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## Afghan State Survival: How Education Influences Political Development

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## **Afghan State Survival: How Education Influences Political Development**

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The United States poured over fifty-two billion dollars of aid, ten years of operations, and 1,854 military members' lives into war-torn Afghanistan, but these investments did not create a stable state.<sup>1</sup> The successful recovery of the country and its long-term stability depend on the Afghan state's ability to mature in capability and permanency. Although many factors influence political development, education remains a dynamic part of long-term development, and in Afghanistan's case, can reduce the populace's support of radicalism. Education allows political participation, increasing political development and improving the probability of state survival.

Lack of political development and continued state instability would force the United States to continue to provide financial and military aid long after the official transfer of responsibility to the Afghan government, and would arguably prevent the region from further progress. Instability in Afghanistan translates to unaffordable regional volatility, exacerbated by neighbor states like Pakistan and Iran. Their real or potential nuclear capabilities paired with insurgency create a perilous possibility in an already unsteady region. In order to avoid such a bleak outcome to over a decade of conflict and aid, it is in the United States' interest to understand what kind of political development is realistic in Afghanistan, how education affects that development, and consequently what changes to enact in its approach to Afghan education.

Although foreign aid from the United States, United Kingdom, and others has been the primary source of state funding since 2001, only nine

percent of that aid is used for education.<sup>2</sup> However, nine percent is an improvement from a nonexistent formal educational system under the Taliban.<sup>3</sup> Since the fall of the Taliban in 2001, over 600 schools have been built, upwards of 50,000 teachers have been trained, and literacy programs are being implemented nation-wide.<sup>4</sup> These improvements are consistent with the Western democratic ideal of a population reaching the highest level of education possible, but are they truly conducive to Afghanistan's further political development? If education in general is not the answer, then how much and what kind of education will influence political development?

Should the ideal type and method of education be determined for Afghanistan, and political development advance as a result of achieving it, the United States could safely and confidently withdraw from Afghanistan, leaving an improved country and more stable region as a consequence. In order to determine these specifics concerning education, the end state of political development must be clearly defined and understood.

### **THE DEBATE ON POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT**

In his article "An Idea of Political Development: From Dignity to Efficiency," Harry Eckstein outlines a list of questions that address the idea of political development. For the purpose of this paper, only three of his six questions will be addressed. First, what conception of continuous

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<sup>1</sup>Tarnoff, Curt. "Afghanistan: U.S. Foreign Assistance," *Congressional Research Service* (August, 2010). <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/row/R40699.pdf> (accessed 23 April 2012).

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<sup>2</sup> Integrated Regional Information Networks. "AFGHANISTAN: Money well spent?". IRIN. <http://www.irinnews.org/Report/88502/AFGHANISTAN-Money-well-spent> (accessed 23 April 2012).

<sup>3</sup> School is Open. "Afghanistan Education History". [http://www.schoolisopen.org/sio/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=53&Itemid=62](http://www.schoolisopen.org/sio/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=53&Itemid=62) (accessed 23 April 2012).

<sup>4</sup> Tarnoff

growth plausibly describes the passage from primal to advanced policies?

Eckstein points out that the concept of democratization has only recently become the explicit goal of political development.<sup>5</sup> He suggests that the best way to characterize the continuum of political development is through the growth of the political domain of society.<sup>6</sup> This is interpreted to mean that more political actions begin to take the place of nonpolitical actions. Eckstein proposes that one end of the spectrum is “social polity”, and the other is “political society”.<sup>7</sup>

“Social polity” refers to a “princely domain” in which there is an institution of headship, but the society is dominant, while the polity remains negligible.<sup>8</sup> On the other hand, “political society” refers to the society in which private relations have been preempted by public institutions which permeate social life.<sup>9</sup> The movement from social polity to political society is induced by the power holders of a social polity realizing their power resources and converting their headship to primacy, then to actual power.<sup>10</sup> This process creates momentum, which blurs the line between polity and society.<sup>11</sup> Eckstein stresses that, “[This state is not an end], but itself a stage in the continuing process.”<sup>12</sup>

The second question Eckstein poses is this: what is the essential nature of polity in its “primitive and simple” form? He begins by asserting that a society’s occupants and practices are built around the concept of society.<sup>13</sup> The symbolic politics of primal societies does not stand for real politics, but instead for society itself. Eckstein cites the example of sub-Saharan tribes identifying almost

solely with their chief, rather than with territory or kinship. These tribes saw the chief as their mouthpiece and as the exemplification of their personal and social identity.<sup>14</sup> He extends this model of primitive and simple polity to Anglo-Saxon society. The transition from the king independently making decisions concerning war, to the incorporation of increasingly large councils to aid him, show the arrangement of the king embodying the society, and the council protecting the society’s moral customs.<sup>15</sup>

Eckstein’s final question concerning political development asks what forces make the advancement of primal polities toward higher forms highly probable. Making a society real and tangible in order to fulfill the needs of personal identity, safety, and the satisfaction of material needs is key in moving a primal polity towards a higher form.<sup>16</sup> In addition, in order “to exist, and to carry out collective enterprises, societies must...be harmonious in some degree”.<sup>17</sup> The natural desire for justice is a function instinctively attributed to society, linking justice to chieftaincy.<sup>18</sup> Eckstein argues that the domain that stands for society itself has the potential to become a monopoly of legitimate power.<sup>19</sup>

He details the process of moving through the iterative stages of political development by outlining distinct stages that societies have historically demonstrated. These stages are the politics of primacy, the “prophylactic” polity, the polity of interests, and the polity of incorporation and of incumbency.<sup>20</sup> Eckstein maintains that each stage is a precondition for those that follow, and the force that propels a society from stage to stage is primarily the desire to reap the direct and indirect benefits of social elevation and primacy.<sup>21</sup> In addition to desire for primacy, the force of greed and the “forces generated by collective functional needs” influence the progression of political development. These forces stem from the

<sup>5</sup> Eckstein, Harry. “The Idea of Political Development: From Dignity to Efficiency,” *World Politics* XXXIV 4 (Jul, 1982): 451-486.

<http://www.jstor.org/stable/2010330> (accessed 18 January 2012), 469.

<sup>6</sup> Eckstein, 469.

<sup>7</sup> Eckstein, 470.

<sup>8</sup> Eckstein, 470.

<sup>9</sup> Eckstein, 470.

<sup>10</sup> Eckstein, 471.

<sup>11</sup> Eckstein, 471.

<sup>12</sup> Eckstein, 471.

<sup>13</sup> Eckstein, 472.

<sup>14</sup> Eckstein, 473.

<sup>15</sup> Eckstein, 474.

<sup>16</sup> Eckstein, 474.

<sup>17</sup> Eckstein, 475.

<sup>18</sup> Eckstein, 475.

<sup>19</sup> Eckstein, 476.

<sup>20</sup> Eckstein, 482.

<sup>21</sup> Eckstein, 484.

need to efficiently manage the “machinery of the government”.<sup>22</sup> “These themes of politics – primacy-seeking, power-seeking, greed, and integration – are familiar,” Eckstein writes. “What is not familiar is the special roles they play at different stages of political development.” If movement along Eckstein’s spectrum of development is driven by primacy-seeking and desire for social elevation, then because education allows for social elevation, it consequently affects political development. However, the specific way that education interacts with development is still unclear.

Samuel Huntington clarifies the mechanics of political development. In his article, “Political Development and Political Decay,” he uses the phrase, “the art of associating together,” to refer to the idea of nurturing political institutions in order to spur political development.<sup>23</sup> Huntington makes certain to differentiate between political development and modernization because, he argues, rapid modernization actually produces political decay.<sup>24</sup> He lists rationalization, integration, and democratization as commonly used terms in defining political development, but maintains that mobilization and participation remain the most emphasized aspects of such development.<sup>25</sup> Karl Deutsch argues that,

“Increases in literacy, urbanization, exposure to mass media, industrialization, and per capita income expand the ‘politically relevant strata of the population’, multiply the demands for government services, and thus stimulate an increased political participation, and shifts in attention from the local level to the national level”.

Daniel Lerner, a scholar who studies the effect of education on development, echoes Deutsch’s thesis by asserting that participation distinguishes modern politics from traditional politics.<sup>26</sup> While Huntington credits all definitions of political

development, he points out three issues with given approaches. First, the causal relationship between modernization and political development limits the applicability of the concept. Development should be a quality rather than a certain type of system.<sup>27</sup> This elimination of stark limitation would allow the concept to reach beyond its “limited identification...with the Western, constitutional, democratic nation-state”.<sup>28</sup>

Second, Huntington points out the flaw in associating political development with all “good things” like literacy, urbanization, media participation, and political participation. This flaw differs from the first because it does not peg political development on modernization, but instead on all positive but possibly unrelated factors. Huntington critiques this view for its vague nature. “Development becomes an omnipresent first cause,” he writes, “which explains everything but distinguishes nothing.”<sup>29</sup>

Third, Huntington reviews the opinion that all events taking place in “developing” areas are in fact intertwined with current or future political development. This kind of wishful thinking blurs the line between actuality and aspiration.<sup>30</sup> Huntington’s final assertion is that rationalization, competitiveness, and nation-building are all unrealistic, and only the concept of mobilization and participation are relevant to a timeless definition of political development. He also calls attention to the fact that people can be demobilized out of politics just as they are mobilized into politics.<sup>31</sup> Thus, the idea of political development is reversible, and he calls the reverse “political decay”.

Huntington goes on to address the idea of political development as institutionalism. He argues that the longer an organization has been in existence, the higher the level of institutionalism, and the older an organization is, the more likely it will continue to exist into the future.<sup>32</sup> Additionally, the peaceful succession of organizational leadership generations indicates high

<sup>22</sup> Eckstein, 485.

<sup>23</sup> Huntington, Samuel P. “Political Development and Political Decay,” *World Politics* XVII 3 (Apr, 1965): 386-430. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2009286> (accessed 18 January 2012), 386.

<sup>24</sup> Huntington, 386.

<sup>25</sup> Huntington, 388.

<sup>26</sup> Huntington, 388.

<sup>27</sup> Huntington, 389.

<sup>28</sup> Huntington, 390.

<sup>29</sup> Huntington, 390.

<sup>30</sup> Huntington, 391.

<sup>31</sup> Huntington, 392.

<sup>32</sup> Huntington, 395.

institutionalization.<sup>33</sup> Finally, the ability of an organization to adapt its functions to changing demands is highly institutionalized. More complicated or multi-institutional political systems are more likely to survive than simple ones.<sup>34</sup> Plato and Aristotle, for example, believed that a polity combining the institutions of democracy and oligarchy was most practical.<sup>35</sup> Complex institutions lend themselves to survival.

According to Huntington, institutions must also have integrity and thus be somewhat autonomous from outside influences.<sup>36</sup> Political groups cannot be the instrument of the social group if they mean to maintain their autonomy and institutionalization.<sup>37</sup> Coherence also plays a part in autonomy, since “autonomy becomes a means to coherence... [And] prevents the intrusion of disruptive external forces...”<sup>38</sup> Coherence also translates to the capacity for coordination and discipline, and by extension, to war and politics. Huntington says that societies that have been proficient at one have proved to be adept at the other. Thus, “discipline and development go hand in hand”.<sup>39</sup>

While Eckstein and Huntington do not define the end goal of political development as political freedom, many scholars do. In his article “On the Decline of Contemporary Political Development Studies”, Robert Bartlett decries the view that liberal democracy trumps all other forms of government.<sup>40</sup> He argues that the purpose of government is to maximize people’s freedom, and suggests that comparative politics focus on describing rather than prescribing as its principal task.<sup>41</sup> Bartlett agrees with Huntington’s assertions in his article on political development

concerning the differentiation between modernization and development.<sup>42</sup>

Prominent economist Amartya Sen addresses the goals of political development in his article “Development as Freedom: An Indian Perspective”. He argues that freedom (economic empowerment, political freedoms, social opportunities, protective security, and transparency) is the primary objective and principle means of development.<sup>43</sup> While Sen’s economically centered discussion on development as a whole is compelling, he focuses only on democracy as the goal of development.

### THE DEBATE ON EDUCATION

Huntington suggests that rapid economic growth breeds political instability, and political mobilization results from a “revolution of rising frustrations” instigated by increased communication. He writes, “Increases in literacy and education may bring more political instability”.<sup>44</sup> Calling on the examples of Burma, Ceylon, and the Republic of Korea, he refers to their high literacy rates and concurrent political instability. Daniel Lerner argues that “[literacy] may be dysfunctional – indeed a serious impediment – to modernization in societies now seeking (all too rapidly) to transform their institutions”.<sup>45</sup>

Rapid embracing of communication may in fact produce a return to traditional or anti-modern sentiments. Huntington warns that such a movement may “mobilize minority ethnic groups who have been indifferent to politics but who now acquire self-consciousness and divide the political system along ethnic lines.” This concept of communication and education leading to a disintegration of the body politic is possible with respect to voting as well. Huntington refers to America’s experience in the 1930’s with allowing

<sup>33</sup> Huntington, 396.

<sup>34</sup> Huntington, 400.

<sup>35</sup> Huntington, 400.

<sup>36</sup> Huntington, 401.

<sup>37</sup> Huntington, 401.

<sup>38</sup> Huntington, 403.

<sup>39</sup> Huntington, 404.

<sup>40</sup> Bartlett, Robert C. “On the Decline of Contemporary Political Development Studies,” *The Review of Politics* LVIII 2 (Spring, 1996): 269-298.

<http://www.jstor.org/stable/1408431> (accessed 18 January 2012), 269.

<sup>41</sup> Bartlett, 274.

<sup>42</sup> Bartlett, 278.

<sup>43</sup> Sen, Amartya. “Development as Freedom: An India Perspective,” *Indian Journal of Industrial Relations* XLII 2 (Oct, 2006): 157-169. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/27768063> (accessed 23 April 2012), 157.

<sup>44</sup> Huntington, 406.

<sup>45</sup> Huntington, 406.



unschooled millions to vote. He writes that their rapid and uncontrolled integration into the political system resulted in political parties' inability to absorb them, and their own lack of knowledge about the existing system deterring them from interacting in it.<sup>46</sup> It is important to distinguish between education in terms of spreading knowledge of just political rights and that of spreading literacy. Most scholars agree that literacy has a distinct positive effect on political participation and development. The following scholars confirm the relationship between education and political development.

In his article "A Critique of Recent Models for the Improvement of Education in Developing Countries", John Chilcott evaluates how educational systems are implemented and run in third-world countries. He explains that it is important to examine why an organization wants to educate a population. They could hope to create literate soldiers, participating political party members, or a more productive economy.<sup>47</sup> How education is approached is important as well. Who writes the curriculum, how teachers are trained, and what they say about the curriculum to motivate students to become literate is key in understanding how a population perceives education.<sup>48</sup> Chilcott indicates his disappointment in most developing nations' educational systems due to their seeming disinterest in developing, maintaining, and evaluating educational systems.<sup>49</sup>

Evaluating the state's approach is key, but sometimes formal education is not the answer. Michelle Kuenzi examines the effect of nonformal education on political participation in her article "Nonformal Education, Political Participation, and Democracy: Findings from Senegal." Her research found that nonformal education had a positive

impact on political participation.<sup>50</sup> Nonformal education refers to basic literacy and numeracy skills. Kuenzi suggests that education in general leads to greater participation in organizations, which in turn affects civic skills.<sup>51</sup> Her study also found that nonformal education increases community involvement and leadership.<sup>52</sup>

Supporting the theory of increased education leads to political participation and political development, Cindy Kam and Carl Palmer determine that education does positively affect political participation in the United States but only until the college level. They suggest an alternative to the conventional view that education is a causal agent for political participation by proposing that education confers participation-enhancing benefits to the individual.<sup>53</sup> They assert that the relationship between education past the high school level and political participation "might not reflect higher education conveying participation-enhancing benefits, but rather, higher education serving as a proxy for pre-adult characteristics."<sup>54</sup> However, these findings do not discount the theory that lower level education does imply political participation.

Finally, the Council on Foreign Relations report "Evaluating U.S. Foreign Aid to Afghanistan", published in 2011, points out the influence of education on reducing radicalism. "In a recent study of the drivers of political violence," the report states, "USAID found limited evidence linking poverty and low education to support for radical groups."<sup>55</sup> The Council criticizes the

<sup>46</sup> Huntington, 407.

<sup>47</sup> Chilcott, John H. "A Critique of Recent Models for the Improvement of Education in Developing Countries," *Anthropology & Education Quarterly* XVIII 3 (Sep, 1987): 241-245. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3216593> (accessed 23 April 2012), 244.

<sup>48</sup> Chilcott, 244.

<sup>49</sup> Chilcott, 245.

<sup>50</sup> Kuenzi, Michelle T. "Nonformal Education, Political Participation, and Democracy: Findings From Senegal," *Political Behavior* XXVIII 1 (Mar, 2006): 1-31. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4500208> (accessed 23 April 2012), 1.

<sup>51</sup> Kuenzi, 3.

<sup>52</sup> Kuenzi, 12.

<sup>53</sup> Kam, Cindy D. and Palmer, Carl L. "Reconsidering the Effects of Education on Political Participation," *The Journal of Politics* (Jul, 2008): 612-631. <http://journals.cambridge.org/action/displayAbstract?fromPage=online&aid=1927220> (accessed 23 April 2012), 613.

<sup>54</sup> Kam, 614.

<sup>55</sup> Committee on Foreign Relations. "Evaluating U.S. Foreign Assistance to Afghanistan". U.S. Senate.

tendency of donors to hire advisors to complete jobs for exorbitant prices rather than invest in higher education and vocational training for Afghan people.<sup>56</sup> Donors' aid strategies are frustrating for the government when applied to education. Each donor wants to begin their own program, which means many separate projects fail, rather than working together to create one successful project.<sup>57</sup>

### COMPARATIVE CASE STUDY

Because the relationship between education and political participation, and by extension, political development, has been determined to be positive, a qualitative assessment of Afghanistan's educational system as compared with Bangladesh will be conducted. Bangladesh was chosen as the comparative case study for its similarity to Afghanistan in violent and relatively short histories, a colonial experience, a Muslim society, aid-assisted hamlet societies, corruption, domestic terrorism, tense relations with neighbors, and poverty.

In an article written shortly after Bangladesh's independence in 1972, Brian Arthur and Geoffrey McNicoll outlined Bangladesh's challenges to growth and suggested actions to encourage future development.<sup>58</sup> Less than 15% of its population was literate and over half of Bangladeshis were living on insufficient nutrition.<sup>59</sup> Inflation, political instability, and labor unrest threatened to compromise the nascent state's survival.<sup>60</sup> Arthur and McNicoll pointed out the mobilizing effect of education by allowing any person to escape traditional hierarchical systems through knowledge.<sup>61</sup> They proposed that the creation of a

strong local administrative system was integral in generating any lasting political change in Bangladesh.<sup>62</sup>

Much like Afghanistan, aid donors questioned the recoverability of the Bangladeshi state. Poor accountability, transparency, and responsibility on all levels threatened to topple the fragile polity.<sup>63</sup> Bangladesh's current parliamentary representative democratic republic is a product of a series of various political frameworks and coups.

Bangladesh has become a kind of development success story, due to its quick recovery from a turbulent independence, and its subsequent economic and political development. The Bangladeshi government made education a priority from its inception. By 1986, the literacy rate was 23.8%.<sup>64</sup> Bangladesh now has a 47.9% literacy rate while just 28.1% Afghans are literate.<sup>65</sup> Bangladesh has three levels of education, totaling 12 years, as well as offered vocational and technical courses. As a predominantly Muslim culture, madrasah education was introduced centuries ago in 1780, and is still offered in conjunction with general education.<sup>66</sup> This madrasah and general education combination calls to mind the American Catholic school model of religious education paired with general education. Such a system offered in Afghanistan

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<http://www.gpoaccess.gov/congress/index.html> (accessed 23 April 2012), 9.

<sup>56</sup> Committee on Foreign Relations, 21.

<sup>57</sup> Committee on Foreign Relations, 28.

<sup>58</sup> Arthur, W. Brian and McNicoll, Geoffrey. "An Analytical Survey of Population and Development in Bangladesh," *Population and Development Review* IV 1 (Mar, 1978): 23-80.

<http://www.jstor.org/stable/1972147> (accessed 23 April 2012), 24.

<sup>59</sup> Arthur, 24.

<sup>60</sup> Arthur, 33.

<sup>61</sup> Arthur, 62.

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<sup>62</sup> Arthur, 65.

<sup>63</sup> Kochanek, Stanley A. "Governance, Patronage Politics, and Democratic Transition in Bangladesh," *Asian Survey* XL 3 (May-June, 2000): 530-550. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3021160> (accessed 13 February 2012), 530.

<sup>64</sup> Wallace, Ben J. and Harris, Michael. "Anthropology And Development In Bangladesh," *Urban Anthropology and Studies of Cultural Systems and World Economic Development*, XVIII 3/4, (FALL-WINTER, 1989): 241-264.

<http://www.jstor.org/stable/40553163> (accessed 23 April 2012), 246.

<sup>65</sup> CIA World Factbook. "Afghanistan: People and Society" and "Bangladesh: People and Society". Central Intelligence Agency.

<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/af.html> (accessed 23 April 2012).

<sup>66</sup> Bangladesh Bureau of Educational Information and Statistics. "Description of the Current Educational System in Bangladesh".

[http://www.banbeis.gov.bd/es\\_bd.htm](http://www.banbeis.gov.bd/es_bd.htm) (accessed 23 April 2012).

would likely be met with more acceptance than a strictly secular educational system. In addition to religious accommodations, Bangladesh made education a constitutional right.

Bangladesh's constitution guarantees children to free and compulsory primary education. This commitment means that the government is committed to providing a mass-oriented system of education, relating that need to the requirements of society, and eradicating literacy.<sup>67</sup> Systematic change took place over the course of years, as the government moved to fully implement a quality educational system. Creating a long-term, iterative plan for continued improvement was a key factor in Bangladesh's education reform.<sup>68</sup> Another factor of progress was the involvement of non-governmental organizations in the growth of nonformal education. By investing in nonformal education at all levels, NGO's helped socially prepare the population for formal education.<sup>69</sup>

## CONCLUSION

Afghanistan is moving along Eckstein's spectrum of political development, making its way from social polity to political society. In order to become a more mature state, Afghanistan must become a state that stands for society itself. If a desire for primacy and social elevation propels a society to move further along the spectrum of development, then education can only help in this process. Additionally, distinguishing between modernization and political development, mobilization and participation remain the goal of political development, and education encourages political participation.

While Huntington would argue that literacy – or education – should not be correlated with political development due to the unrelated nature of all “good things”, and too much education in an under-developed society can cause political decay, the positive effects of education on economic, social, and political development cannot be overlooked. Examining the government's

approach to education is important to understanding the effectiveness and availability of education. Additionally, carefully monitoring aid and supporting nonformal education have proven to be vital in the advancement of educational systems. Such educational advancement in a developing state can be seen in Bangladesh's example.

Bangladesh is a valuable example of a state's successful transition from social polity to political society through the lens of education. The similarities between Bangladesh and Afghanistan make it an appropriate comparison. Afghanistan can learn from Bangladesh's process of educational reform through a systematic, iterative process that sought to educate its population through formal and nonformal education. A direct mentorship relationship between Bangladesh and Afghanistan could be beneficial to Afghanistan's further development. Focusing NGO aid to appropriate areas was a key factor in Bangladesh's educational jumpstart. Afghanistan should pay attention to how it directs the educational aid it receives and make a concerted effort to develop its nonformal education program.

Overcoming many challenges to political development like insurgency, corruption, drug trade, ethnic fractionalization, and widespread poverty will not be an easy task for the Afghan state, but encouraging the progression of its educational system will increase political participation and political development in the pursuit of a stable Afghanistan.

This assessment of the relationship between education and political development is limited by a lack of quantitative analysis and data. Qualitative relationships are valuable but not conclusive. More quantitative research should be conducted on the factors that influence state/regime survival in Afghanistan.

<sup>67</sup> Ibrahim, Muhammad. *Providing Education for Out-Of-School Youth in Bangladesh*. London, U.K.: Commonwealth Secretariat, 2002, 2.

<sup>68</sup> Ibrahim, 3.

<sup>69</sup> Ibrahim, 4.