

# Prospects for Taliban Reconciliation in Afghanistan

John Richardson and Matthew Warshaw

May 2012



# Methodology

D3 Systems, Inc. commissioned Afghan Futures Wave 2 with fieldwork conducted by its subsidiary, the Afghan Center for Socio-Economic and Opinion Research (ACSOR Surveys).

Fieldwork was conducted between January 24<sup>th</sup> and February 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2012.

Afghan Futures Wave 2 consists of 2,018 interviews with Afghans 18+ distributed in proportion to population size in each of Afghanistan's 34 provinces, stratified by urban/rural status. Sampling points are randomly distributed to districts and settlements within province. Households are selected by random walk and respondents are selected by kish grid.

Due to cultural considerations, ACSOR uses gender-matched interviewing in Afghanistan. Of the 264 total sampling points, 33 had to be replaced due to security, transportation, or weather. Women were not able to be interviewed in Paktika province, which accounts for 1.7% of Afghanistan's population.

All results shown in the paper and presentation are statistically significant at the 95% CI using a chi-squared test.

- n size = 2,018

- Fieldwork in all 34 provinces of Afghanistan

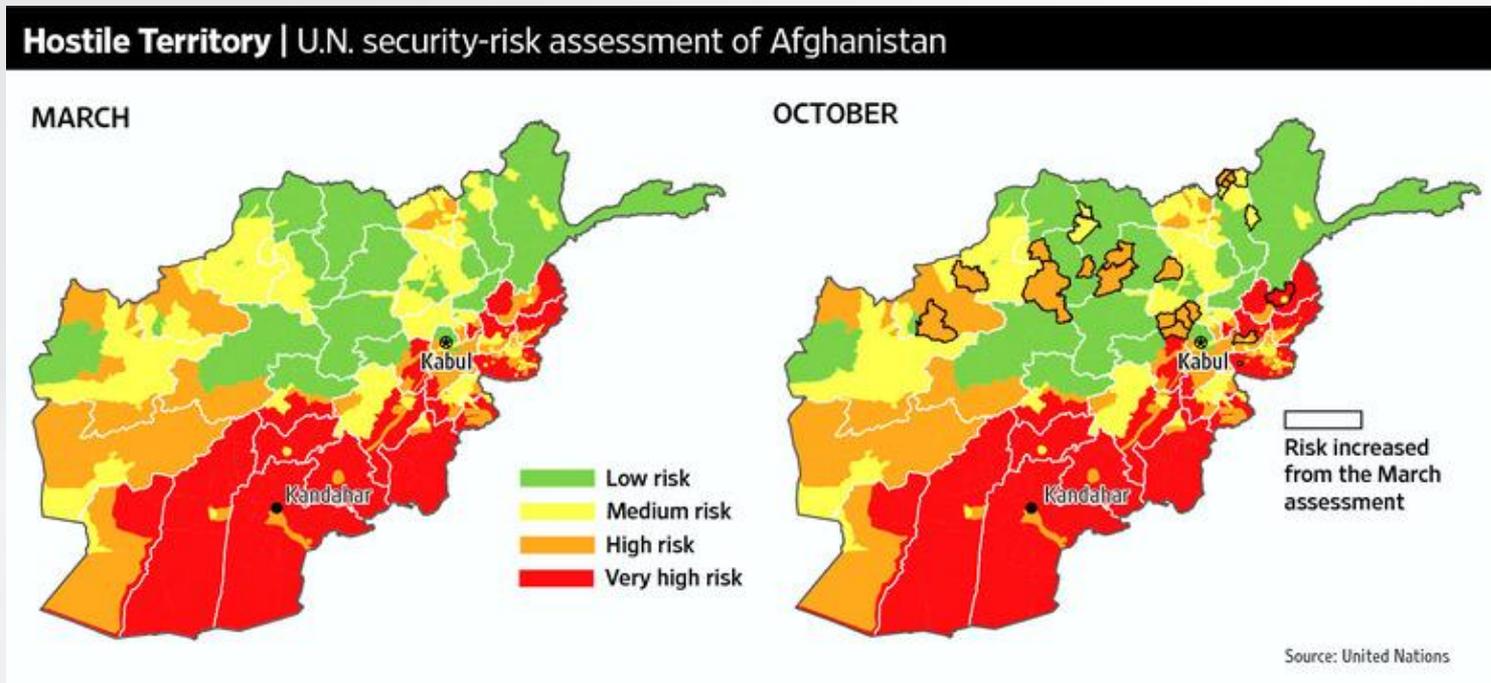
# Ethnicity in Afghanistan



- Ethnicity is strongly correlated with geography in Afghanistan.
- Pashtuns primarily reside in the south and east.

# The Insurgency

## United Nations 2010 Accessibility Maps



- Security conditions in Afghanistan closely linked to geography.
- The southern and eastern “Pashtun Belt” remain the most insecure regions of the country.

# The Insurgency



- The Afghan insurgency consists of many elements: the Taliban, Hezb-i-Islami, the Haqqani network, foreign fighters, local tribes, and criminal organizations.
- The Taliban is primarily active along the “Southern Front” (Helmand, Kandahar, Oruzgan, Zabol, and Paktika).

# The Concern

The conventional wisdom maintains that the Taliban are more popular among Pashtuns than other ethnic groups. Some Afghan analysts have warned that pursuing reconciliation with the Taliban may ignite ethnic tensions or divorce the Afghan people from the central government.

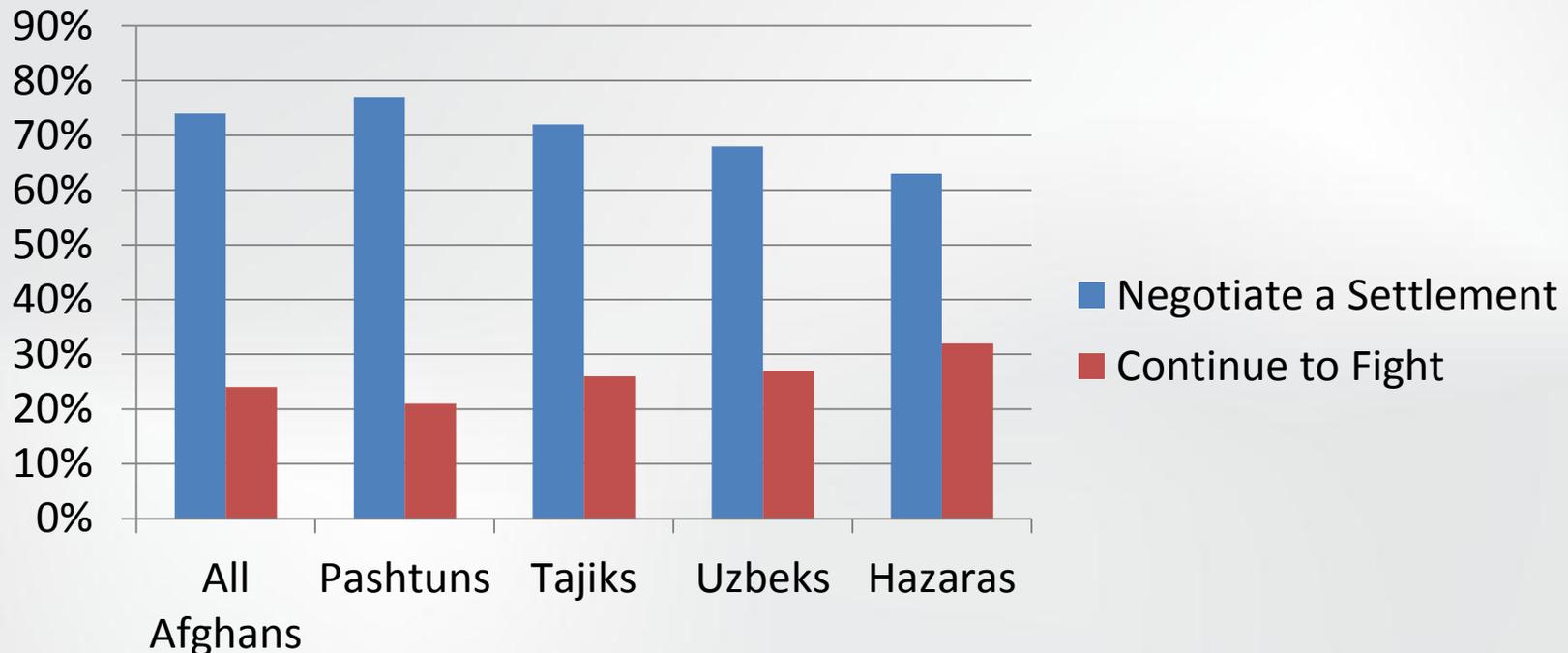
*“a peace settlement with the Taliban runs the risk of escalating conflict with Tajik, Uzbek, Hazara, and anti-Taliban Pashtuns in Afghanistan...Such a settlement could trigger a military build-up among northern commanders, such as Atta Mohammad Nur, Abdul Rashid Dostum, and Mohammad Fahim, causing the war’s center of gravity to shift north. Indeed, reports indicate that northern commanders are already discussing a military build-up if there is a settlement with the Taliban.”* - Seth Jones to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, May 2011.

*“The Taliban, in other words, are highly unlikely to overthrow the government by force of arms. A much more likely failure mechanism might occur if northern ethnic groups – Uzbeks, Tajiks, Hazaras – should, in frustration at lack of progress, withdraw their support for the Pashtun-dominated Kabul government and take matters into their own hands in fighting the Pashtun Taliban. This would lead to an ethnic civil war...”* – David Kilcullen in *The Accidental Guerrilla*

- Taliban reconciliation is often believed to be unfavorable among Tajiks, Uzbeks, and Hazaras.
- Some analysts warn that pursuing reconciliation with the Taliban could instigate an Afghan civil war.

# Afghan Opinion on Reconciliation

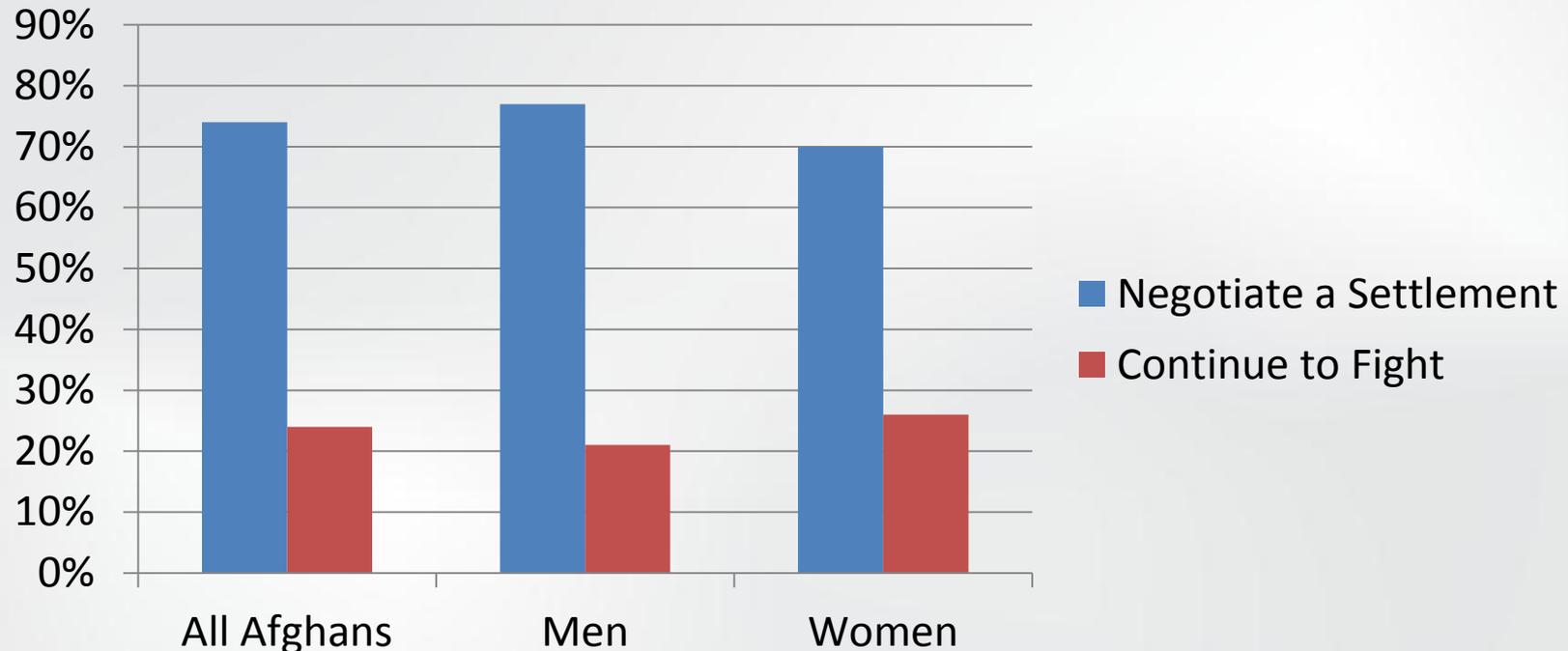
*"Do you think the government in Kabul should negotiate a settlement with Afghan Taliban in which they are allowed to hold political offices if they stop fighting, or do you think the government in Kabul should continue to fight the Taliban and not negotiate a settlement?"*



- Roughly three-quarters of Afghans (74%) favor negotiating with the Taliban rather than continuing to fight.
- Pashtuns are the most in favor of negotiating (77%), but the majority of ALL ethnicities prefer negotiations.

# Afghan Opinion on Reconciliation

*"Do you think the government in Kabul should negotiate a settlement with Afghan Taliban in which they are allowed to hold political offices if they stop fighting, or do you think the government in Kabul should continue to fight the Taliban and not negotiate a settlement?"*

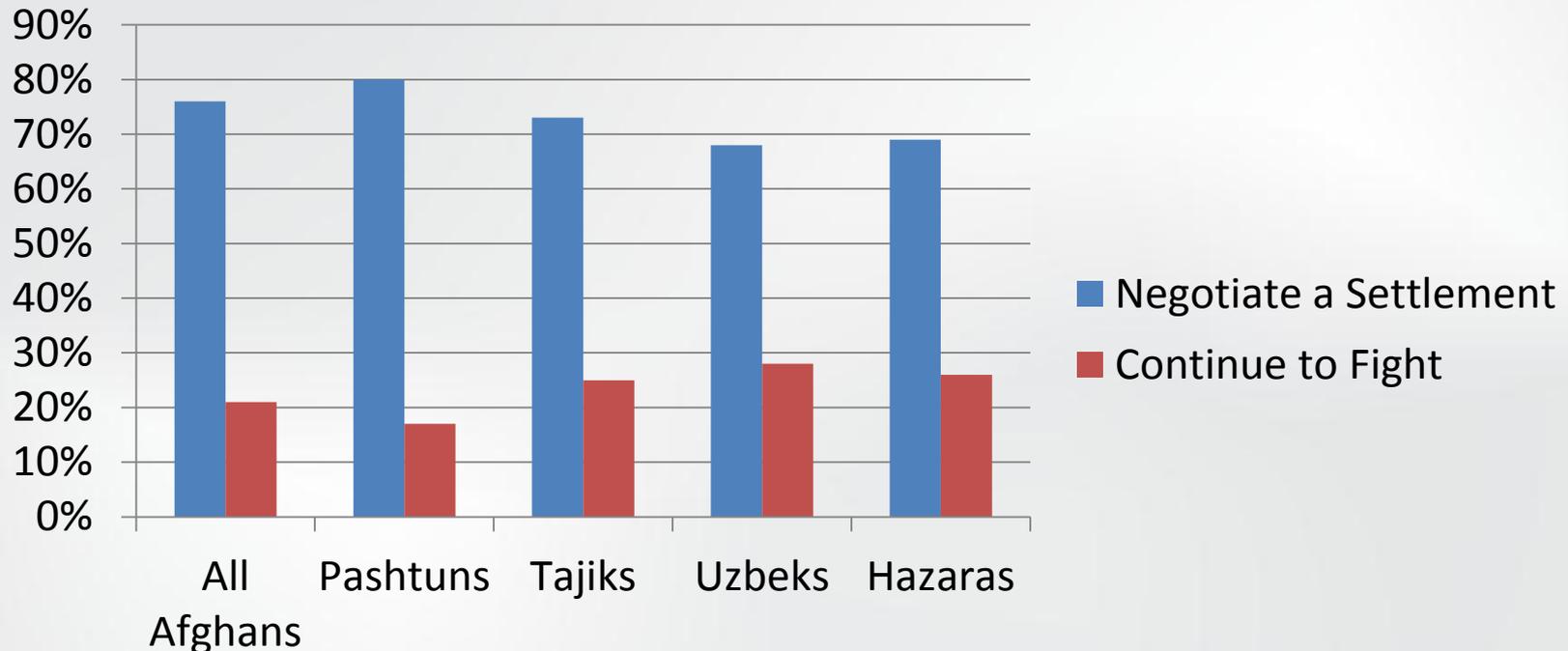


- Men (77%) are more likely to favor Taliban reconciliation than are women (70%).

- However, the majority of both genders prefer negotiations to continued fighting.

# Extreme Concessions

*“What if an agreement to stop the fighting allowed the Taliban to join the Afghan National Security Forces (ANA, ANP, ANSF, ANBP, or ALP) - do you think the government in Kabul should continue to fight the Taliban and not negotiate a settlement?”*

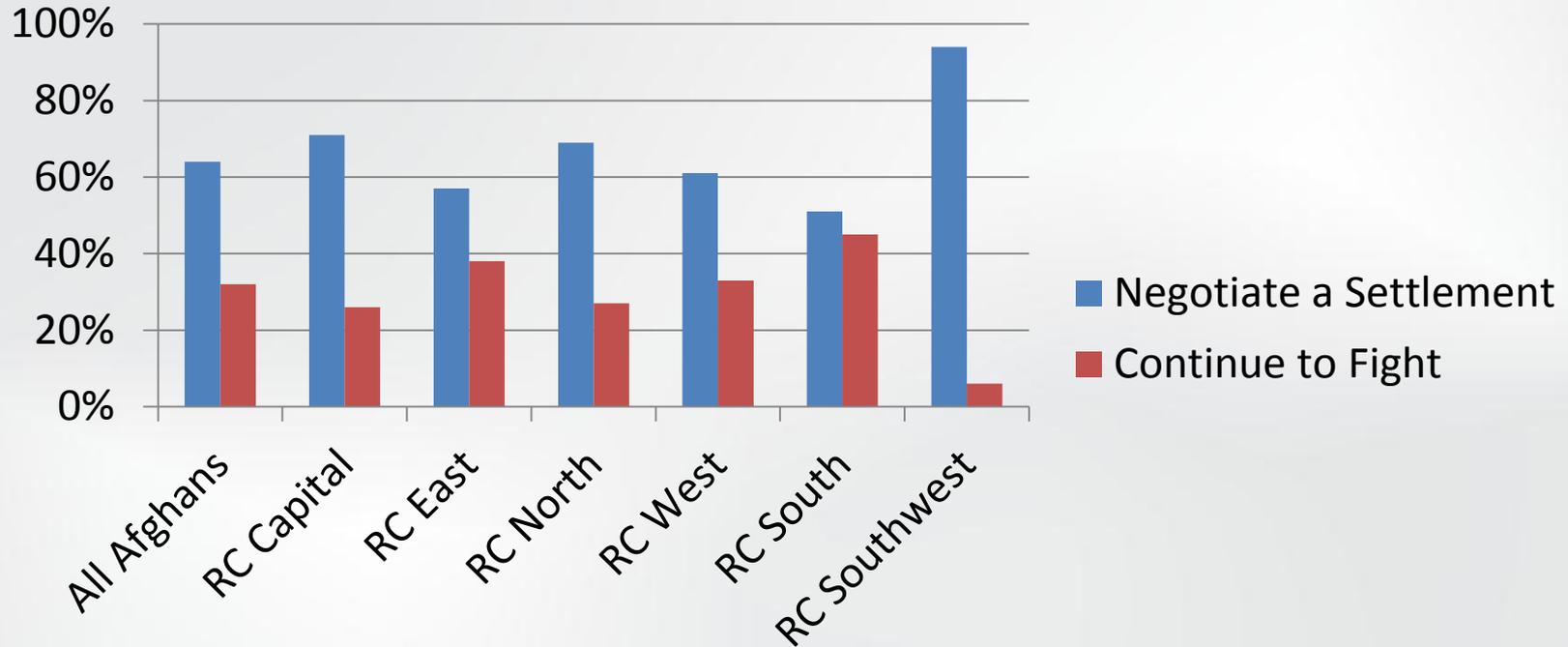


• All major ethnicities in Afghanistan would rather allow the Taliban into the ANSF than continue fighting.

• Uzbeks (68%) and Hazaras (69%) are the least likely to want the Taliban to into the ANSF.

# Extreme Concessions

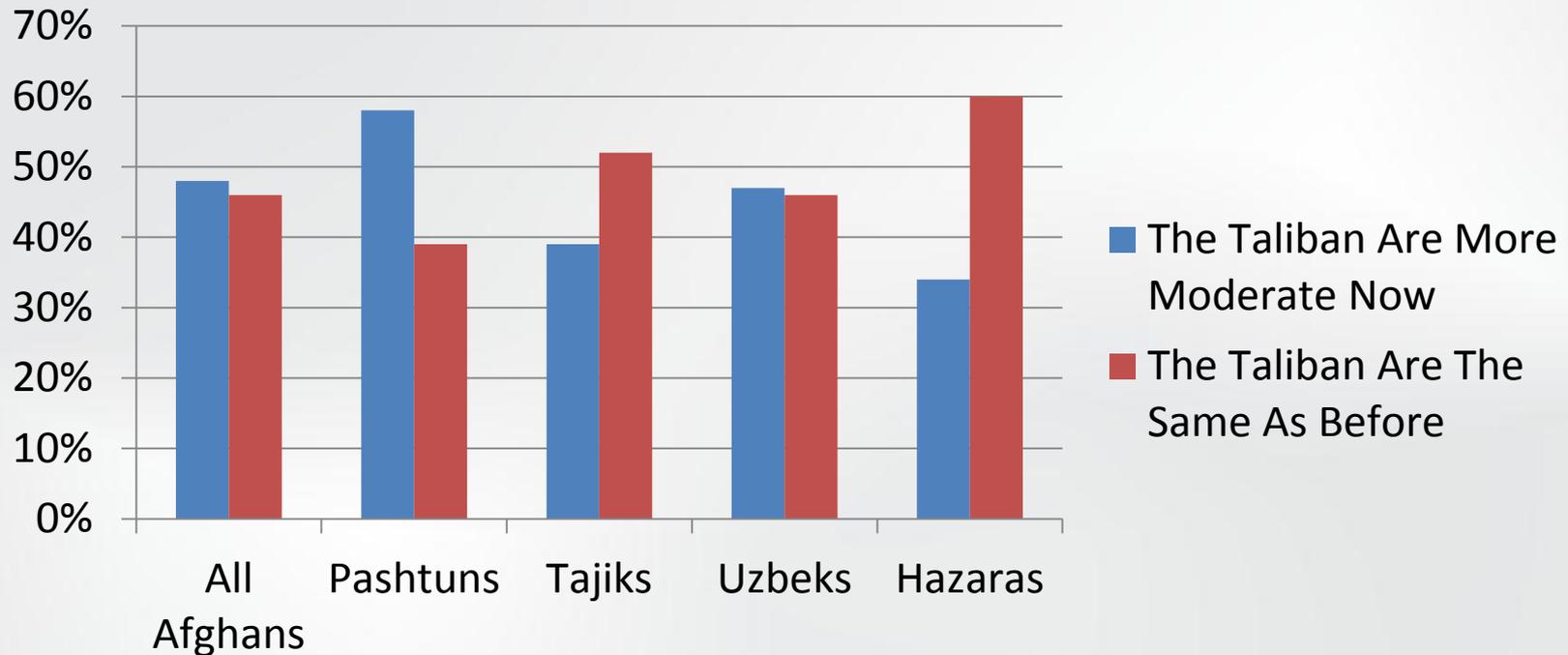
*“What if an agreement to stop the fighting ceded control over certain provinces to the Taliban - do you think the government in Kabul should continue to fight the Taliban and not negotiate a settlement?”*



- The majority of Afghans (64%) would be willing to cede control of some provinces to the Taliban rather than continuing to fight.
- Considering the unfavorable opinion held of the Taliban by most (86%) Afghans, this likely reflects their desire to avoid continued fighting more than a preference for Taliban governance.

# A Moderate Taliban?

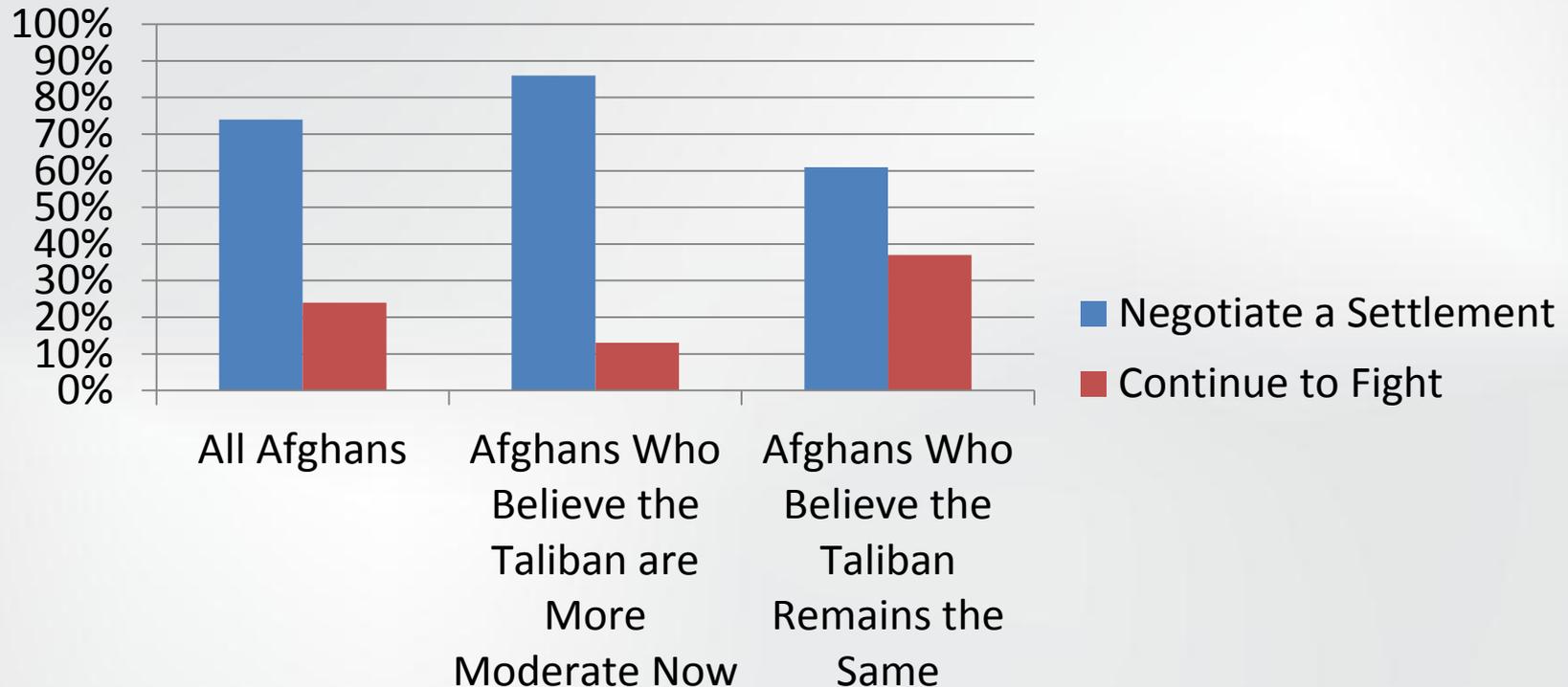
*“Is it your impression that the Taliban have changed and become more moderate, or do you think they remain the same as they were when they ruled Afghanistan before?”*



- Overall, Afghans are evenly split on whether the Taliban have become more moderate with 48% believing they have, while 46% believe they remain the same as before.
- There is significant variation between ethnicities with Pashtuns the most likely to believe the Taliban has become more moderate (58%), while Hazaras are the least likely to see the Taliban as more moderate (34%).

# Taliban Moderation's Impact on Reconciliation

*“Do you think the government in Kabul should negotiate a settlement with Afghan Taliban in which they are allowed to hold political offices if they stop fighting, or do you think the government in Kabul should continue to fight the Taliban and not negotiate a settlement?”*



- Afghans who believe the Taliban are more moderate now than when they ruled Afghanistan are 25% more likely to favor negotiations than those who believe the Taliban have not moderated (86% vs. 61%).

# Core Services

**For over 25 years, D3 has provided cutting-edge, full-service research results to its global clientele.**

Today, D3 has worked in over 110 countries providing quantitative and qualitative research services in its core service areas. The Middle East, the European Union, Russia and the former Soviet Union, Latin/South America and Asia are areas of company focus.



# For More Information

For More Information  
Regarding The Findings Provided In This Report  
Contact:

**D3 Systems, Inc.**  
703.388.2450

Matthew Warshaw  
[Matthew.Warshaw@d3systems.com](mailto:Matthew.Warshaw@d3systems.com)

John Richardson  
[John.Richardson@d3systems.com](mailto:John.Richardson@d3systems.com)

[www.D3Systems.com](http://www.D3Systems.com)