

**ETHNICITY AND NATION BUILDING
IN AFGHANISTAN**

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the dissertation titled "ETHNICITY AND NATION BUILDING IN AFGHANISTAN" submitted by MANMATH NARAYAN SINGH for the award of degree of MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY (M.Phil) of the University, is his own work and has not been previously submitted for any degree of this or any other university. We recommend that this dissertation be presented before the examiners for their consideration for the award of M.Phil Degree.

Prof. I. N. Mukherjee
(Chairperson)

Prof. K. WARIKOO
(Supervisor)

To

**Ma, Daddy,
Behna & Bauaa**

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New Delhi
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MANMATH NARAYAN SINGH

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PREFACE

PREFACE

Since the last couple of decades or so, tumultuous happenings have taken place in Afghanistan -- the Saur (April) Revolution of 1978, Soviet armed intervention in December 1979, the transition to *Mujahideen* (the holy warriors) Government in 1992, and finally, the takeover of Kabul by the Taliban (student militia) on September 27, 1996, and their execution of the former president Najibullah -- which have attracted world-wide attention. However, till date, the correlation between the internal factors, (like tradition and culture, the role of the Islamists and other indigenous ideologies) and the external ones, (like the security dilemma in Afghanistan, the geo-strategic significance of the country and the nature of the Great Power rivalry), remained unexplored. These factors are important for understanding the problem of nation-building and its relation with ethnicity.

The Afghan Society is very complex. Regional and tribal differences have often led to civil strife and local rebellions. The Pashtuns, have occupied top positions in the government and all

the kings, except for a brief period in 1929, have been Pashtun.¹ Even the communist revolution in April (*Saur*) 1978, was dominated by the Pashtuns and that is why the Islamic resistance was slow to occur in the Pashtun-dominated tribal areas.² The Pashtun King Abdul Rahman had resettled Pashtun tribes in the non-Pashtun areas of the north, and launched a massive campaign to dominate the central mountain region, the Hazarajat. This led to the Hazara war.³

However, the nation-building efforts started by Abdul Rahman and his successors did not yield results until the 1950s. With the rise of modern education, there emerged a class of Afghan intellectuals. Infrastructure of the state had to be expanded to accommodate them. In the latter half of this century, expansion of the armed forces in Afghanistan had

¹. Leon Poullada, *The Pashtun Role in the Afghan Political System*, Occasional Paper No.1, (New York, 1970).

². Olivier Roy, *Islam and Resistance in Afghanistan*, (Cambridge, 1986), p. 101.

³. Mir Munshi, *The Life of Abdul Rahman Amir of Afghanistan*, (Oxford, 1980).

decreased the state's dependence on the tribes.⁴ Gradual growth of government and the urban classes, and the penetration of modern technology, weakened the tribal organisations.⁵ The constitution of Zahir Shah was proclaimed in 1964. Even Daud, who dethroned him in a coup in 1973, had enacted a constitution in 1977. The *Khalq* leader Hafizullah Amin had appointed a constitutional drafting committee, when he had briefly acquired power by ousting Nur Muhammad Taraki in 1978-79. His successor Babrak Karmal, had stated in his first press conference that he, too, would adopt an *usul-i-asasi*, i.e. a 'constitution'.⁶ Even the Islamists worked under democratic principles, which by no means is repugnant to Islam.

The new leaders in post communist Afghanistan confronted serious challenges. Nation-building was being jeopardised as separate groups had been controlling different

Louis Dupree, *Afghanistan*, (Princeton, 1973), pp. 494-498.

⁵. J.W. Anderson, "There are No Khans Anymore : Economic development and Social change in Tribal Afghanistan," *Middle East Journal*, vol.32, no.2, (1978), pp. 167-83.

⁶. British Broadcasting Corporation, *Summary of World Broadcast*, hereafter, (BBC/SWB), FE/6312/C3 and FE/6401/C2/1-6.

parts of the country along ethnic, tribal and sectarian lines. The political polarisation, and a bitter struggle for power, among the various *Mujahideen* factions, had become manifest. The Pashtuns feared a loss of power and the Uzbek-Tajik coalition gained greater political influence in Kabul, traditionally dominated by the Pashtun elite.⁷ Thus, the political conflict got transformed into an ethnic conflict. The polarisation has been between the Pashtun on the one hand, and the rest of the ethnic groups of the country, on the other hand. The emergence of the *Taliban*-a student militia, comprising mostly of the Pashtuns has re-established the Pashtun dominance in two-thirds area of Afghanistan.

The Taliban first emerged in Kandahar, the traditional seat of the Pashtun. The rise of the *Sunni*-Taliban with its narrow and strict interpretation of the Islamic laws has raised fear and anxiety in the Central Asian Republics, Iran, Russia, Turkey and even India. How far is the fear justified? What are the roles of the various other regional and super-powers like

⁷. Rasul Bakhsh Rais, *War Without Winners : Afghanistan's Uncertain Transition After the Cold War*. (Karachi, 1994), p. 1.

Pakistan, Iran, Saudi Arabia, U.S.A, Russia, etc. in the present crisis ? What will the impact of divisions along ethnic lines on the Afghan Society ? There are many other questions, like, have the Marxists and the *Mujahideens* (holy warriors) failed in Afghanistan ? Or is it the beginning of the 'Mullah Raj' ?

The country faces an acute urban-rural divide too. It is due to the fact that fruits of modernisation and foreign aid have failed to reach the rural areas. The benefits of economic developments have also not reached the rural areas and whatever little has been achieved is limited, primarily, to the few cities of Afghanistan.

The question is what should be done to solve the multifaceted problems? What roles can the ethnic groups play in the process of nation building? This work seeks to establish a relationship between ethnicity and nation-building. Inter-ethnic relations in Afghanistan are characterised by the 'domination pattern'. The Pashtuns, who have sought to dominate the rest of the ethnic groups, had resented the Tajik-dominance in post-communist Afghanistan. This has resulted in the consolidation of 'ethnic pride of the Pashtuns' being

represented by the Taliban. But this cultural arrogance may prove to be counter-productive for nation-building as it would alienate the other ethnic groups from the seat of power.

The involvement of foreign powers in Afghanistan has complicated the process of nation building. Foreign aid has thrown up new elites who have sought to out-manoeuvre their opponents in the power-politics, thereby aggravating the situation. An examination of the Afghan society and to answer the questions related with ethnicity and nation building is the main concern of this work. It is divided into five chapters.

The introductory chapter highlights the geo-physical and geo-cultural diversities of Afghanistan with a brief look at the country's history. It then seeks a theoretical and conceptual clarifications of the terms 'ethnicity' and 'nation building'.

The second chapter titled, 'Ethnic Diversity in Afghanistan' analyses the nature of the Afghan society and the ethnic divisions. It also briefly summarises the recent trends in the ethno-politics in the region.

The third chapter titled 'Great Power Interest and the Making of Modern Afghanistan' focuses on foreign linkages,

with special emphasis on the role of the erstwhile Soviet Union, the United States, Pakistan, Iran and other regional actors. It also analyses the impact of the Soviet invasion.

The politicisation of the Islamic religion is discussed in the fourth chapter titled 'The Rise of Political Islam'. The role of the various Islamist parties - their programmes, policies and the nature of their foreign linkages- is hereby dealt with. This chapter concludes with the rise of the Taliban.

The fifth chapter entitled 'Problems and Prospects of Nation Building' deals with the various factors which has precluded the growth and development of Afghanistan. It emerges that it is ethnicity, regional diversities, and the role of the political elites that has prevented the nation building project from coming to fruition in Afghanistan.

Last chapter summarises the main conclusions of the study.

CHAPTER - I

Introduction

THE PROBLEM

When humankind was getting used to the concept of the 'global village', the sudden outburst of ethnic conflicts has become the main feature of the post-Cold War era. Discarded primordialities have been revived and reinstated. The discourses on society and its future has gathered a new set of words and symbols. The paradox of the present is that while on the one hand, the European Community is seeking larger unity, on the other hand, events in Yugoslavia, Albania, Malaysia, Afghanistan etc. have been shaped by centrifugal tendencies. Ethnic loyalties have proved too strong to be contained. Eric Hobsbawm, in his study claimed that "anyone likely to write the world history of the late twentieth or early twenty-first centuries will see 'nation-states' and 'nations' or ethnic / linguistic groups primarily as retreating before resisting, adapting to, being absorbed or dislocated by the new supranational restructuring of the globe....."¹ But the increasing number of the pockets of discontent and ethnic strife across the globe, which has reached boiling point in few places, undermines his work. Ethnicity has become more salient,

¹. Eric Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism Since 1780*, (Cambridge, 1990), p. 182.

especially in the post-Cold War era.

With the rise of the Taliban in Afghanistan, and its take over of Kabul, on September 27, 1996, the ethnic problem in the country has reached a new height. The *Mujahideen* government, which was Tajik-dominated, failed to usher in an era of peace and prosperity. Various factions, which although had ideological affinity, were sharply divided on tribal, racial and regional lines. As Raja Anwar writes "although 99.9 percent of Afghans are Muslim, in field of politics regional and tribal differences take precedence over religious and ideological beliefs."² This statement contains elements of truth in it. As we notice that both Gulbadin Hikmatyar and Burhanuddin Rabbani failed to work together although religiously, both are *Sunni* Muslim and politically, their parties *Hizb-i-Islami* and *Jamiat-i-Islami* follow the same objectives and have been influenced by the *Ikhwan-ul-Muslamin*, Muslim Brotherhood. But their Pashtun-Tajik divide became an important factor in preventing them from working together.

². Raja Anwar, *The Tragedy of Afghanistan : A Firsthand Account*, Translated from the Urdu by Khalid Hasan, (London, 1988), p. 126.

Regional differences, too, are very powerful as the leaders, despite ties of common nationality and religion, have been unable to reach any political agreement. It holds true of the *Mujahideen* leaders Rabbani and Maulvi Ghulam Nabi. The former, a Badakhshan-Tajik and the latter, a Panjsher-Tajik, fell victim to regional prejudices. As Anwar says, "their enmities and bitter struggle spring from the tribal, sub-tribal, nationalistic and regional differences which characterise this most backward of societies - differences which possibly escape definition in terms of modern political theory."³

Afghanistan can be described as a multi - ethnic state. The dominant ethnic group, both in economic and numerical terms are the Pashtuns. The second largest ethnic group are the Tajiks. Other ethnic groups are Hazaras, Uzbeks, Turkomans, Aimaqs, Farsiwan, Nuristanis, Baluch and Kyrghyz. The Pashtuns had "established their supremacy by driving out the once - ruling Hazaras, Tajiks and Nuristanis from their ancestral lands and grazing grounds."⁴ This forms the

³. *ibid.*, pp. 126-7.

⁴. *ibid.*, p. 125.

background of the deep-seated divisions between the Pashtuns and other ethnic groups. To understand the present problem, the bitter legacy of history has to be kept in mind.⁵

AFGHANISTAN : GEO-PHYSICAL DIVISIONS

The hostilities are also accentuated due to the geo-physical and geo-cultural diversities. The central Hindu Kush mountains provide the main routes to the north and the south of Afghanistan. In the north, the Hindu Kush lie in the Turkestan plains. The dry western and south-western sections of Afghanistan extend to the Iranian plateau. In Registan, south and east of the Hilmand river, stony and sandy deserts dominate. According to Dupree, "anyone flying over Afghanistan will be struck by the nakedness of the terrain. Bare rock dominates dramatically everywhere above 14,000 ft., or 4,270 mts. Scrub vegetation and grassland cover most lower altitudes. Occasional clumps of trees appear in the foothills of the northern slopes of the Hindu Kush. True forests exists only in the eastern Afghanistan, mainly in the provinces of Paktya,

⁵. *ibid.*, pp. 125-6.

Route to Turkestan, Mongolia, China, and ultimately Japan.”¹⁰ It had considerable influence in Afghanistan as well. The Kushans, Mongols, Hephthalite Huns, Greeks all had invaded the country. The Hephthalite Empire had lasted for over a century (A. D. 450-565), in the region.¹¹ However, the Hephthalites were defeated by the Sasanians and the Western Turks and at the beginning of the seventh century A. D., most of the present-day Afghanistan was under the control of the Sasanian Empire.¹² The Sasanian Empire crumbled because of the Arab attacks. The Arabs were Muslims who permitted the local native rulers to retain their thrones, but assigned Arab military and tax collectors to assist them.¹³ Mahmud of Ghazni, who had conducted at least seventeen successful raids in India, looting the wealthy Hindu temples, had also overthrown the ruler of Ghor, an independent mountain kingdom in central Afghanistan.¹⁴ After Mahmud's death, his

¹⁰. *ibid.*, p. 296.

¹¹. *ibid.*, p. 302.

¹². *ibid.*, p. 303.

¹³. *ibid.*, p. 312.

¹⁴. *ibid.*, p.314.

kingdom's central authority broke down. In A. D. 1220 Chengiz Khan destroyed the Afghan's Finest civilization. Efforts were made to reunite the culture.¹⁵ Then came another Turco-Mongol warrior, Tamerlane, claiming descent from Chengiz Khan. He tried to consolidate the empire from India to Turkey but with his death, the empire also disintegrated. The Mughals, Safavids, and Uzbeks of Central Asia then competed with each other to control Afghanistan. According to Dupree "all three continually bumped against each other in a line running from Kabul to Kandahar."¹⁶ It was because of this that tribalism had prevailed in Afghanistan during the sixteenth and the seventeenth centuries A.D., and, at least, 345 separately named tribal units existed in the region.¹⁷

Freed of foreign domination, the Abdali Afghans dominated most of the region of Afghanistan. In Kandahar, the Abdalis had to select a paramount chieftain. Each of the sub-tribes wanted its leader to be selected the supreme *Khan*, (the

¹⁵. *ibid.*, pp. 316-7.

¹⁶. *ibid.*, p. 321.

¹⁷. M. Rahim, *History of the Afghans in India : A.D. 1545-1631*, (Karachi, 1961), pp. 34-35.

notable). A *jirgah*, (assembly), was convened which lasted for nine days.¹⁸ The two main contestants were Hajji Jamal Khan of the Mohammadzai lineage and Ahmad Khan of the Saddozai. Mohammad Sabir Khan, a noted *darwish* (holy man), crowned Ahmed Khan the *Badshah, Durr-i-Duran* (Shah, Pearl of the Age). Ahmad Shah Abdali, and the Abdalis in general have also been known as the Durranis.¹⁹

Since then, the intra-ethnic and inter-ethnic rivalry has continued to plague Afghanistan. In Afghanistan, there are about seven million non-Pashtun people.²⁰ The intricate cultural stratification has often resulted in political rivalries. It has had a great impact on the Afghanistan nation-state per se. The process of nation building has been impeded by the ethnic hostilities.

ETHNICITY AND NATION BUILDING : A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Ethnicity is derived from the Greek term *ethnos*, meaning people, nation or a country. Ethnicity is important for our

¹⁸. Dupree, n.6. p. 332.

¹⁹. G. Ghubar, *Ahmad Shah Baba-yi-Afghan*, (Kabul, 1943).

²⁰. Anwar, n.2. p. 1.

inquiry about the nation-building as most nationalist movements "began as ethnic aspirations of a group, whose bonds were racial, linguistic and cultural."²¹ However, of late, the ethnic groups have been politicised to the extent that they manifest themselves in "ethno-centrism, communal consciousness that glorifies one's own race and its associated achievements, at the expense of others."²² To consolidate such an identity, the ethnic groups begin to distinguish themselves (*we*) from the others (*they*). They perceive that they share a common identity. Ethnic identity is, thus, formed on the basis of common descent, relevant cultural and physical characteristics, and a set of attitudes and behaviour pattern. As Daniel Bell states "ethnicity has become more salient because it can combine an interest with an affective tie," and that the upsurge of ethnicity today is the "emergent expression of primordial feelings, long suppressed but now reawakened or, as a 'strategic site', chosen by disadvantaged persons as a new

²¹. Herbert A. Gibbons, *Nationalism and Internationalism*, (New York, 1930), p. 4.

²². Dawa Norbu, *Culture and Politics of Third World Nationalism*, (London, 1992), p. 37.

mode of seeking political redress in the society.²³

There are two main approaches of the understanding of the new ethnic phenomena. The first is the *primordialist* approach to ethnicity and ethnic identities, which considers common descent as the more important factor, as the primordial loyalties can be activated more easily than rational principles and organisations founded upon them. The second approach is variously known as *situational*, *subjectivist* or *instrumental*. It emphasises upon the group's members' perception of being different from others. This difference redefines the group's position in the society and the groups evolve their own strategies for the achievement of desired results.

We can attribute the salience of ethnicity to the strategic advantages flowing from an ethnic identity. According to Daniel Bell the strategic choice made by the individuals emerge due to the following factors :

1. People want to belong to "smaller" units and find in ethnicity an easy attachment.

²³. Daniel Bell, "Ethnicity and Social Change" in Nathan Glazer and Daniel P. Moynihan, eds., *Ethnicity : Theory and Experience*, (Cambridge, 1975), p.169.

2. Break-up of the traditional authority structures and the previous effective units have made the ethnic attachment salient.
3. Politicisation of decisions that affect the communal lines of the people make way for the establishment of ethnic groups which becomes a ready means of demanding group rights of providing defence against other groups.²⁴

It can therefore, be summarised that ethnicity as identity and group attachment has both positive and negative impacts. Positively, it seeks to redress the grievance of the hitherto disadvantaged groups, but negatively, it means that men of one ethnic group need some other group to hate. The politics of ethnicity has replaced the politics of ideology which means the continuation of conflicts by other means. In defining the term ethnicity various scholars have emphasised upon different factors. Edmund Leach has used the "structural relationships" along with "identity formation", in defining an ethnic group.²⁵

²⁴. *ibid.*, p.171.

²⁵. Edmund Leach, *Political Systems of Highland Burma*, (Cambridge, 1954), p.15.

Fredrick Barth has laid emphasis on 'boundary maintenance' as an important factor in ethnicity, which is dependent upon structural difference of the groups. For Barth, structural differences are more important than cultural factors in defining ethnic identity.²⁶

On the contrary, Edward Shils²⁷ and Clifford Geertz²⁸ have emphasised on the importance of 'culturally distinctive characteristics' of ethnic groups. Shils and Geertz advocate the primordialist approach and differentiate the ethnic groups on the basis of their origin, ritual, religion or descent.

Keeping the above perspectives in mind it is, therefore, necessary that we do not use the term 'tribe' for major ethnic groups of Afghanistan, such as Pashtuns, Tajiks, Uzbeks, Hazaras, Baluchis, Nuristanis etc. Tribe may be defined as a localised group in which kinship is the most dominant factor of organisation. Few ethnic groups of Afganistan are tribally

²⁶. Fredrick Barth, "Intriduction", in Fredrick Barth ed., *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries*, (Boston, 1969), pp.9-38.

²⁷. Edward Shils, "Primordial, Personal, Social and Civil Ties", In *British Journal of Sociology*, vol.VII, (1957), pp.113-45.

²⁸. Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, (New York, 1993), pp.255-310.

organised, the best example being the Pastun, the most dominant ethnic group of the country. Tribe should also be distinguished from a clan or, a lineage. A **clan** is a group of people of a larger ethnic group who claim common ancestry, without necessarily being able to trace it. A lineage is a unified group of people who can trace common ancestors.

The nature of the relations among the various ethnic groups determines the level and extent of nation-building. A multi-cornered contest for dominance among ethnic groups creates the dominating and the subordinated groups. This creates tensions and the problems become very complex.

In Afghanistan the problem is also of 'ethnic groups with divided homes.' Modern Afghanistan state was formed because of the strategic interests of both British India and Tsarist Russia. It brought together different ethnic groups into a single political society. The Pashtuns, Tajiks, Uzbeks, Kyrghyzs, Turkomans live in Afghanistan as well as in the neighbouring countries of Pakistan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Kyrghyzstan and Turkmenistan. It has led to border conflicts and large scale trans-border migrations, especially during the Basmachi

rebellion, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and during the recent Tajik- Afghan border crisis.

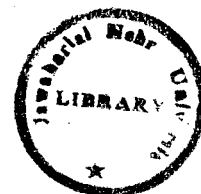
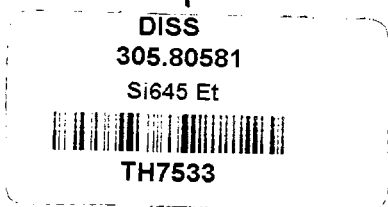
The Afghan refugees in Pakistan and Iran have numbered about four million.²⁹ It has not only torn the social fabric of the Afghan society, but has complicated the process of nation-building. The disintegration of Soviet Union has introduced uncertainties among the Tajiks and Uzbeks of Afghanistan. These ethnic groups have close ties with their people in the adjoining Central Asian Republics. "The cross-cutting of ethnic and religious ties like the Persian - speaking Tajiks are Sunni...adds still another complexion to the entire region."³⁰ The Tajiks constitute 59 percent of the total population of the Republic of Tajikistan and number 5.1 million. Their population in Afghanistan is around 3.5 million. Uzbeks are the largest group of Muslims in Central Asia and their population in Afghanistan is around one million.³¹

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²⁹. Myron Weiner and Ali Banuazizi eds., "Introduction", The Politics of Social Transformation in Afganistan, Iran and Pakistan, (New York, 1994), p.2.

³⁰. ibid., p.2.

³¹. ibid., p.30.



The questions that arise are; Will the ethnic groups in Afghanistan support their ethnic and religious counterparts in the neighbouring Central Asian Republics especially the Tajiks and Uzbeks? What would be the reaction of various smaller ethnic groups? Will the Pashtuns of Afghanistan once again demand 'Pashtunistan' and align with their brethren in the Pashtun dominated areas of Pakistan? What would, then, be the impact of these ethnic alignments on regional politics? But most of all, what would be the consequences of such ethnic groups on the process of nation building in Afghanistan?

Another factor which can prove detrimental to the process of nation building in Afghanistan is the induction of billions of dollars worth of arms, which has led to the proliferation of various regional commanders. They have enjoyed autonomy vis-a-vis the Kabul regime. How can these people be incorporated in the new scheme? And, how can the various factions agree to control and limit arms in the region so that peace and tranquility would prevail?

Afghan tradition and anti-Western orientations have played significant roles in the evolution of Afghan nationalism.

Our concern is with religion-induced culture that has played such an important role. But then why has regional and tribal differences made the Afghan elites so intolerant of each other?

Nation building in developing countries is a product of traditional culture and modern ideology. The ethnic groups, political elites, religion and culture help in the formulation of a consciousness which is so essential for the development of the region. Traditional culture provides the emotional power that mystifies the rational frame work for the resolution of social problems.³² In the light of these generalisations, perhaps it can be said that after the Soviet invasion 'tradition' was invoked when various resistant groups had proliferated in the country. The political Islamists and the traditional elites provided an ideology which was to counter the Communist ideology, and they called for *jihad* (holy war). It gave rise to various *Mujahideen* (the holy warriors) outfits in the country. It also proves that in Afghanistan tradition and culture is a live social force which can move the hearts of millions, and that it can be effectively manipulated for mobilisation purposes.

³². Narbu, n.9.p.2.

Nation building in a developing country is very different from that of a developed world. It can not be 'imitated', or 'imported' from the West, as Benedict Anderson has argued. According to him, nationalism is a product of 'Imagination'.³³ He argues ~~is~~ that the historical experiences of nationalism in Europe, America, and Russia have supplied the elites of Asia and Africa with exclusive forms of nation building wherein, the elites of the developing countries only have to appropriate the best form, from among the various models for their respective regions. This theory can be critiqued for having a distinct Western bias. In fact, what Anderson has done is to 'patent imagination' and make it the 'exclusive property-right' of the Western elites. It can be argued ~~is~~ that, even in the developing countries, the elites can evolve the best forms of nationalism keeping in mind the nature of their society. Also, due to temporal and spatial differences, adapting any 'imagined' form of nationalism would be like placing the process of nation building in Asia or Africa in a procrustean-bed.

³³. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities : Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, (London, 1982).

Although we do not intend to get into a debate with regard to the forms of nation building in the developing and developed countries it suffices to say that ethnicity and nation building in Afghanistan have their own peculiar problems. In Afghanistan intra-ethnic and inter-ethnic relations have practical differences which in turn make the process of nation building precarious. Also, the gradual growth of government, rise of modern technology and its penetration into rural areas have had an impact on the tribes and the tribal organisations have weakened.³⁴ Intellectual classes, (product of modern education and trained for state service), evolved to counter the traditional tribal institutions. These men could profess radical political ideologies ranging from Marxism to Islamism.³⁵ The Islamist and the Marxist have always contested each other's ideology. The end of the Najibullah regime heralded a victory for the Islamists. But their inability to rule, simultaneously with the

³⁴. J.W. Anderson, "There are No Khans Any More : Economic Development and Social Change in Tribal Afghanistan", *Middle East Journal*, vol.32.no.2. (1978), pp.167-83.

³⁵. Barnet R. Rubin, *The Fragmentation of Afghanistan : State Formation and Collapse in the International Systems*, (New Haven, 1995), p.20.

reassertion of the traditional elite, has ushered in a new series of crises.

The Islamists speak of Islamist Ideology rather than religion in the strict sense of term. They seek to reconstruct the society with their control over the state whereas, the *Ulema* seek to control and manage the civil-society by interpreting the *Shariat* (Islamic law) and the Quran. As Roy says, "the fundamentalism of Islamist is more radical than that of the *Ulema* : What they seek is not the return to the *Shariat*, which is means not an end, but the total reconstruction of political relations on the lines of the first Muslim Community".³⁶ Thus the Taliban, who seek the control of the civil society by their strict imposition of the *Shariat*,³⁷ and the Islamist who seek to reconstruct the society beginning with the state, are ideologically at logger-heads. These can have major implications for the process of nation building.

In Afghanistan the problems of nation building lie in the very nature of the ethnic groups. The relations between them

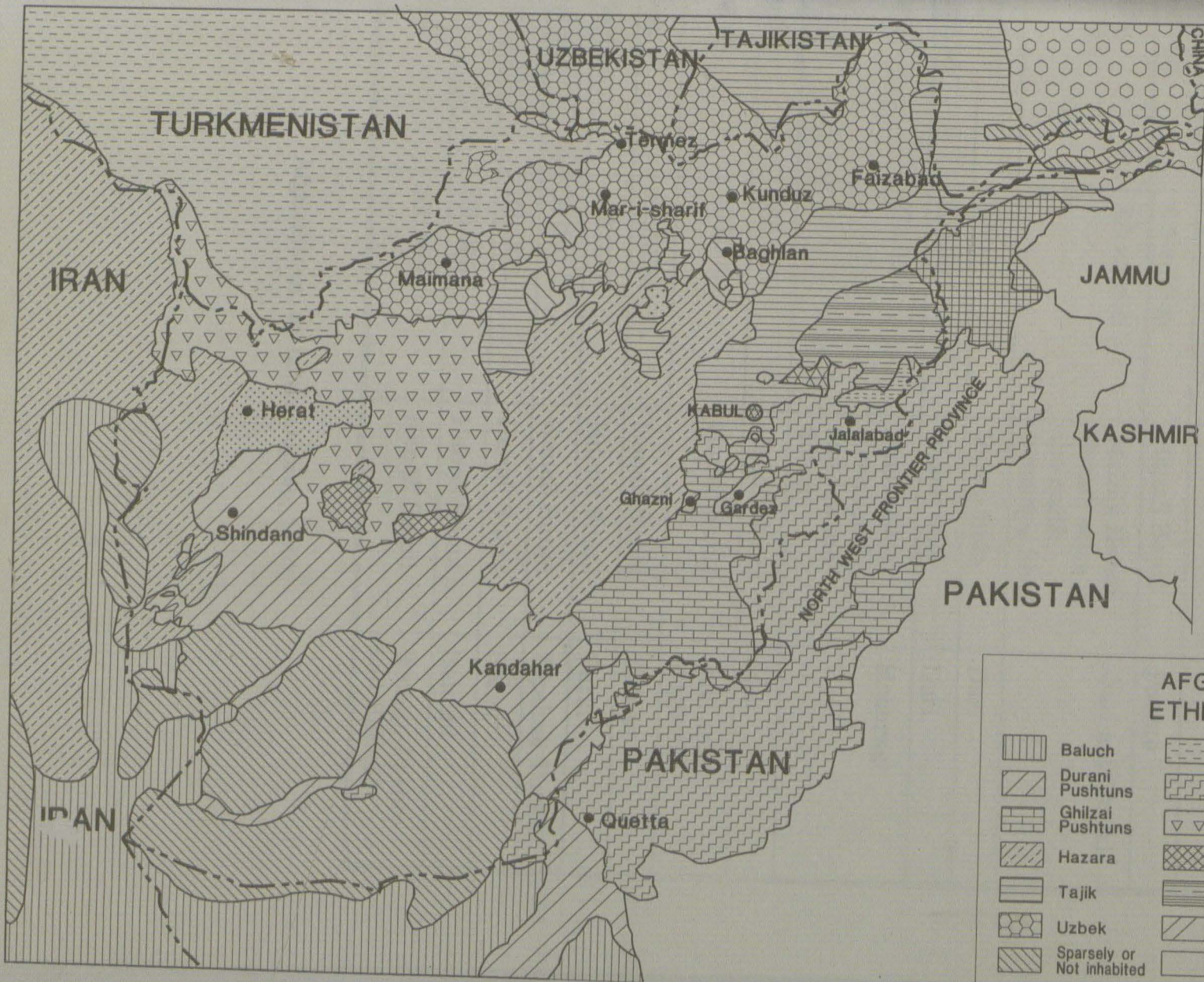
³⁶. Roy, n.7.pp.6-7.

³⁷. *POT, Afghanistan Series*, vol.XXI, no.32. (October 8, 1996), pp.161-2.

determines the nature and extent of nation building. The concern of this study is on the relation between tradition and Islamic political ideology as both have enabled the development of cultural symbols of common identity during a crisis. Islamic political ideology remains opposed to both socialism and capitalism. In the succeeding chapter we examine the nature and extent of the ethnic divisions along with the rising trends of ethno-politics.

CHAPTER - II

Ethnic Diversity in Afghanistan



AFGHANISTAN'S ETHNIC GROUPS

	Baluch		Turkmen		Tatar
	Durani Pushtuns		Other Pushtuns		Kirghiz
	Ghilzai Pushtuns		Chahar Aimak		Chitrali
	Hazara		Mughal		Pashai
	Tajik		Nuri		Safi
	Uzbek		Brahui		Miscellaneous Tribes
	Sparsely or Not inhabited		Area excluded From this study		International Boundry

ETHNIC COMPOSITION OF AFGHANISTAN

ETHNIC GROUP	APPROXIMATE POPULATION	RELIGION	LANGUAGE
Pashtun	6.5 million	Hanafi Sunni	Pashto
Tajik	3.5 million	Mainly Hanafi Sunni; some in the north Ismailiya Shia	Dari and Tajiki
Farsiwan	600,000	Imami Shia	Dari
Qizilbash	200,000	Imami Shia	Dari
Hazara	870,000	Imami Shia, Ismailiya Shia and few are Sunni	Hazaragi
Aimaq	800,000	Hanafi Sunni	Dari
Mughal	100,000	Hanafi Sunni	Dari and Mogholi
Uzbek	1 million	Hanafi Sunni	Uzbeki
Turkoman	125,000	Hanafi Sunni	Turkic
Kyrghyz	50,000	Hanafi Sunni	Kipchak Turkic
Nuristani	100,000	Hanafi Sunni	Kafiri
Baluch	100,000	Hanafi Sunni	Baluchi
Brahui	200,000	Hanafi Sunni	Brahui, Pashto and Baluchi

Source : Afghanistan, by Louis Dupree, 1980.

homeland in the north across Afganistan. The Farsiwan, or the Persian speakers, live in the western part in close proximity with Iran. The Baluchis occupy the south-western corner of Afghanistan. Brahui are Dravidian speakers living in the same general area as the Baluch. Nuristani, inhabit the eastern mountain range of Afghanistan and Pakistani Chitral. According to Dupree, about 3,000 of the Chitrali Kafirs still practice a Islamic religion. The Wakhi-Pamiri groups occupy into the mountains of Pakistan, and the Barbari of eastern Iran probably have an Aimaq or Hazara origin.² While displaying a plurality of ethnic groups the country also presents distinct plural cultures. This has acted as both a boon and a bane for the invading forces. Western romantics like Kipling, have caught the valour and glory of the Afghans.³ Even the Indian Noble laureate Rabindranath Tagore has talked of the puritan glory and simplicity of the Afghan in his *Kabuliwala*, a short story. After the Second World War and with the escalation of the Cold War, a trend emerged to contrast Afghan "tradition"

². *ibid.*p.57.

³. Rudyard Kipling, *Complete Verse : Definitive Edition* (New York, 1989).

and approved constitutional and legal changes in the country.⁶ Many of these institutions also conform to the Islamic view established in the *Quran*, the *Hadith* and the *Shariat*. Heavy reliance on the *Quranic* injunctions and the *Hadith* is considered to be fundamentalism of the *madarasa* (religious schools) while dependence on religious law, and practice of the *Shariat* is recognised as fundamentalism of the *Ulema*.⁷ The *Shariat* and its legal order seeks to protect the people against any economic injustice. It also provides a spiritual resource to the people when faced with any cultural invasion.⁸

In Afgh^hanistan there is on the one hand a constellation of closely knit groups (*qaum*), and a society founded upon the religious law, *Shariat* on the other. The *qaum* is regulated by the *Khans* or the local notables. They strive to enlarge their patronage by acting as judges in local disputes, thus extending their influence within the community.⁹

6. Rasul Baksh Rais, *War Without Winners*, (Karachi, 1994), p.18.

7. Roy, n.7.pp.3-5.

8. *ibid*,p.5.

9. *ibid.*,p.7.

In the Afghan society there is a contradiction between the town and the province. As Roy says that "there are really two Afghanistans : first there is the town (*Shahr*)--the place of innovation (*bidat*) the natural environment of the civil servant, teacher, soldier and the communist, all 'intellectuals' and 'bare-heads' (*sarluchak*), held to be unbelievers and arrogant; and second the province (*atraf*), the home of religion, tradition (*sunnat*) and values which stand the test of time ."¹⁰ In the town, politics (*siyasat*) is followed by the middle class and the students. Whereas, in the country-side the drama of politics revolves around the struggle for power, carried on by the *Khans*, or the local notables. However, "the stereotype which equates the town with progress and the countryside with tradition has little basis in reality. In both town and country there is a wide range of diversity; they are both constantly changing though there is a core of continuity."¹¹

Though Islam provides unity with its codified system of rituals restricted groups and tribal code also command

¹⁰. O. Roy, *Islam and Resistance in Afghanistan*, (Cambridge, 1985), p. 10

¹¹. *ibid.*, p. 11

allegiance e.g. *Pashtunwali*.¹² To identify oneself with Pashtun values is more important than to be identified with an ethnic group or a nation . For tribalism, amongst groups other than the Pashtun, the term can be used in the strict sense for the Nuristani and the Baluchi, but not for the Tajik and Uzbek. For the Hazara, tribalism has largely disappeared following the Pashtun conquest. The Aimaq are the most interesting, for they call themselves "tribes people", but nobody has ever been able to map out their territory and the names they use are often contradictory.¹³

The two major sects of Islam, are *Shia* and *Sunni*, -(born primarily because of disputes over political succession after Prophet Mohammad's death, rather than any religious differences)- predominate in Afghanistan.¹⁴ However, due to the prevalence of pre-Islamic and tribal practices Islam practised in Afghan villages, nomad camps, and most urban

¹². A.S.Ahmad, *Pukhtun Economy and Society* (London, 1980), pp. 181,193

¹³ . M.Elphinstone, *An Account of the Kingdom of Caubul*, vol. II, (Oxford, 1972), p. 2

¹⁴. Dupree, n.1. pp. 95-111.

areas would be almost unrecognisable to a Muslim scholar.¹⁵

But in spite of their common adherence to Islam, regional and tribal differences take precedence over their religious beliefs.

ETHNIC GROUPS: THE DIVERSITIES

Afghanistan is a cultural-mosaic and few of its ethnic groups are of indigenous origin.¹⁶ The people are racially and linguistically different. Louis Dupree has classified the Afghans into three 'physical types' viz. Caucasoid, Mongoloid and modified Australoid¹⁷ and their languages categorised under four major language families: Indo-European, Uralic-Altaiic, Dravidian and Semitic.¹⁸

Few Afghan groups have maintained racial homogeneity outside the Pashtun areas of south and east and even there breakdowns have begun to appear.¹⁹ Where groups have practised miscegenation for centuries, broad bands of ethnic

¹⁵. *ibid.*, p. 104.

¹⁶. *ibid.*, p. 57.

¹⁷. *ibid.*, pp. 57-65.

¹⁸. *ibid.*, pp. 59-64.

¹⁹. G.Maranjian, "The Distribution of ABO Blood Groups in Afghanistan", *American Journal of Physical Anthropology*, vol.X, (1958), p. 263.

gray zones exist within composite communities. When long contacts have existed between the Caucasoid and Mongoloid groups, particularly in northern Afghanistan among Tajik and Uzbek, red or blond hair, blue or mixed-eye combinations occur in association with epicanthic folds and high cheekbones.²⁰ Many darker-skinned Baluch and Brahui also have blue, green or mixed eyes. Even some of the Pashtuns tend to take daughters from the Uzbek and Tajik but Uzbek or Tajik men rarely marry Pashtun women.²¹

These ethnic groups, divided into the two major sects of Islam, have also developed local variations on Islam's major doctrines, by incorporating distinctive cults and beliefs that predate Islam . It is estimated that 80 percent of Afghans belong to the *Sunni* sect of Islam, while the rest mostly living in the more remote parts of the country, are *Shias*. Their exact number is not known, due to lack of an authentic census. It is, however, estimated that the Pashtuns constitute a near majority followed by Tajiks, Uzbeks, Hazaras and the rest of

²⁰. Dupree, n.1.p. 65.

²¹. *ibid.*, pp. 187-88.

the other ethnic groups.

The Soviet invasion of December 1979 has had its impact on the Afghan society According to Andrei Sakharov, about 600,000 died in the course of "the war of the villages."²² But the figures of Shevardnadze, the former Foreign Minister of the erstwhile Soviet Union, nearly one and a half million Afghans had been killed.²³ A degree of caution is therefore, appropriate when discussing the demographic statistics of Afghans. It appears that out of a pre-invasion population of approximately 13.05 million,²⁴ about 5.506 million Afghans had taken refuge in Iran and Pakistan by 1988.²⁵ The invasion has had its effect on the ethnic groups along with its impact on nation building.

²². A. Sakharov, "Neizbezhnost, Perestroiki," in Iu.N. Afanas'ev (ed.), *Inogo ne dane*, (Moscow, 1988), pp. 122-134.

²³. E. Shevardnadze, *The Future Belongs to Freedom*, (New York, 1991), p. 68.

²⁴. N.A. Khalidi, *Demographic Profile of Afghanistan*, Research Note no.106, International Population Dynamics Program, Department of Demography, Research School of Social Sciences, The Australian National University, (Canberra, 1989).

²⁵. M.K. Sliwinski "On the Route of 'Hijrat'". *Central Asian Survey*, Vol.VIII, no.4 (1989), pp. 69-93. Note : According to Weiner and Banuazizi, eds., "Introduction", *The Politics of Social Transformation in Afganistan, Iran and Pakistan* (New York, 1994), p.2. The Figure is Approximate Four Millions.

We now make an analysis of the various ethnic groups of Afghanistan :

Pashtun: The dominant Pashtuns have spread through all sectors of the country, although they are still concentrated in the mountainous regions of the east and the south. The origin of these people remains a mystery though some historians claim that they inhabited the hills between Afghanistan and the Indus river as early as the time of Alexander the Great. It is certain that they were in their traditional region when they converted to Islam between the eight and tenth centuries.²⁶

The Pashtuns are of *Hanafi Sunni* sect and speak Pashto language which belongs to Indo-European family. Their approximate population is around 6.5 million. They can be broadly categorised as belonging to the Mediterranean substock of the Caucasoid stock.²⁷

Most Pashtuns are farmers, but many mix agriculture with herding. Perhaps as many as one million of them are entirely nomadic. Nearly all are tribally organised. In a

²⁶. N.P. Newell and R.S. Newell, *The Struggle for Afghanistan (Ithaca, 1981)*, p. 23.

²⁷. Dupree, n.l. pp. 59-64.

changing political environment the Pashtun tribes have preserved their own forms of organisation and remain independent. Their independence is expressed through the autonomous enforcement of the tribal legal order-the *Pashtunwali*²⁸- it is simple but demanding. It demands vengeance against injury or insult to one's kin, chivalry and hospitality towards the helpless and unarmed strangers, bravery in battles and openness and integrity in individual behaviour. *Pashtunwali*, in short, is a code that limits anarchy among a fractious but vital people.

Pashtun tribalism has its own significance. An interplay between *Khan*, leadership and *Khel*, lineage,²⁹ makes up the Pashtuns', social structure. The Ghilzai Pashtuns, living on the eastern side are different from the Durranis. The former put into opposition the seats of government (*hukumat*) to the lands

²⁸. R.Hanger, "State, Tribe And Empire in Afghan Inter-Polity Relations" In R. Tapper, ed., *The Conflict Of Tribe and State in Iran and Afghanistan*, (London, 1983), pp. 83-118.

²⁹. J.W.Anderson "Khan and Khel : Dialects of Pakhtun Tribalism", In R.Tapper, ed., *Conflict of Tribe and State In Iran and Afghanistan*, (London, 1983), pp. 119-149.

of freedom or un restraint (*Yaghistan*).³⁰

A distinction can be made between the tribal structures of the Pushtuns of Afghanistan with those of Pakistan. The Durrani of Afghanistan had established an empire under Ahmad Shah Abdali in 1747. Abdali had taken the title of Durr-i-Dauran meaning 'Pearl of the Age'. On the contrary, the eastern Pashtuns have failed to establish any great empire. This could probably be due to the prevalence of two distinct levels of production zones. One was the segmentary, egalitarian, low-production zone categorised as *nang*, (honour) and the other based upon ranked groups with super and subordinate social positions, associated with irrigated lands and was termed as *qalang* (taxes and rents).³¹ The reason why *nang* tribes did not establish themselves politically or militarily may partly lie in the structure and organisation of the tribes, and in the economic and ecological limitations on such adventures.³²

³⁰. *ibid.*, p. 125.

³¹. A.S. Ahmad, "Tribes And States In Waziristan," In R. Tapper, ed., *The Conflict of Tribe and State in Iran and Afghanistan* (London, 1983), pp. 192-211.

³². *ibid.*, pp. 196-7.

Pashtuns make distinction between paternal (*kaka*) and maternal (*mama*) uncles. Kinship terms, therefore, reflect the masculine bias of the society, with emphasis on the patrilineal side.³³

When two ethnic groups begin to intermarry, the kinship terms reflect the process, and the terms of the dominant group. The Pashtuns take daughters from the Uzbeks and Tajiks, but even today, seldom do the Uzbek and Tajik males marry a female Pashtun.³⁴

Tajik: Tajik comprise the second largest ethnic community in Afghanistan, living in settled communities, usually, as farmers or towns people. Their religion is *Hanafi Sunni* though a few in the north belong to the *Ismaili Shia* sect. The Tajiks often identify themselves with geographic rather than kin-tribal designation. They call themselves Panjsheri, Andarabi etc.³⁵

Many of the Tajiks are the descendants of the families of

³³. Dupree, n.1.p. 187.

³⁴. *ibid.*, p. 188.

³⁵. *ibid.*, p.183.

refugees who came to Afghanistan from Fargana and other regions of former Soviet Central Asia in the 1920s and 1930s, after the turmoil of the Russian revolution, civil war and forced collectivization.³⁶ Since then contacts have flourished between the groups of Tajiks living on either side of an international border.³⁷ The civil wars and change of regime in Afghanistan and Tajikistan in 1992 resulted in an exodus of refugees from Tajikistan into Afghanistan and other Central Asian Republics, and another wave of Afghan refugees, mainly from Kabul, who took refuge in Tashkent, Dushanbe, Osh and Moscow etc.³⁸

The Tajiks speak Dari or Afghan Persian, Tajiki and Pashtu. These languages are of the Indo - European family. "Their tongue indicates that they and the Iranians share a common origin."³⁹ Their contribution to Afghanistan has been as productive farmers. With the onset of modernity, many

³⁶. Anthony Hyman "Central Asia's Relations with Afghanistan and South Asia", In P.Ferdinand, eds., *The New Central Asia And its Neighbours*, (London, 1994), pp. 76-78.

³⁷. *ibid.*, p.78.

³⁸. *ibid.*, pp. 78-79.

³⁹. Newell and Newell, n.26.p. 25.

Tajiks have become doctors, engineers, and have taken to teaching, and are involved in other professional courses.

With regard to their physical characteristics it can be said that they are of Mediterranean substock. However, due to the occurrence of miscegenation among the Uzbeks, Mongoloid attributes increase from south to north.⁴⁰ The Tajiks played a major role during the Soviet resistance. Many had joined the *Jamiat-i-Islami* of Burhanuddin Rabbani. Nonetheless regional diversities have been deep-seated and prevented the unity among the Tajiks of Afghanistan.⁴¹

Uzbek : Of the Turkish people dominating the extreme northern plains of Afghanistan, the most numerous are the Uzbeks. Numbering about one million they live near the Amu Darya (Oxus river). Their religion is *Hanafi Sunni* and they speak Uzbeki Turkic languages belonging to the Uralic-Altai family. Uzbeks still use old names of political units, popular during the great days of their power in Central Asia.

⁴⁰. Dupree, n.l.p. 59.

⁴¹. Raja Anwar, *The Tragedy of Afganistan : A First hand Account*, Translated from the Urdu by Khalid Hasan, (London, 1988), p.126.

The Uzbeks, like the Pashtuns, practice a mixture of farming and herding. Their most famous product are the fur of the lamb foetus, *karakul*- Persian lamb, and tribal rugs, usually woven by the women. Male Uzbeks are great horsemen and have developed *buzkashi*, a rugged variation of polo in which teams of horsemen vie in placing the corpse of a goat or a calf behind the opponent's goal, into the national sport.⁴²

Many Afghan Uzbeks are relatively recent migrants from the Soviet Central Asia. These people have developed economic and cultural relations with their ethnic community, living across the border, who now have their own sovereign republic in the Central Asia.

Hazara: The mountainous central region of Afghanistan is inhabited by the Hazaras. Stocky in built and Mongoloid in appearance, they have suffered much from the rigours of their climate and the intrusions of their neighbours. At present their population is about one million. Their religion is *Imami Shia*. But some are of *Ismailiya Shia* faith while a few are followers of the Sunni version of Islam. Their language is Hazaragi, a

⁴². Newell and Newell, n.26.p.25.

Dari dialect, of the Indo-European family.⁴³

The Hazaras had probably arrived in Afghanistan between A.D.1229-1447,⁴⁴ and are not descendants of the army of Chenghiz Khan, as is popularly believed. They constitute the majority of Afghanistan's *Shia* religious minority. The Hazaras have been under-privileged to an extent reminiscent of an out-caste in a caste society.⁴⁵ Religious difference, geographical separation, economic subordination and phenotype act together, constituting strong boundaries between them and the other ethnic community of the country.⁴⁶ Until their conquest by the Pashtuns, the Hazaras seem to have had a typically hierarchical Mongol tribal structure, presided over either by chiefs called *mir*, or *sultans* who exercised absolute power.

⁴³.Dupree, n.1 p. 60.

⁴⁴. E.Bacon, "An Enquiry into the History of the Hazara-Mongols of Afghanistan", *South Western Journal of Anthropology*, vol.VII (1951), pp. 230-47

⁴⁵. R. Canfield, Hazara Integration into the Afghan Nation : Some Changing Relations between Hazara and Afghan Officials, Occasional Paper, No. 3, The Afghan Council (New York, 1972), p. 6.

⁴⁶. K.B.Harpviken, "Transcending Traditionalism : The Emergence of Non-State Military Formations in Afghanistan", *Journal of Peace Research*, vol. XXXIV, No.3(1997),pp.271-287.

For the Hazara, their ethnic (*qaum*), political (*millat*) and religious (*mazhab*) identity are often one and the same thing. The three terms are often employed interchangeably, though *qaum* in Hazarajat means ethnic group rather than extended family. A feeling of cultural identity has developed, especially amongst the young intellectual émigrés and it has led to the emergence of a Hazara nationalism. Since the last four decades, labour migration has contributed largely to their economy. However, inequalities of wealth remain great among them.

Farsiwan The Farsiwan are *Imami Shiites* speaking Dari language. They number about 600,000 of which many are agriculturists. They live near the Iranian border Herat, Qandahar, Ghazni and other southern and western Afghan towns. Literary sources often mistakenly refer to them as Tajik.⁴⁷

The Farsiwan are of the Mediterranean substock and speak Dari, their language in different dialects. The farmers of western part of the country speak Iranian Farsi. The Heratis have an urban dialect of their own. The Kabulis speak

⁴⁷. Dupree, n.1, p. 59.

Brooklynese, another of Dari dialects.⁴⁸

In areas all over the world, words tend to develop distinctive dialectal qualities. This, explains the different vocabularies occurring in Dari dialects.⁴⁹

Qizilbash They are primarily an urban group scattered throughout the country. They are the descendants of military and administrative personnel left behind by Nadir Shah Afshar in the eighteenth century. Today many of them hold important bureaucratic and professional appointments. They are among the more literate groups in Afghanistan.⁵⁰

They mainly profess *Imami Shia* faith, although some use the *Shia* practice of *taqiya* (dissimulation), and pass for Sunni in order to escape discrimination. Their language is Dari and they belong to the Mediterranean substock.

Aimaq : Numbering about 800,000, the Aimaqs of the country practice *Hanafi Sunni* faith. They have been referred to as 'Chahar' ("Four" in Dari) 'Aimaq' (Turkish "tribe"). These

⁴⁸. *ibid.*, p. 70.

⁴⁹ D.N.Wilber, "Language and Society : The Case of Iran", *Behaviour Science Notes* vol.2, no.2.(1967), pp.22-30.

⁵⁰. Dupree, n.1.p.59.

people themselves never use "Chahar," unless prompted by the interrogator.⁵¹ They usually refer to themselves with their tribal designations. Those separated and living in Iran are called 'Barbari' or 'Berberi'. They speak Dari dialects with a mixture of Turkic vocabulary. They usually have of Mongoloid features, but these are much less pronounced than that of Hazara.⁵² Many of them are also of Mongoloid and Mediterranean admixture.

The Aimaq territory in Ghor province has witnessed a great growth in the teaching of Sufi doctrine.⁵³ The *pir*, spiritual master, of the Naqshabandi order, Baha'uddin Jan, had greatly influenced the Aimaqs until he was killed under the Taraki regime, together with two of his sons.

Mughal : Originally the Mughals were concentrated in Ghor but now several thousand of them live scattered though central and north Afghanistan. They probably dispersed from

⁵¹. *ibid.*, p.60.

⁵². *ibid.*, p. 60.

⁵³. Roy, n.7. pp. 41- 42.

their original area some 150 years ago.⁵⁴ The Mughals may be the descendants of the armies of Chinghiz Khan. Their features are Mongoloid with occasional Mediterranean admixture.

They belong to the *Hanafi Sunni* order. The language most of the Mughals speak, is Dari, with a few Mongolian words added every now and then. Many old men and women consider Mongholi of Uralic- Altaic family, to be the mother tongue of the group. Some southern Mughals also speak Pashto.⁵⁵

Turkoman : Primarily semi-sedentary and semi-nomadic and numbering around 125,000, the Turkomans live in northern Afghanistan. They are credited with introducing in the *karakul* sheep (Persian lamb), and the rug industry in Afghanistan during the 1920s. Many of these people had migrated from the Soviet Central Asia during the Basmachi revolts against the Bolsheviks.⁵⁶ The Turkoman women are famous for their carpets.⁵⁷ With such talents they are able to earn adequately

⁵⁴. H.F.Schurmann, *The Mongals of Afganistan : An Ethnography of the Mongols and Related People in Afganistan*, (The Hague, 1962), p.15.

⁵⁵. Dupree, n.1.p.60.

⁵⁶. *ibid.*, p. 61.

⁵⁷. Newell and Newell, n.26. p. 25.

to maintain a decent livelihood. They live in Herat, Andkhui Maimana, Daulatabad and Maruchak. They are of aquiline Mongoloid origin.⁵⁸

The Turkomans practice *Hanafi Sunni* religion and speak Turkic dialects. With the emergence of Turkmenistan republic in the north, the tribes are now demanding more autonomy from the centre.

Kyrghyz: Several thousands of them live in the Afghan Pamir Mountains. Because of the fury of nature they have to move their livestock seasonally, thereby leading nomadic lifestyle. They are tough and hardy and are of Mongoloid origin. Most of them are the descendants from the families of refugees who had migrated to Afghanistan from the Soviet Central Asia to escape from the wrath of the Red Army.⁵⁹

Their religion is *Hanafi Sunni* and speak Kipchak, a Turkic dialect of the Uralic- Altaic family of languages.⁶⁰ Though Afghanistan does not share its border with the infant

⁵⁸. Dupree, n.1, p. 61.

⁵⁹. Hyman, n.36. pp.76-79.

⁶⁰. Dupree, n.1, pp. 61-64.

republic of Kyrgyzstan, the last five years of civil war and movement of the people across national borders has complicated their problem.

Kazakhs : Like the other Central Asian ethnic groups, the Kazakhs, too, had migrated into Afghanistan in 1920s and 1930s. But with the emergence of Kazakhstan there was a flow of refugees, or rather, 'homecoming' of about 4,000 ethnic Kazakh refugees from Afghanistan and Iran.⁶¹ In the early 1980s, over 2,000 ethnic Kazakhs had been forced by war to leave their homes in Afghanistan and find refuge in Iran. The long overland journey of the Kazakhs, to their place of origin, was helped by co-ordination and funding from the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

For most of these Afghan-Kazakhs, Kabul and north Afghanistan had been their home for over six decades where they earned a living, and at the same time, maintained their cultural and ethnic identity.

Nuristani : The Nuristani live in the mountainous region north of the Khyber pass. They have never fitted comfortably

⁶¹. Hyman, n.36. pp. 78-79.

within the modern Afghan political system.⁶² Divided into five major tribes, their number is around 100,000.⁶³

These people were *kafirs* (non-believers) at first but were forcibly converted to Islam in the late nineteenth century. Despite their conversion they have remained a people apart. They have developed a distinct culture whose origin is disputed. Their usually light hair and blue or gray eyes have prompted suggestions that they are the descendants of the soldiers of Alexander the Great. The Nuristani tribes also maintain the institution of the *Khan*, whose status is primarily dependent upon the number of collective meals he can provide to the people living in the village.⁶⁴ For many years these people have been disadvantageously placed in matters of justice, taxation and economic competition. To cope with the pressures, Nuristani *Khans* have provided two types of service to their people: internal and external.⁶⁵ To maintain internal autonomy they

⁶². Newell and Newell, n.26. p.98.

⁶³. Dupree, n.1. p.62.

⁶⁴. S.Jones, *Men of Influence in Nuristan : A Study of Social Control and Dispute Settlement in Waigal Valley, Afghanistan* (New York, 1974).

⁶⁵. Newell and Newell, n.26. p. 98.

regulate and mediate affairs within the community. But this task has become increasingly complicated with the intrusions of external authority personified by the Governor and the police. Since Nuristanis were excluded from such offices, the *Khan's* responsibility was to maintain an effective shield of isolation against the tax collectors and other vexations.⁶⁶ The critical areas of external interference were the state laws, public education, (which was carried out in Dari, and Pashtu), and the development projects that threatened their control over the land and forests. Their ability to effectively counter these external influences had a direct correlation with their enhanced status.

Since Nuristan has occupied a strategic position, with its border in close proximity with Pakistan, the central authority have had reasons to be sensitive to its political situation. Therefore, few Nuristanis were recruited into the central military forces, and under Daud's republic they held senior ranks in both, the armed forces and the police. Efforts to integrate them into the Afghan polity has brought about mixed results.

⁶⁶. *ibid.*, pp. 98-99.

The Nuristanis now practice Hanafi Sunni religion. Their language is Kafiri, belonging to the family of Indo-European languages.⁶⁷ Their physique resembles those of the Mediterranean people, though there exists about one-third blondism in their population.⁶⁸

Baluch : There are nearly 100,00 Baluchis in the country. They were basically the caravaneers, nomads and were even used as slaves until the British ended slavery in the nineteenth century. Now few are semi-sedentary or semi-nomadic living in the north western region of Afghanistan. Due to climatic variations, they move from Sistan to Herat in the summer, and return to Sistan in the winter. Most Baluchis are of Rakhshani tribe, and their main sub-groups are Sanjarani, Nahrui, Yamarzai, Sumarzai, Gumshazai, Sarabandi, Miangul, Harut or Salarzai. A specialist Baluch group of hunter-fisherman, called the *Sayyad*, live in the Sistan town.⁶⁹ Some *Sayyeds* are Farsiwan as well. The Gauder, another Baluch group, specialise in cattle raising.

⁶⁷. Dupree, n.1. p. 62.

⁶⁸. *ibid.*, p. 62.

⁶⁹ *ibid.*, p. 62.

The Baluch are of Mediterranean substock with more branchycephalic tendencies.⁷⁰ Their religion is Hanafi Sunni and language is Baluchi, of the Indo-European family. Baluch are also found in the south-eastern Iran and Baluchistan province of Pakistan.

Brahui : They were usually the tenant farmers or hired herders for Baluch or Pashtun Khans. Their population is around 200,000 and most of the people live in the south western Afghanistan. They practice Hanafi Sunni religion. They speak Brahui, which belongs to the Dravidian language family. However, some of them also speak Pashto or Baluchi. They also refer to themselves as a Baluch sub-group. They belong to the Vedoid family with much of Mediterranean admixture.⁷¹

Other ethnic groups are negligible in number. Most of them have been integrated into the mainstream culture, thereby displaying very little cultural traits of distinctiveness. Some ethnic groups, like the Kohistani, have been used by the other dominant ethnic groups against the latter's apparent enemies.

⁷⁰. *ibid.*, p. 62.

⁷¹. *ibid.*, p. 62.

This ethnic rivalry primarily aims at the control of natural resources by one dominant ethnic group and its allies, at the cost of its potential adversaries.

MAJOR TRENDS IN ETHNO-POLITICS

The living standards of Afghans vary widely. In the fertile valleys, some families claim thousand of acres of land. Great wealth is amassed by the most successful of the banking and trading families. Also, a large number of bureaucratic and commercial elite have great fortunes in the real estate in and around Kabul. This wealth has little bearing on the minimal subsistence condition endured by many farmers and herders. These people have fought for land and water but the economic results were usually seen in terms of ethnic competition.⁷² The poverty of most Hazaras is partly seen as the result of their failure to keep Pashtuns and Uzbeks from intruding into the central highlands for the summer grazing of their herds. A similar struggle went on between the Uzbeks and the original Tajik residents of the north east. This struggle was aggravated by the arrival of

⁷². Newell and Newell, n.26. p. 78.

government -supported Pashtun settlers in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.⁷³ The Uzbeks gained control over the richest land in the lower level of the Kunduz river basin, leaving the narrower upland valleys to the Tajiks, while the Pashtuns established low-elevation camp grounds and claimed rights in upland grazing lands, often in competition with the other two communities.⁷⁴

Such competitions have created the need for land control, agriculture and herding throughout the country. The dominant realities behind social and economic relations are such political arrangements among the groups. Within the communities themselves, there are notable differences in wealth. Social values shared by all Afghans emphasise personal self-assertion. Rural politics is closely identified with the struggle of the household units to perpetuate themselves.

The years following the April revolution of 1978, gave

⁷³. *ibid.*, pp. 78-79.

⁷⁴. Thomas J. Barfield, "The Impact of Pushtul Immigration on Nomadic Pastoralism in North Eastern Afghanistan." In Jon W. Anderson and Richard F. Strand, eds., *Ethnic Processes and Inter-group Relations in Contemporary Afghanistan*, Occasional Paper No.15, Afghan Council of the Asia Society (Summer, 1978).

rise to a series of complications. The Nuristanis- who had a history of friction with the Pashtun tribes, and favoured a republican government- were made the targets for persecution by the Pashtun dominated *Khalq* regime. The Khalqis armed the Nuristanis neighbours, with an intention of extending their sway in Nuristan.

The Nuristanis were branded as infidels, despite their devotion to Islam.⁷⁵ Their wooden houses in the villages were bombed. Pashtun tribal auxiliaries and police units were deployed against them, with little success. The Nuristanis fought for their political autonomy within their own mountains and so long as they maintained an escape route into Pakistan, their tactical advantage was difficult to overcome.⁷⁶

A similar situation was noticed in the Hazarajat, the central highland region. Hazaras are the largest group that has been constantly oppressed by the Pashtuns. Like the Nuristanis, the bulk of the Hazara population was not

⁷⁵. Newell and Newell, n.26. p. 100

⁷⁶. *ibid.*, p. 100.

brought under effective central control until the 1890s. Since then, they have found it difficult to subsist in the arid mountains. The nomadic groups-Pashtun, Uzbek, Turkoman-have taken over highland pasturage and used the profits from the merging networks of modern trade to buy up some of the best irrigated land.⁷⁷ Therefore, the Hazara labour force migrates seasonally to the cities, particularly Kabul, to look for work. Because of their association with the Shia branch of Islam they are, at times, treated as inferior.

In the years following the Second World-War, movement from rural areas to urban centres had occurred. Hired labour force, army corps, and professional groups came in contact with opportunities outside their kin-oriented, socio-economic-political structure. In many cases these people had accepted leaders within their own informal groups.⁷⁸

Kinship, however, still substitutes for government in most areas and social, economic, and political reciprocal rights and obligations function effectively within the extended

⁷⁷. *ibid.*, p. 101.

⁷⁸. Dupree, n.1 pp. 191-2.

family.

The Pashtun dominance had continued during the communist regime. Most of the leaders like Taraki, Amin, Karmal, Najibullah etc. came from the Pashtun ethnic group. Being habituated to rule, the Pashtuns were very critical of the Tajik-dominated Mujahideen regime. Some of them, who felt a loss of the Pashtun-pride in the years following the communist rule, now have a sense of satisfaction in the post-Taliban era. Now, the Tajik and Uzbek fear the dominance of the Pashtuns. These minority groups are anxious to maintain their distinctness and are even trying to garner international support.

Of late, the Afghan society has undergone a major upheaval. This is primarily due to the relationship between the various Afghan regimes on the one hand, and the nature of geo-political strategy of the foreign powers, on the other hand. These foreign powers have funded few projects in Afghanistan but have also exploited the ethnic groups for their own narrow interests. These foreign powers "formed parties and organisations and selected leaders and

commanders of their own choice for those parties and organisations. They supplied arms and accorded recognition only to those parties whom they favoured.”⁷⁹ Thus, these powers laid the ground work for what Rubin has termed ‘The Fragmentation of Afghanistan.’⁸⁰

⁷⁹. A. Rasul Amin, *Afghanistan : Through a Critical Phase of History* (Peshawar, 1996), p. 7.

⁸⁰. 1. Barnett R. Rubin, “The Fragmentation of Afghanistan”, *Foreign Affairs*, vol. DXVIII, no.5 (Winter 1989-90), pp.150-68.

CHAPTER - III

Great Power Interest and the Making of Modern Afghanistan

THE MAKING OF MODERN AFGHANISTAN

The modern state of Afghanistan took shape when British India and Tsarist Russia sought to fulfil strategic gains in the region. The two Great-Powers intended to protect their routes of communication and to insulate their empires from one another. As a result Afghanistan became a legitimate buffer state for indirect rule. The identity of the state reflected the geopolitical and geostrategic needs of the contending Great Powers rather than the socio-political structures within its borders.

Earlier, in the nineteenth century security dilemma had led to two Anglo-Afghan wars, the first in (1839-42) and the second in (1878-80). In the succeeding years northern frontier of Afghanistan comprising the Russian- Turkestan, was demarcated in 1885-87 and 1895, while the southern and eastern frontiers with British India were outlined in the Durand Agreement of 1893 and demarcated in 1894-96. Earlier, in 1872, the western frontier with Iran was demarcated. Within these limits Abdul Rahman had established a strong centralised

government. The consolidation of Afghanistan as a buffer state had resolved the security dilemma for both Britain and Tsarist Russia.

Although the Afghan government had not recognised the demarcation of the Pashtun tribal area on the Afghan frontier, it did not seek to antagonise British India for its own benefit. A governmental control had to be consolidated in modern Afghanistan. The Durrani confederation, (one of the three major groups of tribes from Afghanistan's pre-eminent ethnic group- the Pashtun), which had a long tradition of rule.¹ In alliance with the British, Abdul Rahman Khan, belonged to the Muhammadzai clan of the Barakzai tribe of Durrani-Pastun, the project of turning Afghanistan into a pacified nation-state with a centralised government. Rubin cites that the basic state structure that he had created- "a Pashtun ruler whose administration used a nominally centralised bureaucracy and army, as well as strategic foreign aid, to encapsulate a variety

¹. Barnett R. Rubin, *The Search for Peace in Afghanistan : From Buffer State to Failed State*, (New Haven, 1995), pp.19-20.

of local social structures-largely endured until 1992."²

However, the Amir's grandson, King Amanullah Khan, struck at the power of religious establishment and alienated the *Ulema*, who rose in protests, and he encountered the loss of Islamic legitimacy.³ Amanullah's discontinuation of tribal allowances, abolition of the role of tribal *Khans* in administration, and abuse of the *Loya Jirga*, the Grand Assembly, resulted in alienating the tribal leadership. Thus when, *Bacha-i-Saqao* (son of water-carrier), had led a coup d'etat against his regime, the Durrani of Kandahar had refused his appeal for aid.⁴ Only the Hazaras, who were granted full citizenship and the right to celebrate *Shia* rituals in public, continued to support him. After a nine-month impasse, during which *Bacha-i-Saqao* controlled the territory, the British aided the establishment of a new dynasty under one of *Amanullah's* former generals Nadir Shah. He was assassinated in 1933 and

². *ibid.*, p.21.

³. Barnett R. Rubin *The Fragmentation of Afghanistan : State Formation and Collapse in the International System* (New Haven, 1995), p.57.

⁴. *ibid.*, p.58.

succeeded by his nineteen-year old son, Zahir Shah, who reigned until 1973.

Zahir Shah belonged to the Musahiban family. For the first two decades of his reign his uncles had controlled the government as Prime Ministers.⁵ In 1953, his cousin, Muhammad Daud Khan seized control and became the Prime Minister. From 1963 to 1973 Zahir Shah had tried to rule by developing a constitutional monarchy. Daud had been divested of his powers. So, in 1973 Daud ousted Zahir Shah, abolished the monarchy and ruled as the president of the Republic of Afghanistan until he and most of his family were executed by the PDPA in 1978.

COLD WAR AND AFGHANISTAN.

Zahir Shah assumed power at a time when the external threat to Afghanistan was minimal. However, within the country there was a breakdown of state control and the re-emergence of tribal power. The Mushahiban had to compromise with the rural power holders. The sources of revenue had diminished, as taxes on agriculture had declined. For

⁵. *ibid.*, p.58.

development the country sought foreign aid. It had to look for an ally within close proximity of its frontiers. The withdrawal of the British from India, and the partition of the latter into two sovereign states, had left the infant state of Pakistan on its eastern borders. The relations between the two turned hostile with the emergence of the issue of 'Pashtunistan', the home of the Pashtuns. This led to Afghanistan circumventing its dependence on Pakistan for access to the international market. Since transport route to Iran had not been developed, the only alternative was through Soviet Central Asia.

When Daud became the Prime Minister in 1953, he accepted the Soviet offer of assistance. It led to international realignments in South Asia. As Rubin states, "India and Afghanistan received military equipment from the Soviet union, which supported their positions on regional issues, while Pakistan received similar supplies and support from the United States and, later, China,"⁶

In 1954, the Soviet agreed to assist Daud and they offered a \$100 million line of credit for development and other

⁶. *ibid.*, p.65.

aid. After 1956, the United States competed with the Soviet Union in offering development aid.⁷ Till 1973, foreign grants and loans accounted for 80 percent of Afghan investment and development expenditure. As Fry remarks, that even to pay for the 20 percent of projects earmarked for local financing or to operate other projects, the Afghan government had lots of difficulties.⁸ Afghanistan had, however, no control over its foreign aid and a sharp decline could precipitate an acute fiscal crisis in the state, which did occur in 1966. Because of such dependence of Afghanistan upon foreign agencies, it has been termed as a 'rentier state' by Rubin.⁹

The impact of all the external aid was the proliferation of weapons in Afghanistan. Although foreign aid was also used to finance developmental projects like health, education, agriculture, transportation and communication, industry and mines, the accumulation of weapons led to the creation of large

⁷. *ibid.*, p.65.

⁸. Maxwell J.Fry, *The Afghan Economy : Money, Finance and the Critical Constraints to Economic Development* (Leiden, 1974), p.158.

⁹. Rubin, n.3 pp.62-73.

scale turmoil in the years to come.

State building strategy of the government had a direct correlation with foreign aid, as the former's role of a distributive agency was limited by the availability of foreign resources. The government had become more independent of the tribes, peasants and *Ulema*. The education system was now churning out newly educated intellectuals. These intellectuals had opposed any compromise that the regime sought to make with the traditional forces. Daud invested heavily in the expansion of this class and widened opportunities for the teachers, bureaucrats and army officers. These people needed political fora for seeking state power but Zahir Shah never signed any legislation which sought to legalise the political parties. However, the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) founded in 1965, tried to accommodate the grievances of the people. It was used effectively by Daud. Daud had also appointed members of the PDPA to key posts in the army. These leaders were mostly Soviet-trained military officers. They belonged to the *Parcham*, (Banner) faction of PDPA and had a tilt towards the Soviet Union. These intellectuals now began to

struggle for state power.

During the Cold War, the Soviet leaders supported communist movements in those countries whose non-alignment with the West served Soviet interests. Afghanistan was one such country to benefit from this policy. United States and its allies too gave aid to it. There emerged a tacit collaboration between the donors.¹⁰ The Soviet Union had become the largest aid donor. From 1956 to 1978 Soviet aid to Afghanistan had been "\$1,265 million in economic aid and roughly \$1,250 million in military aid" whereas the United States provided "\$533 million in economic aid."¹¹ Afghan military elite were trained in Soviet Union and USA. Bradsher and Kakar¹² have different figures, however, Bradsher puts the figure to 3,725 Afghan military officers trained in Soviet Union and 487 in the United States. Kakar puts the figure to 7000 trained in the USSR and Czechoslovakia and 600 trained in the United States.

¹⁰. Louis Dupree, *Afghanistan* (Princeton, 1973), pp. 526-30.

¹¹. Henry S. Bradsher, *Afghanistan and the Soviet Union*, (Durham, 1985), pp. 24-25, 29.

¹². M.Hasan Kawun Kakar, "The Fall of the Afghan Monarchy in 1973" in *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, no. 9 (May, 1978), p.212.

Afghanistan had exploited its geo-strategic location to secure foreign aid and support. The foreign economic aid was instrumental in financing the governmental expenditures. Every year from 1958-1968, and again from the mid 1970s upto the withdrawal of the aid in 1991, about 40% of the state expenditure came from foreign aid. The country had become in Luciani's term an "allocation state",- a state where about 40 percent of the state revenue is dominated by oil or other foreign sources, or the state expenditure constitutes a substantial share of the GDP.¹³ Afghanistan however, fulfilled only the first criterion and not the second one, as its state expenditure did not constitute a large share of the GDP.

ROLE OF EXTERNAL INFLUENCES ON AFGHANISTAN'S ETHNO-POLITICS

The massive flow of capital into the countries around the Persian Gulf had created enormous job opportunities. Iran under the Shah, with aid from United States, had used the

¹³. Giacomo Luciani, "Allocation vs Production States : A Theoretical Framework" in Hazem Beblawi and Giacomo Luciani, eds., *Nation, State and Integration in the Arab World*. vol.II; *The Rentier State* (London, 1987), pp. 49-82.

money to become a regional power. Daud's Afghanistan had also become ~~became~~ a beneficiary of the oil boom. The State's fiscal position was strengthened by higher revenues from natural gas and from foreign exchange derived from remittances sent back by the Afghans working in the Persian Gulf.¹⁴

After the oil boom of 1973 Iran provided great opportunities for both the Afghan state and the Afghan people. Labour migration had increased and those who went to work were the *Shia*-Hazaras and the Farsiwan and their remittances enriched the previously marginal social groups.¹⁵ It created resentment among the Pashtun government officials whose relative well being was deteriorating. Another contribution of the labour migration was that it had removed the control of the rural tribal society and exposed them to an urban setting. These people came into contact with both leftist and militant Islamic movements taking shape in Iran.

In October 1974, an agreement between Iran and Afghanistan had been worked out. The former was to furnish

¹⁴. Rubin, n.3. p. 74.

¹⁵. *ibid.*, p. 74.

the latter with \$2 billion in aid, over a decade, which was almost equal to the total sum received from all sources during the Cold War.¹⁶ Money was to be used for building railroad, linking Kabul, Ghazni, Kandahar and Herat to the Iranian port of Bandar Abbas. This was to remove Afghanistan's dependence on either the Soviet Union or Pakistan for its access to the trade routes.

The Shah of Iran had also asked his secret police SAVAK, to assist Daud in setting up a similar organisation in Kabul. Military training agreements with Egypt and India were sought, where the Afghan officers "could learn to use Soviet-supplied equipment without direct exposure to the Soviets."¹⁷

With external aid in hand, Daud now set out on an autocratic control. He began by removing the *Parchamis* from the higher offices in the government, whose help he had taken to remove Zahir Shah in 1973. However by 1978, the *Khalq* had become well organized and they participated in the *Saur* Revolution. The *Khalq* leaders belonged to the Ghilzai tribe¹⁸

¹⁶. *ibid.*, pp. 74-75.

¹⁷. *ibid.*, p. 75.

which was hostile to the Durrani *Parchamis*, who were closer to the Soviet camp had formed an alliance with the *Khalqi*. Together they executed a coup on 27th April, 1978. Daud and his family members were executed. Now Noor Muhammad Taraki and Hafizullah Amin the two *Khalq* leaders took over the control of the affairs of the country.

Immediately after the coup, the Marxists organised a central revolutionary committee which appointed Taraki the President of the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan and the Prime Minister of its Cabinet. Amin along with a Parcham leader, Babrak Karmal were appointed the deputy prime ministers.

Most of the *Khalq* leaders were Pashto leaders who came from the Pashtun ethnic group living in eastern Afghanistan. But these leaders belonged to the Ghilzai, the largest among the Pashtuns, who had constantly opposed the monarchy and the rule of Daud. The monarchy and Daud belonged to the Muhammadzai branch of the Durrani tribe¹⁸ as few of the

¹⁸. Nancy P. Newell and Richard S. Newell, *The Struggle for Afghanistan*, (Ithaca, 1981), p.73.

Parcham leaders came from the royal family the animosity was also tribal. The *Khalq* who were more tightly organised than the *Parcham*, emerged victorious in the power struggle following the April Revolution. The *Parchamis* were purged. Karmal was expelled from the party, (PDPA), and banished abroad.

The *Khalq* began to imprison the surviving members of the royal family. They also expelled other Soviet-inclined Marxists from their posts. Many were imprisoned and a few others executed. The *Khalq* was alienating the Soviets by their acts. In order to gain mass support and legitimacy they were becoming less revolutionary and more nationalistic than the Moscow-dependent *Parchamis*. They also introduced a series of reforms to win the favour of the poor. Land reforms, prohibition of marriage before the age of 18, forced female Marxist education and interference with the traditional marriage-system only alienated the *Khalqi* from the masses. In March 1979, there were protests in Herat, which had a strong *Shia* minorities with an orientation towards Iran. The *Khalq* government blamed Iran for these protests.

The *Khalq* leadership had formed a government of

"national deliverance" on 1 April 1979 and became dependent upon the Soviets for military and economic support. Amin had now come close to effectively controlling the government and he became the Prime Minister. There emerged a bitter struggle between Taraki and Amin for leadership in which the latter emerged victorious. On October 9 1979 the Kabul Radio announced the death of Taraki due to some undisclosed illness.

Although Amin gained control of the movement in the country, his freedom to act was limited. The Soviets had penetrated the Afghan defence forces. There was a rift in the army. The government recruited educated Afghan youths to balance the Soviet's influence. The relations between Amin and the Soviets turned hostile. The uprising in the country against the *Khalq* was gaining momentum. It was in these circumstances that the Soviets reacted by armed intervention in Afghanistan on December 27, 1979 following which Amin was executed.

The United States which had supported the Shah of Iran was not in a position to react as the Shah had been ousted in an Islamic revolution and the U.S. was busy resolving the Iranian

crisis. The military regime of Pakistan had hanged the former Prime Minister of the country Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, and had alienated the masses. Iran's Islamic government was yet to consolidate itself. The Soviets had, thus, perceived a 'low-risk' situation and were sure of a "quick victory through military intervention".¹⁹ They defended the invasion on the basis of November 1978 Treaty of Friendship and Article 51 of the U.N. Constitution.

SOVIET INVASION AND THE GLOBAL RESPONSE

Though the Soviet invasion was sudden, the ground work had begun in the mid 1960s. The invasion rested on several assumptions about the Soviet ideology, its political system and its role as a global power.²⁰ Its goal of world socialist transformation, in particular through support of class wars and socialist and national liberation movements promoted her entry

¹⁹. Rasul B Rais, *War Without Winners : Afghanistans Uncertain Transition After the Cold War*, (Karachi. 1994), pp.86-87.

²⁰. *ibid.*, p.67.

into international conflict.²¹ The Soviet Union was optimistic about a Marxist-Leninist revolution in the Third World societies where it had invested heavily. Thus geo-political constraints coupled with geo-strategic factors had necessitated the Soviet action.

However, another perspective that attempts to explain the Soviet invasion is that of deflecting attention from its domestic problems by gaining victories in the foreign countries.²²

The Soviet invasion represented the hegemonic globalism of the Soviet Union. Till April 1978 revolution, when Taraki had assumed power, Washington was not interested in stepping into Britain's shoes and replaying the 'Great Game' in Afghanistan. Now, the US wanted to drag its global rival into a long drawn battle. Its aim was to defame the Soviet Union, bleed it, defeat it and take revenge for the Vietnam war. Communist China, too, aided the Afghans against its rival within the communist camp due to the Soviet policy of expansionism. Other regional

²¹. Richard Pipes, *US-Soviet Relations in the Era of Détente* (Boulder, 1971), pp. 135-214.

²². Adam B. Ulam, *Expansion and Coexistence : The Soviet Foreign Policy 1917-73* (New York, 1974).

powers supported the Afghans due to the disturbance of economic, military and strategic balance at regional and global levels and the resultant threat to the petroleum wells in the countries of the Middle-East.²³

The Soviet intervened to enable the Afghan Marxist regime survive. They charged that the United States, China, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia sought to combine to destroy the Marxist regime in Kabul. The United States had recruited Afghanistan's neighbour, Pakistan, into both Central Treaty Organisation, CENTO and South East Asia Treaty Organisation, SEATO. It was to develop as a 'northern tier'.²⁴ These strategic factors too had necessitated the Soviet reaction. The Soviets argued that the invasion introduced no change in the international situation and that the khalq government was thoroughly dependent on the Soviet support for more than a year and that Soviet Union had already been involved militarily. According to this argument the change represented by the

²³. A.Rasul Amin,, *Afghanistan : Through a Critical Phase of History*, (Peshawar, 1996), p. 2.

²⁴. N.D.Palmer and H.C.Perkins, *International Relations* (New Delhi, 1985), pp. 583-4.

introduction of 100,000 troops in addition to the 10,000 military personnel the Soviets had previously sent, was a matter of degree not of kind.²⁵ The change was however fundamental and not incremental. The situation was altered totally. Overt aid had ensured Soviet influence in almost all sectors of Kabul's official life. Covert connections were almost entirely limited to the very small but rapidly growing segment of the modern educated class. These strategically placed leaders who had been trained in the Soviet Union, were to assist in the days to follow.

With the Soviet invasion had come the slogans "workers have no land, modesty and chastity of women are feudal attributes, and feudal-lords (national elders) are usurpers and enemies of the people."²⁶ These slogans, writes Amin, attempted to undermine the values of Afghan patriotism. As modesty and chastity of women and protection of private property are given sacred term of honour (*namoos*) by Afghans, it made them furious and there was a spontaneous rebellion

²⁵. Newell and Newell, n.18 pp. 109-10.

²⁶. Amin, n.23 p. 2.

against the infidels and their agents.²⁷

The Soviet invasion represented the beginning of the 'Soviet -imperialism', in Afghanistan which was very different from the nineteenth century Tsarist expansionism. A technologically powerful Soviet Russia, armed with the most sophisticated weapons, had indulged in armed aggression against one of its Asian neighbours. It was the second attempt by the Soviets to annex a developing country, after they had made Mongolia a satellite state in 1925. The unilateral attempt to use force against a Third World country incurred the wrath of many nations. However, most of the countries responded keeping in view their interests and influence in Afghanistan.

The American response to the invasion was strong. The then President Jimmy Carter accused the Soviets of 'blatant violation of the accepted rules of international behaviour' and warned of 'serious consequences' if the Soviets did not withdraw.²⁸ But in reality America had conceded Afghanistan. The consequences was the boycott and embargo actions and the

²⁷. *ibid.*, p. 4.

²⁸. Newell and Newell, n.18 p. 194.

general chilling of U.S. relations with the Soviet Union. Part of America's difficulty lay in the fact that it was geo-strategically disadvantaged due to Afghanistan's location. It could only hope for a sort of miracle which could necessitate Soviet withdrawal. It had to offset this disadvantage by establishing strong ties with the other regional governments that feared Soviet invasion.²⁹

The Islamic nations of the region also condemned the invasion. The growing sense of confidence in the potency of Islam was manifested in the special emergency meeting of the foreign ministers of the Organisation of Islamic Conference, held in January 1980, at the Pakistani capital, Islamabad. A Resolution was adopted which deplored the Soviet invasion as a flagrant violation of international laws, covenants and norms, specially (teh) Charter of United Nations. It demanded the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of all the Soviet troops present in the Afghan territories. It called upon all the members to withdraw aid and assistance to the Soviet held Afghanistan and also to boycott the Olympic Games, scheduled to be held in

²⁹. *ibid.*, p.195.

Moscow in July 1980.

At another meeting of the foreign ministers of Organisation of Islamic Conference, in May 1980, at Islamabad they resolved to end the Soviet military intervention. Its resolution also called upon all the states to respect the sovereignty, territorial integrity, political independence, non-aligned status and the Islamic identity. It affirmed the right of the Afghan people to choose their own political and socio economic systems, to oppose the interference of any super power in the affairs of any Islamic country, to bring about peace and prosperity in the region and to defuse the international hostilities. The resolution sought ways and means to convene an international conference under the auspices of the United Nations or, otherwise, to bring about an end to the grave crisis in Afghanistan.³⁰

The two conferences marked the beginning of interference of the Islamic nations in Afghanistan, the lead being taken by Pakistan. However none of these countries were exclusively concerned about the safety of the Afghans or sought

³⁰. *New York Times*, 30 January, 1980, p. A13.

to understand the socio-economic peculiarities and hardships to be faced by their brethren in Afghanistan. In fact the "neighbouring Muslims countries exploited the national tragedy of Afghanistan for their own national interest, ignoring the peculiar historical, social and political realities of the Afghan society," alleges A. Rasul Amin.³¹

THE EMERGENCE OF AFGHAN RESISTANCE

Though much of the details remain obscure, nonetheless, it is possible to trace the origin of the opposition to the Soviet invasion. Under the khalq regime the Nuristani, Tajik and Hazara had revolted. The uprisings in the tribal zones multiplied. In the non-tribal Pashtun zones, Islamist militants had influenced the revolts. For Roy the resistance movements were of three types non-tribal, tribal and *Shiite*.³²

The uprisings had an impact on the ethnic groups. We now examine the various ethnic groups and their method of resistance. The Pashtun communities of the north were slower

³¹ Amin, n.23.p. 7.

³². Oliver Roy, *Islam and Resistance in Afghanistan* (Cambridge, 1986), p. 103.

to revolt than the Tajiks. This was born from community solidarity between the Pashtun minority of the region and the government officials who came from the same background, and who had traditionally acted as their protectors.³³ In the south, where Pashtuns were in a majority, many had also joined the *Hizb-i-Islami* of Gulbuddin Hikmatyar who was organising a resistance against the communists. The Durrani tribes waited to see how things would turn out. This attitude reflected the attributes of high aristocracy. With time, the Pashtuns got involved in the resistance, as the atheistic rule of the infidels through their puppet, had run counter to their own values.

Several major Pashtun Tribes like the *Waziris*, *Mohmands*, *Afridis* and *Yusufzais* recognised dangers to themselves. Their proximity to the Pakistan border, which was virtually unsealable and facilitated both refuge and supplies to them.³⁴ No previous government had survived without strong Pashtun support. The isolated campaigns had spread until they involved all sections of the populations, including many in the

³³. *ibid.*, pp. 103-4.

³⁴. Newell and Newell, n.18 p. 103.

cities, who hitherto had remained unaffected.

The Tajiks, more than any other groups, formed the backbone of resistance in the north.³⁵ They were sensitive to the Pashtun domination. Earlier, when the *Khalqi* government had brought radical reforms, its activities were seen as a new wave of Pashtun interference rather than as an effort to bring deliverance to the masses. Their resistance to the Soviet invasion lay in the fact that the Pashtuns had always been supported by the Soviets. Even on the issue of Pashtunistan, raised by Daud in 1950s to consolidate himself, the Soviets had supported the Pashtuns and alienated the other minority ethnic groups, who feared a Pashtun domination. They had also been in constant contact with their cousins across the Soviet Central Asia, and therefore had first-hand knowledge of the Marxist rhetoric and Soviet deeds.

Many Tajiks had joined the *Jamiat-i-Islami* of Burhanuddin Rabbani. Rabbani had a broad background of classical culture, religious orthodoxy and political Islamism and was willing to work with the traditional *Ulema*. The movement

³⁵. *ibid.*, p. 101.

had gained ground when its troops, led by Ahmad Shah Masud with an effective strength of 20,000 fighters had mounted an all-out offensive against the Soviet backed regime.

The Nuristanis too viewed the Soviets as assisting the Pashtuns. They had a history of friction with the Pashtun and it was but natural that to protect their independence and honour they would jump into the resistance.³⁶ Since their territory lies adjacent to the Pakistan border, the supply of arms into the region was not a big problem. They were fighting against a foreign power which sought to dominate them in their mountains and valleys. Their Khan had played an important role in the struggle.

Olivier Roy says that people of Nuristan were divided into two groups on the basis of socio-political criterion, the influential families became traditionalists and the mullahs fundamentalist.³⁷ In Nuristan fronts had come up which had more than an ephemeral existence and which were independent of the Peshawar parties.³⁸ The well established independent front was the *dawlat* of Nuristan, a Wahhabi republic, under

³⁶. *ibid.*, pp.99-101.

³⁷. Roy, n.32.p. 111.

³⁸. *ibid.*, p. 137.

the leadership of Maulawi Afzal.³⁹

The Uzbeks, who live in the north where much of Afghanistan's industry is located, had been anti-Pashtun. Many had bitter experience of life under the Soviets.⁴⁰ Among the Uzbek ethnic group, the traditional structures had broken down and they were, therefore, more receptive to modernisation. Initially, they had remained unaffected by the resistance going on around them, except in the lands of Tajiks and Hazaras, where they had become involved in the movement.

The Hazara represented the core of the *Shia* movement in Afghanistan. They played a strategic role in the resistance movement as their land was concentrated in the central mountains. Since 1981, the Russians had abandoned any pretensions of controlling this region. The *Shia* party *Harakat-i-Islami*, and who were of urban background, which was dominated by the Qizilbash, had established itself along the borders of Hazarajat.⁴¹

In the sixties educated Hazara youth had become politicised. They

³⁹. *ibid.*, p. 138.

⁴⁰. Richard Tapper 'Introduction' In Richard Tapper ed., *The Conflict to Tribe and State in Iran and Afghanistan* (London, 1983), p. 41.

⁴¹. Roy, n.32 p. 139.

had either turned to Maoism or became the followers of Khomeini. They founded organisations which were both Marxist and nationalist,⁴² such as *Hizb-i-Moghol* where the Hazara nationalists traced their origins to the Mongols and the *Tanzim-i-Nasl-i-now-i Hazara-yi Moghol*, organisation of the new Mongol Hazara generation. The followers of Khomeini became politicised under the cover of cultural associations founded at Kabul and Kandahar. When the Soviet invasion occurred, there were uprisings in the region. However, when the Soviet stopped their military operation in 1981, schisms appeared. The *Shura-yi inqilabi-yi Hifaqh-i islami-yi Afghanistan* ("Revolutionary Council of the Islamic Union of Afghanistan") with Sayyad Beheshti as president was split three ways. The secularists, which included the Mir and the left were at one extreme. Its organisation, known as *Tanzim* was based at Quetta. At the other end were the radical Islamists which included the Sheikhs who had supported the Iranian revolution and who accused the mir of 'feudalism' and the Sayed of corruption and nepotism. The Sayyad dominated the clerical centre. In the struggle for power Radi sought an alliance with the pro-Iranian Hazara party, Nasr to oust Beheshti. So, the anti-Soviet movement had disintegrated which benefited the Soviets.

⁴². *ibid.*, p.140.

The Soviets sought to undermine the unity of opposition to the regime by promoting Soviet-Style 'nationalities' policy.⁴³ By this act they sought to assimilate the non-Pashtun groups of the north which had their kin living in the Soviet central Asia. Other ethnic groups like the Baluches, Brahuis had either gone to Iran or Pakistan to join their counterparts in the resistance movement.

The most effective resistance operations had taken place among the Tajik in the Panjshir valley. The Pashtuns, a major tribal group, were less successful in pursuing traditional guerrilla activities against the regime. This was because of their inability to co-ordinate effectively, as, they were frequently pre-occupied with their own tribal conflicts. Tribal and ethnic ties continued to provide most Afghans with their strongest sense of loyalty and the most effective mode of organisation.

The resistance can be broadly categorised into two groups.⁴⁴ The first type was led by the religious leaders, people of influence like the village headmen or other elderly individuals. These revolts occurred spontaneously and were directed against the government officials who sought to impose land reforms, literacy reforms or made arrests, and took

⁴³. Tapper, n.40 p. 41.

⁴⁴. Roy, n.32 p. 106.

the form of mass uprisings. Members of this group did not attempt to go beyond their own territory, thus, it was localised. The second type was led by the different parties at Peshawar. The leaders were Islamists and sought help from foreign countries to organise a nation-wide armed resistance. They were the product of modern education who had also been the first ones to be confronted by the evils of modernity. So, they sought the help of the ideology of political Islam to confront the atheist Soviets. These leaders took the lead in co-ordinating their strategy against the Communists.

However, Afghan nationalism, in a true sense, had eluded them. As A.Rasul *Amin* writes “unfortunately the remnants of those networks, certain powers, power-hungry individuals, notorious extremists and certain ignorant people , indulge even now in aggravating fanaticism among the Afghan brethren under one or the other name, and create obstacles, voluntarily and involuntarily to prevent a united Afghanistan.”⁴⁵

⁴⁵. Amin, n.23 p. 2.

CHAPTER - IV

The Rise of Political Islam

ISLAMIST MOVEMENT IN AFGHANISTAN

The Soviet invasion had brought about profound ideological and social changes. The three most important changes were

- a) the emergence of young Islamists,
- b) the reassertion of *Ulema*, the religious scholars, and their control of the civil society, and
- c) diminishing power of the influential families.¹

The Islamists are intellectuals and “product of modernist enclaves within traditional society... products of the government education system which leads only to employment in the state machine. Except for the group of ‘professors in the faculty of theology, they do not consider themselves to be scholars (*Ulema*) but as intellectuals (*roshanfikir*).”² They share many basic beliefs in common with the *Ulema* like the primacy of *Quran*, *Sunnat* etc. but the basic difference is that the Islamists seek to develop a modern political ideology based on Islam.

¹. Olivier Roy, *Islam and Resistance in Afghanistan*, (Cambridge, 1986), p. 149.

². *ibid.*, p. 69.

For the *Ulema*, the most important aspect lies in the return to the *Shariat*, the religious law. They are the interpreters of the *Quran* and *Hadith*. The essence of this educated clergy is juridical, not political, and they seek to govern the civil society, and not the state.

The difference between the Islamists and the *Ulema* can be traced with regard to their social origins and political ideology. In terms of social origins, the Islamists are the products of modern institutions of society, like colleges, and in general the urban environment. Whereas the *Ulema* emerged from the clergy, or traditional circles. In political terms, the Islamists speak of Islamist ideology rather than religion in the strict sense of the term. For them, a political model of Islam is capable of confronting the great ideologies of the modern world. In the forefront of their thinking is the problem of the state and their political militancy goes hand-in-hand with a sense of history. Instead of wishing like the *Ulema* to manage the civil society, their ambition is to reconstruct the society, starting with the state. Thus, the relations between the Islamists and the *Ulema* are marked with mutual mistrust. But for Roy, the

Islamists are more radical than the *Ulema* for “what they seek is not a return to the *Shariat*, which is a means not an end, but the total reconstruction of political relations and modernity, if it does not confirm to the *Sunnat*, or the Tradition of the Prophet.”³ For them, both state and the economy must confirm to the traditions of Islam.

The Islamic movement in Afghanistan has its roots in the 1950s, in Kabul, at the Sharia Faculty of Kabul University.⁴ A group of students who had been introduced to the Muslim Brotherhood while studying in Egypt, began to meet to refute the arguments of the Marxists in the campus. Though both were products of modern education, yet they professed divergent political ideologies as their view about state and society differed. The Islamists were allied with the conservatives, or, the traditional *Ulema*. These people translated the works of foreign Islamists such as Sayyad Qutb and Maududi.⁵ They updated

³. *ibid.*, p. 6.

⁴. Barnett R. Rubin, *The Fragmentation of Afghanistan : State Formation and Collapse in the International System*, (New Haven, 1995), p. 83.

⁵. Roy, n.1. p. 70.

their works to present Islam as a modern ideology. Burhanuddin Rabbani, who was in Egypt from 1966 to 1968, translated Qutb's work 'Pointers to the Way'.⁶

Around the beginning of 1973, the movement registered in Afganistan and formed a leadership *Shura* (Council)⁷. At the first meeting Rabbani was elected the leader and chairman of the council. Later, the council named the movement *Jamiat-i-Islami*. After Daud's coup, the movement encountered great repression. The main activists then fled to Pakistan, from where they sought foreign aid. In 1974, Rabbani spent six months in Saudi Arabia. The Saudis provided assistance during his first year of exile but when Daud aligned with United State of America, the Saudi aid to him had stopped after 1975.⁸

Rifts had become evident in the movement and in 1975 it split into the *Jamiat-i-Islami* led by Rabbani, and the *Hizb-i-Islami* (Islamic Party), led by Gulbuddin Hikmatyar. After the *Saur* revolution of 1978, another group led by Maulawi Yunus

⁶. *ibid.*, p. 70.

⁷. Rubin, n.4.p.83.

⁸. *ibid.*, p.83.

Khalis, broke with Hikmatyar and formed the second *Hizb-i-Islami*.

The Pakistani regime of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto aided the Islamists as a means to counter the Daud regime, which had in the 1950s raised the issue of 'Pashtunistan' or, the demand for Pashtun homeland. The Islamists were provided with military and financial assistance. Hikmatyar, the leading Pashtun Islamist exiled in Pakistan, had become the "contact person" for the Afghan Islamists seeking assistance.⁹ After the founding of the *Hizb-i Islami*, Hikmatyar acquired the leadership of the movement and Pakistan increased its assistance to it.

The Islamists argue that the way to fight injustice is not through appeals for moral reform, but through an organised political activity aimed at taking state power. They argue that in Islam there should not be any separation between religion and politics and that Islam has its own system of politics and economics. The Muslims therefore, must strive to return to the unity that existed under the early Caliphate.

They see both capitalism and communism as unjust

⁹. ibid., p. 84.

systems based on *Jahiliyya*, pre-Islamic ignorance or barbarism, a term first coined by Abul Ala Maududi of the *Jamat-i-Islami* and used by Sayyid Qutb, a leading thinker of the Muslim Brotherhood.¹⁰ To Islamists, it is not merely lawful but obligatory for Muslims to wage *Jihad*, holy war, against governments promoting either western models of society or communism. Depending upon the circumstances, the *Jihad* might be military, or may take a peaceful form, like electoral campaigning.¹¹

SPIRIT OF JIHAD AND THE AFGHAN PEOPLE

The Soviet invasion introduced a spiritual dimension into the individual behaviour. The rhetoric of Islamic justice and personal involvement in the war of resistance led to the desire for *Jihad*, holy war. The warrior was motivated by the profound belief that he would either become martyr (*shahid*), if he died, or, if he killed an enemy he would become victorious (*ghazi*).¹² The preaching of the *Ulema* had a kind of intense effect that

¹⁰. *ibid.*, p. 87.

¹¹. *ibid.*, p. 87.

¹². Roy, n.1. p. 158.

was instrumental in churning out the warriors. The Afghan people, who accept the Islamic texts, were willing to provide lodging to the *Mujahideen*, the holy warriors. Throughout the country there was no shortage of willing guides, people who would lend horses, provide shelter and finance without any coercion. The significance people attached to the ethical values of the *Jihad* was awesome. Individuals put their lives in danger without any kind of external pressure.

The *Mujahideen* received substantial and growing support from Pakistan, United States, Saudi Arabia, China, Iran and other countries of the Western and Islamic world. However, the Islamist activists who dominated much of the resistance in Afghanistan, were split by faction and ethnicity and did not have a nation wide cadre structure necessary to organise an uprising.¹³ It was a mass-based movement of a fragmented society without any centralised national leadership. The local elites of the old regime as well as the political Islamists dominated the movement.

Another major problem the Mujadideen faced was the

¹³. Rubin, n.4. p. 185.

overcoming of the qaum, local community, membership. The rhetoric of *Jihad* had to transcend the people's allegiance to their *qaum* and instead incorporate the broader principles of Islamic resistance. However, to choose between fight and flight had become the matter of personal preferences. Many tribal people had left their areas at the first sign of a Soviet attack. On the other hand, the people of Panjshir valley who had been attacked many a times and driven out of their valley, continued their support in favour of the resistance.

Unlimited military assistance, arms, ammunitions and finance from the foreign powers and the leaning of the Islamists to various Islamic regimes on the basis of ethnic loyalty, were major contributory factors in changing the course of the Afghan resistance. It also meant that the communist regime of Afghanistan would not encounter any unified Afghan resistance and their capacity to manipulate the various factions remained high. Islamists were unable to unite under one banner. It was less due to their primordial loyalties and more due to the foreign aid control. Pakistan's Inter Services Intelligence (ISI), regarded itself as the general staff of the war, planning and

commanding the actions of the *Mujahideen*, If an Afghan commander developed his own political-military organisation in the country and his priorities differed from those of the 'headquarters' in Rawalpindi, his rivals and subordinates were supported. This, according to Rubin, meant that "no unified Afghan national organisation or leadership developed out of this system."¹⁴

ISLAMIC RESISTANCE IN AFGHANISTAN

The Islamic resistance in Afghanistan benefited from foreign funding. The ISI of Pakistan selected the leaders and distributed money and weapons. The leaders in turn redistributed the money and weapons to the party members through their social and political networks. Rubin says that the quantity of outside aid together with the strength and extent of these networks determined the size and the structure of each of these parties.¹⁵

There were several levels of organisation which linked

¹⁴. Rubin, n.4. p. 201.

¹⁵. *ibid.*, p. 201.

the party to the Afghan society. *Qaum* was the local unit and the base. Four social categories, to which the leaders belonged, are identified by Roy, as *Ulema*, *Sufis*, tribal *Khans* and *Islamists*.¹⁶ The first three developed from non-political activities not connected to Islamic resistance. The Islamists belonged to political network.

Rubin says "commanders could belong to several networks at once, and no party corresponded completely to a particular social network. Opportunism and pragmatism played a role in party membership, and each network was also segmented by language and *qaum*."¹⁷ It meant that the political elites not only fought against the foreign regime but had also competed among themselves for legitimacy. Pakistan had recognised seven *Sunni* parties of which three were traditionalist-nationalist parties and four were Islamist parties. Each of these parties had international links and a characteristic ideology.¹⁸

¹⁶. Roy, n.1. pp. 112-8.

¹⁷. Rubin, n.4. p. 202.

¹⁸. *ibid.*, pp. 196-225.

TRADITIONALIST-NATIONALIST PARTIES

1. *Mahaz-i milli-yi Islami-yi Afghanistan* was the most nationalist party and closest to the old regime. The party leader, Pir Sayyid Ahmad Gilani had married a granddaughter of Amir Habibullah. The party, translated as National Islamic Front of Afghanistan, NIFA, attributed the conflict in Afghanistan to "a group of traitors who have no roots or basis among the Muslim people of Afghanistan."¹⁹ They supported 'nationalism and democracy'. Their programme was hostile towards the Islamists.

The commanders of NIFA had come mostly from the Pashtun ethnic group (eight out of ten), one was Tajik and the other was an Uzbek.²⁰ Most commanders had traditional private education. Few were *Ulema* and few had modern secular education and they favoured a moderate nationalist government over either Islamism or Marxism.

NIFA, says Rubin, had mixed relations with Pakistan

¹⁹. *ibid.*, p. 203.

²⁰. Olivier Roy, "The New Political Elite of Afghanistan", In Myron Weiner and Ali Banuazizi, eds., *The Politics of Social Transformation in Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan*, (New York, 1994), p.77.

and always resented the failure of the United States to suitably reward its pro-western orientation. Arab Islamists had considered it to be too 'nationalist' (*watani*) and insufficiently Islamic and had refused to provide aid to it.²¹

2. The *Jabha-yi Nijat-i Milli-yi Afghanistan* was the *Naqshbandi* equivalent of NIFA.²² The party leader, Sibghatullah Mujaddidi belonged to the family of *Pirs*. Mujaddidi taught and preached Islamic orthodoxy. He represented a link between the most Islamic wing of the old regime and the more moderate Islamists, including Rabbani.²³

Its programme identified the targets of the *Jihad* as being those "handful of deviants of Islam, who seized the political power with the force of tanks, heavy artillery, planes and savage killing."²⁴ The party intended to defend the national traditions but its ultimate goal was the

²¹. Rubin, n.4. pp. 209-10.

²². *ibid.*, p. 210.

²³. *ibid.*, p. 210.

²⁴. *ibid.*, p. 211.

establishment of an Islamic society in which all the political, economic and social affairs would be founded on the teachings of Islam.

The core of the leadership consisted of the *Sayyed* and the rest were Pashtun. Quite a few of its leaders attended elite high schools or were educated in the west.²⁵ Its relations with the ISI was bitter, as Mujaddidi had charged it of playing favouritism in Afghanistan and denounced its presence in the country. The party had very weak international links.

(3) *Harakat-i Inkilab-i Islami-yi Afghanistan* was the third traditionalist-nationalist party recognised by Pakistan. Its leader was Maulawi Muhammad Nabi Muhammadi. It represented the traditional *Ulema* but was organisationally most corrupt and was penetrated by the KHAD, the intelligence wing of the communist regime.²⁶

The party's programme combined traditionalist Islamic appeals with nationalism. It blamed "the destructive and

²⁵. *ibid.*, p. 211.

²⁶. Roy, n.1. pp. 229-30.

reactionary hands of the colonial powers"²⁷ for Afghanistan's problems. Politically, the programme favoured a 'true and genuine Islamic republic,' but it did not describe the structure of such a system. Of the commanders nearly 90 percent were *Ulema* with private *madarsa* educations, and the rest had less education.²⁸ They came from all regions representing all *Sunni* ethnic groups in the country. Its leadership was more Pashtun. Overtime, Tajik members gravitated towards *Jamiat*, and Uzbeks towards the government funded militia, and also the *Hizb-i Islami. Harakat* slowly became more Pashtun.²⁹ Initially the ISI had supported the *Harakat*. But the party was never supported by the Arab Islamists. The passive character of *Harakat's* leader and the social base of its commander rendered the party politically insignificant.

THE ISLAMIST PARTIES

1. The *Hizb-i Islami-yi Afghanistan*, or, the Islamic Party of Afghanistan, headed by Hikmatyar, is a revolutionary

²⁷. Rubin, n.4. p. 212.

²⁸. Roy, n.20 p. 77.

²⁹. Rubin, n.4. p. 213.

Islamist party. The most radical student movements have been represented by this party. Rubin notes, that in social and educational background it resembled the *Khalq* but the difference lay in the fact that leaders of the *Khalq* came from tribal background, whereas Hizb leaders belonged to less tribal areas and were educated solely in Afghanistan.³⁰

Hikmatyar's radical Islamism and the superior organisational skills made the *Hizb* cynosure of the Pakistani and Arab Islamists. Also, a few moderate Pakistani generals and the operations wing of the CIA had favoured the party. Nearly every Pashtun tribe or clan had one branch affiliated with the *Hizb*. The party's Islamist core was well organised and its members were given affiliation cards that reflected at least three levels of membership: those who joined before the 1975 uprisings; those who joined between 1975 and the 1978 communist coup, and those who joined after the coup.³¹ It was the only party to hold limited elections and the members who had joined the party before 1975, (the only one's who had

³⁰. *ibid.*, p. 214.

³¹. *ibid.*, p. 214.

been allowed to vote), had elected Hikmatyar as their leader in 1986. The *Mujahideen* of this party followed the party and not the commanders. The promotion of the commanders was based on individual ideology and skills rather than on social roles. *Hizb-i Islami* (Hikmatyar) was three-fourths Pashtun.³² In the northeast the Tajiks and Uzbeks who joined the party did so mainly due to local feuds. Roy notes that *Hizb* “transcends tribal allegiance”³³ The recruits belonged to the area “where tribal structures have broken down or which have a mixture of groups originating from different tribes.”³⁴ Rubin states that most of the recruits did not belong to any such pockets of Afghanistan in the 1980s but rather came from the “refugee settlements of Pakistan.”³⁵ With Pakistani and Arab aid and support the *Hizb* was able to build an extensive network for their organisation.

³². *ibid.*, p. 215.

³³. Roy, n.1. p. 111.

³⁴. *ibid.*, pp. 111-2.

³⁵. Rubin, n.4. p. 215.

The paradox lay in the fact that though the *Hizb* recruited the Afghans to oust the communist regime, foreign aid meant that a true Afghan nationalism would not emerge. What lay at the bottom of those foreign regimes was not the evolution of one strong and united Afghan force, (which could prove detrimental to their national interests), but how to control one faction of the *Mujahideen* and through it, cater to its own selfish ends.

Though the *Hizb* had the goal of Islamic revolution, their constant struggle with the Islamists of other party and even some moderates meant that the party was more interested in pursuing its own programme and policy.³⁶ This resulted in the rejection of the *Hizb* by the people in general, and by other parties in particular. It led to a split that involved "Hekmatyar's-second-in-command, and some local commanders inside the country swung their support behind the *Jamiat*."³⁷ However, *Hizb's* importance had not diminished much and the party could not be over looked in

³⁶. Roy, n.1 pp. 133-4.

³⁷. *ibid.*, p. 134.

the Afghan politics.

2) *Hizb-i Islami-yi Afghanistan* (Khalis) evolved from a split caused within *Hizb-i Islami* in 1979. The Khalis desired to engage in an active combat against the old regime. The split, however, reflected the internal squabbling within the Islamist parties. *Hizb-* Khalis represented the *Ulema* who had earlier opposed Zahir Shah's government and fought against Daud.³⁸ The party did comprise of some of the Islamist students of the eastern tribes, but ultimately the tribal *Ulema* dominated it.³⁹

Khalis, like many other Islamists, fled the country after Doud's coup. Along with other Islamists he indulged in armed struggle from Pakistan. The misappropriation of funds led to corruption among the Islamists due to which Khalis founded his separate organisation after breaking away from *Hizb-Hikmatyar*.

Roy states that the party had only one Tajik commander and the rest comprised of Ghilzai and other

³⁸. Rubin, n.4 p. 215.

³⁹. *ibid.*, p. 215.

eastern Pashtuns.⁴⁰ The *Mujahideen*, writes Gellner, were largely "tribal puritans" who were led by a charismatic *mullah* or *alim* and who encouraged them to fight for an ideal Islamic order.⁴¹ The party's most powerful leaders, besides Khalis were Haji Din Muhammad, Abdul Haq and Haji Abdul Qabir. Din Muhammad was the deputy leader who manned the party's internal affairs; Abdul Haq was the Kabul commander, and Abdul Qabir the Nangarhar commander.

The KHAD penetration in Kabul along with ISI manipulation had resulted in the degeneration of the organisation. The Pakistani officers had found Abdul Haq very independent in his affairs who did not acknowledge the former's intrusion in the Afghan affairs. The ISI began to deal with his sub-commanders to regain strategic and political control over the Afghan affairs which undermined the unity of the party.⁴²

3. *Jamiat-i Islami-yi Afghanistan* or, the Islamic

⁴⁰. Roy, n.20. p. 77.

⁴¹. Ernest Gellner, *Muslim Society : Essays*, (Cambridge, 1981), p. 72.

⁴². Rubin, n.4. p. 217.

networks were largely confined to Persian speaking areas and therefore the *Jamiat*, despite the ideology of its leaders and major commanders had attracted many Tajiks and other Persian speaking *Sunni* Muslims.

The *Jamiat* commanders were granted more autonomy than Hizb-Hikmatyar. They were free to evolve their own strategies and other organisational models,⁴⁵ even when it came into conflict with the strategies of the ISI. The cadres were skilled which benefited the party immensely. Moreover, their distance from Pakistan border meant that ISI influence would not be very high.

As per Rubin, more than three quarters of its leaders are Persian speakers and the rest are Ghilzai Pashtun. About two-thirds of its leaders had religious education in the state system. Nearly all had university education in the country itself and three studied at al- Azhar University in Egypt . About 30 percent of its commanders are Pashtun, 60 percent Persian speakers, most of the rest are Uzbek and a few

⁴⁵. *ibid.*, pp. 218-9.

Nuristanis.⁴⁶ The commanders have had traditional education and are linked to the *Ulema* in the leadership. The *Jamiat* was the most dominant party in the Tajik majority area in the north east and its leadership combined strong Islamist revolutionary background along with the practical and pragmatic approach of some of its commanders. It had good relations with Arab Islamists but in 1986, the Arab aid was cut off after Rabbani had met President Reagan of the United States.⁴⁷ It had good relations with the Pakistani Jamat-i- Islam and the ISI .But ISI involvement was also resisted at times. Ahmad Shah Masud , an able commander was able to counter Pakistan interference through his links with the West and even the USSR.⁴⁸

The party emphasised Persian culture which brought it closer to Iran. Rabbani visited Iran after the Iran-Iraq war,⁴⁹ and enjoyed good relations with Iran . He had advocated the

⁴⁶. Rubin, n.4. p. 207 Table 9.5 and Roy, n.20. p. 77 have slightly different figures as size of their sample differ.

⁴⁷. Rubin, n.4. p. 220.

⁴⁸. *ibid.*, p. 220.

⁴⁹. *ibid.*, p. 220.

recognition of *Jafari* school of Jurisprudence for the Shia of Afghanistan.⁵⁰ In 1991, the *Jamiat* had signed an agreement to promote Persian culture with Iran, Tajikistan, and the Shia alliance *Hizb-i Wahdat*. Even now, when the Taliban controls Kabul, Iran has continued to recognise Rabbani and his *Jamiat*. Government-in-exile in north it is apprehensive of the fundamentalist *Sunni-Pashtun* dominated Taliban.⁵¹

(4) *Ittihad -i- Islami Bara-yi Azadi-yi Afghani* or, the Islamic Union for the Freedom of Afghanistan, was led by Abdul Rabb al-Rasul Sayyaf, who was a Kharruti Pashtun. He was adept at raising money from Arab sources and because of the party's financial base the ISI had eventually recognised it as the seventh party.⁵² The party had virtually no social network in Afghanistan. The leader and other staff were mainly Ghilzai-Pashtun *Ulema* or those who had personal links with Sayyaf.

Rubin writes that the party composed of 'heterogeneous

⁵⁰. *ibid.*, p. 220.

⁵¹. POT, *Afghanistan Series*, vol. XXI, no.34, (October 15, 1996), p.178.

⁵². Rubin, n.4. p. 221.

groups of individuals' who were more interested in money and arms.⁵³ For a few of its leaders, *Jihad* had become a business. For money and arms, the leaders could either join the party when both were in free flow, or leave it, when it was in short supply. Such attitude prevented the recruitment of able and dedicated *Mujaheed*. As Rubin says that "as an opponent of nationalism and a supporter of pan-Islamic ideals, Sayyaf strongly supported the enlistment of Arab and other Islamic volunteers, who swelled his ranks and created considerable friction of the Afghans with the Arab *mujahideen*."⁵⁴

With such divisions among the parties, the Afghan resistance could not develop into a true national movement. Rasul B. Rais has acknowledged that the movement was not united during its period of active armed struggle, but for almost nine years it denied the Soviet forces an effective

⁵³. *ibid.*, p. 336.

⁵⁴. *ibid.*, p. 221.

control over the country.⁵⁵ Just like the way Pakistan supported the various Sunni- Islamic parties, Iran too extended its support to the exiled *Shia* organisations rather than any tribal or regional organisations.⁵⁶

THE SHIA PARTIES

The *Shia* youths, viz. Hazara and Qizilbash had organised radical political groups in the 1960s and 1970s.⁵⁷ In the 1970s the *Shia* Islamists were too few in number to have any influence in the *Shia* uprisings in either the Hazarajat or the government of the *Shura*. However with Iranian support and training the Hazara Islamists became a potent force. With time, these Islamists managed to strengthen their position and the pro-Iranian Hazara party, *Nasr* acquired the leadership of the *Shura* by successfully

⁵⁵. Rasul Baksh Rais, *War Without Winners : Afghanistan's Uncertain Transition after the Cold War*, (Karachi, 1994), p. 165.

⁵⁶. Rubin, n.4. p. 221

⁵⁷. D.B. Edwards, "The Evolution of Shia Political Dissent in Afghanistan" in J.R.I. Cole and N. Keddie, eds., *Shi'ism and Social Protest* (New Haven, 1986), pp. 201-29

staging a coup against the traditionalist Sayyids.⁵⁸ The *Shura* then became the main front of Hazara traditionalist party, led by Sayyid Jagran, who had his base in Ghazni province. Three Islamist parties of the *Shias* played a major role in military and political activities. The first was the *Harakat-i-Islami*, (Islamic Movement) led by Ayatollah Asif Muhsini a Pashto-speaking religious leader from the *Shia* community known as Khalilis. He hailed from Kandahar. Roy claims that this party was the *Shia* analogue of *Jamiat* with which it had good relations.⁵⁹ In 1984, writes Roy, the party had considered withdrawing to Quetta and to ally with the *Jamiat* politically.⁶⁰ Muhsini was the follower of Ayatollah Khui with whom he had studied in Najaf, rather than a follower of Khomeini.⁶¹ Rubin, quoting a cable states that Muhsini was imprisoned by Khomeini government of Iran in August 1980, and his party banned, after it was learnt that

⁵⁸. Roy, n.1. pp. 141-42.

⁵⁹. *ibid.*, p. 147

⁶⁰. *ibid.*, p. 147

⁶¹. Rubin, n.4. p. 222.

CIA had funnelled money to his party through a bank account in Mashhad.⁶² Muhsini neither regained the confidence of the Iranian authorities nor did he win the favours of Pakistan or the United States.

The second was the *Sazman-i-Nasr-i-Islami-yi Afghanistan* or the Islamic Victory Organisation of Afghanistan. It was organised by the *Shia* youth with a little help from the Organisation of the Islamic Revolution, OIR in Iran.⁶³ It helped the *Shia* revolutionaries in foreign countries and its leader was Ayatollah Montazeri. For Rubin, the OIR helped *Nasr* in the same way that the ISI favoured the *Hizb-i-Islami* of Hikmatyar.⁶⁴ For Roy, the *Nasr* was the closest *Shia* equivalent of the *Hizb-i-Islami*.⁶⁵ The *Nasr* had, however alienated a few Iranian leaders by exhibiting its independent style of functioning. So, in the early 1980s the Iranian regime had helped to establish a new party among

⁶². *ibid.*, p. 222.

⁶³. *ibid.*, p. 223.

⁶⁴. *ibid.*, p. 224.

⁶⁵. Roy n.l. p. 147-8.

the *Shia* of Afghanistan.

This organisation, the third, was called *Guruh-i-Pasdaran-i-Jihad-i-Islami* or, the Group of Guardians of the Islamic Jihad, but it is generally known as the *Sipah-i-Pasdaran*.⁶⁶ Like *Nasr*, *Sipah-i-Pasdaran* comprises of militant revolutionaries who followed the Khomeini. For Lorentz the main difference between *Nasr* and *Sipah* lay in “the degree to which they are committed to the idea of a separate Hazara national identity. The *Nasr* became the most powerful Hazara organisation retaining a strong ethno-nationalist tinge and moved closer to the Peshwar parties in order to balance the Iranian influence.”⁶⁷

MUJAHIDEEN IN THE POST-SOVIET AFGHANISTAN

The Islamist elements, during the Afghan resistance, began organising a broader Islamic revolutionary movement. They sought to establish a nation-wide network by approaching the *Ulema*, traditional *Khans* and other Islamic

⁶⁶. Rubin, n.4. p. 223.

⁶⁷. Rubin, n.4. p. 336, end note no. 57.

figures. They were the first to point the dangers of growing Soviet influence in Afghanistan in the Daud regime. After the Soviet invasion they mobilised the Afghan people to counter the Soviet designs.

Rais writes that Islam in Afghan society was shaped by two factors. First, that though Afghan political system never established a strong state, religion remained separate and subordinate to the political interests of the rulers. Second, traditional religious establishment aimed at spiritual training of the individual and sought to inculcate social behaviour in conformity to Islamic values.⁶⁸ Islamic beliefs and practices of the ordinary Afghans have been shaped by these institutions. The Islamists only had to rally the masses under one banner and confront the communist regime with a great show of strength. But intense factionalism within the resistance leadership coupled with a motivated foreign support only undermined the unity of the Afghans. A. Rasul Amin alleges that "the neighbours were giving privileges and the armed groups worked in return for prevention and

⁶⁸. Rais, n.55. p. 174.

neutralisation of the process of thinking about the sovereign state of Afghanistan with a national identity. Those armed groups were trained, with those unprecedented privileges, in conformity with their endemic internal enmities, to keep up the spirit of protection of the national interests of those neighbours instead of the national interests of Afghanistan".⁶⁹

The Islamists did form an *Islamic Alliance of Afghan Mujahideen* in August 1981. However, due to the intra-group and interpersonal rivalries and the intermittent fighting between the *Hizb* and *Jamiat*, unity remained elusive. The 1981 alliance was called the *Ittihad-i-Islami-yi Mujahideen-i Afghanistan*, (Islamic Union of Mujahideen of Afghanistan).⁷⁰ The collective leadership could have united the fragmented Afghan Mujahideen. But such unity remained very fragile. However the common objectives of evicting the Soviets from the country kept the internal squabbles to the minimum. By April 1988, the Soviet had

⁶⁹. A.Rasul Amin, *Afghanistan : Through a Critical Phase of History* (Peshawar, 1996), p. 9.

⁷⁰. Rubin, n.4 p. 223.

signed the 'Geneva Agreements' along with the U.S.A, Pakistan and Afghanistan, announcing their withdrawal from the country.

The Soviet troops withdrew between May 15, 1988 and February 15, 1989. The resistance fighters had captured all the frontier along the Pakistani border. However, fragmentation of the political and military structures of the resistance prevented the Mujahideen from turning local victories into a national one.⁷¹ For many of the fighters and the commanders their personal obligation, or *farz-i ain* of *Jihad* ended with the Soviet withdrawal. The absence of Soviet threat brought regional considerations to the fore. It fomented divisions among the *Mujhideen* groups.

Pakistan's military sought to gain "strategic depth against India by planting a friendly Islamic regime in Kabul."⁷² United States wanted the replacement of Najibullah regime with a more moderate regime. Iran and Saudi Arabia used the various Mujahideen forces to gain

⁷¹. *ibid.*, p. 247.

⁷². *ibid.*, p. 247.

advantage in the region. These foreign powers developed links with the "emerging regional- ethnic alliances within Afghanistan".⁷³ The commanders and leaders played on these rivalries to increase their independence. However, their inability to form larger ethnic or regional coalitions made it difficult for them to have more bargaining power in the newly emerging equations. People were unable to overcome their 'primordial loyalties' and work for an 'integrative revolution', which according to Geertz, is essential for civil politics in the new states.⁷⁴

The daunting task of the resistance was over after the Soviet withdrawal. Now, the Mujahideen sought to control Afghanistan. The Soviet backed Najibullah regime had managed to cling to power till April 1992. The *Mujahideen* were still divided. In 1989, the failure at Jalalabad and the fighting among the parties in the summer of 1989, led Washington to redefine its stance. Similarly, with the end of the Iran-Iraq war, Iranian government paid more attention to

⁷³. *ibid.*, p. 248.

⁷⁴. Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (London, 1973), pp. 255-310.

Afghanistan. Iran had become weary of the Saudi and Pakistani influence in the region. In the summer of 1989, the Iranian President Rafasnjani told the *Shia* groups that war in Afghanistan was over and they ought to seek a political settlement with Kabul.⁷⁵

In 1990, Iran succeeded in uniting the *Shia* parties into one single party, the *Hizb-i-Wahdat* or the Unity Party. Earlier, at the insistence of their foreign sponsors the seven Sunni parties formed an "Interim-Islamic Government of Afghanistan", (IIGA) at a *Shura* convened in Pakistan in February 1989. Negotiations with Iran and Soviets failed to produce a formula for representation of either the *Shia* or the "good Muslims" from Kabul, when the government delegates were called.⁷⁶

By 1991 Iran signed a treaty on cultural co-operation with Tajikistan, *Hizb-i-Wahdat* and *Jamiat-i-Islami*. The Pakistani military and the Saudis began to fear the rise of Iranian influence and the possibility of a deal between the

⁷⁵. *The Times*, June 21, 1989; *Washington Post*, July 9, 1989; and *The Independent*, July 31, 1989.

⁷⁶. Rubin, n.4 p. 250.

superpowers to sideline the more militant Islamic forces.⁷⁷

Hence, the Saudis increased their support to Hikmatyar, the strongest *Sunni*-Pashtun leader. The ISI too had invested a great deal in Hikmatyar over the years and regarded him as the best guarantor of Pakistani interests in Afghanistan. By the end of 1991, both the United States and the erstwhile USSR, suspended its military aid to their Afghan groups. And their direct involvement in Afghan crisis had ended.

THE CHANGING WORLD ORDER AND ITS IMPACT ON AFGHANISTAN'S DOMESTIC POLITICS

With shifting power relations tearing the country apart, both outside powers and Afghan groups continued their efforts to reinstate a legitimate government. Iran, Pakistan, Uzbekistan, Saudi Arabia worked to ensure that the forces supported by their rivals did not become too powerful. Since 1989, Hikmatyar had been using ethnic politics, among other tactics, to counter the U.S. State Department's effort to marginalize him. He had even allied with the *Khalqis* in 1989-

⁷⁷. Yousaf and Aakin, *Dear Trap* pp. 6-7.

90 with the support of ISI, for a military victory.⁷⁸

On March 18, 1992 the Afghan president Najibullah addressed the nation on television and radio and announced his resignation ^{which} (witch) he said would take effect when the United Nations would establish an "interim government", to which he would transfer all "powers and executive authority".⁷⁹ This created a power vacuum in Kabul, which the regional and ethnic coalitions had rushed to fill.

After the fall of Najibullah four principal armed groups fought for power in Kabul. They had different ethnic compositions and different sources of foreign support. The first was led by Abdul Rashid Dostum, a former commander of Afghan Army's *Jauzjani* division. He led a large Uzbek group of former government militias but it also had members of other ethnic groups from Northern Afghanistan.

Masud and Rabbani led mainly the Tajiks. They also had within their fold members of other north-eastern ethnic groups and the *Harakat-i Islami* of Ayatullah Asif Muhsini, a

⁷⁸. Barnett R. Rubin, *The Search for Peace in Afghanistan* (New Haven, 1996), p. 130.

⁷⁹. *New York Times*, 19 March, 1992.

largely non-Hazara party.⁸⁰ They also got resources from their base in the north-eastern provinces. When Rabbani became the acting President in June 1992, they received financial support from the Saudi government. Fuel too was provided by the Saudi government and the Rabbani government had made use of the Afghan currency during its tenure.

Hikmatyar led mainly a Pashtun group and his recruits came from the refugee camps of eastern Afghanistan. A few former *Khalqis* and government militias also joined his *Hizb* recruits. His inability to galvanise the Pashtun tribal Shuras prevented him from having a consolidated regional base. He received support from the Arabs and Pakistani radicals. Rubin writes that "Hikmatyar also had income from the drug trade and trumped Rabbani's control of the currency by counterfeiting money in Pakistan,"⁸¹

Hizb-i Wahdat, which was based at the Hazarajat, were armed by the Iranians and Parchamis during

⁸⁰. Rubin, n.79 p. 129.

⁸¹. *ibid.*, p. 129.

Najibullah's fall. This group had organised the *Shia* of Kabul city.

“The ethnic structure of the conflict changed over time as the domestic and international balance of power shifted, suggesting that the conflict was fundamentally a struggle for power rather than an ethnic war fuelled by ancient hatreds.”⁸² The Pashtun, who had dominated the Afghan state were now pitted against the non-Pashtuns in the struggle for power. It was also a coalition clash between the parties backed by Iran on the one hand and that of Pakistan and Saudi Arabia on the other hand. However, the coalitions kept changing from time to time.

Furthermore, with the emergence of sovereign Central Asian Republics the alliance between the Tajiks and the Uzbeks of north Afghanistan fell out. The Uzbek President, Islam Karimov had worked with Russia to restore former communists to power in Tajikistan. Karimov had backed Dostum and he insisted that Dostum block Masud's aid to the Tajik Islamists and nationalists on the Tajikistan-

⁸². *ibid.*, p. 129.

Afghanistan border.⁸³ The Afghan Mujahideens controlling the Afghan border, had been actively involved in armed clashes with the Russian and Tajik border guards.⁸⁴ The Islamic opposition parties' victory over the pro-communists in Tajikistan in May 1992 led to the exodus of Russians and Uzbeks from the region.⁸⁵ In fact Shodmon Yusufov, the Chairman of the Democratic Party of Tajikistan threatened that "national minorities of Tajikistan could be used as hostages"⁸⁶ created panic among the Uzbaks and Russians public threat that they would seek aid from "Afghan brothers" and also the fact that the "national minorities in Tajikistan could be used as hostages" had created a pranic reaction among the Uzbek and the Russian minorities.⁸⁷ Yusufov was the chairman of the Democratic party of Tajikistan, hence his

⁸³. *ibid.*, pp. 129-30.

⁸⁴. K. Warikoo, "Cockpit of Central Asia : Afghanistan Factor in Tajikistan's Crisis" in K.Warikoo, ed., *Afghanistan Factor in Central and South Asian Politics* (New Delhi, 1994), p. 5.

⁸⁵. *ibid.*, p. 6.

⁸⁶. Summary of World Broadcasts SU / 1141 August 3, 1991.

⁸⁷. *ibid.*,

appeal was found to have impact on the fragile coalition of Afghanistan as well.

TRANSITION TO THE MUJAHIDEEN GOVERNMENT

Under the Peshawar Accords of April 26, 1992 Mujaddidi became the acting President for two months and Rabbani succeeded him. On April 28 the "interim government arrived in Kabul from Peshawar and proclaimed the establishment of the Islamic State of Afghanistan."⁸⁸ The government was denounced as being a 'disguised communist regime' by Hikmatyar. Earlier, Peshawar Accords had been reached and Hikmatyar was excluded from it. Hence, his resistance to the government began with bombardment of the capital with rockets.⁸⁹

After the expiration of four months Rabbani convened a *Shura* in December, 1992 which elected him as the President for a further eighteen months on December 29, 1992.⁹⁰ The near monopoly over governmental control led to a shift in the

⁸⁸. Rubin, n.79 p.133.

⁸⁹. *ibid.*, p. 133.

⁹⁰. *ibid.*, p. 134.

alliance. Masud and Rabbani became isolated as their former allies turned against them.

In January 1993, after an appeal by King Fahd of Saudi Arabia and on pressure from Jamaat and its allies from Pakistan, an agreement between the major *Sunni* and *Shia* leaders of Afghanistan was reached. The agreement, signed on March 7, 1993, retained Rabbani the President but made Hikmatyar the Prime Minister. The Prime Minister could select the government, including the Defence Minister, in consultation with the President. This led to rivalry between the two powers over the issue of the Defence Minister and in May 1993 Masud had resigned from this post. The *Mujahideen* government had to be a broad based government in order to reintegrate the regional centres of powers by bringing them under the authority of the Centre. This required compromises, effective institutional mechanisms, and experience of pluralistic politics. The *Mujahideen* parties were not willing to share power. Political differences and inexperience of broad based pluralistic politics prevented any formation of stable coalitions among the parties.

Moreover, the non-Pashtun minority ethnic groups like the Tajik, Uzbek, Hazara, Turkmen etc. had acquired a greater sense of empowerment by establishing autonomous centres of power. A new class of leaders had emerged from among these groups.⁹¹ The Pashtun majority had to accommodate these new leaders. Rais highlights the fact that the Uzbeks, Tajiks and few Hazaras who were instrumental in removing Najibullah and had assured their co-operation to Masud got engaged in bitter rivalry. These leaders, also, did not want to compromise on their newly acquired independence, which hitherto was denied to them under the dominant Pashtun rule.⁹²

The *Mujahideen* government was trying to consolidate itself by resorting to ethno-politics. As Rais says "the new battle lines may shape along ethnic lines."⁹³ The Pashtun nationalists disliked the Uzbek or Tajik control over Kabul.⁹⁴

⁹¹ .

⁹² . *ibid.*, p. 225.

⁹³ . *ibid.*, p. 226.

⁹⁴ . Ahmad Rashid, "In Pashtun Country", in *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 14 May, 1992, p. 12.

They were prepared to support the most nationalist elements among the Pashtuns in their struggle against the Uzbek-Tajik coalition. Hikmatyar and the *Hizb* were unable to overcome the status-quo and to assert Pashtun dominance.

The *Mujahideen* government remained embroiled in feuds. The shifting alliances meant that inter-group and intra-group rivalry would remain high. The result was a total breakdown of law and order in the civil society. The cause of the *Jihad* was lost. Only a decentralised political order, that could grant autonomy to the various ethnic groups, could have actually paved the way towards a genuine national reconciliation.

By January 1994, the anti-*Jamiat* forces formed an alliance being aided by Pakistan and Uzbekistan. Hikmatyar and Dostum launched a combined attack on the forces of Rabbani and Masud. Despite consistent foreign support Masud gained ground by the year end which established him as an able military commander. But the lack of an effective central government paved the way for the formation of regional councils, which included former commanders who

had fought against each other. These council were formed along ethnic and tribal loyalties.⁹⁵ The national leaders sought the help of these councils, which also meant that mobilisation would be based on ethnic and tribal loyalties.

On February 12, 1994, the former Secretary General of the UN Boutros Ghali, sent the former Tunisian Foreign Minister Mahmoud Mestiri as the Special Envoy to Afghanistan. "The mission created a national public space that had long been absent from Afghan politics", says Rubin.⁹⁶ The expectations of the Afghan people and the common denominators were :-

- i) end of the foreign involvement that was fuelling the war,
- ii) UN - monitored cease fire,
- iii) a natural peace keeping force,
- iv) a transitional period leading to elections, and
- v) the disarming of the population and the principal

⁹⁵. Rubin, n.79. pp. 125-142.

⁹⁶. *ibid.*, p. 136.

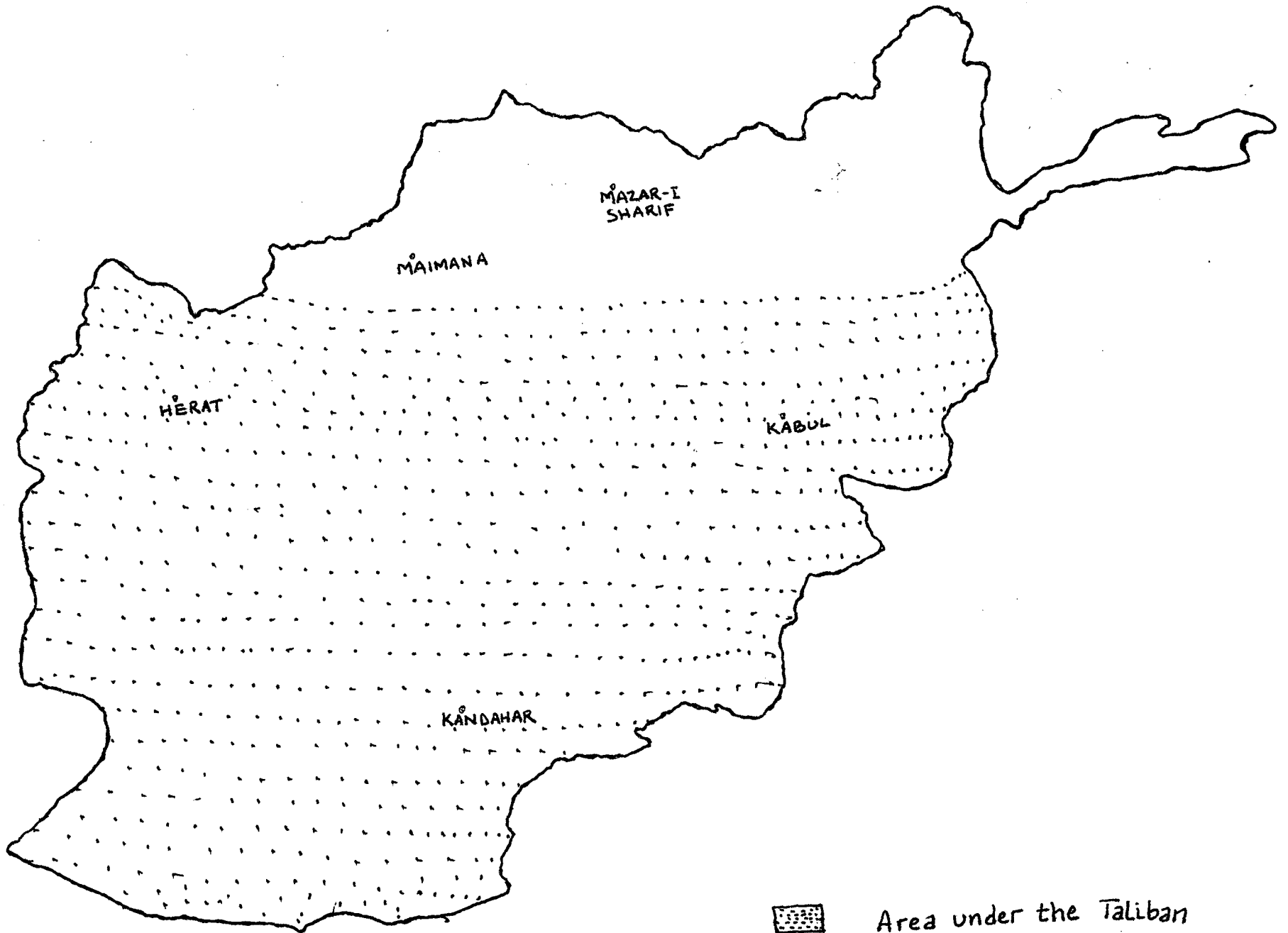
belligerents.⁹⁷

However, when on 7 September, 1994, the UN Secretary General personally visited Islamabad, the Pakistan capital, he regretfully announced that the joint meeting of the warring parties and other leaders of neutral parties could not be convened.⁹⁸ The UN in the meanwhile was seeking means to end the conflict in Afghanistan. It had innovated by deciding to set-up local peace-keeping forces rather than international ones. Rabbani and Hikmatyar agreed to abide by the proposals but there was suspicion that the leaders could seek to alter a few of the proposals to suit their own interests.⁹⁹ While these leaders sought to outmanoeuvre their opponents, a new and unexpected armed students-militia appeared on the Afghan soil. The Taliban, the student-militia, who had religious training as well, established their control over Kandahar and were threatening to take over the Afgan capital, Kabul.

⁹⁷. *ibid.*, p. 126.

⁹⁸. U.N.Department of Public Information, "*Secretary-General Urges Afghan Leaders*", September 7, 1994.

⁹⁹. Rubin, n.79. pp. 135-6.



MĀZAR-I
SHARIF

MĀIMANA

HERAT

KĀBUL

KĀNDAHAR



Area under the Taliban

THE RISE OF TALIBAN, AND ITS IMPACT ON GEO-POLITICS.

In October 1993, when Benazir Bhutto was elected the Prime Minister of Pakistan, she appointed Gen. Naseerullah Khan Babar as the Interior Minister. Babar, a Pashtun, had moved away from aiding Hikmatyar as the stalemate in Afghanistan had been continuing for a long time. Babar had first used the Taliban "for their November 1994 operation in rescuing a trade caravan, on its way to Central Asia, that had been captured by the local warlord of Kandahar".¹⁰⁰ The ISI which was running the Afghan operations with complete autonomy since the late 1970s, viewed this as a deliberate tactics of the Benazir regime to reduce its influence in the region. Babar was following the foreign policy of the former Pakistani Ministers of State for Economic Affairs, Sardar Asif Ali, whose was on 'economic gains' rather than Islamism. As Babar believed that controlling the polity of Afghanistan would mean "the control over resource rich

¹⁰⁰. Abha Dixit, "Soldiers of Islam : Origins, Ideology and Strategy of the Taliban", in *Strategic Analysis*, vol. xx, No. 5 (August, 1997), p. 664.

Central Asian Republics through Afghanistan and eventually exploiting markets from Poland to Singapore".¹⁰¹ Thus, Taliban, an ISI-Babar creation, was to ensure the strategic and economic depth of Pakistan in the region.

Pakistan's strategic objectives and motives are also dealt by Sreedhar, who writes that by having a friendly government in Kabul, Pakistan could have a strategic depth in an event of war with India ; secondly, it could provide the Pashtun population, of Afghanistan and Pakistan, emotional satisfaction and also attain its geo-strategic and geo-economic objectives of controlling trade links with the Central Asian States.¹⁰²

Foreign support to the Taliban meant that it could alter the prevailing status-quo. At the time, when aid to the *Mujahideen* government had stopped, Taliban with its Pakistan backing became a potent force. The militia was kept in perfect order as the foreign powers were willing to

¹⁰¹. Ashok K. Mehta, "The Great Game", Pioneer (New Delhi), November 9, 1996, p. 8.

¹⁰². Sreedhar, "Pakistan's Strategic Calculus", In Sreedhar, ed., *Taliban and the Afghan Turmoil*. (New Delhi, 1997), pp.75-87.

sponsor \$70 million per mensem,¹⁰³ a major portion of which came from Pakistan, across the Afghan-Pak border. These developments enabled the Taliban to stage its control over the country.

On September 27, 1996, the militia captured Kabul, formed an Islamic government and executed the former president Najibullah. The Taliban chief Mohammad Omar appointed a six-member interim government and he stressed that Afghanistan would now have a 'complete Islamic system'¹⁰⁴. The Taliban ordered women not to report for work till further notice. The women were to wear veils or cover their faces with *Hejab*. The Taliban also said that adulterers and drug users would be stoned to death.¹⁰⁵ The Taliban victory brought about mixed reactions. While on the one hand the Taliban won support from the Afghans who were fed up with years of factional war and suffering, on the other hand, the more cosmopolitan Pashtuns saw the

¹⁰³. Dixit, n.100 p. 666.

¹⁰⁴. POT, *Afghanistan Series*, vol. XXI, no. 32, October 8, 1996, pp. 161-4.

¹⁰⁵. *ibid.*, p. 162.

religious fundamentalism of the Taliban as a threat to the secular lifestyle they had enjoyed in the country's capital city.

The Taliban leadership, consisting of traditional, privately educated *Ulema* and a few students who had studied in the traditional *Sunni madrasas* in the Baluchistan province of Pakistan, also ordered the closure of cinemas, ban on television and prohibited girls from attending schools.¹⁰⁶ Such totalitarian measures were not liked by the broad-minded Afghans and it has also sent wrong signals to the neighbouring Central Asian States, Iran, Russia and India.

Some local Pashtuns in Kabul saw the arrival of their ethnic brothers as deliverance from the previously Tajiks-dominated rule of Rabbani and his commander Ahmad Shah Masud.¹⁰⁷ The Tajiks and other ethnic groups view the new wave of Pashtun assertion as a threat to their distinct culture. The Uzbek and Tajik leaders like Dostum and Masud realised that the Taliban's strength lay in its backing by

¹⁰⁶. *ibid.*, p. 162.

¹⁰⁷. *ibid.*, p. 162.

Pakistan and not the traditional warrior qualities associated with the Pashtun tradition. They are of the view that the Taliban does not represent the Pashtun culture and value system but that they are merely a "bunch of hooligans"¹⁰⁸ who are being used by the Pakistani and Saudis for their own narrow and selfish ends.

The Central Asian States held a summit meeting on Afghanistan at Almaty on October 4, 1996, and called upon the UN Security Council to take urgent steps to end the Afghan crisis which, they felt, posed a threat to regional stability. They also appealed to the Taliban to stop fighting with its brethren and to sit out with them to search for means of achieving a national accord.¹⁰⁹ Similarly, Iran viewed the situation with great caution. It perceived that the Pakistan-backed-Taliban regime was an effort to undermine its influence vis-à-vis the Central Asian States. Iran had built a railway line connecting its port Bandar Abbas to the

¹⁰⁸. Sreedhar, "Pakistan's Afghan Policy at the Cross-Roads", in *Strategic Analysis*, vol. XXI, no. 8, (November, 1997), p. 1180.

¹⁰⁹. BBC, *SWB*, Part- 1, SU / 2736, October 7, 1996, P.G/1.

Central Asian Republics. It sought to build a pipeline across its territory to export hydrocarbon reserves and natural gas from the vastly untapped Central Asian Republics. Pakistan, by expediting the pipeline agreement between Unocal / Birmas, Turkmenistan and the Taliban, only sought to jeopardise the Iranian economic interests in the region. Russia, too, was unnerved by the gains of Taliban but was unwilling to be drawn into any other Afghan experience from within. It was, therefore, using the Commonwealth of Independent States platform to air its grievances. Pakistan, by not attending the Tehran conferences-held on October 27-28, 1996, to resolve the Afghan crisis-alienated Iran, Turkey and the Central Asian Republics . This made Islamabad lose its credibility, as, by deciding to stay away and express its solidarity with the Taliban, it sent a signal of confrontation to the other regional actors who sought to establish peace and tranquillity in Afghanistan. And of the various faction of Afghanistan, none, except the Taliban is willing to repose its faith in Islamabad.

IMPLICATIONS OF TALIBAN'S VICTORY

The Taliban victory in Kabul brings various factors to light. They may be summarised thus,

- i) It highlights the failure of the Islamists to evolve a broad-based policy by virtue of which they could control the state of Afghanistan
- ii) It signals the assertion of the *Ulema*, who till recently sought to control only the civil society. In 1932, King Nadir had institutionalised the *Ulema* in the form of *Jama 'at ul 'Ulema*, or a council of the principal *Ulema*.¹¹⁰ The modernisation policy under Daud had left it powerless. The first time when Islamists and the *Ulema* worked together was when in April 1970, *Parcham*, the journal published by the Parcham faction of the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan had published a poem by Bareq Shafi'i which used a religious benediction (*dorud bar Lenin*) to celebrate Lenin's centenary.¹¹¹ *Ulema* networks were created but it had no political organisation.

¹¹⁰. V.Gregorian, *The Emergence of Modern Afghanistan* (Stanford, 1969), p. 234.

¹¹¹. Roy, n.1 pp. 47-48.

Soviet invasion had reawakened the political consciousness of the *Ulema* but the inability of the Mujahideen Government to bring about peace and tranquillity in the war-torn society had accelerated their control over the society. Through the Taliban they seek to control both the state and the civil society.

iii) The Taliban victory implies that the United States, Saudi Arabia, and Pakistan have temporary advantage in the region over the Iranians and other regional powers. The US has backed Taliban for its anti-drug programme as well as for its own economic interests. Saudi Arabia has tried to push for a 'pristine Islamic ideal' by backing the Taliban. However, many accuse the Taliban of bringing upon a 'religious totalitarian state'. Pakistan wants to assert its geo-economic advantage by backing a 'co-operative regime' in Kabul.

(iv) The Tajiks, Hazaras, Uzbeks and other ethnic groups perceive Taliban victory as an attempt to introduce the Pashtun hegemony in the region. Therefore, they support Rabbani and his government in the north. The multi-

ethnic character of Afghan society resembles a 'Salad bowl' and any isolationist ethno-centric policy would only result in ethnic confrontation.

The problem of Afghanistan has sprung out of a lust for power among various groups. Sincere efforts have not been made to reconcile the differences. On the threshold of the twenty-first century, it is rather very embarrassing that the Taliban is trampling upon the role and value of women, regrettably, by distorting the ideals of Islam. Utmost care must be taken to prevent any human rights violation, particularly women's rights. If such tragic events continue to occur, the country could be, forever, trapped in its miseries. Proposals to solve the crisis amicably must take priority over other matters. Though America and Pakistan are emerging as the mediators of peace and conciliation, each have their hidden motives of safeguarding and consolidating their interests in that country.

One of the most urgent objectives now should be to negotiate and create consent and unanimity of views among the different Afghan factional groups. The meeting should guarantee the sovereignty and territorial integrity of

Afghanistan, and it should keep in mind the Afghan national character which has always resisted the alien aggressors. There is no place for rhetoric. Efforts must be made to discuss and solve the practical problems and to accommodate the interests of the Afghans. Only then could it pave the way for an effective nation-building process to ameliorate the conditions of the war-ravaged Afghans.

CHAPTER - V

Problems and Prospects of Nation Building

NATION BUILDING PROCESS

Afghanistan as a nation state emerged under the reign of Abdul Rahman Khan (1880-1901). Until 1880, writes Dupree, "the process of alternating fusion and fission dominated the political scene"¹. Therefore, until 1880, Afghanistan was more of an *empire* than a *nation-state*². Thus, Ahmad Shah Abdali was the creator of an empire and not a nation-state. The establishment of a Pashtun empire was possible as the once-formidable neighbours, the Iranian monarchy, Mughal dynasty at Delhi, the Turkoman, and the Tajik Emirates had begun to totter. The traditional Pashtun tribal system had turned into a feudal order over the years.³

Abdul Rahman was blocked by the Russians in the north and north-east, while in the south and the south-east, the British had checked his advance. In 1893, the British had signed the Durand Treaty with Abdul Rahman, which was

¹. Louis Dupree, *Afghanistan* (Princeton, 1973), p.xix.

². *ibid.*, p.xix.

³. Raja Anwar, *The Tragedy of Afghanistan : A First-hand Account* translated from the Urdu by Khalid Hasan, (London, 1988), p.3.

demarcated as an international frontier. It divided the Pashtuns, living in Afghanistan and the North Western Frontier Province of British India, and shattered their cultural and political unity. Abdul Rahman had to spend his time and energy to penetrate and pacify the zones of relative inaccessibility.⁴ He did so by executing and deporting the rebellious leaders. His notable campaigns were against the Uzbek Khanates, the Turkoman, Hazara, Nuristani etc. He had even shifted thousands of Ghilzai Pashtuns, the traditional rivals of the Abdalis / Durranis from the south and south-central Afghanistan to the north of the Hindu Kush. Although the Ghilzai were anti-Durrani, while living in their own territorial tribal zones, in the new area they had become pro-Pushtun.⁵ The Ghilzai had to contend with the non-Pashtun tribes in the north, such as the Tajiks, Uzbeks, Hazaras, Turkomans etc. But, in order to consolidate himself, Abdul Rahman had to substitute the prevailing feudal and tribal system with one

⁴. Dupree, n.1.p. 418.

⁵. *ibid.*, p.419.

broad-community under one law and one rule.⁶

Abdul Rahman's reign was characterized by external boundary-drawing, internal consolidation and attempts at modernization.⁷ He was succeeded by his son, Habibullah Khan who was dependent upon the British for grants, stipends and privy purses. During his reign Afghanistan's first school Habibia (named after him), was set up at Kabul.⁸ The country's first power station, the first pumping station for irrigation, the first printing press and the first newspaper also date back to his time.⁹ During the First World War (1914-18), a German and Turkish delegation had arrived in Afghanistan which promised a military assistance if the Amir made war on the British.¹⁰ But the Amir had convened a *Jirga* (Assembly) on 29 January 1916 and declared that the Afghans would not fight the British.

⁶. Donald N. Wilber, *Afghanistan*, (New Haven, 1962), p.19.

⁷. R. McChesney, "The Economic Reforms of Amir Abdul Rahman Khan," *Afghanistan*, vol. 20; no.3. (1978), pp.11-34.

⁸. Anwar, n.3. p.17.

⁹. *ibid.*, p. 17.

¹⁰. *ibid.*, pp. 17-18.

According to Anwar Habibullah was "probably the first Afghan ruler who forswore war on humanitarian grounds."¹¹ The plea for peace, however, went contrary to the Afghan temperament and his refusal to lead hostilities against the British had caused great disappointment to his son, his brother, and the Afghan people at large.¹²

In 1919, the Amir was attacked and killed. He was succeeded by Amir Amanullah Khan. Amanullah, on 13 April 1919, declared "complete independence and autonomy" of Afghanistan. This led to the third Anglo-Afghan war, which began on 6 May, 1919, "where the British force was fifteen times the size of the Afghan army."¹³ And the Afghans took to guerilla warfare. On 3 June 1919, both sides agreed to a cease-fire and after three years of negotiations, the two sides signed the Treaty of Rawalpindi in 1923. Amir Amanullah recognized the Durand line and the British recognized the sovereign state

¹¹. *ibid.*, p. 18.

¹². *ibid.*, p. 18.

¹³. *ibid.*, p. 19.

of Afghanistan. ¹⁴ It took the British three wars, a long time and after much suffering and sacrifice, to understand the fundamental differences between the Afghan rulers and the Afghan people. The Afghans, within their tribes and ancestral areas, were completely free and the rulers were not competent to interfere in the internal affairs of the tribes. But, whenever any foreign power sought to subordinate the Afghans under their hegemonic rule, the tribes rallied around their leaders to counter the foreign power. The British had realized the difficulties in colonising Afghanistan. Taking lessons from history, they left the Afghans to govern themselves.

In the meanwhile in the neighbouring Tsarist Russia, the Bolsheviks had toppled the Tsarist regime in a revolution. In October 1919, an Afghan mission headed by General Mohammad Wali Khan, a Tajik, left for Moscow. The Bolshevik representative Michael Bravin, who had gone to Kabul in September 1919, assured the Afghans that for their involvement in the civil war in Central Asia on the side of the Bolsheviks, they would be guaranteed assistance against the

¹⁴. *ibid.*, p. 20.

British.¹⁵ This Soviet-Afghan relationship made the Afghans dependent upon the former, which had ultimately resulted in the Soviet invasion in December 1979.

WEST-INDUCED MODERNISATION AND THE PROBLEMS OF NATION-BUILDING

Amanullah Khan was an intellectual and an admirer of modernism. He was also a nationalist and a reformer. He was the first Afghan ruler to wear western out-fits.¹⁶ During his reign the first Afghan Constitution was promulgated in 1923 and a series of administrative laws were reorganized. Also, a system of Legislative Councils was established, new set of courts based upon secular codes of law was set up and major economic reforms were initiated.¹⁷ The first government budget was introduced in 1922. The Amir had toured Turkey, England, Germany and the Soviet Union. He was sympathetic to the social and religious reforms initiated by Kamal Ataturk of Turkey. Similarly, after his return from the foreign tours, he

¹⁵. Dupree, n.1. p. 443.

¹⁶. Anwar, n.3, p. 20.

¹⁷. The Encyclopaedia of the Far East and Australasia, (1997), pp. 51-70.

announced a series of liberal reforms to eradicate the existing tribal and semi-tribal customs prevailing in Afghanistan.

Some of his proposed measures, writes Rubin, sought to reduce the powers of the religious establishment which aroused protests from the *Ulema*, thus, "depriving Amanullah of Islamic legitimacy in the eyes of much of the public".¹⁸ Amanullah had taxed the Tajik peasants, living in the north of Kabul, in his proposed reforms. Also, by discontinuing tribal allowances and by abolishing the role of the tribal *Khans*, he had alienated the Durranis of Kandahar.¹⁹ In his zeal to reform the Afghan society, Amanullah had failed to recognize the importance of social and religious tradition. Changes could have been possible, if, the existing infrastructures of the society had been appropriately modified. But Amir Amanullah seemed to be in a haste to carry out the reforms. Even in Turkey the socio-religious reforms were possible because the country, unlike Afghanistan, had moved away from tribally-dominated

¹⁸. Barnett. R. Rubin, *The Fragmentation of Afghanistan : State Formation and Collapse in the international System* (New Haven, 1995), p. 57 .

¹⁹. *ibid.*, pp. 57-58.

traditions and customs, and was ripe for any social change.

This British were alienated by Amanullah's proximity with the Soviets. And since Amanullah had not built-up his army it was possible to foment resentment against him and possibly, defeat him. The conservative religious leaders, tribes and dissident members of the royal family were instrumental in instigating a rebellion. The Amir abdicated in favour of his eldest brother, who ruled for three days before *Bacha-i-Saqao* (Son of a Water-carrier), a non-literate Tajik, ruled Kabul for nearly nine-months.²⁰ Amir Amanullah sought shelter in Italy. He had become disillusioned with the West's inability to integrate its values with Asian cultures.²¹

The Afghan rulers were too hasty in modernising tradition. For them, and especially Amanullah and his advisers the road to modernization lay in imposing the prevailing West-dominated modernisation programmes, without keeping in mind the specific nature of the Afghan society. Afghan society was

²⁰. Dupree, n.1 p. 452-3.

²¹. *ibid.*, pp. 454-6.

however, "not ready to don the mantle of western liberalism."²²

This complicated the processes of nation-building as the resultant violence had a telling impact on the society.

After a brief rule of *Bacha-i-Saqao*, Nadir Khan, the former General, and who belonged to the Musahiban family had come to power. He made the religious reactionaries a party to the ruling class.²³ Under the Ministry of Justice, a special board of the *Ulema* was constituted. These *Ulema* were fanatic and declared all the modern and progressive ideas as 'un-Islamic', if it did not confirm to their definition of 'Islamic values'. Nadir Khan was murdered in 1933 and his nineteen-year-old son Zahir Khan succeeded him.

For almost two decades Zahir's uncle had ruled the country on behalf of the young King. In 1953, his cousin Daud seized control and became the Prime Minister. Zahir Khan, however, asserted his control in 1963. The "Musahiban made a concerted though ultimately unsuccessful effort to Pashtunize

²². Anwar n.3 p. 21.

²³. *ibid.*, n. 18 p.66.

the predominantly Persian-speaking civil service."²⁴ The foreign-aid and resources were used to create a patronage network, aimed at strengthening the cause of Pashtun nationalism.

Under the period of New Democracy (1963-73) the number of government funded schools increased. The number of educated youth coming from rural background also multiplied manifold. The constitution of 1964 benefitted the intellectuals. Two elections were held although parties were not permitted to contest.²⁵ The various divisions within the intelligentsia began to organize themselves politically. Nationalist, communist and Islamic movements gained ground. The intelligentsia were alienated from the local power structure, like the tribe, clan or village.²⁶ Moreover, within the intelligentsia there lacked a "broad common culture" as various sections were inspired by different foreign ideologies and models of the state. Although

²⁴. Rubin, n. 18 p. 66.

²⁵. Barnett. R. Rubin, *The Search For Peace in Afghanistan : From Buffer State to Failed State*, (New Haven, 1995), p. 25.

²⁶. Rubin, n. 18. p. 20

they were against the traditional tribal institutions these men could readily adopt "radical political ideologies, from Marxism to Islamism."²⁷

As the ^{to} competition among the intelligentsia gained strength, the internal power structure of Afghanistan began to change. In 1973, Daud replaced Zahir Khan in a coup, abolished the monarchy and proclaimed himself The president. He did so with the help of the intelligentsia. But, till then, no effective institutions had been evolved to replace the monarchy. This was the main cause of instability which led to a series of crises. It resulted in generating a security dilemma, not only within the country but in the entire region as well.

But 1970s was the decade of the cold-war and the two blocs had represented opposed version of the modern regime; but a common model of the state - the territorial nation-state.²⁸ The two blocs were led by the United States and the Soviet Union. The Brezhnev Doctrine of the Soviet Union had considered the Third-World environment to be favourable for the

²⁷. Rubin, n. 18 p. 20.

²⁸. *ibid.*, p.4.

spread of Communism. The United States, its adversary, considered any such expansion against the norms of international relations and illegitimate. The U.S. had, however, assisted the Shah of Iran to become a regional hegemon. The Shah in turn used the "oil wealth to draw Afghanistan into a regional grouping under its leadership."²⁹ Daud used ishe *this* opportunity to increase his authority within the country and to move away from the control of the Soviets. But Kremlin under Brezhnev perceived this attempt as a reversal of Afghanistan's policy of non-alignment.

In the seventies, the Islamists in Afghanistan revolted against Daud. The movement was suppressed and the Islamists fled the country. However, these Islamists were provided with aid by the Pakistani government and also the CIA.³⁰ The Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's regime used the Islamists against Daud over the Pashtunistan issue. The Islamists, according to Rubin, "were the only group in Afghanistan that had opposed the break-up of Pakistan and had supported that country against

²⁹. Rubin, n. 25 p. 26.

³⁰. *ibid.*, p. 27.

India during the 1971 war".³¹ Pakistan thus, used the Islamists for its own strategic reasons. The exiled Islamist leaders were contemplating ways to usurp power. It was a triangular contest between Daud, Islamists and the Marxists in the power game. The Marxists who got divided into two factions - *Khalq* and *Parcham* had temporarily united to seize power in a coup in April 1978. It brought an end to foreign funded and Western oriented process of nation-building.

FAILURE OF THE MARXIST MODEL OF NATION BUILDING

The PDPA which seized power in a coup and executed Daud had established the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan which became dependent upon Soviet aid. In their zeal to reform the "feudal" society, they started in bringing about radical changes. The new government constantly claimed that a changes would benefit almost 98 percent of the population, who had hitherto, not benefitted, in the old regime.³² This was the *Khalqi* propaganda, as by then the *Khalq* had out manouvered

³¹. *ibid.*, p. 27.

³². *Kabul Times*, September 23, 1978.

the *Parcham* in the power-game. According to this logic, the *Khalq* regime faced threat from only 2 percent of the population. An attempt to impose the concept of hierarchy of social classes on the Afghan society proved to be futile.³³ It also revealed the poverty of thought and action of those, *Khalq* leaders. These leaders came from rural background and belonged to the Pashtun ethnic group yet they failed to grasp the nuances of the Afghan society.

The *Khalq* government sought to eliminate the 2 percent exploiters by execution, expulsion or imprisonment. They also began to indoctrinate the non-Marxist populace in an effort to spread their ideology and gain popular support. Their target was Islam and the traditional institutions of the country. The *Khalqi* were also taking recourse to repressive measures to eliminate their main competitors-the tribal aristocracy and the rival intelligentsia-from the control over the civil society and the government. The regime was dominated by the Ghilzai and Paktia Pashtuns and it had representation in the various

³³. J. W. Anderson and Richard F. Strand, eds., *Ethnic Process and Intergroup Relations in Contemporary Afghanistan*, Occasional Paper no. 15, Afghanistan Council of the Asia Society, (New York, 1978).

spheres of governance.

However, due to their poorly formulated programmes and its harsh implementation, there arose violent protests. The Afghans blamed the 'atheistic alien ideolgoy' for the on going crisis. They were convinced of the brutality of the *Khalq* regime. The persistent revolts paved the way for the Soviet Union to carry out its armed intervention. And on December 27, 1979, the Afghan territory was invaded by the Soveits. It was a calculated invasion as most of the regional actors were busy with their domestic crisis.³⁴

The Soviets, after their armed intervention, installed Babrak Karmal as the President of the Revolutionary Council, General Secretary of the PDPA and the Prime Minister. According to Rubin, "the reogranized party, dominated by *Parcham* under Soviet tutelege, was to function as the supreme power within the state, which the Soviets tried to remodel along the lines of their own institutions."³⁵

³⁴. Rasul Baksh Rais, *War Without Winners : Afghanistan's Uncertain Transition After the Cold War*, (Karachi, 1994), pp. 86-87.

³⁵. Rubin, n. 18 p. 123.

Thus, an era of Soviet-guided strategy of nation-building was ushered. The programmes and policies were to be in confirmity with the long-term Soviet interests in the region. Military was used to penetrate the rural areas whereas the police sought to control the cities.³⁶ The government tried to use totalitarian system to spread its influence in the region. In the resultant violence atleast a million people perished.³⁷ In order to enhance the State's capacity to penetrate itself, two institutions played a major role- the armed forces and the secret police, (KHAD).

The regime's primary goal, says Rubin, was "to build and strengthen the institutions of the party-state". It required external and internal security of Kabul city. To secure Kabul from external influences, the rural areas, neighbouring the city were tightly controlled. To maintain internal control the KHAD indulged in terror-tactics and, Rubin quotes a representative of the governement, that nearly 150,000 people from Kabul city

³⁶. *ibid.*, p. 123

³⁷. *ibid.*, p. 122.

were arrested.³⁸

In Soviet Russia, when Mikhail Gorbachev assumed the charge of General Secretary of the Communist Party, he let it be known that the situation in Afghanistan needed to be changed. He promoted a compromise, which aimed at "national reconciliation."³⁹ He aimed at negotiating the withdrawal of the Soviet troops from Afghanistan as their maintenance had become too expensive. Under the Geneva Accords the withdrawal began on May 15, 1988 and ended on February 15, 1989. But aid to Najibullah's Communist regime continued, to be around \$ 3-4 billion per annum⁴⁰, (until 1991 year end), as by then United States and the erstwhile Soviet Union had reached an agreement to end the aid. As soon as the aid stopped there were revolts in the Afghan army. Dostum was the first commander to desert Najibullah. In the meantime Najibullah tried to use ethnic ties to create means to hold on to power⁴¹.

³⁸. *ibid.*, p. 137.

³⁹. *ibid.*, p. 146.

⁴⁰. *ibid.*, p. 147.

⁴¹. Rubin, n. 25 p. 131.

But the non-Pashtun northern alliance was solidifying. Masud received massive American aid which he used to equip and expand his army⁴².

The ethnic conflict had come to fore by the time Najibullah had announced his desire to quit. The non-Pashtun *Parchamis* and *Shias* of Kabul city assisted Dostum and Masud lay a seige of the city of Kabul and the *Khalq-Hizb* Pashtun dominated forces were defeated⁴³. On April 26, 1992 the Peshawar Accords was announced and Hikmatyar was excluded from the new *Mujahideen* government. Mujadidi, under the agreements became President for two months, who was succeeded by Rabbani. Thus, from the begining of the *Mujahideen* rule, a divided coalition came to power.

AFGHANISTAN UNDER THE MUJAHIDEEN

The inability of the *Mujahideen* to unite to govern, hampered the cause of Afghan unity. Though both *Jamiat-i-Islami* and *Hizb-i-Islami* had agreed that the problems of Afghansistan lay in the linguistic and ethnic divisions-which

⁴². *ibid.*, p. 130.

⁴³. *ibid.*, p. 133.

they condemned, in reality they gave it little attention⁴⁴. It made the formation of a broad-based transitional government difficult. Regional power centres could not be integrated⁴⁵. Political and personal differences among the Mujahideen groups prevented any consensus on political arrangements. Their confrontations symbolized group identities. One manifestation of this rivalry was the eruption of armed conflict between the forces of commander Ahmad Shah Masud and the guerilla loyal to Hikmatyar. The politics of war became more complex with the overlapping of territorial divisions with the ethnic conflicts. It led to the emergence of an ethnic identity. Rais writes that "non-Pashtun ethnic groups, such as Hazara, Tajik, Turkmen and Uzbek, have acquired a greater sense of empowerment by establishing autonomous centres of powers."⁴⁶ The Pashtun majority and the traditional elite had to recognize the changed realities . It was these ethnic divisions that undermined the unity of the country.

⁴⁴. *ibid.*, p. 88.

⁴⁵. Rais, n. 33 p. 221.

⁴⁶ *ibid.*, p. 225.

The Mujahideen government was dominated by the non-Pashtuns-Tajik-Uzbek coalition. It had put an end to the traditional Pashtun governance. Primordial loyalties were considerably being nurtured. The Pashtuns in both Afghanistan and Pakistan were suspicious of the Rabbani regime which ruled over Kabul. They got disillusioned. The Pashtuns in Pakistan were critical of the Uzbek-Tajik control of Kabul⁴⁷. By not giving adequate representation to the Pashtun populace, the Mujahideen government led by Rabbani, was only undermining its legitimacy. As nearly half the population were denied due representation in the sphere of governance.

But the most important failures of the Mujahideen regime lay in their inability to

1. "re-establish the authority of the central government"
2. and their failure to "disarm the heavily militarized society"⁴⁸.

The result was the establishment of powerful regional centres and the escalation of violence which resulted in total

⁴⁷. Ahmed Rashid, "In Pashtun Country" *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 14 May 1992, p. 12.

⁴⁸. Rais, n. 33p. 229.

anarchy and chaos.

The Mujahideen regime also suffered because it was operating in a constitutional vacuum⁴⁹. Their inexperience of democratic politics, political differences among the parties, the fragmentation of political power prevented the formation of stable coalitions. It was in these circumstances that the ISI Pakistan backed Taliban took advantage of the situation to consolidate itself in the south. The Mujahideen had failed to govern effectively. So, when the Taliban staged a march on the capital, the Rabbani government had staged a strategic retreat⁵⁰. However, the Taliban Chief Mohammad Omar announced that the Rabbani government had "Collapsed"⁵¹.

THE "MULLAH RAJ": PANACEA OR PROBLEMS?

Although the Taliban faced the minimum of resistance from President Rabbani's forces, yet they began their rule over Kabul by publicly executing the former President, Najibullah.

⁴⁹. *ibid.*, p. 220.

⁵⁰. *POT, Afghanistan Series*, vol. XXI, no. 32, (October 8, 1996), p. 165.

⁵¹. *ibid.*, p. 161.

The Taliban's victory has generated cultural embarrassment besides raising anxiety both within the country and in the region. The leading Iranian daily Kayhan International accused the Taliban for their "stone-age mentality". It further declared that the "top brass of the super-fundamentalist Taliban" was "sick in the mind"⁵².

Even in Pakistan, virtually all the religious parties disapproved of the Taliban's ban on working women and closure of the girl's schools and colleges⁵³.

However, due to the absence of a modernist intelligentsia in the Taliban ranks for defining and articulating the Islamic aspirations in contemporary context, the Taliban's image has become that of a reactionary outfit. The more cosmopolitan Pashtuns, - the ethnic group from which most of the Taliban members come - view the Taliban's religious fundamentalism as a threat to their liberal - secular life style. The *nang* Pashtuns, who are averse to any control, may find the Taliban rule a threat to their independence. The Taliban's victory and

⁵². *ibid.*, p. 213.

⁵³. *ibid.*, pp. 213-4.

consolidation is not only a threat to Afghan unity and integrity but to the new opposition troika being represented by the Tajiks, Uzbeks and the Hazaras. Thus, battlelines have been drawn along ethnic and sectarian lines⁵⁴.

The ethnic crises in Afghanistan, has the potential of creating a regional turmoil. The ethnic groups of the country over-lap into Pakistan, Iran and the Central Asian Republics, A week following Taliban's take-over of Kabul, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan met in Almaty on October 4, 1996 to respond to the Taliban's take over of Kabul. Similarly, Iran held a conference on October 27-28, 1996, at Teheran to resolve the crisis. At the conferenc, Pakistan was conspicuous by its absence.

Paksitan's interest in Afghanistan was explained in the previous chapter. Here, we analyse the prospects of Afghanistan under the Taliban.

The Taliban has, so far, refused to share power with the other groups in Afghanistan. It is ironic that a party which began as a catalyst for peace, should get involved in fighting its

⁵⁴. *ibid.*, pp. 216-7.

own people in the country. Keeping the present realities in mind one may apply Arend Lijphart's theory of "constitutional democracy."⁵⁵ This model has four major components.

1. The first is that of government by a grand coalition of leaders of the plural society.
2. The second is the system of mutual veto which aims to protect the vital interests of the minorities.
3. The third is proportionality of representation.
4. The fourth is the degree of autonomy to each of the segments to run its own affairs.

But this system pre-supposes the existence of elites to form a grand coalition. But such elites have failed to solve the problems of Afghanistan and their failure has precluded the process of nation building.

Under the Taliban the problem is of representation of the non-Pashtun ethnic groups on the one hand and the representation of the intellectuals on the other hand. Since, in the last couple of decades. Afghanistan has not had much of a

⁵⁵. A Lijphart, *Democracy in Plural Societies : A Comparative Exploration*, (New Haven, 1977), p.25.

democratic experience, it becomes expedient to create a conducive environment to facilitate democratic norms and traditions which would conform to the Afghan tradition and culture.

In addition to the many uncertainties about the future of the regime in Afghanistan, the question is also about the minority ethnic groups who have their ethnic kinfolks across the borders-viz. the Persian speaking Tajiks numbering about 3.5 million in Afghanistan; the Turkic-speaking Uzbeks who constitute about one million of the population of Afghanistan, the Turkoman, Kyrghiyz, Hazara, Aimaqs and others. The Pashtuns also live in the North West Frontier Province of Pakistan. So, will the ethnic groups in a fragmented Afghanistan provide support to their ethnic and religious counterparts in the Central Asian Republics, Iran or Pakistan? What will happen to rest of the various minority groups? Perhaps, the answer lies in the fact that each of these ethnic groups may try and seek out a greater autonomy and look for allies, along / across the international borders. The weaker groups may try to internationalize their struggle. Thus, it would

be feasible to create ' zones of influence' and try to work out a decentralized government.

THE PROSPECTS OF NATIONAL BUILDING

One of the key issues involved in the process of nation building lies in the nature of inter-group solidarity. Michael Hechter explains that "groups will form when individuals desire to attain jointly produced private goods that cannot be obtained by following individual strategies".⁵⁶ The prospects of nation building lies in the desire of the groups to work, or not, together. These groups may agree upon demarcating autonomous regions in the country to promote agriculture, livestock grazing, promotion of regional institutions and regulation and promotion of tourism.

The promotion of nation building also requires in striking a balance between the Islamists, traditional notables and the *Ulema*.⁵⁷ These elites have the task of bringing about socio-

⁵⁶. Michael Hechter, "Nationalism as Group Solidarity" *Ethnic and Racial studies*, vol. 10, no.4, (October 1987), pp.415-6.

⁵⁷. Olivier Roy, "The New Political elite of Afghanistan," In Myron Weiner and Ali Banuazizi eds., *The Politics of Social Transformation in Afghanistan, Iran, and Pakistan*, (New York, 1994), pp 72-100.

political changes in the region, and the emergence of any 'would-be' states structures will depend upon the nature of co-ordination and co-operation among them. As Roy has mentioned "contradiction today is not between town and village, between traditional notables and intellectuals, but between a fledging state rising from below and imported state, both manned by young intellectuals".⁵⁸ In the post-Taliban Afghanistan, however the prospects of nation building would lie in ability of the Taliban to accommodate the diverse ethnic and regional interests.

Aslo the fighting taking shape along tribal and ethnic lines suggests that primordial sentiments have begun to dominant the region. The paradox lies in the fact that while primordial loyalties are an effective means of mobilisation, such sentiments would ultimately weaken the state. The state has to incorporate these divers loyalties and find an effective institutional means to use it for the process of nation building. Iran, (Russia), Pakistan, United States are competing amongst themselves to gain a stretegic depth in Afghanistan so that they

⁵⁸. *ibid.*, p.95.

would get an access to the rich and vastly untapped natural resources of the neighbouring Central Asian Republics. In the present state of political chaos, with regional powers using Afghanistan as a launching pad for their strategy, it is very difficult for genuine peace to prevail. As Rubin has rightly observed that Afghanistan has become a 'failed state' because of the strategies of the global hegmons. The new elites of Afghanistan were "created by the foreign-aid-funded schools and bureaucracy" and they used "international alliances to build and train their own armed organisations linked to different ethnic groups and regions of the country"⁵⁹. These contestants have failed to evolve any agreements. Moreover, with the rise of the Pakistan-backed Taliban, conflicts among the contending groups have to be solved diplomatically.

On the roles of the interfering countries, Amin says that they should forego their national interests and also their political, religious and ideological differences to work with a new approach to achieve success⁶⁰. The foreign powers must "stop

⁵⁹. Rubin, n.25 p. 143.

⁶⁰. A. Rasul Amin, *Afganistan : Through A Critical phase of History*, (Peshawar, 1994), p. 17.

their assistance to any nationality / ethnic groups or religious sects of Afghanistan ⁶¹" and surrender all political power to the Afghans. It is through time route that the resolution of the conflicts in Afghanistan lie.

⁶¹. *ibid.*, p. 17.

CONCLUSION

The modern history of South and Central Asian countries can be analysed on the basis of their colonial past. In seeking to consolidate their fortunes in the sub-continent, the colonial powers such as the Portuguese, Dutch, French, British, and Russian used the area primarily as a buffer zone. They carved out territories which served as corridors by which they freely accessed their colonised lands. The outcome was that :

- a) the development of the region suffered as the colonial powers engaged in their own strategic interests,
- b) the process of nation building was deferred, and
- c) nations were arbitrarily carved out without taking into account the ethnic divisions.

In Afghanistan, British India and Tsarist Russia sought to outmanoeuvre each other to gain control with the British strategy fluctuating between 'masterly inactivity' and the 'forward policy'. The Afghan boundary was abruptly drawn and the separation of ethnic groups on either side of the international border created its own share of crisis.

On account of the struggle between contending parties, Afghanistan suffered both economically and politically. To counteract British influence the Afghans sought to adhere to their own institutions which were based on indigenous tradition and culture. The Kings sought to bring about political unity, which was first sought to be achieved under the reign of Ahmad Shah Abdali. The 1890s saw further attempts at consolidation being made by Abdul Rahman. Nation building however, was not an easy task, mainly due to the appropriation on the part of the rulers, of the western model of nation building which was thoroughly unsuitable for a traditional and diverse Afghan society.

The post Second World War era saw the Soviet interests in the region grow due to Afghanistan's strategic location. The cold war end game was played out on Afghan territory which resulted in the fragmentation of Afghan unity. Different outfits emerged to counter the Soviets; these outfits significantly, were never united - regional, tribal, and ethnic loyalties prevented their unity. The Islamic nations expressed their support and sympathy for their Afghan brethren but did little to ameliorate

their condition. Most of the countries used the Afghan crisis as a launching pad to consolidate their hold over the different Afghan factions. Pan-Islamism, therefore contributed little towards the resolution of problems.

The various political elites, by their designs only complicated the matter. The division of the Mujahideens on ethnic lines was however, abetted and sponsored by outside forces. This interference was instrumental in the politicization of primordialities in the country which, in turn, turned out to be one of the major obstacles in the path of nation building.

It is against this background that we can make sense of the coming to power of the Taliban. Their inability to involve the various other ethnic groups can only result in their failure. Ethnic assertion is no anachronism, but when an ethnic group favours an 'exclusivist policy' for its narrow gains, then it not only undermines the unity of its people but also precludes nation building. Nation building is a complex phenomenon which entails inter-group solidarity, socio-economic development, cultural differentiation and integration and the active participation of citizens in the decision making process.

The evolution of an effective Afghan nationalism has also been hindered by the non-participation of women in the various schemes of post-Taliban Afghanistan. Pakistan and the United States, again have supported the Taliban for their own economic interests. For them, the main concern has been to tap the natural resources of the Central Asian Republics through Afghanistan.

To sum up, the crisis in Afghanistan has been created primarily by the international community. The resolution of conflict therefore, calls for sustained co-operative effort at an international level. Regional co-operation must also be started where by the ethnic groups come to evolve some kind of consensus as regards the issues to be articulated and their resolution. Also a programme of reconstruction can not be started until the contending militias are disarmed and are offered an alternative mode of livelihood.

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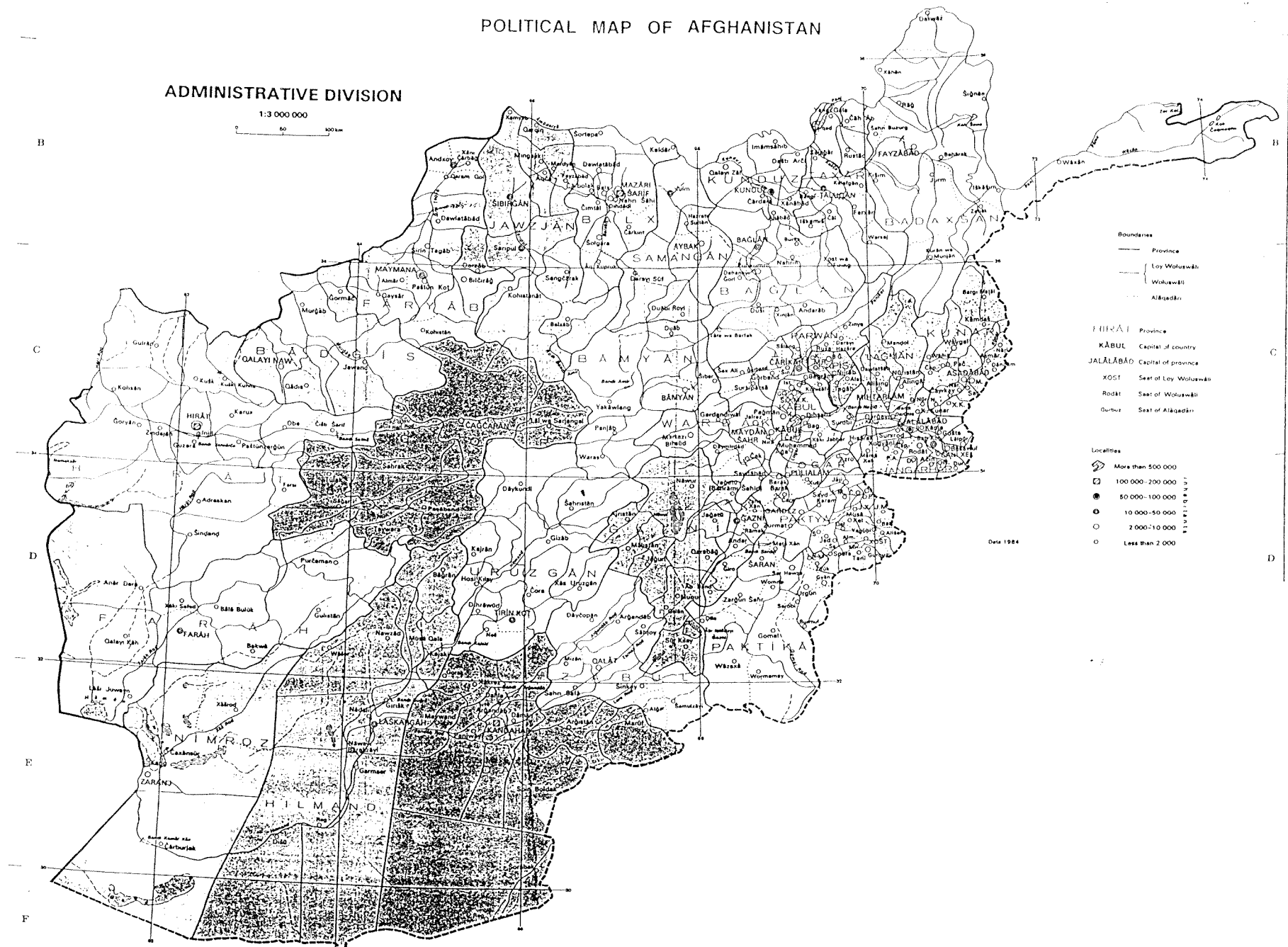
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POLITICAL MAP OF AFGHANISTAN

ADMINISTRATIVE DIVISION

1:3 000 000
 0 50 100 km



- Boundaries**
- Province
 - - - - - Loy Wotuwaki
 - Wiloyati
 - Alaiqadri
- FIRAI Province**
- KABUL Capital of country
 - JALALABAD Capital of province
 - XOST Seat of Loy Wotuwaki
 - Rodaki Seat of Wiloyati
 - Guruzi Seat of Alaiqadri

- Localities**
- ⊕ More than 500 000
 - ⊙ 100 000-200 000
 - ⊙ 50 000-100 000
 - ⊙ 10 000-50 000
 - ⊙ 2 000-10 000
 - Less than 2 000

Data 1984