Afghanistan has been in the news again lately, having been eclipsed for some time by
the war in Iraq. It’s now obvious that Afghanistan’s problems are far from over. This
book helps us understand the context and extent of these problems.

William Maley is an expert in international relations and has studied
Afghanistan over many years. He sets out clearly the huge job facing the new
government of the country after the ousting of the Taliban, recounting their successes
as well as their failures and shortcomings. Maley gives a balanced and sober account
of Afghanistan’s situation, ably organised into sections on politics, security, human
development and foreign relations. There is nothing terribly startling here: it is a
depressingly familiar story of political infighting and well-meaning but misguided
interference followed up by broken promises.

The bulk of the book was written in late 2005, following the September
elections for the new parliament, four years after the attacks on the USA which
prompted the invasion. However, there is a brief Epilogue referring to subsequent
events and pointing out that despite the progress that has been made, ‘Afghanistan
remains on a knife-edge, confronted by brutal insurgents at home and diminishing
interest abroad.’