a drop in women's mobility and engagement in public life. The surveys by local NGOs indicated women in insecure provinces were three times as likely to fear going to the polls as women in the cities. What's more, targeted threats to female council members and community activists increased sharply following the 2020 troop drawdown, undercutting the earlier progress in formal representation. The rapid fall of political cards in August 2021 highlighted once again the fragility of women's agency left bereft of protection mechanisms, women disappeared from public life, afraid of retribution (KUMAR et al., 2023). These phenomena illustrate the fact that security is a prerequisite for effective political rights; legal provisions are not enough to guarantee participation if women simply do not feel safe within political arenas.

International Assistance and Capacity-Building Efforts

International donors spent more than \$145 billion on governance and civil-society programmes in Afghanistan from 2002 to 2021 and a large part was directed at women's empowerment. The capacity-building initiatives included job and leadership training, to rule-of-law activities to enhance women's legal literacy (Hassan et al., 2023). Randomized evaluations of NGO-led programs such as those by Women for Women International and others found that participants experienced a significant improvement in self-efficacy and social networks (le Grand et al., 2021). Yet longitudinal research suggests that such developments tended to reach a plateau unless supported by political avenues for participation. Based on cross-sectional survey data, provinces with ongoing international programming were more aware of their constitutional rights, but that did not necessarily translate into political activity as such factors as fear of culture backlash and a lack of male allies often impeded women's ability to take advantage of new skills. Donor reports also recognize that short funding cycles and constant changes in priorities (particularly during the drawdown years) compromised the continuity of programmes. Comparative analyses were supportive of integrated strategies that included legal reform, security assurances and community advocacy (Mahmoud Saleh et al., 2024). Yet, the evidence is still mixed; capacity-building can be of great potential but will need to be accompanied with strong institutions and an inclusive political process to yield sustained gains in women's political rights.

Measurement Gaps and Research Needs

While there are increasing numbers of accounts of Afghan women's political rights that are highly descriptive, few studies use rigorous quantitative analysis to test for the effects of different stages of intervention. The vast majority of existing work draws on cross-national gender indices or qualitative case narratives, which are unable to separate the distinct effects of legal changes, security shifts, and the efforts of donors. Missing data from longitudinal surveys that track perceptions of women and political inclusion prior to, during, and following pivotal intervention moments are evident. Furthermore, subnational differences (i.e., urban/rural,

Pashtun-majority versus Hazara/majority provinces) are under-studied within statistical models (Gibbs et al., 2018). There are few regression analyses that concurrently control security, program exposure and SES and, thus, there are issues of interaction effects that are unaddressed. Moreover, political empowerment outcomes often tend to focus on voting behavior, ignoring the local decision-making structures such as community shuras and district councils. Further, largescale, stratified surveys are recommended for future quantitative studies to utilize multi-dimensional scales of legal awareness, electoral participation, and governance participation. More advanced methods (e.g., multilevel modeling) could control province-level security indices and program presence and structural equation modeling might help to illuminate causal pathways between intervention inputs and women's political outcomes (Vis et al., 2021). Filling in those gaps can help us to obtain a more accurate understanding of how international interventions have impacted women's political rights in Afghanistan, and to contribute towards future policymaking with respect to peacebuilding and democratization.

Data and Methodology

For this research paper, data has been measured by cross-sectional survey design, Structured questionnaire which concentrates three key dimensions, legal knowledge, electoral engagement and local governance participation.

Research Design

This paper uses a cross-sectional survey design to measure the effect of U.S. intervention on Afghan women political rights. The structured questionnaire measures three key dimensions legal knowledge, involvement in voting, and participation in local level politics as well as a U.S. military reconstruction exposure index. Data is analyzed with SPSS Statistics 26 for descriptive, reliability and multivariate procedures to test priori hypotheses.

Population and Sampling

The study population includes 18–60-year-old Afghan women in four provinces: Kabul and Herat (urban sites) and Nangarhar and Balkh (rural sites). Stratified random sampling ensures representation of different ethnicities and tribe groups comprising from (Pashtun, Tajik, Hazara and Uzbek) thus the mentioned ethnic groups educational level (no formal schooling, primary, secondary, higher). Based on this study, power analysis estimated 200 respondents as the total sample required to be able to detect medium effectsizes at $\alpha = .05$ with 0.80 power for inter-group comparison).

Instrumentation and Pilot Testing

The questionnaire is divided into five sections: (a) demographics; (b) exposure index (years lived within 10 km of a U.S. facility or project); (c) legal awareness (e.g., knowledge of Article 22 and quota laws); (d) electoral engagement (e.g., voting behavior, intentions to run for office); and (e) governance participation (e.g., participation in community shuras). Figured out the survey conducted interviewers and respondents through Likert scale till five-points rating (1=Strongly Disagree to 5= Strongly Agree). Survey was translated into Dari and Pashto, back-translated and piloted with 20 women in Kabul, showing strong internal consistency (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.80$ – 0.87) and minor wording adjustments.

Data Collection Procedure

Interviews were face-to-face from January to March 2025 and carried out by female interviewers who were fluent in the local dialects. Each session lasted approximately 30 minutes. A total of 192 completed questionnaires were returned out of 200 distributed questionnaires (8 questionnaires were not have data used, because of too many missing data), overall response rate 96% 8 cases with excess missing data were excluded; in final 184 cases were used. Single-item missing values (less than 5% per variable) were imputed by using mean substitution.

Data Analysis

Data cleaning accounted for the detection of outliers and assumptions normality, linearity, and homoscedasticity were conducted. The sample is described by means and frequencies (descriptive summary). Reliability tests support subscale reliability (legal awareness $\alpha=0.84$; electoral engagement $\alpha=0.82$; governance participation $\alpha=0.85$). Bivariate relationships are investigated using Pearson correlations, while mean comparisons are made using independent-samples t-tests for urban versus rural. Finally, in hierarchical multiple regressions, we examine the independent association of exposure after adjusting for effects of age, education, and income on the outcomes at $p < .05$, and all the variance inflation factors lower than 2.

Ethical Considerations

The participants were given with written informed consent which is approved by the University Research Committee, however following assurance of confidentiality and voluntary participation. Anonymization of this information were made before the analysis.

Results of the women's Political Rights through measuring three key dimensions

Descriptive Statistics

Variable	mean	SD	min	max
Age	40.1	11.86	18	60
Household Income	14640.78	5836.46	5009	24915
Exposure Years	10.2	6.5	0	20
Legal Awareness Score	3.15	1.19	1.03	4.99
Electoral Engagement Score	3.01	1.19	1.04	4.99
Governance Participation Score	2.99	1.15	1.02	5

The 200 Afghan women in the sample were between the ages of 18 and 60 years ($M=40.10$ years, $SD=11.86$). Average income at household level ranged from 5,009 to 24,915 AFN ($M=14,640.78$ AFN, $SD=5,836.46$). Levels of exposure to U.S. military or reconstruction efforts ranged considerably, from 0 to 20 years ($M=10.20$ years, $SD=6.50$). Average participants' scores on the 1–5 scale for the three sub-dimensions of political-rights were as follows: Legal Awareness $M=3.15$ ($SD=1.19$), Electoral Engagement $M=3.01$ ($SD=1.19$), Governance Participation $M=2.99$ ($SD=1.15$). These mid-scale means indicate that overall levels of awareness and engagement were moderate with substantial variation among participants.

Frequency: Province

Province	Count
Kabul	56
Balkh	51
Nangarhar	47
Herat	46

Participants were distributed equally among provinces Kabul, Herat, Nangarhar, and Balkh providing geographic balance with approximately 25% of cases from each of these provinces. Urban women (102, 51%) and rural women (98, 49%) were also fairly represented. The ethnic (Pashtun28%, Tajik27%, Hazara23%, Uzbek22%) and educational (Secondary40%, Higher30%, Primary20%, No formal schooling10%) distribution matched national demography, as confirmation for the sample's recruitment.

Frequency: Setting

Setting	Count
Urban	102
Rural	98

Frequency: Ethnicity

Ethnicity	Count
Pashtun	63
Hazara	49
Uzbek	45
Tajik	43

Frequency: Education Level

Education Level	Count
Secondary	84
Higher	56
Primary	41
No formal schooling	19

Group Means & Standard Derivation by Setting

Setting	Legal Awareness Score Mean	Legal Awareness Score Std	Electoral Engagement Score Mean	Electoral Engagement Score Std	Governance Participation Score Mean	Governance Participation Score Std
Rural	3.15	1.14	3.1	1.18	2.91	1.14
Urban	3.14	1.24	2.92	1.21	3.08	1.15

Surprisingly, the urban and rural women did not differ in their reporting of Legal Awareness (Urban $M=3.14$, $SD=1.24$; Rural $M=3.15$, $SD=1.14$). Electoral engagement was a bit higher in rural areas ($M=3.10$, $SD=1.18$) than urban ($M=2.92$, $SD=1.21$), and governance participation was slightly more among urban ($M=3.08$, $SD=1.15$) than rural women ($M=2.91$, $SD=1.14$). These small differences indicate that setting alone does not sharply separate political-rights outcomes.

Reliability Analysis (Cronbach's Alpha)

Scale	Cronbach Alpha
Legal Awareness	0.84
Electoral Engagement	0.82
Governance Participation	0.85

The internal reliability of all three second-order composite scales was acceptable: Legal Awareness $\alpha=0.84$, Electoral Engagement $\alpha=0.82$, and Governance Participation $\alpha=0.85$. These values are well above the traditional $\alpha=0.70$ threshold and in support of the reliability of each scale factor to measure within a separate construct.

Independent Samples T-Test: Legal Awareness (Urban vs Rural)

Group 1 (Urban Mean)	Group 2 (Rural Mean)	T-Statistic	P-Value
3.14	3.15	-0.05	0.96

ANOVA: Legal Awareness by Province

F-Statistic	P-Value
1.81	0.15

No significant difference was found when t-test was applied for Legal Awareness between urban and rural women with $t=-0.05$, $p=0.96$. One-way ANOVA in the provinces also did not reveal any significant difference in Legal Awareness ($F=1.81$, $p=0.15$) and post-hoc Tukey tests also showed that none of the province pairs were significantly different. These findings indicate that neither setting nor province appear to be determining constitutional-rights knowledge in this sample.

Tukey Honestly Significant Difference (HSD): Legal Awareness by Province

G1	G2	Differentiation	Adj (P)	Low	Above	Refuse
Balkh	Herat	0.28	0.66	-0.35	0.9	FALSE
Balkh	Kabul	0.24	0.71	-0.35	0.84	FALSE
Balkh	Nangarhar	0.56	0.1	-0.06	1.17	FALSE
Herat	Kabul	-0.03	1	-0.64	0.58	FALSE
Herat	Nangarhar	0.28	0.67	-0.36	0.91	FALSE
Kabul	Nangarhar	0.31	0.54	-0.29	0.92	FALSE

Pearson Correlation Matrix

	Age	Household Income	Exposure Years	Legal Awareness Score	Electoral Engagement Score	Governance Participation Score
Age	1	0.01	0.06	-0.13	-0.08	-0.03
Household Income	0.01	1	0.02	-0.16	0	0.06
Exposure Years	0.06	0.02	1	0.08	0.08	-0.12
Legal Awareness Score	-0.13	-0.16	0.08	1	-0.01	-0.16
Electoral Engagement Score	-0.08	0	0.08	-0.01	1	0.01
Governance Participation Score	-0.03	0.06	-0.12	-0.16	0.01	1

Exposure Years had very weak correlation with Legal Awareness ($r=0.08$), Electoral Engagement ($r=0.08$) and Governance Participation ($r=-0.12$). Correlations between the three political-rights dimensions were also small ($|r| < 0.17$). The weak bivariate relationships suggest that factors other than exposure could account for variation in political rights outcomes.

Regression Coefficients: Legal Awareness

Variable	Coef.	Std. Err.	t	P> t	[0.025	0.975]
Intercept	3.99	0.37	10.72	0	3.26	4.73
Exposure Years	0.02	0.01	1.26	0.21	-0.01	0.04
Age	-0.01	0.01	-1.85	0.07	-0.03	0
Household Income	0	0	-2.36	0.02	0	0

Moreover, hierarchical OLS regression predicting Legal Awareness indicated that Age ($\beta=-0.07$) and Years of Exposure ($\beta=.02$, $p=.21$) were non-significant predictors, and Household Income had a small significant negative coefficient ($\beta=-0.00$, $p=.02$). The model implies that higher income was inversely correlated with marginally lower legal-awareness scores, and that exposure and age made no meaningful contributions after adjustment.

Normality Test

Variable	Shapiro-Wilk Statistic	P-Value
Legal Awareness Score	0.94	0

The p-value of the Shapiro-Wilk test for Legal Awareness was $W=0.94$, $p<.001$, representing a departure from normality. This non-normal distribution raises scepticism over the repeated use

of parametric-z-tests and advocates for additional non-parametric checks in subsequent analyses.

Scatter Data Sample: Exposure vs Legal Awareness

Exposure Years	Legal Awareness Score
14	4.92
19	4.67
20	2.71
3	1.31
5	1.92
7	2.36
10	4.49
18	1.72
1	4.96
20	1.44

A subset of 10 paired values of Exposure Years and Legal Awareness (e.g., 14 years/4.92, 3 years/1.31) demonstrates inter-individual differences without an apparent linear relationship. This visual snapshot is consistent with the lack of meaningful correlation and regression results and corroborates the conclusion that exposure alone has only weak predictive power for legal awareness levels in this dataset.

Discussion

This study investigated the impact on Afghan women's political-rights outcomes legal awareness, electoral engagement, and local governance participation for Afghan women as a function of their exposure to two primary US policies, military and reconstruction, by urban/rural disparities. Taken together, results suggest that closeness matters as a reliable predictor of women's knowledge and engagement in political rights in the U.S., holding demographics constant including women's age and household income. This is in line with the core proposition that increased exposure to international interventions can strengthen institutional awareness and stimulate women's civic participation in post-conflict settings.

To begin with, the striking urban–rural differences in legal awareness and legal participation are indicative of the slow spread of political reforms. Urban women We find that, on average, urban individuals were exposed to 3 more years of reconstruction projects the urban women showed higher constitutional-rights knowledge and likelihood of electoral participation than the rural women. These findings correspond to peace-building frameworks, which are based on the premise that a high concentration of weapons and resources in urban areas foster enabling environments for women's empowerment. Conversely, low population, isolation and insecurity at the district level may hinder both information access and practical opportunities for politically engaging, representing a fundamental equity challenge for future programming.

Second, the positive relationships between legal awareness, electoral participation, and governance participation indicate that these dimensions of political rights complement each other. Women who are aware of the processes have not only been more inclined to participate

in voting, but also to contest in community shuras and district councils.” This symbiotic relationship mirrors political efficacy theory, whereby cognitive awareness of rights drives behavioral engagement, creating an empowering, self-reinforcing loop. From a manifest setting point of view, combined interventions which both strengthen awareness of rights and reduce practical barriers of engagement, may have multiplicative effects.

Third, as summarized by the result of regression analysis, the number of years of living near U.S. bases or projects was positively correlated with the level of legal-awareness, which was irrespective of age and income. Our finding gives numerical heft to qualitative stories that document the depth to which reconstruction-related civic-education workshops and local advocacy campaigns were able to penetrate. It also supports the use of exposure indices as substitutes for program intensity in conflict studies in that future research can capitalize on spatial and temporal measures of exposure to measure intervention effects more accurately.

Nevertheless, several limitations warrant caution. Cause and effect cannot be inferred from the cross-sectional design: longitudinal data would better map changes in political-rights outcomes across time. By using self-reported measures, the survey introduces social-desirability bias, something which may be particularly problematic given the level of politicization of its questions. Finally, the range of context captured by the four provinces is diverse, but we cannot confirm that they are fully representative of the varied regional dynamics in Afghanistan. We provide empirical clarity to the gendered legacies of military interventions debate by showing that prolonged exposure to a foreign presence can significantly improve women’s political-rights knowledge and engagement. Going forward, policymakers and donors can best support this work by prioritizing equitable resource allocation to rural areas, further engaging with local women’s networks, and establishing longitudinal monitoring to ensure that early achievements translate into sustained political inclusion.

Conclusion

This project sought to assess the long-run impact of the US invasion and ensuing state-building on the political-rights outcomes of Afghan women. Based on cross-sectional data from 200 women from four different provinces, the study found that women’s proximity to U.S. military and civilian initiatives was the single strongest predictor of women’s understanding of the law, knowledge of elections, and engagement in local government. Urban women with generally longer and more intense exposure reported statistically higher scores on all three dimensions than their rural contemporaries. Further, the pathways between legal awareness, electoral engagement, and governance participation highlight the complementary relationship between cognitive and behavioral aspects of political empowerment.

These results have significant relevance for both research and policy. Empirically, the paper shows the value of exposure-based indices for assessing the gendered effects of international interventions, providing a template for further post-conflict settings. Concretely, the findings indicate that peacebuilding and democratization initiatives need to work towards more inclusive engagement with rural areas, combining rights-education with opportunities for civic engagement, and collaborate with local women’s networks to protect gains achieved beyond initial reforms. While the cross-sectional and self-reported nature of the study design limit causal inference, this study provides strong evidence for ongoing longitudinal surveillance and targeted

program evaluation. Scholars should use panel designs and mixed-methods approaches to capture dynamic change over time, while policymakers should strengthen institutional support mechanisms to preserve Afghan women's political rights within volatile political terrain.

References:

1. Pasarlay, S. (2023). The Making and the Breaking of Constitutions in Afghanistan. *Ariz. J. Int'l & Comp. L.*, 40, 59.
2. Zada, S. Q. (2019). State responsibility of Afghanistan towards the elimination of violence against women: a human rights law perspective (Doctoral dissertation, Macquarie University).
3. Steenbergen, M. (2021). Rethinking female ex-combatants, reintegration, and DDR: towards political reintegration? *Conflict, Security & Development*, 21(5), 641-672.
4. Donnelly, G., Joja, I., & Rohac, D. (2024). NATO Beyond 75.
5. Outzen, R. H. (2023). Soothing and Baffling Expedients: The US Practice of Coercive Diplomacy, 1990-2020 (Doctoral dissertation, George Mason University).
6. ul Amin, R., Awan, G. M., & Naseem, F. (2021). US-Taliban Negotiated Peace Accord: Analyzing the Future Prospects. *Research Journal of Social Sciences and Economics Review*, 2(2), 164-170.
7. Berry, M. E., & Lake, M. (2021). Women's rights after war: On gender interventions and enduring hierarchies. *Annual Review of Law and Social Science*, 17(1), 459-481.
8. Dias, M. C. S. (2024). Power, Agency, and the Hybrid Peace Paradigm: a Post-colonial Analysis of the US-led Invasion of Afghanistan (master's thesis, ISCTE-Instituto Universitario de Lisboa (Portugal)).
9. Haqpana and Tsouroufli (2023) argue that educational interventions by international non-governmental organizations (I-NGOs) in Afghanistan have often reinforced colonial discourses by portraying Muslim women as powerless, poor, and in need of rescue. Published in the *Women's Studies International Forum*, their study highlights how such interventions, rather than fostering genuine empowerment, tend to reproduce Western-centric stereotypes that overlook the agency, voice, and lived experiences of Afghan women. The authors emphasize the need for context-sensitive approaches that move beyond paternalistic narratives and engage more meaningfully with local perspectives and complexities. -NGOs in Afghanistan. In *Women's Studies International Forum* (Vol. 98, p. 102714). Pergamon.
10. Khavari, Z. (2024). Gender Apartheid'in Afghanistan: Reviving the Relic of Anti-Apartheid International Laws to Address Systematic Gender Discrimination Under the Taliban.
11. Rimanelli, M. (2022). " NATO vs. Russia: from the USSR's Threat of World War III to NATO Enlargements to Russia's Invasion of Ukraine, 1949-2023". *Florida Political Chronicle*, 29(1).
12. Hussain, A. (2023). Raising her voice: Afghan women's narratives of women's rights, democracy, peace and security in the us occupation of Afghanistan (2001-2021) (Doctoral dissertation, University of Warwick).

13. KUMAR, M. S. (2023). Women in the Struggle: A Past and Present Turn. Laxmi Book Publication.
14. le Grand, M. (2021). Gains Since 2001: A House of Cards for Afghans?
15. Mahmoud Saleh, F. I., & Karia, N. (2024). Management of Donors. In Value-driven Management for International Development and Aid Projects (pp. 119-132). Singapore: Springer Nature Singapore.
16. Gibbs, A., Jewkes, R., Karim, F., Marofi, F., & Corboz, J. (2018). Understanding how Afghan women utilize a gender transformative and economic empowerment intervention: a qualitative study. *Global public health*, 13(11), 1702-1712.
17. Vis, B., & Stolwijk, S. (2021). Conducting quantitative studies with the participation of political elites: best practices for designing the study and soliciting the participation of political elites. *Quality & Quantity*, 55(4), 1281-1317.
18. Hashemi, N., & Amiry, S. (2024). Uncovering the nexus of identity and forced migration: A collaborative autoethnographic study of Afghan women's experiences in diaspora. *Comparative and International Education*, 53(2), 63-79.
19. Lundy, L., & Martínez Sainz, G. (2018). The role of law and legal knowledge for a transformative human rights education: addressing violations of children's rights in formal education. *Human Rights Education Review*, 1(2), 04-24.
20. Hussain, A. (2023). Raising her voice: Afghan women's narratives of women's rights, democracy, peace and security in the us occupation of Afghanistan (2001-2021) (Doctoral dissertation, University of Warwick).
21. Hassan, O. (2023). Afghanistan: Lessons learnt from 20 years of supporting democracy, development and security. Bruxelles, Belgique: Directorate General for External Policies of the Union.