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Majority of Americans Say Afghan War Not Worth Fighting

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According to a recent [Washington Post-ABC Poll](#), the majority of Americans say the war in Afghanistan is not worth fighting.

Usually, I don't take kindly to polling data; they are ephemeral snapshots of public opinion that fluctuate with the prevailing political winds. But I will say ([as I've said before](#)) that Central Asia holds little intrinsic strategic value to the United States. In that respect, I can understand why Americans are growing skeptical of continuing what's become an "aimless absurdity."

America's flagging support for the war comes as millions of Afghans head to the polls to elect their next president. Hamid Karzai, the incumbent, is the front-runner, but if he is unable to secure more than 50% of the vote there will be a run-off scheduled for early October. Given the pervasive levels of corruption within his own government, if Karzai ends up winning, America and the international community might be perceived as propping up an illegitimate government; however, if Karzai loses, it might further alienate the country's largest minority group, the Pashtuns, among whom Karzai, and the Taliban, pull most of their support.

This morning, [New York Times](#) reporter Carlotta Gall [writes](#) from Kabul, "initial reports from witnesses suggested that the turnout was uneven, with higher participation in the relatively peaceful north than in the troubled south."

Before the elections, Taliban militants, mainly concentrated in the southern and eastern provinces but now spreading to the north, threatened to cut off fingers marked with purple ink used to indicate when someone casts a vote. Ms. Gall writes: "In the southern city of Kandahar, witnesses said, insurgents hanged two people because their fingers were marked with indelible ink used to denote that they had voted." Wow! Maybe the elections will be a watershed moment in Afghanistan's history: the democracy experiment comes as a death sentence.

On a lighter note, there are already allegations of voter fraud. An inspection of the rolls revealed the name of an unlikely voter, "Britney Jamilia Spears," one of a number of phantom voters.

Many people would agree that the atmosphere surrounding Afghanistan's presidential elections is analogous to the country as a whole: dysfunctional. Candidates are forging alliances with warlords; tribal elders are being offered jobs, territory, and forgiveness of past sins to secure their allegiance; and Britney Spears is a registered Afghan voter. It's about time that America narrow its objectives and start bringing the military mission to a close.

Malou Innocent is a foreign policy analyst at the Cato Institute, a libertarian think tank based in Washington, D.C. This post originally appeared on Cato at Liberty, August 20, 2009.

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