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Ethnicity and Civil Society in Contemporary Afghanistan

Carol J. Riphenburg

This article focuses on the critical question of ethnicity and politics in Afghanistan. It examines current conceptual models of ethnicity and their application to present-day political affairs in the country. Research shows that it is not the presence of ethnic groups per se that leads to violence or instability but the absence of civil society and democratic governance and norms. Lessons may be drawn from Afghanistan's neighbors to the north. These Central Asian nations present cases of emerging civil societies, which are fragile, fragmented, and strongly influenced by the international donor community. After 23 years of war in Afghanistan, repression and neglect have had a devastating effect on civil society.

Afghanistan was supposed to be the centerpiece in America's war on terrorism, an example of how to rescue a failed state. Disintegration would be terrible for Afghanistan, and bad for the United States and outside world.[1] State failure, predictably tied to internal strife and humanitarian crisis, can spread from limited unrest to national collapse and then regional indeterminacy. So how is the rebuilding of Afghanistan faring?

The international community[2] is calling for the creation of a secular, multiethnic, and democratic state without providing the military force or resources to build it. Critical to helping Afghanistan emerge from its failed and threatened status are state capacity, the question of ethnicity, and the victory of normal politics over guns, imperiled today by the power of warlords outside Kabul. This analysis focuses on the critical question of ethnicity in Afghanistan.

ETHNICITY: CONCEPTUAL MODELS

Ethnic groups are no longer viewed as primordial, but are considered to be the products of history, the design of concrete procedures of administrative classification,

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1. Not only the citizens of failed states suffer; the failings of states also pose enormous dangers beyond their own borders, witness the events of September 11, 2001. See: Robert I. Rotberg, ed., *State Failure and State Weakness in a Time of Terror* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2003).

2. The United Nations Assistance Mission to Afghanistan (UNAMA), with military force provided by the United States and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO).

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political organization, and socialization. Analyzing colonial politics in Zambia, Daniel N. Posner[3] concludes that the structure of a country's ethnic cleavages is not just a social fact but also a historical product. Posner indicates that the ethnic landscape is important because the dynamics of ethnic competition and conflict rise not from the presence of ethnic groups, but from the pattern of their relative sizes and geographic distribution. Countries containing a single large ethnic group or two evenly matched groups, he notes, have been found to be more violence-prone than those including a larger number of equally sized groups. Countries with a large number of small ethnic groups demonstrate slower rates of economic growth than countries that are more ethnically homogeneous. Posner also draws on ethnic fractionalization research to point out that the numbers and relative sizes of ethnic groups in the political system are central to the outcomes of economic growth rates, political instability, and the outbreak and duration of civil wars. In addition to their numbers and sizes, the physical placement around the country is also crucial. Posner states that the link between the *characteristics of the cleavage structure* and the likelihood of conflict is a basic supposition in nearly all explanations of ethnic politics and communal strife.

If the Pashtuns,[4] which comprise approximately 38% of Afghanistan's population, can be considered a single large ethnic group, Posner's research could be of interest here. Also, most Pashtuns reside in the south. Where they do live "intermixed" with other minorities — as in the north, such co-mingling as occurred was usually accomplished by force.

Posner's research is basically at odds with that of James D. Fearon and David D. Laitin[5] who find that a greater degree of ethnic or religious diversity, or indeed any particular cultural demography, does not by itself make a country more prone to civil war. Also, they found little evidence that one can predict where a civil war will break out by looking at where ethnic or other broad political complaints are strongest. These authors argue that the factors that explain which countries have been at risk for civil war are not their ethnic or religious characteristics but rather the *conditions that favor insurgency*. These include: poverty, which is indicative of financially and bureaucratically weak states and also favors rebel recruitment; political instability; rugged ground; and large populations. Moreover, Fearon and Laitin hold that the current prevalence of internal war is not the result of changes in the international system, stemming from the end of the Cold War, but is mainly the result of a steady accumulation of protracted conflicts that began immediately after World War II. The current level of such conflicts had been reached prior to the breakup of the Soviet Union.

In applying Fearon and Laitin's model, Afghanistan does rank high on the factors that favor insurgency: poverty, political instability, rugged ground, and a large

3. Daniel N. Posner, "The Colonial Origins of Ethnic Cleavages: The Case of Linguistic Divisions in Zambia," *Comparative Politics* 35, No. 2, January 2003, pp. 127-28.

4. The following section discusses the size and make-up of Afghanistan's groups, i.e., the ethnic landscape.

5. James D. Fearon and David D. Laitin, "Ethnicity, Insurgency, and Civil War," *American Political Science Review* 97, No. 1, February 2003, pp. 75-76.

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population. These factors are the independent variables in this analysis.

Kumar Rupesinghe[6] points out other issues of governance and conflict resolution in multi-ethnic societies. First, the profusion of ethnic groups does not in itself lead to violence and conflict. Ethnicity as a term is ambiguous. It is a dynamic concept including both subjective and objective elements. It is the combination of awareness and external environmental reality, which gives it meaning. An ethnic group is "not a mere aggregate of people but a self-conscious collection of people united, or closely related, by shared experiences and a common history." Second, Rupesinghe emphasizes the historical contingency of ethnicity, and that recent revivals of the concept are an aspect of modernity. Globalization is propelling us towards a single world order, a single civilization. With the end of the Cold War, new issues are gaining prominence on the political agenda, including questions of self-determination and the pursuit of a genuinely multi-ethnic global order. The old approach of nation-building based on a highly centralized state is no longer viable. Policies of assimilation and integration must take into account the goal of a multi-ethnic plurality.

Rupesinghe maintains that the multiplicity of ethnic groups does not alone make for violence and conflict. He mentions the effort of Joseph Rothschild[7] to construct models of ethnic stratification. Rothschild suggests various models of *ethnic group stratification*: vertical hierarchy, parallel segmentation, and cross-patterned reticulation. Only in the first is there complete "correspondence among all dimensions — political, economic, social, and cultural — of ethnic superordination and subordination." In the reticulate model, ethnic groups and social classes cross-populate each other. Rothschild advises that the reticulate model offers the best conditions for the gradual resolution of ethnic groups. He also presents seven different outcomes of stratification from a conflict-resolution viewpoint: dominating majority, dominating minority, etc. Rupesinghe also refers to Donald L. Horowitz's[8] distinction between *ranked and unranked groups.* Ranked groups are those in which social class and ethnic group coincides; ethnic conflict is more likely in ranked groups. Where groups are cross-class, one finds unranked ethnic groups.

Horowitz[9] argues that the linkage of four conditions best explains the occurrence of deadly ethnic riots: 1) A hostile relationship between two ethnic groups, not necessarily an ancient animosity, that produces antipathy or hatred. 2) A response to events — usually designated as anger, but perhaps more accurately interpreted as

6. Kumar Rupesinghe, "Governance and Conflict resolution in Multi-ethnic Societies," *Ethnicity and Power in the Contemporary World,* ed., Kumar Rupesinghe and Valery A. Tishkov (Ed.), (Tokyo: United Nations University Press, 1996), pp. 10-31.

7. Joseph Rothschild, *Ethnopolitics: A Conceptual Framework*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1981). Cited in Rupesinghe.

8. Donald L. Horowitz, "Patterns of Ethnic Separatism," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 23, No. 2 (1981). Cited in Rupesinghe.

9. United States Institute of Peace (USIP), "Lethal Ethnic Riots: Lessons from India and Beyond," *Special Report* 101, February 2003, pp. 1-12. Donald L. Horowitz's research was published at length in *The Deadly Ethnic Riot* (Santa Barbara: University of California Press, 2001).

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arousal, rage, outrage, or wrath—that strongly engages the emotions of one of these groups. 3) An acutely felt sense of justification for killing. 4) An assessment of the reduced risks of violence that reduces inhibition. He notes that social scientists have put forth more effort to explain why ethnic violence takes place than why peaceful relations exist among different ethnic groups.

Rupesinghe's point, that ethnicity is an ambiguous and subjective term, is of interest here. Ethnicity has been used differently by various Afghan groups, as well as in diverse ways at disparate historical periods. One has only to point out that early on in Afghanistan's history the term Afghan was synonymous with that of Pashtun. With regard to Rothschild's classification, Afghanistan has at various times represented a dominating majority or minority depending on the historical period. Currently, the pattern is that of a dominating minority. Even with recent changes in certain ministries, access to social mobility, at least at the center, depends on good relations with the Tajiks ruling in Kabul.[10] This feature would coincide with Horowitz's definition of ranked groups, where social class and ethnic group are coincident. Stratification in ranked systems is equivalent with ethnic membership. Mobility opportunities are restricted by group identity. Such a society of ranked ethnic groups is more prone to conflict.

Barnett R. Rubin[11] supports the proposition that an ethnic conflict is one in which the contenders are defined by cultural criteria. He points out that Ted Gurr, whom he indicates is a leading scholar of the subject, prefers the term *ethnopolitical conflict*. Gurr, furthermore, maintains that ethnic conflict as such does not exist. The contestants are always political or military organizations that define goals or recruit supporters in ethnic terms, never unadulterated ethnic groups themselves. According to Rubin, ethnic identity is as much a political project as a reality; and ethnicity is a contested area.

Nazif Shahrani,[12] a foremost expert on Afghanistan, relates the country's communal tensions to the type of government in effect since Abdur Rahman. During his reign, the creation of the first modern state (as opposed to nation) under the name Afghanistan came into being more than a century ago. Abdur Rahman, with subsidies

10. Karzai has become increasingly outspoken against warlord dominance, saying they represent a greater threat to Afghanistan than the insurgency in the south. Many Afghans had assumed that Karzai would choose the most prominent warlord, Vice President Marshal Muhammad Fahim, leader of the *Shura-i Nazar* and Minister of Defense, as his first vice presidential candidate in presidential elections, scheduled for October 9, 2004. Yet, on the very day of the deadline for presidential candidates' nomination, Karzai (and the US) broke with Fahim, choosing a younger brother of the assassinated, charismatic Ahmad Shah Mas'oud, founder of *Shura-i Nazar*. The alliance between Karzai and *Shura-i Nazar* had often been troubled; but it dominated Afghan politics since the fall of the Taliban. Nonetheless, Fahim has not resigned as Defense Minister; and his militia continues to occupy Kabul and parts of the northeast. Moreover, among the 23 candidates for president, several are faction leaders.

11. Barnett R. Rubin, *Blood on the Doorstep: The Politics of Preventive Action*, (New York: The Century Foundation Press, 2002), pp. 11-12.

12. Nazif M. Shahrani, "War, Factionalism, and the State in Afghanistan," *American Anthropologist*, Vo. 104, No. 3 (2002), pp. 715-21.

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from the British, laid the foundation for an autocratic centralized state in which the ruling faction imposed itself on the rest of the reluctant communities in the country. Shahrani sees this as an unsuitable governmental model for Afghanistan, which has led to intercommunal wars and tensions when central power has failed. These old state structures based on domination rather than governance, corruption, and nepotistic bureaucracy must be replaced. Shahrani argues that the transformation of tribal structures and ethnic differences into groups, fragmented along ethnic, linguistic, and sectarian cleavage, was the direct consequence of the policies of centralizing governments. *State structures and policies* have been the problem in breeding communal violence and conflicts in multiethnic societies.

Shahrani's views on the importance of an effective governance structure, as opposed to one of domination (what he terms the "old sovereignty-driven centralized system of misrule that has characterized the history of Afghanistan since 1880"), are supported by the findings of Wolgang Danspeckgruber.[13] In addressing problems arising around the notion of self-determination for communities in an era of globalization and growing interdependence, Danspeckgruber emphasizes the importance of *self-governance* for these groups—maximum autonomy in combination with integration and the acceptance of multiple identities. This would satisfy the aspirations of peoples looking for greater independence within presently created states as well as cases in which the community in question inhabits an area covering one or two states in a region. Except for the Hazaras, this situation is true for all the larger ethnic groups in Afghanistan. Such a model of self-governance must include democratization, demilitarization, and demobilization. It must also embrace the following principles: the idea of legitimate multiple identities; the involved parties must develop a flexible political culture, ideally based on democratic values and tolerance; organized crime must be eliminated; economic programs must have immediate effects; education (along with detraumatization) and the dissemination of reliable information must seek to create and present a realistic picture of the immediate communal environment. Issues of self-identity and self-determination must be employed to serve the rights of individual men, women, and children rather than leadership interests.

Ashutosh Varshney[14] advances evidence that *civic engagement* among members of different ethnic groups can deter those who seek to convert ethnic conflict into ethnic violence. He makes two essential arguments, both focusing on the relationship between the structure of civic life and the presence, or absence, of ethnic violence. First, inter-ethnic and intra-ethnic networks of civic engagement play very different roles in ethnic conflict. The former build bridges between ethnic communities, while the latter reinforce ethnic boundaries and reduce positive communication and interaction between ethnic groups. Second, civic engagement takes two different forms: organized civic networks (business associations, professional organizations, reading clubs, film clubs, non-governmental organizations, trade unions, and political par-

13. Wolfgang Danspeckgruber, Ed., *The Self-Determination of Peoples: Community, Nation, and State in an Interdependent World*, (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2002).

14. USIP, "Lethal Ethnic Riots," *Special Report*. Ashutosh Varshney's research led to *Ethnic Conflict and Civil Life: Hindus and Muslims in India* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001).

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ties) and everyday civic networks (according to Varshney, civic networks stem from the basic, habitual interactions of life, such as whether families from dissimilar communities visit each other, eat together frequently, mutually participate in festivals, and permit their children to play together in the neighborhood). If robust, both forms of engagement promote ethnic peace. Of the two, however, associational forms are sturdier than everyday forms as bulwarks against ethnic violence. According to Varshney, vigorous associational or organizational life (inter-ethnic) can act as a serious constraint against the polarizing strategies of political elites intent on manipulating ethnic conflict for their own political purposes. Varshney emphasizes the importance of interethnic and organized civic networks for the amelioration of ethnic strife. The implications of this for Afghanistan will be considered in the conclusion.

The present state of affairs in Afghanistan appears to be that of a dominant minority, with the international community working to move the country toward a multi-ethnic democratic model. This analysis examines 1) the ethnic landscape of Afghanistan; 2) the relations and political dynamics of these groups; and 3) the influence of the independent variables of poverty, a weak state and political instability, rugged terrain, and a large population on the dependent variable of ethnic stability.

Investigation of ethnic cleavages pervading state and society in Afghanistan is critical to consideration of the prospects for reconstruction and political consolidation. Sectarian, linguistic, and religious identities are also important. Most societies are split along one or more lines. Often these splits, or cleavages, become the society's fault lines along which political views form. Important social cleavages, in addition to ethnicity, are: social class, religion, urban-rural, and geographic region. Almost any social cleavage (occupation, age, gender, etc.) or category can become politically relevant. In Afghanistan, ethnicity appears to be an especially salient cleavage. The problem is to find out why.

Pashtuns point to the complex and overlapping territorial, economic, and factional relationships among Afghanistan's ethnic groups. The average Afghan on the street denies the importance of ethnicity. Yet, political leaders often use group identity in their pursuit of power and resources by reinterpreting history around symbols of ethnic or religious differences, especially during civil wars. The homogeneity of the Taliban and Ahmad Shah Massoud's forces, as well as the historically rooted anti-Pashtun sentiments among Hazaras, Uzbeks, and Tajiks, were all useful to various political factions during times of civil war. Likewise, Pashtun aversion to acceptance of a Tajik-dominated central government proved convenient to the Taliban's quest for power.

Twenty-three years of war prior to 2001 have led some to conclude that the use of ethnic and sub-ethnic solidarity to rally military and political support has augmented ethnic divisions in Afghan society. However, ethnic and tribal allegiances are not immutable. Fundamentalist leaders like Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, for instance, have played both pan-Islamic and ethnic cards, as needed. Ethnicity is one the principal fissures around which politicians contend for power in Afghanistan; but it is not the only one.[15]

15. International Crisis Group (ICG), "Afghanistan: The Problem of Pashtun Alienation," *ICG Asia Report*, No. 32, August 5, 2003, pp. 1-36.

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ETHNIC LANDSCAPE

Afghanistan's population is made up of nearly 55 distinct ethnic groups. Four of these account for a large majority: the Pashtuns (38%), Tajiks (25%), Hazaras (19%), and Uzbeks (6%).[16] Accurate numbers are difficult to ascertain, due to the absence of a census and the large flows of refugees, which affected various groups differentially. Pashtuns, at an estimated 38% of the population, make up the single largest ethnic group. Pashtuns controlled political power for most of Afghanistan's history as a state, with the result that their traditions and cultural precepts tended to be equated with the national identity of Afghanistan.

Pashtuns in Afghanistan are segmented into about 30 tribes, each further divided into clans and lineages. Close to half of these tribes belong to one of two major confederations: the Durrani and the Ghilzai. Most of the Durrani are found in the southwest, in the broad expanse of flat land from Farah to Kandahar. The Ghilzai inhabit the southeast, between Kandahar and Kabul. They also have large communities in the center and north of the country due to coerced and fostered resettlement under Durrani rule. Approximately ten million Pashtuns reside over the border in Pakistan, where they constitute a majority of the population of the North-West Frontier Province and the northern part of Baluchistan Province. Notwithstanding these divisions, Pashtuns have a powerful feeling of ethnic identity, based on a tradition of common descent; a characteristic Indo-Iranian language, Pashto; and a communal code known as Pashtunwali. Pashtuns are Sunni Muslims, followers of the Hanafi School as are nearly all Afghan Sunni Muslims.

The Dari (Persian)-speaking, Sunni Tajiks are the second largest ethnic group. They live primarily in Kabul, the northeast, and the province of Herat, but also comprise a large portion of the urban population in other parts of the country. Fluency in Dari, the language of administration, and nearness to governmental centers allowed urban Tajiks to serve as subordinate associates of the Pashtuns in government, under Durrani leaders as well as following communist administrations.

The primarily Shi'i, Dari-speaking Hazaras live in the central highlands and have historically been the most politically and economically disadvantaged group. The Turkic-speaking Uzbeks abide in the northern plains and foothills. Their representation in government between the late nineteenth and middle of the twentieth century was insignificant. Moreover, in the northern provinces until the 1950s, all military and political officials (including their attendants) consisted solely of Pashtun or Tajik from south of the Hindu Kush.[17] Unlike the Pashtuns, the three other major ethnic groups in Afghanistan were either non-tribal or predominantly detribalized by the late twentieth century. Diverse social trends, such as labor migration to Kabul in the instance of the Hazaras and the Tajiks of the Panjshir Valley, had the consequence

16. *Chicago Tribune*, "Inside Afghanistan," September 30, 2001, p. 16.

17. Nazif Shahrani, "Ethnic Relations under Closed Frontier Conditions: Northeast Badakhshan," *Soviet Asian Ethnic Frontiers*, William O. McCagg, Jr. and Brian D. Silvers (Ed.), (New York: Pergamom Press, 1979), pp. 174-92.

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of disrupting local identities and creating larger solidarity clusters.[18]

The development of the Afghan state in the mid-eighteenth century corresponded to the rise of Durrani tribal power at the national level. Thereafter, Pashtuns from the Durrani tribes strengthened their control over state and society, often to the detriment of other tribal and ethnic groups. The resistance that succeeded the Soviet invasion of 1979, along with the ensuing civil war, allowed non-Pashtun ethnic groups to establish political and economic independence from both the government and Pashtun dominance. From 1992 to 1996, the predominantly Tajik *Jami'at-i Islami* party headed by President Burhanuddin Rabbani commanded the central government. Pashtun resistance to a Tajik-dominated political regime, and assistance from Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, facilitated the rise of the Taliban, a largely Pashtun fundamentalist movement that ruled most of the country from 1996 to 2001.

ETHNIC RELATIONS AND POLITICAL DYNAMICS

Resistance to (jihad against) the Soviets and the civil war that ensued played havoc with state-society relations and accentuated ethnic and religious schisms. The US intervention had ended the civil war.[19] However, the compulsory redistribution of political power at the center has produced new tensions and pressures, portending a reversion to the chaos of the 1990s. The crucial task for the international community supervising Afghanistan's post-conflict transition is to guarantee that a legitimate state authority with a monopoly of force is constituted, forestalling descent into yet another cycle of factional violence. On a par with a resolute political transition is attaining a rough balance between contending ethno-regional interests. Other ethnic groups would no doubt oppose reinstatement of the traditional Pashtun dominance. Still, the current distribution favoring Panjshiri Tajiks looks equally illegitimate to most Pashtuns and other Afghan ethnic groups.[20]

Breaking with Muhammad Fahim and dismissing Ismail Khan, the former governor of Herat, President Karzai faced the difficult task of choosing a Cabinet, which would represent Afghanistan's ethnic mix and confirm his pledge to fight the opium economy. Winning the presidential election with 55% of the vote, he nonetheless came in a distant second to local favorites in the provinces of the central high lands and the northeast. Karzai also found himself restricted by Afghanistan's new constitu-

18. ICG, "Afghanistan: The Problem of Pashtun Alienation," *ICG Asia Report No. 32*.

19. Actually, the US continues to battle Taliban insurgency in the south and east. Large portions of the country have become inaccessible to aid workers, with the agency *Médecins Sans Frontières* withdrawing after twenty-four years of service.

20. Afghanistan's new constitution, approved by a constitutional *Loya Jirga* on January 4, 2004, recognizes ethnic identification. The national anthem will be in Pashto; but the constitution mentions the names of 14 disparate ethnic groups as comprising the Afghan nation. Pashto and Dari, the Afghan version of Persian, will be the official languages of the country. For the first time, six regional languages, Uzbek, Turkmen, Baluchi, Pashai, Nuristani, and Pamiri, will enjoy official status in the regions, where the majority of the population speaks them.

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tion, which requires that cabinet ministers have higher education and hold only Afghan citizenship, not dual citizenship. In his new Cabinet, announced December 23, 2004, Karzai made significant changes. Abdul Rahim Wardak, former deputy to Fahim, replaced Defense Minister Muhammed Fahim, a prominent Tajik warlord and the head of the northern alliance that helped the United States drive the Taliban from power in 2001. Wardak is a Pashtun, who gained recognition as a commander in the 1980s fighting Soviet occupation, then fled abroad as the country descended into civil war. In addition to Fahim, a southern warlord named Gul Agha Sherzai was removed from the Cabinet, where he had been Public Works Minister. Anwar ul-Haq Ahadi, a longtime Karzai ally, replaces Finance Minister Ashraf Ghani, a former World Bank official credited with securing large commitments of foreign aid. Foreign Minister Abdullah and Interior Minister 'Ali Ahmad Jalali, both popular in the West, are to be kept on despite the reshuffle. Jalali, a longtime exile in Washington, will have to turn in his US passport to remain in the Cabinet. Ismail Khan secured the office of Minister of Energy, a new post. [21]

The Bonn Process

United States-directed military forces deposed the Taliban; and the United Nations-negotiated Bonn Agreement set up an Interim Administration that was to govern for six months. Though headed by an ethnic Pashtun, Hamid Karzai, a Popalzai tribal leader and former Deputy Foreign Minister from Kandahar, leaders of the *Shura-i Nazar-i Shamali* (Supervisory Council of the North) predominated in the cabinet, primarily Tajiks from the Panjshir Valley, the late Ahmed Shah Mas'oud's native region and power base. They controlled the so-called power ministries of interior, defense, and foreign affairs.

The Emergency *Loya Jirga*, inaugurated by the former King Zahir Shah in June 2002, prepared the ground for the installation of Hamid Karzai's transitional government that will govern Afghanistan until 2004, when general elections are to take place. Meeting from June 11 to 19, 2002, the Emergency Loya Jirga was counted upon to establish a more balanced, thus more legitimate, government; instead it reinforced the monopoly of the *Shura-i Nazar* over the government's security organizations: the army, intelligence agency, and police. Marshal Muhammad Fahim gained the portfolio of vice president, in addition to retaining the defense ministry. Pashtun control of financial institutions somewhat balances *Shura-i Nazar's* control of the security forces. Yet the concentration of political power in Panjshiri rule has created resentment among Pashtuns.

Pashtuns had voiced their discontent about the conduct of the Bonn political process even before the Loya Jirga. Their grievances were aggravated by the growing influence of non-Pashtun armed factions during the Interim Administration.

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21. The Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU). Country Report: November 2004, (London: Economist Intelligence Unit, 2004), pp 3, 7. Associated Press. *Afghan President to Announce Cabinet.* December 23, 2004. http://story.news.yahoo.com/news?tmpl=story&u=/ap/20041223/ap_on_re_as/afghan_cabinet.

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Pashtun delegates had hoped to regain lost influence in Kabul by supporting the former King's candidacy to head the Transitional Administration. When Zahir Shah was unceremoniously removed from consideration, under the influence of the US special envoy, Zalmay Khalilzad, and the United Nations, it created the impression that the Loya Jirga was a rubber-stamp for the Panjshiri-dominated Interim Authority. The threatening sight inside the tent of the *Shura-i Nazar*-controlled National Security Director, the country's internal security agency, weakened the assurance of delegates in the neutrality of the process. During the Loya Jirga, Karzai did not consult fellow Pashtun delegates over his cabinet; but under pressure from the *Shura-i Nazar* used the legitimacy given him by a landslide vote to impose it. The makeup of the cabinet broadened the gap between the Panjshiri Tajiks and Pashtuns and allowed for the perception to develop in their minds that the President had betrayed his ethnic Pashtuns.

Larry Goodson[22] and Ahmed Rashid[23] have pointed to the necessity of Pashtun representation at the center. Pashtuns must be included in the political process or Afghanistan will remain fatefully unstable. President Hamid Karzai's authority has remained fragile since the Emergency Loya Jirga. Since escaping assassination in Kandahar in September, 2002, he has been protected by an American security force. The size of the Pashtun population and its strategic location in the country are significant political realities. To establish political stability and a legitimate government, valid ethnic grievances must be considered and representative political institutions created, both at the center and in the provinces. According to the International Crisis Group, loss of power at the center following the downfall of the Taliban and the fragmentation of the Pashtun south and east among commanders with very narrow support bases, have led most Pashtuns to lose interest in the political process established in Bonn. The problem may be compounded in that Pashtuns feel helpless in the face of unfavorable political developments, fragmented and leaderless.[24]

REGIME REPRESENTATION

The Presidency and Cabinet

Pashtun marginalization. When President Karzai took office, he had considerable support over the south and west. Since then, Pashtuns worry about his capacity to guide the country. Karzai has had difficulty in limiting the power of the *Shura-i Nazar* in the national government and in successfully challenging local warlords elsewhere in the country. The President's popularity among Pashtuns rose in October 2002 when he announced the dismissal of 30 middle-level commanders throughout the country. However, compliance with the order was uneven.[25] Serious clashes with

22. Ed Warner, "Success of New Afghan Government Will Depend on Unity, Security," *Voice of America (VOA) News,* December 10, 2001.

23. Robert Chesel, "Power Vacuum in Kabul," *Radio Netherlands*, (November 13, 2001).

24. ICG, "Afghanistan: The Problem of Pashtun Alienation," *ICG Asia Report No. 32.*

25. ICG, "Afghanistan: The Problem of Pashtun Alienation."

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warlords have since taken place in the north and west. Karzai continues to attempt to deal with the warlords through appeasement or cooption in the political process. He has dismissed three corps commanders for impeding disarmament but has given each of them new jobs in their core areas where their power bases are strongest, making significant reform of the security services hardly any easier.[26]

At Bonn, and during the Emergency Loya Jirga, the United States and other members of the international community endeavored to balance Panjshiri control of the government's security organs with Pashtun direction of the key financial institutions. A notable World Bank anthropologist, Ashraf Ghani Ahmadzai, was appointed as Finance Minister; Anwar ul-Haq Ahadi was chosen as Governor of the Afghan Central Bank. Nevertheless, most regional authorities and some national government ministers have an independent resource base and military force. This gives the financial institutions limited leverage over them and leaves them dependent on international assistance. Ghani persuaded some regional authorities, such as Herat governor Isma'il Khan, into ceding a portion of their revenue to the center. Such transfers are of limited value unless they become regular and systematic.

Ethnic representation in the nation's security organs is another issue of concern. Defense Minister Fahim acted unenthusiastically to the charge by the international community that Panjshiris are disproportionately represented. In February 2003, he reported a rearrangement within the Defense Ministry, placing Uzbeks, Pashtuns, and Hazaras in posts previously held by Panjshiris. The revision involved eleven department heads and included the appointment of a Pashtun general, Gul Zarak Zadran, as supplementary Deputy Minister of Defense. Zadran's appointment, though, does little to change the balance of power in the ministry and possibly even reinforces it. Zadran, a supporter of *Ittihad-i Islami* leader 'Abd al-Rabb al-Rasul Sayyaf (who is an important Pashtun ally of former President Rabbani), believes that mujahidin should form the basis of the new Afghan National Army.

Karzai had named Ali Ahmad Jalali as Interior Minister in January 2003, replacing Taj Muhammad Wardak. The Emergency Loya Jirga had chosen Wardak in June in an effort to override suspicions of a Panjshiri monopoly of state security. He, however, proved incompetent in restructuring and professionalizing the ministry. Jalali, a Pashtun like Wardak, took over with the enterprising and publicly announced objective of carrying out a complete overhaul of the police forces. Just the same, Jalali is an Afghan expatriate; and like other members of the Afghan diaspora who have returned to their country, he lacks a powerful domestic support base. This has made it difficult for him to confront the synthesis of military and economic power brandished by individual commanders and the factions with which they are linked.[27]

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26. Kate Clark, "Of Aid and Arms," *Middle East International,* No. 731, August 6, 2004, p. 24. Still, problems with warlords continue. US Ambassador to Afghanistan Zalmay Khalizad helped broker a ceasefire in August 2004 to end fighting in western Afghanistan between Amanullah Khan and forces of Herat's governor, Ismail Khan. The conflict appeared an effort by Amanullah Khan to gain supremacy over Pashtun areas prior to the presidential election on October 9. Carlotta Gall, "US Ambassador Helps to Negotiate Cease-Fire in Afghan Fighting," *New York Times*, August 18, 2004, p. 5.

27. ICG, "Afghanistan: The Problem of Pashtun Alienation."

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Ethnic Discrimination in the Afghan Army

Most appointments within the Ministry of Defense during 2002 were biased towards a single ethnic group, the Tajiks. Of the 38 generals chosen by Marshal Fahim in February to constitute the general staff of the army, 37 are Tajiks (like Fahim) and one is Uzbek. According to Antonio Giustozzi, this is not so much ethnic discrimination as political favoritism. Of the 37 Tajik generals, 35 are, indeed, associated with *Shura-i Nazar*. Of the 100 generals appointed by Fahim in early 2002, 90 belonged to *Shura-i Nazar*. Even more troubling was the fact that most of these new generals do not have a professional army background, although they all have been active in the civil war. The effort to fill the army with high ranking officers close to *Shura-i Nazar* is clear. Yet, especially in the case of officers with a background in the regular army, it will be interesting to see how strong their loyalty proves in the future. Tensions may develop between mujahidin generals and generals trained by the Russians.

Ethnic bias has been a problem for the Afghan army even during the period of the monarchy. The majority of the officers, especially before the Soviet occupation, belonged to the Pashtun majority, with a smaller number being Tajiks and very few belonging to the minorities. A reform in 1963 determined that officers and noncommissioned officers were to be recruited under a quota proportional to their share of the population. In the 1970s, the outcome of the reform was to reduce the predominance of Pashtun officers in the army, although they remained the majority. Under communist rule, the number of non-Pashtun officers grew continuously, even if the latter remained abundant. By the early 1990s, Tajiks were over-represented in the army, relevant to their share of the total population. Nonetheless, Tajiks were usually concentrated in logistical and other non-combat units, with the infantry still being led by a large majority of Pashtun officers. This was also true of the Sarandoy (constabulary), while the armed branch of the intelligence service displayed a more balanced ethnic mix. The communist governments of 1980 to 1992 were especially anxious to incorporate officers belonging to ethnic minorities, especially Uzbeks and Hazaras. This policy led to the creation of several Hazara-only and Uzbek-only divisions during that period. It sidestepped the problem of imposing Hazara and Uzbek officers on Pashtun troops.

Below the officer level, the draft system in place after 1941 secured ethnic diversity in army formations. Recruits from different ethic and geographic communities were integrated into professional military outfits. The army was both a security force and a national educational institute where Afghan youth received literacy and civic education. The army, then, was the most significant integrating institution in the multi-ethnic society. The draft system for recruiting the army's basic conscripts is not likely to work under current conditions for political, professional, and economic reasons. The Transitional Authority is not powerful enough to enforce a draft system. Conscripts who serve only a short time and receive low pay remain poorly prepared and committed.[28]

28. 'Ali A. Jalali, "Rebuilding Afghanistan's National Army," *Parameters* XXXII, No. 3, Autumn 2002, pp. 72-86.

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Regarding the new national army, the troops are not as ethnically monolithic as the general staff. However, Tajiks have more than an equitable portion of army personnel. An early 2003 estimate ascribes 40% of the new national army to Tajiks, 37% to Pashtuns, and the rest to other minorities. In part, this may be due to Fahim's selective recruitment, with some Pashtun, Hazara, and Uzbek divisions not being asked to send their quota of recruits by the Ministry of Defense.

Pashtun recruits are thought to have some grievances regarding their training. Instruction is in Dari only, no Pashto. Mistreatment of Pashtun soldiers by Tajik officers has been alleged. Others say that Turkmen recruits have also made complaints of mistreatment due to lack of proficiency in either Dari or Pashto. Ethnic groups other than Pashtuns and Tajiks, such as Uzbeks, Turkmen, and Hazaras, have much less proportional share of recruits than Pashtuns. There is no question that initially the officers of the new national army were predominantly Tajiks. The third group of candidate officers, which started training in spring 2003, was the first to include a majority of Pashtuns (51%), which indicates efforts to redress the original imbalance.

Recruitment for the new national army first took place in the vicinity of Kabul, which would easily result in an overrepresentation of Tajiks among officers. The Ministry of Defense might also have desired to reward politically loyal candidates, i.e., Tajiks. However, as international instructors began looking for better candidate officers and a public relations campaign (which included deployment of army units in the provinces and visits of provincial governors and local commanders to the training base outside Kabul) got underway, regional power brokers began supplying good candidate officers, mainly to the advantage of the Pashtuns.

The Pashtun population is extremely sensitive to indications of domination of the new army by Tajiks. They are suspicious of suggestions that the ethnic imbalance might just be temporary. In early 2003, Fahim appointed 11 new department heads and four other officials within the Defense Ministry, all non-Tajiks replacing *Shura-i Nazar* members who were transferred to other jobs. He has also created a fourth deputy ministerial position, to which he appointed a Pashtun general affiliated to his allies of Sayyaf's *Ittihad-i Islami*. Of the three deputy ministers who maintained their posts, two are Tajiks and members of *Shura-i Nazar* and one is Uzbek, linked to General Abdul Rashid Dostum.

On May 22, 2003, Dostum assumed the post of adviser in Kabul to President Karzai on military and security issues, relinquishing the position of Deputy Defense Minister in northern Afghanistan.[29] Billed as a promotion, Dostum's reassignment actually involves a weakening of the influential warlord. Karzai hopes tensions and violence in northern Afghanistan can be eased by the repositioning of Dostum to Kabul. The ongoing battles between rival groups in northern Afghanistan hinder rebuilding in Afghanistan. Dostum, a former communist general, has served a succession of governments for 20 years. He was an influential and important commander in the struggle against the Taliban. In the past, Dostum's militia has often waged battles

29. Northern Afghanistan's powerful warlord General Rashid Dostum resigned from the government to contest the presidential elections against President Hamid Karzai.

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with rival groups in northern Afghanistan.[30]

Plans to train a new army emphasize the need to ensure its multi-ethnicity; and efforts are underway to incorporate soldiers from all ethnic groups in every single unit. The goal is to decrease the control of the warlords over their former troops and promote more disciplined troop behavior towards the civilian population. For a long time, however, the regular, western-trained Afghan National Army (a work in process) and some private militias will coexist. Efficiency is also a problem. Mixing people from different backgrounds, speaking as many as three different languages (Dari, Uzbek/Turkoman, Pashto), could enhance the army's relationship with the civilian population. On the other hand, it might also compromise its performance on the battlefield. Past examples, especially during the communist regime, suggest that mixed units are not highly motivated when fighting. During the war against the mujahidin, ethnically homogeneous units had a more successful record. However, in battles against their home turf or ethnic cohorts, their loyalty proved problematic. No doubt, crafting a politically and ethnically inclusive Afghan National Army will be a difficult task.[31]

An alternative, supported by some former monarchist officials of the old generations, would be a truly unbiased army, staffed by professional officers. This is in fact what international patrons of Karzai, especially the United States and the United Kingdom, have been recommending. However, former officers of the royal army are now, in the majority, too old to form the officer corps of the new armed forces. Forming an entirely new class of officers would take too long. Defense Minister Fahim is enlisting large numbers of officers from the communist period, although only those who are politically aligned with him. Many other officers of the communist period are not aligned with any of the military-political factions ruling Afghanistan today; and they now view themselves as military professionals, capable of remaining above factional infighting. Bringing these individuals in, however, would create tensions among the former mujahidin who fought against them during the 1980s.

In late September 2003, President Karzai announced changes in the Defense Ministry designed to bring to it greater ethnic representation. This rearrangement is a key component in a plan to disarm Afghanistan's many warlords and their private armies later in the year. A multi-million dollar UN-backed disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration program of some 100,000 armed Afghans had been suspended awaiting the change.

Under the new changes, Karzai handed over several key posts in the Afghan Defense Ministry to commanders of Pashtun descent and other ethnicities. In all, he appointed 22 new people at the ministry. The Defense Minister, Fahim, a Tajik, who has appeared as a powerful block to President Karzai's authority, retains his position.

30. Afghan Civil Society Forum (ACSF), "Abdul Rashid Dostum Becomes Advisor to President Hamid Karzai in Kabul," *Newsletter,* May 2003, p. 5. Berne: Swiss Peace.

31. Antonio Giustozzi, *Re-building the Afghan Army*, (Crisis States Programme, Development Research Center: London School of Economics, 2003).

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However, his first deputy and chief of staff have been replaced. Karzai fired General Asif Kilawar, a Tajik, from the post of Army Chief of Staff, replacing him with General Bismillah Khan, a Tajik from the Northern Alliance (Front), who was reduced from Deputy Defense Minister to Chief of Staff in the new reform. He then assigned a Pashtun, Abdul Rahim Wardak, to the post of first deputy, the ministry's number-two job. Three other deputies representing the Hazara, Uzbek, and Pashtun ethnicities were also designated. Reaction to the changes was mixed, with Vikram Parekh, a senior analyst with ICG, noting that two of the three top posts within the ministry still belonged to one faction, the Northern Alliance. Although Afghanistan's largest ethnic group, the Pashtuns, appear to have gained in representation in the ministry following the reshuffle, authority remained plainly in the hands of powerful Tajik Defense Minister Muhammad Qasim Fahim.[32] The reshuffling is a crucial step towards demobilizing Afghanistan's numerous private armies and independent militias. The government of Japan, which is furnishing most of the funding for the demobilization project, did not want the project to begin until the ministry reforms were enacted.

WARLORDISM[33] (FEUDAL RESPONSE TO FRAGMENTED POWER AND POVERTY)

In Afghanistan, US-led Coalition intervention has been accompanied by a fragmentation of authority along much of the same lines as those that prevailed prior to the Taliban's emergence. Several powerful local figures, who control militias sometimes in conflict with one another, dominate most Afghan provinces. In some areas the façade of a rule of law portends, with official police forces and a judiciary; but in reality local despots for the most part predominate.

In southern Afghanistan, arbitrary arrest, torture, and extortion are all prevalent. The fragmentation and insecurity has had far-reaching consequences for commerce in the Pashtun-majority southern and eastern provinces, which include trade routes vital to Pashtun business interests. The social effects of warlordism in the Pashtun, as areas elsewhere in Afghanistan, are just as considerable. Patronage along sub-ethnic lines by local authorities has aggravated internal divisions and disrupted traditional political arrangements.

The main source of political power for commanders has invariably been economic. In the ruinous state of the drought and war stricken south, few industries remain. There are only three functional types of commerce in the south: smuggling, opium, and the gun. Foreign patronage is another source of cash; one that is also controlled by commanders. Commanders in Herat, Helmand, and

32. IRINNews, "Afghanistan: Cool Reaction to Major Defence Ministry Reforms," *IRRINNEWS.ORG* (2003), pp. 1-2. www.irinnews.org/print.asp?/ReportID=36790.

33. Some Afghan scholars prefer the term regional commander or local commander or leader (even possibly sub-state leader) to that of warlord.

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Kandahar have complete command of the road tolls that are established on the massive smuggling routes to Iran and Pakistan. The opium trade remains more decentralized, with many growers and traders, and significant differences between provinces. Even where commanders do not profit directly from the trade, they profit indirectly by extorting money to permit wealthy opium traders to sustain their business.

From the era of the anti-Soviet struggle, commanders have benefited greatly from a war economy. Warlordism did not exist in Afghanistan due to age-old practice and usage but results from the country's forced integration into the contemporary state system.[34] The perpetuation of low-level conflict aids warlords in fending off the stability that would undermine their power. "Chronic war in Afghanistan can be understood as the continuation of power politics by economic means."[35]

Commerce

War with the Soviets demolished the rural subsistence economy. Following the Soviet withdrawal and the decrease in US and Saudi assistance for the resistance groups, the mujahidin elites, who had to find new sources of income to maintain and expand their power, became more dependent on opium production, trans-border trade, and smuggling. During the civil war, local commanders extracted money for the transport of goods through their territories. Pashtun tradition and trucking groups, it is thought, supported the Taliban to protect their business concerns. Afghan Pashtun merchants make up part of a transnational economic network, sustained by ethnic and sub-ethnic bonds, that stretches to the United Arab Emirates, which has the largest Afghan Pashtun population after Karachi. Dealers normally buy duty free consumer electronics and reconditioned cars in Dubai for smuggling into Iran and Pakistan.

Pashtun traders see their participation in the economic reconstruction of Afghanistan contingent on the restoration of peace and security. Pashtun traders, with strong economic and social linkages across regional borders are an exceptional group, involved in a regional transit trade business worth billions of US dollars. As their livelihoods are threatened, they are likely to become more and more impatient. Their ability to challenge the provincial authorities or local commanders is limited, since Pashtun economic power, much like political power, is fragmented and regionalized.

Pashtuns have the perception that the political process in Kabul has basically avoided them and that development and reconstruction of Pashtun areas is becoming a remote concern. The repaving of the Kandahar to Kabul road has begun; but little progress is as yet visible. The Pashtun tribal belt, on both sides of the Durand Line, has a high rate of poverty that encourages criminal activities as well as religious extremism.

34. Barnett Rubin, "ICG interview with Barnett Rubin," New York (April 2002). Quoted in ICG, "Afghanistan: The Problem of Pashtun Alienation."

35. ICG, "Afghanistan: The Problem of Pashtun Alienation."

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State

Afghanistan has been characterized as a failed state, a society where the institutions managing conflict have collapsed. Such a situation can lead to violence. When the state has a limited ability to extract resources from the populace they ostensibly rule, essential government services may cease to function. Afghanistan has always been a resource poor country, relying on trade (drugs, smuggling and collection of transit fees), and foreign aid for survival.

Currently, warlordism is part of the complex distribution of regional and sub-regional power. Local conditions vary widely with the individual commander. Their legitimacy resides primarily in their ethnic and tribal affiliations. Commanders are supported largely for the critical funds they provide to their ethnic group or tribe. Commanders with local government positions often channel foreign aid to areas where their ethnic group or tribe predominates.

The impact of the collapse of government authority on the Pashtuns can be observed as an example. In the political and security vacuum left by the fall of the Taliban, the actions of Pashtun warlords to develop a tribal support base has worsened sub-ethnic divisions and, in fact, marginalized non-dominant groups. Ghilzai, who live in predominantly Durrani areas, complain of harassment, seizure of property, and discrimination from Durrani warlords. Ghilzai farmers in Kandahar province find they are only permitted to hire Durrani workers. Sometimes the indulgences of warlordism are directed at the most vulnerable groups, namely minorities.

More powerful than the Durrani/Ghilzai divide, however, are the identities of individual tribes. Enmities between particular Durrani tribes far greatly surpass any bad feelings between Durrani and Ghilzai. On occasion, bitter lengthy quarrels exist within tribes. Of the six principal Durrani tribes, three now experience exceptional political influence in the south: the Barakzai (tribe of Kandahar Governor, Gul Agha Sherzai),[36] the Popalzai (led by President Karzai's family), and the Alikozai. The other main tribes among the Durrani are the Nurzai, the Alizai, and the Achakzai.

CONCLUSION

Ethnic conflicts are considered crucial challenges to national and international politics and are often accompanied by a gradual collapse of state authority. Furthermore, these conflicts appear to undermine development policy and have the potential to destabilize entire regions. Ethnic identities are generally defined by the belief in a common origin and are expressed by a common language, historical consciousness, religion, etc. However, labeling violent conflicts as ethnic involves the risk of oversimplifying complex issues.[37]

36. Since replaced as governor by Yusuf Pashtun.

37. Christian Wagner, Ana Devic, Ulrike Joras, Mario Krämer, Conrad Schetter, and Andreas Wimmer, "Prospects and Limits of Ethnic Mobilization," *ZEF News* No. 10, July 2002, pp. 1-2.

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The data presented above indicate that Afghanistan ranks high on all of the indicators, which predispose a country to insurgency (the independent variables of this research): poverty, political instability, rugged terrain, and a large population. These factors, according to Fearon and Laitin are as likely to contribute to civil war as ethnicity. Moving beyond the topic of civil war, the research of Christian Wagner et al. pulls together some of the concerns alluded to by the authors mentioned at the beginning of this analysis. According to Wagner et al., studies have demonstrated that the instrumentalization of ethnic identities represents only one of several ways of political mobilization. Thus, ethnic self-definitions compete with different patterns of social identity, e.g. membership of a social class or strata. In Afghanistan, various military and political movements started to make use of ethnic identities only after the collapse of communist rule in the beginning of the 1990s. Although these ethnic identities dominate international media coverage of the Afghan war, the inner-Afghan conflict presents a different picture, Wagner et al. note. On the one hand, Islam constitutes a universalistic framework of orientation, which prevents an emphasis on ethnicity. On the other hand, ethnic identities remain only a subordinate reference of identity for the majority of Afghans. Group solidarities on the basis of clans, tribes, or villages, in addition to ethnic association, are the dominant references of identification. Therefore, an ethnicization of conflict took place in Afghanistan, but not an ethnicization of the masses. These scholars also found that the introduction of democracy and equal opportunities lead to a politization of ethnicity, if the new elites are not in a position to resort to existing networks of civil society in order to secure their power.[38]

The most pressing challenges facing Afghanistan today are: legitimizing the central government and managing center-periphery relations, especially in dealing with the warlords; providing reliable security and rule of law beyond Kabul; economic reconstruction; and upholding ethnic harmony and achieving national integration. This study has focused on the issue of ethnic dynamics. In Afghanistan, they are potentially volatile but at present maintain a reasonable balance, if one puts the most optimistic face on the current situation. US military action influenced the political balance and shifted power away from the Pashtuns, who find this difficult to bear. Yet, internal divisions, based on region, ideology, and personality, trouble the Pashtun community. The victory of religious, rather than nationalist, Pashtun parties in the October 2002 elections over the border in Pakistan impels concern about its meaning for Afghanistan. US engagement in Iraq may also arouse Pashtun opinion against American involvement in Afghanistan and increase attacks against US troops.[39]

38. Christian Wagner et al., "Prospects and Limits of Ethnic Mobilization," *ZEF News*.

39. United States Institute of Peace, "Unfinished Business in Afghanistan: Warlordism, Reconstruction, and Ethnic Harmony," *Special Report* 105, April 2003, pp. 1-13.

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PROSPECTS OF CIVIL SOCIETY IN AFGHANISTAN

Central Asia: Lessons for Afghanistan

Afghanistan's neighbors to the north can perhaps shed light on the positive and negative effects, which stem from manufacturing civil society from the outside. Central Asia presents a case of an emerging civil society, which is fragile, fragmented, and strongly influenced by the international donor community. Under communism, there was little political space for any unofficial associational activity, although religion (the values, traditions, and institutions of which were part of the everyday fabric of society) provided an ideational framework and focal point for regime resistance. New political groups, which had been germinating in the Gorbachev period, played an important role in the process of political liberalization across central Asia during the 1990s. However, the development of these movements was held back by the lack of organizational skills and political strategizing. While the new parties which emerged had in common a rejection of the past, they disagreed over the manner in which they intertwined nationalist, democratic, religious, or free market aspirations. Political rivalry opened up space for new political actors, for the realignment of old elites, and for more open civil involvement in public affairs. The process of democratic change took place unevenly across Central Asia. It was against a backdrop or fundamental political transformation, economic failure, and increasing poverty that international financial institutions and donor agencies began to provide assistance to Central Asia. With the arrival of donor agencies, the process of opening and grassroots initiative got an important lift. Even where so called "second-wave" organizations developed, new social organizations tended to be concentrated in the capital cities and urban centers of the area. Government attitudes toward nongovernmental organizations constituted an important variable accounting for the regional unevenness in the development of civil society. Kyrgyzstan has the most encouraging legislative structure governing nongovernmental organizations.[40]

In the Soviet period, civil society was severely restricted; in the post-Soviet area in Central Asia, it has gained new energy. Though civil society has developed irregularly across Central Asia, in general it remains fragile, constrained to conflicting degrees by restrictive regulatory and legislative milieus and dependent on donor support and funding. Most new social organizations in central Asia have confronted the challenge of survival in a situation where the legislation governing nongovernmental organizations is new, often constraining, and where national and local government officials are suspicious of their purposes and activities.[41]

40. Jude Howell and Jenny Pearce, *Civil Society and Development: A Critical Exploration* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, Inc. 2001), pp. 190-98.

41. Jude Howell and Jenny Pearce, *Civil Society and Development: A Critical Exploration*, p. 199.

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Afghanistan

After 23 years of war in Afghanistan, repression and neglect have had a devastating effect on civil society. With the virtual collapse of the educational system, there are now several generations of Afghans who have received little or no education. War and repression have divested the country of peaceful political activity and intellectual pursuits that are the foundation of civil and institutional life. Most Afghan politicians, professionals, or persons engaged in literary and artistic activities have either been killed, fled the country, or died of old age, while press and media activity came to barely function.

Another element, trust, may be difficult to create in a post-conflict society and thus may hamper the type of vigorous associational or organizational life (inter-ethnic), which can act as a serious constraint against the polarizing strategies of political elites intent on manipulating ethnic conflict for their own political purposes. Civicness, defined by Gabriel Almond and Sydney Verba as widespread social trust and a high evaluation of considerateness and generosity in people and which permeate the political system, are essential to positive group formation. Almond and Verba's data led them to believe that in Italy, Germany, and Mexico, interpersonal relationships are characterized by relatively low levels of trust, making people less willing to cooperate politically with their fellow citizens.[42]

Can NGOs play a role in reviving civil society in Afghanistan? Today, many NGOs funded by external sources operate in the country. Most have adopted the language of civil society as a means to an end, whether it be democratization, economic growth, or sustainable development, rather than as an end in itself. An NGO may be a multilateral agency, a bilateral donor, or a legitimate or shell local organization set up to attract external funding. A thorough analysis of NGOs is beyond the scope of this study. What can be said is that the process of civil society in societies emerging from authoritarian regimes and years of chaos, where freedom of association and organization outside of the state was sharply circumscribed or not able to grow, is not clear-cut. In Afghanistan and other areas, the concept of nongovernmental organization is relatively new. They must struggle to gain legitimacy in the eyes of their intended beneficiaries as well as the local government. Running the association and maintaining its financial viability can meet legal and organizational challenges, as workers in these groups lace expertise and face complicated and inappropriate financial procedures.

NGOs in Kabul have expressed concern over the government's new regulations governing NGOs. The Afghan Planning Ministry has devised a specific legislative framework within which NGOs must now operate. Head of the Agency Coordinating Body for Afghan Relief (ACBAR), Rafael Robillard, fears that the new law is unnecessarily coercive and will essentially render NGOs as governmental organiza-

42.Gabriel Almond and Sydney Verba, Ed., *The Civic Culture: Political Attitudes and Democracy in Five Nations* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1989). First published in 1963.

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tions. The law requires NGOs to be part of a new coordination assembly for NGOs. Moreover, it requires all NGO funding in the country to be channeled via Afghan banks. NGOs say that NGO coordinating bodies already exist and maintain that existing banks do not have the capacity to provide adequate facilities to NGOs. The thousands of local and international NGOs now active in Afghanistan had made it essential that the government devise legislation to differentiate between contractors and NGOs and between those engaged in legitimate assistance work and those who are not. The goal of the new regulations is to ensure more accountability. The United Nations in Kabul has welcomed the government's move, viewing it as a step toward developing capacity in Afghan institutions.[43]

Relying on external donors and funds to jump start civil society is not without its risks. Civil society, according to Jude Howell and Jenny Pearce, does not necessarily respond to external manufacturing. Reliance on donor funds can reinforce internal relations of hierarchy and elitism within local civil society groups and render them less accountable to their members. It cannot be produced according to outlines devised from offices in Washington or London. Civil societies in any context have a history and must develop in synchronization with their particular historical, cultural, and political tempos.[44]

43. United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, "Afghanistan: NGO Concern Over New Regulatory Framework, *Integrated Regional Information Network* (May 19, 2003). www.reliefweb.int/w/Rwb.nsf/0/0ffafa638ca5062e85256cee007.

44. Jude Howell and Jenny Pearce, *Civil Society and Development: A Critical Exploration*, p. 121.

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