Chapter II

The Diversities in Afghan Society
Regional Diversities In Afghanistan

With an area of 652,225 sq km Afghanistan, variously known as Yaghistan, Ariana or Khorasan (land of the rising sun), is a highland mass lying mostly at an altitude of 1,200 m or more. Its mountain ridges vary extremely with some exceeding 6,000m. The highest mountain within Afghanistan is Nowshak, which stands at 7,485 meters. The ravines and broader valleys, parts of which are fertile, along with undulating plated, wide river basins and lake sumps account for an extremely varied topography. The country can be said to comprise of a complex and irregular highlands, relatively broad and low in the west and much higher and narrower towards the east.

Politically, Afghanistan has two frontiers of major length: on the north with Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan the other on the south and east with Pakistan. The latter, commonly known as the Durand Line and negotiated in 1893 between the British Indian Foreign Secretary Sir Mortimer Durand and the Amir of Afghanistan Abdur Rahman Khan, remains a bone of contention between the two countries. The relations between Pakistan, created out of Indian territories on 14 August 1947, and Afghanistan remains strained. They have very often disputed each other's claim over the areas lying in the vicinity of the Durand Line. Occupied largely by the Pashtuns, the largest ethnic group of Afghanistan, often repeated claims over Chitral, Sindh, Peshawar, the North West Frontier Province and parts of Baluchistan, the territories of

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Pakistan, have been made for what many Pashtuns regard as an autonomous state of 'Pashtunistan'.

Two other shorter, but significant frontiers of the country are in the west with Iran and in the northeast with the People's Republic of China. But the hazardous terrain imprecise delimitation of the territories in the South and West raise dispute regarding the actual areas of the country.

In the east the chains of the Hindu Kush (Hindu destroyer) mountains portude eastward and meet the Pamir ranges then it is connected to the Himalayan system. The heights of the mountain peaks decline from east to west and in the extreme west we come across the much lower Parapamus ridges (proto- Pamir) forming the last complex mountain system. The Pamir range, also referred to as the roof of the world because of the many mountain ranges converging near it, lies at the intersection of Afghanistan, Tajikistan, Pakistan and China. These mountains account for many of the fast flowing rivers of the country.

The Afghan river systems drain in three directions out of the Hindu Kush and the smaller southern mountains of the Sulaiman range. The melting snows of the northern ranges and the rivers drain into the Amu Darya, known to the ancient world as the Oxus River and as the Jayhun River to the Arab geographers. The Amu Darya flows into the Aral Sea and forms international border with Uzbekistan. This river system is used by Afghanistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan for irrigation purposes to support the farmers occupying the semi-desert areas within its vicinity. But of late the excessive use of its water by the chemical and pesticide companies has caused desiccation of the Aral Sea and increased the level of pollution. The Hari Rud, approximately 650

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1 ibid., pp-485-94.
3 ibid., p.61
4 Magnus and Naby, n.2, p.3.
kilometers in length in Afghanistan, flows westward out of a narrow
tough between two ranges of the central Hindu Kush Mountains, and
cuts a fertile valley out of the rocks. The river flowing through Herat
contributes significantly to the agricultural produce of Heart and its
nearby areas. It then takes a northern turn toward Turkmenistan and
finally terminates in a salt, closed basin to form the Afghan- Iranian
border. The Helmand system drains about 40 % of Afghanistan land
area.\(^8\) The Helmand, that is joined by its major tributary Arghandab at
Qala Bist has no outlet to the sea, rises out of the southern watershed by
the Koh-e-Baba range near Kabul, flows in southwest direction until it
takes a sharp north turn into a closed basin that lies partly within
Iranian territory. Inspite of a low balance in the water level and change of
flow seasonally the river water remains for much of its part non-brackish
rather than saline, as is normal when there is no outlet to the sea.
Helmand, thus, offers potential for agricultural growth. But often
schemes to rejuvenate the Helmand valley have run into rough weather
and the desire to make the adjoining deserts bloom again remains a
cherished dream.\(^9\)

The densely populated areas of the country are, in the main, found
in the lower lying regions either as a series of peripheral zones to the
north and south, or as a series of interior valleys and basins situated
between the main mountain ridges of the centre. The Balkh region in the
north lies in the interior, cut off from the sea by the mountains where
precipitation is mostly deficient. Much of the region consists of semi- or
full desert with light yellow loessic soil. But the highly fertile loessic soil,
in combination with moderate water supply has a potential for economic
prosperity of the region. The two main towns of this region are Herat in
the west and Mazar-e-Sharif in the north that have grown considerably
and acted as cultural centres for centuries.

\(^8\) Dupree, n.3, p.37.
\(^9\) Ibid., pp.482-485, 499-507.
The Kabul basin lies on the southern side. It is a relatively flat zone enclosed by steep mountain ridges. Towards its northwest lies Bamiyan, where stood the two colossal statues of the Buddha until blown up by the fanatic Taliban in March 2001. Bamiyan was a great cultural centre for Buddhist discoverers. At the southeast of Kabul lies Jalalabad where lower elevation produce warmer conditions and a less severe winter. In the southwest lies a series of cultivated zones extending from Ghazni to Kandahar. To its west lay the more arid areas that subsequently merge into the lowland passes and join the Registan and the Dasht-e-Mayo. Pastoral nomads who have settled near the Registan region irrigate their land from the waters of the Helmand-Arghadab rivers.

The Hazarajat region lie on the south of the Kuh-e-Baba mountain ranges. The region receives limited rainfall due to deforestation and its topography renders movement difficult. The Hazara, original inhabitants of the area, have had to face constraints imposed by the mountainous enclaves, floods caused by the rivers, land erosion and soil leaching. Another remote highland is Nuristan. Lying at the north-east of Kabul the mountainous region is “well-wooded at places, supporting a small population of cultivators and pastoralists who use the summer pastures of the high hills and move to lower levels in winter.”

Although lying athwart the Indian sub continent, Afghanistan’s climatic conditions relate more to Iran and the Middle East. The country has an almost arid summer and precipitation is confined largely to the winter months. Annual rainfall ranges from 100mm-150mm in the drier, lower areas of the west and north to 250mm-400mm in the east. Kabul with an average of 300mm rainfall per annum and Herat with 125mm typify the eastern and the western regions respectively.

The country’s geographic zones and its climatic variance has confounded numerous scholars. The Danish geographer Humlum has...
divided Afghanistan into ten natural provinces: East, South, Central, West, Northwest, North, Nuristan, Badakhshan, Wakhan and Monsoonal Afghanistan. But Michel rejects Humlum's classification primarily because of the latter's inclusion of Jalalabad within the region of Monsoonal Afghanistan.\textsuperscript{12} Dupree, having studied the region in detail, discusses the diverse landscape from the point of total ecology. He emphasises upon the lines of human contact and communication with reference to zones of 'accessibility' and 'relative inaccessibility'. Thereupon he divides the country into eleven zones, with six zones of the Hindu Kush and five zones of the deserts and the plains.\textsuperscript{13} Magnus and Naby insist that there are eight geographical zones in the country. They state that the regions of a country must be "distinguished by both population clusters as well as terrain and climate."\textsuperscript{14}

According to the new Encyclopedia Britannica Afghanistan has three distinctive regions.\textsuperscript{15} The northern plain with approximate 104,000 sq. km is the agricultural zone. The southwestern plateau with approximate 130,000 sq. km of land is highly arid and contains numerous desert and semi desert area including the Registan desert. The central highlands region is an extension of the Himalayan Mountains and the Hindu Kush and consists of approximately 418,000 sq. km of the total land mass. Due to the geographical impediments only about twelve percent of the country's land area is arable and approximately four percent of land is irrigated.\textsuperscript{16}

The availability of a small portion of land for cultivation, in combination with the traditional equipments and fratricidal wars, has


\textsuperscript{13} Dupre, n.3, pp.3-31.

\textsuperscript{14} Magnus and Naby, n.2, p.5.


\textsuperscript{16} Ibid., p.128.
on the old Silk Routes linking the Chinese-Indus-Mediterranean civilisations, the region acted as facilitator of trade and cultural movements. Overwhelming cultural tides have swept Afghanistan throughout history and significant historical events have taken place in the region since the passage of Alexander's troops, to the Taliban takeover of Kabul and its subsequent aftermath. The present day Afghan society, being the product of thousands of years of interactions amongst the people of numerous empires and various eras, has a diverse range of ethnic, linguistic and cultural groupings.

The People and their Language

With distinct ethnic, linguistic and physical traits Afghanistan's people rival its topography. When census was attempted in 1967, the official figure was set at 15,766,201 inhabitants of which 2,550,723 were nomads. The Afghan population was growing at an annual rate of 2.5%. It is estimated that during the time of the Soviet armed intervention the population was 15 million and by the next six years there were approximately 4.8 million Afghan refugees living in Iran, Pakistan, India, Western European countries and the United States. In the absence of census the size of Afghanistan's population is subject to dispute, resulting in speculation. During the Soviet invasion the population had decreased in Afghanistan primarily due to the exodus of refugees.

Nonetheless we can account for the people of the various tribal and ethnic groups. Afghanistan, that has for many years remained a cultural melting pot, has a predominantly Muslim population. A social-anthropologist can distinguish between the various people. According to Dupree "distinctive tribal and ethnic clothing, language, religion and
precluded economic growth. The per capita income in 1979 was $225 and the annual growth of GNP during the 1970s was about 2.5%. In the early 1980s, under Soviet influence, nationalisation was extended to all sectors of the economy. In the years following the Soviet intervention budget, revenue, and tax collection were modeled along Soviet patterns. Much of the revenue was raised from taxes and loans from the Soviet bloc countries and Soviet grants-in-aid. But, in general, economic development was not uniform and varied from region to region. Even within a region there were pockets that lagged behind in terms of economic development.

A varied topography has fostered lop-sided development creating regional imbalances in the country. Although the daunting physical barriers and the fratricidal wars have precluded the socio-economic development of the people, the inhabitants have not lost hope. To quote Dupree "the insolence of the Afghan, however, is not the frustrated insolence of urbanised, dehumanised man in the Western society, but insolence without arrogance, the insolence of harsh freedoms set against a backdrop of rough mountains and deserts, the insolence of equality felt and practiced (with an occasional touch of superiority), the insolence of bravery past and bravery anticipated." 

Afghanistan, has had a varied past primarily because of its geographical location. It is situated at the meeting point of four ecological and cultural areas- the Middle East, Central Asian republics, Xinjiang Province of China and the Indian subcontinent. For many years the region has gone through many vicissitudes. The remnants of various races inhabiting Afghanistan, the influx and encroachments by numerous groups and constant movement of its nomadic people has turned the country into a cultural mosaic. Lying at the crossroads of Asia

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17 ibid., p.129.
18 ibid., p.129.
19 Dupree, n.2. p.xvii.
other cultural impediments make the difference."\(^{23}\) The numerous influences and movements of the people have resulted in growth of different languages. According to Dupree we can account for four major language families, viz. Indo-European, Uralic-Altaic, Dravidian and Semitic.\(^{24}\)

The two principal languages spoken in Afghanistan are Pashtu and Persian. Both belong to the family of Indo-European languages. The 1964 constitution named Pashtu and Dari (Afghan Persian/Farsi) as official languages of the state. Dari, literally translated, means the "language of the court."\(^{25}\) Dari and Pashtu use the Arabic script and are written horizontally form left to right. Attempt to Pashtu-ize governmental work in Afghanistan, during Daud’s prime-ministership 1953-63, had been a failure as many officers used Farsi for official work and communication.\(^{26}\)

Tajiki is another important language of the Indo-European family spoken in Afghanistan. The Tajiki dialects are often referred by the name of the valley in which it is spoken, eg. Panjsheri, Andarabi etc. Dari is spoken by the Mughals who are concentrated in Ghor, but the language is interpolated with many Mongolian words.\(^{27}\) The Gujars speak a dialect of Hindustani, but the Gujars of eastern region also speak Pashtu.\(^{28}\) The few Hindu and Sikhs who work as merchant and traders speak Hindustani, Punjabi or Lahnda, belonging to the Indo-European language family.\(^{29}\)

The Farsi spoken in Afghanistan has been interpolated with regional dialects. The Tajik speak Tajiki, a Farsi dialect related to but not identical to the Tajiki spoken in Tajikistan; the Aimak speak Farsi loaded

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\(^{23}\) Dupree, n.3, p.55.

\(^{24}\) ibid., p.66.


\(^{26}\) Dupre, n.3, pp.66-70.

\(^{27}\) ibid., p. 60.

\(^{28}\) ibid, p.63.

\(^{29}\) ibid., pp.63-64.
with many Turkic words; the Hazaras speak Hazaragi which is another variant of the Farsi dialect. Farsiwan of western Afghanistan speak Iranian Farsi while the urban Heratis speak the language with a distinct urban dialect. \(^{30}\)

Most rural Afghans tended to call their spoken language as Farsi and not Dari. But since the last three and a half decades Dari language has developed a great deal and taken hold in many parts of the country. The Kabulis speak Dari with a distinct urban tone. Different regions account for different dialects and the vocabulary, too, differs. In a classic study of the Indo-Iranian Frontier languages, Morgenstierne has aptly remarked that the effect of regions on vocabulary has been such that the Wakhi and Pamiri have more difficulty understanding the other's archaic Dari. \(^{31}\)

Commenting upon the language and literature of the Afghans Tate quotes a well known proverb that says, "Arabic is science; Turki is accomplishment; Persian is sugar; Hindustani is salt; but Pashtu is the braying of an ass." \(^{32}\) The rugged character of Pashtu, spoken mostly by the Pashtuns living in the southern and eastern Afghanistan, is mainly because mountainous people speak it. In spite of its critics Pashtu is capable of expressing an idea accurately and concisely. The first person to have used Pashtu for literary work is the famous Pir Roshan, Mian Bayazid, the founder of the heretical sect of the Roshanis or Ihdadis. Akhun Darwezah Baba, Bayazid's contemporary and opponent, too wrote in Pashtu and helped to popularize the language. \(^{33}\)

The two great seventeenth-century Pashtun poets were Khushal Khan Khattak and Rahman Baba. According to Dupree Khushal Khan epitomized "the Pashtun warrior-poet, the ideal personality type in
Afghan Culture.” Yet, on closer analysis we find that Khushal approximates the ‘philosopher-king’ of Plato. Khushal Khan the Khattak chieftain fought many wars against the other Pashtun tribes and also the Mughals who were ruling India. However, he did write about the beauty of nature, love, man and his glorious deeds.

Pashtu, unlike Arabic, Turkish and Persian has a limited literature but nonetheless it can be said that even in Afghanistan it has got short shrift. The language came into its own only in the seventeenth century and since then numerous writers and poets have constantly enriched the Pashtu literature. The writers of Pashtu were not ignorant people, unacquainted with other languages or were unable to express themselves in any other language than their rugged mother tongue. According to Tate the “sentiments that pervades this indigenous literature are chiefly those of love” but the Pashtu writers have also displayed “a burning desire for martial fame and a lofty mysticism, akin to that of the Persian Sufis. A fervid tone of patriotism also distinguishes many of these compositions.”

The second important group of languages belongs to that of the Uralic-Altaic family. The Altaic (Turkic dialects) speakers are concentrated on the north of the Hindu Kush and come from the members of the Uzbek, Turkmen and Kyrgyz ethnic groups. As dialects vary from group to group and region to region thus have the Uzbeki speakers of Afghanistan absorbed many of the Persian words. The Turkic languages of the country use the Arabic script. In the erstwhile USSR, many languages of both the Indo-European and Uralic-Altaic family had been “transposed into the Cyrillic alphabet.”

14 Durpee, n.3, p.83.
16 Tate, n.32, p.198.
17 Jarring quoted in Dupree, n.3, p.72.
18 ibid., p.74.
The Brahui speak the Brahui language, which belongs to the family of Dravidian languages. But there are many Brahui who also speak Pashtu or Baluchi languages. In the southwestern region, where many Brahuis work as tenant farmers or hired herders of Pashtun and Baluchi Khans, they speak the language of their master.

In Afghanistan there are a few Jews living in Kabul, Kandahar and Herat. Few of these Jews speak Hebrew, which belongs to the family of Semitic languages. The Jews, who make their living as merchants, traders and moneylenders also speak the popular languages of the Afghans, e.g. Dari and Pashtu. Many of the Afghan Jews had gone to Israel but most subsequently returned.

The numerous languages of Afghanistan have enriched the country's literature and culture. Dupree says that Afghanistan has a literate culture but is essentially a non-literate society. Most literate and non-literate Afghans consider themselves poets. But in a non-literate society majority of such poets 'speak' rather than 'write' in their mother tongue. In the pre-war Afghanistan, the troubadours repeated the love stories or the legend of Ali, the Prophet's son-in-law, in the teahouses. Ali's tales are associated with Afghanistan. But not anyone can become a minstrel and it takes long years of training under an older master. When the disciple finally partakes his solo journey narrating the verses and the proverbs that he may have acquired masterfully then is said to have come of age.

It must be remembered that most Afghans do not have an access to their rich literature. In a highly stratified society the property owning classes, rich land lords, religious and political elites have a greater access to the educational institutions. The separation of the uneducated 'masses' immersed in their traditional culture and the 'intellectuals' who

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39 *ibid.,* p.62.
40 *ibid.,* p.64.
41 *ibid.,* p.74.
42 Fodor and Curtis, n.21, p.315.
have benefited from "modern education is representative of some disjunctions observable in the social structure of practically all the new states," and Afghanistan has certainly not been immune from it. The Afghan society consists of discrete collectivities—ethnic, tribal, religious or linguistic—that do not identify with the national whole. Social stratification also makes possible exploitation that is inherent and accounts for the stranglehold of the leaders over the masses.

A country still ruled by a patriarchal system, which when well understood, serves as a substitute for the social legislations. But being patriarchal in essence the norms of the society tend to be andocentric and androcratic. This inevitably implies that the women have a secondary or peripheral role to play in the development of the society. Thus we find that with the rise of the Taliban many decrees were pronounced by the Amr Bil Maruf Noi Az Munkar, Religious Police, that targeted the women. To understand the prevalent dynamics we must study the Afghan society closely.

**Afghan Society: The Contradictions**

The Afghan society is highly fragmented and stratified with contradictions between the towns and the provinces. Roy states that "there are in fact two Afghans: first there is the town (shahr), the place of innovation (bid'at); this is the natural environment of the civil servant, the teacher, the soldier and the communist, all 'intellectuals' and 'bare-heads' (sarluchak), held to be unbelievers and arrogant; and secondly the province (atraf), the home of religion, tradition (sunnat) and values which stand the test of time." In the town politics (siyasat) is

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followed by the middle class and the students. Whereas in the countryside the drama of politics revolves around the struggle for power, carried on by the Khans – 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." In the country, a complex pattern of different ethnic groups is the subtle basis for inequalities of status and other relationships.

To understand the Afghan society we must also distinguish between the tribal and the non-tribal zones. As "every Afghan is linked to the past by a line of ancestors traced back through his father", he therefore belongs to an "endogenous community (the qaum), whether its sociological basis is tribe, clan, professional group (qaum of the mullahs or of Barbars), caste (the bari of Nuristan), religious group (the sayyed), ethnic group (munjani), village community or simply an extended family". The tribe or qabila is the qaum that has traditional customs, rights and duties and a set of complex institutions. Among the tribally oriented Pashtuns we find that the Pashtunwali acts both as an ideology and a code for the tribals and the allegiance is restricted by the set of tribal values that are predominant. Moreover, tribally oriented ethnic groups have their own territorial bases. In Afghanistan the Nuristani, Baluchi, Aimak are said to be the tribally oriented groups tribes people. But the Aimak's territory, who call themselves 'tribes people', has not been clearly defined and marked out. Ethnic groups like the Tajik and

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46 ibid., p.11.
47 ibid., p.12.
49 Roy, n.45, f.n. 6, pp.232-233.

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Uzbek, are not tribally oriented. Even among the Hazara tribalism has largely disappeared following the Pashtun conquest.

When the ruling elite pursued modernization, it led to the expansion of the state bureaucracy. Since the state lacked adequate number of officials to help expand its base into the countryside, functions were delegated to leaders of the local communities. These intermediaries were not necessarily the *khans* whose legitimacy depended upon a complex pattern of tribal networks. In fact they were the *maliks* or *arbabs* who represented the local *qawm* and received remuneration from the families they served but often they also received money from the state.\(^5\) The *maliks* who represented the state to the community and the community to the state often used the available social networks to enhance their power and made their role more legitimate.

Ever since the time of Amir Abdur Rahman the state sought to bring the numerous ethnic and tribal groups within its sphere of administration. The state systematically pursued a policy to not only control the nomads but also the various settled communities. It asserted its right by appointing its own *qazi*, *hakim* and *naib* to assure the success of the new settlements.\(^5\) The intention was to bring the village assemblies under its control by appointing the *qazi* who had the right to pronounce judgement upon the various cases brought to it by the litigants. In order to control the society the state used various *symbols* that were legitimate in the society.

First was to gain legitimacy by invoking the principles of Islam. To resort to the use of religion in pursuance of its goals was another way of making the state actions legitimate. On the one hand the state had to defend the believers against the non-believers while on the other hand it

had to control the infidels. Therefore the *Kafirs*, infidels, were converted and called Nuris (Children of Light) and their region christened ‘Nuristan’. The Nuristan’s converted to Sunni Islam and many advanced to prominent positions in the military.\(^52\) The second way in which the state sought to perpetuate its power was through emphasis upon a national culture and unity. In the twentieth century, the Amirs, kings and the heads of the state sought to achieve goals of national unity by training loyal and patriotic citizens and to use them as intermediaries to control the politics of the countryside. The state strove to control the religious institutions and appoint its own religious heads that could be supportive of the governmental policies and decisions. Third factor was to control the tribes of Afghanistan. Amir Abdur Rahman was the first ruler to “seriously attempt to break the power of the tribes using a mixture of force, alliance, bribes, and intrigues”.\(^53\) Since then the tribal problem has continued to affect the relations between the various tribes and the state of Afghanistan.

According to Roy “the very moment when the state institutions were attempting to establish themselves, to rationalise and integrate the village communities, they themselves became the object of a strategy on the part of the *qaum* which involved not so much the assertion of power but the infiltration of those same institutions”.\(^54\) As the *qaum* sought to capture the state institutions and spread the tribal values, it began to use the state as a powerful external agent through which benefits could be accorded to the members of the ruling tribe. Thus while particularistic loyalties gained the upper hand rhetoric of state, Islam, or class struggle had no influence upon the individual behaviour of a group.\(^55\)

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\(^52\) Tapper, “Introduction”, n.51, p.35.


\(^54\) ibid, p.24.
As the state became a stake in the larger strategy of the qaum it failed to provide a broader social unity and this resulted in an ideological vacuum. The political terminology borrowed from the West was not helpful in mobilising the people from the countryside. It led to the alienation of the political class from the rural areas. Although many members had their social origins in the countryside Western terminology and concepts could not enhance their legitimacy. The intelligentsia fought fiercely for survival against both the rural society and the tribal establishment.

Attempts at modernisation have not been successful primarily because the villagers have believed that the outsiders come to extract resources from their village and do not bring anything into it. Thus they have built a 'mud curtain' and feared that extraction of rent, taxes, and conscription for armies only makes the villages powerless. As a consequence government and its intermediaries who seek to introduce reforms face considerable hostilities from the villagers. Therefore, in a developing society like Afghanistan where "locally oriented religious beliefs serve not only as rationale for existence, but justification for the perpetration of a predeterministic status quo, in which a man who performs his given roles in society can expect paradise as a reward", the attributes of an 'inward looking' society is predominant. Thus changes can be brought about only when attitudes, values and belief systems undergo drastic changes.

The state can bring about perceptible in the society. Through its ideology the state can lay legitimate claims to authority by mixing bodies of knowledge that exists in the society with history, modern ideas and appropriate technologies. Through its structural and functional capacities it can strive to bring about distinct social and behavioural changes. Since 1979 the state has sought to control the civil society

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52 Dupree, n. 3, p.249.
53 ibid., p.250.
through the spread of divergent ideology ranging from Marxism, nationalism, pan-Islamism, to Pashtun tribalism. Yet, in segmented societies violent rivalries have occurred and religion and politics have been used as unifying factors to aid in the development of the society.

Developmental programmes that attempted to create a nation state lacked legitimacy. The warring combatants could not even 'imagine' living together as peaceful 'community'. Nationalism, which is 'imagined' and is, therefore, more of a state of mind than a geographical entity could not bring about the desired unity among the various tribes. Kinship rights and religious obligations have become much more profound and dominant. The Hazaras, being Shia, have been persecuted by the Taliban. The Taliban's rise was reminiscent of the Pashtun assertion. The fissiparous tendencies only heightened tensions in the civil society. Also, the various policies of the Taliban movement fostered class differentiation.

Through various decrees the Taliban leadership set about to restructure the social life of the Afghans. Their ideological position was recognized in the Pashtun dominated areas of the south and east Afghanistan. As the movement gained legitimacy the leadership used symbolic force and took recourse to 'political religion' to unite the masses. The Taliban set about to re-structure the society and specify the most fundamental needs of the individuals by issuing various edicts and decrees that sought to define the meaning, identity, norms and behaviour of the individual members of the community. They got profoundly concerned with transforming the social and spiritual life of the people through their schemes and methods. This resulted in what we may term 'totalitarian theocracy'. The desire to restructure society by

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59 Rashid n.44, pp.115-120.
involving religion was that religion has more power than ordinary ideological through. As Apter has put it “so fundamental is its power that one cannot examine individual conduct or desires without reference to it. In that sense religion cuts into human personality in a way in which ordinary ideological thought rarely does”.61

Thus like the Khalq faction of the PDPA, which was Pashtun dominated but used Marxism to restructure the society, the Taliban began to impose changes from above. Their version of the ‘sacred’ could not be translated into an acceptable pattern of belief. Pathological conditions of fear, mistrust and anxiety gripped the masses. The Religious Police of the Taliban under Mullah Qalamuddin indulged in reprisals and oppression to scuttle the non-conformists. In theocracies, religious and political associations become one and the same and the pursuit of political objectives is sanctified by a religious belief system and the ideas that it has percolated.62 Therefore suffering of the people had become religiously ordained.

In the Afghanistan society, where the Muslims live their life in accordance with the Islamic principles diluted with the tribal codes and local culture, the actions of the Taliban leaders put them into the category of extremist.63 Law based upon the sharia regulates the Afghan rural society and the legal authority is vested in the qazi, the formally appointed judges. The numerous ulema, qazi, scribes and other leased men regulate the social network in the villages and link it to the state institutions. But the Taliban sought to bypass the social networks and appointed its own protégés to control the society. In the process local customs were bypassed when it took over Herat in September 1995. The artistic and sophisticated people were least prepared for the ‘primal puritanism’ of the Taliban. An elderly Islamic scholar told John F. Burns,

61 Ibid., p.64.
62 Ibid., pp.70-71.
the New York Times correspondent "we are ruled now by men who offer us nothing but the Quran, even though many of them cannot read". 64

The changes in Afghan society began in 1979 when Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan. The destruction of the social networks by the Marxist leadership devastated much of the country. The United States responded with CIA operation and poured billions of dollars and weapons into the country. In the society, since then, "where just about every modern institution or technology that had gained even a small foothold has been totally destroyed".65 Thus the siyasat (politics) of the Taliban led it towards zulm (arrogance of power) and the atrocities were epitomized by the petty leadership and often resulted in tyranny and exploitation of the masses. Social justice was trampled upon and only what the Taliban decreed became the law.

To bring about changes in the society the communists, in the 1980s had their own ideological framework and they ruthlessly struck at the counter revolutionaries. Hafizullah Amin, the Khalq leader, sought to uproot feudalism and check exploitation in the society. But in their haste the communists did not wait for the autonomous popular movement to grow and instead sought to attract the support of the armed forces and began to infiltrate the army.66 The leaders of Khalq faction believed that Afghan society was feudal where a handful of the feudalist (khans) with the support of the clergy exploited the peasants.67 But in order to bring about rapid changes in the society the Khalq leadership failed to comprehend the ‘tribal’ mode of production governing the societal relations. It led to the failure of their reform programmes that was rejected on ideological grounds as well as considered unrealistic within the parameters of the socio-economic reality. As Roy says "the reform did

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65 Ibid.
not succeed in providing the government with a social basis of support, but, on the contrary, it created a hostile consensus of opinion amongst the peasants".68

Even the campaign against illiteracy did not have the desired effect. The teachers who were appointed to spread literacy were the students and secondary school pupils who supported the regime. There was, therefore, a close link between 'campaign against illiteracy' and 'political indoctrinator'. Many times the teachers behaved in an authoritarian and arrogant way and old men who were force to attend the course found the procedure to be very humiliating.69 The reforms were seen as being anti-tradition and were opposed. It led to resistance and uprisings. But "it was not the principle of reform which caused the population to revolt but the way in which these reforms were being carried out (with the ensuing repression), or the contradictions in which the peasant population found itself as a result of them".70

The Pashtun-dominated Khalq began a series of reprisals that was directed against the liberals, Maoists and the non-Pashtun ethnic and tribal groups. Repressions and ethnic antagonisms were directed against the Harzaras and Hazarajat paid a heavy price. The moist Hazāras were persecuted and Shiite clergy were also targeted. Sayyed Waez who was the in charge of the Muhammadia madrassa had disappeared in February 1979. Many Shias were arrested at Charkent, Darrah-yi Souf, Yakaolang and Jaghorī.71 The communist regime blamed the religious rulers of Iran for having aroused the feelings of the Shiite clans and creating religious rebellion in Herat. It termed such actions as fanatic and reactionary that was tantamount to intervention in the internal affairs of Afghanistan.72

68 ibid., p.92.
69 ibid., p.94.
70 ibid., p.95.
71 ibid., p.97.
72 Kabul Times, 8 April, 1979.
The communist leaders argued that they aimed to build an Afghan Society void of exploitation. To achieve that they called for unlimited sacrifice of the people on all the fronts. The fourteen years of communist rule witnessed the leadership partake different developmental strategies. Impact upon the different ethnic, tribal and regional zones varied. As a result modernisation and the level of socio-economic development remained lop-sided. Whilst some regions benefited rapidly, in the remote areas of the country the communal tribal system remained intact. Hafizullah Emadi states that the reason for such lopsided development resulted from "the country's lack of resources for development and lack of communication and trade links among various regions caused by rugged mountains and the harsh climate." Also, tensions arose as various ethnic and tribal groups competed with each other to garner the little benefit that was available. Hostilities heightened as none of the leaders could effectively overcome their narrow class, ethnic and tribal loyalties. Such trends precluded the development of a true national consciousness. The political and religious elite had an unenviable task of managing the tension between various social and ethnic groups and also to work out viable alternatives to bridge the religious differences among the Sunni, Shia and the Ismaili (a sub-branch of the Shiite sect).

Although Islam provides unity with codified system of rituals, in Afghanistan an individual's allegiance may also be restricted by group and tribal codes e.g. *Pashtunwali.* To identify oneself with tribal values is more important than to be identified with an ethnic group or a nation. Other than the Pashtun, tribal code of conduct and behaviour is dominant among the Nuristani and the Baluchi, but not among the Tajik and Uzbek. The Hazara have overcome tribalism to a large extent,

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74. Ahmad, n.48, pp.181 and 193.
following their conquest by the Pashtun. The Aymaq are the most interesting, for they call themselves “tribespeople”, but nobody has ever been able to map out their territory and the names they use are often contradictory.\textsuperscript{75} Shia and Sunni, the two major sects of Islam have predominant following in Afghanistan.\textsuperscript{76} However, due to the prevalence of pre-Islamic and tribal practices the Islam practiced in Afghan villages, nomad camps, and most urban areas would be almost unrecognisable to a Muslim scholar.\textsuperscript{77} A deeper understanding begs a careful analysis of the society, its ethnic groups and the roles the various social networks have played.

**Ethnic Diversity in Afghanistan**

Afghanistan is a cultural mosaic and few of its ethnic groups are of indigenous origin.\textsuperscript{78} All Pashtuns are not Afghan citizens as many live in the North West Frontier Province of Pakistan. Tajiks, Uzbeks, Turkmen, Kyrgyz and Kazakhs now have their own Republics in the north. The Hazaras, Nuristanis, Brahui and Baluch form their separate cultural units and have their own languages. These ethnic groups have distinctive physical features. Dupree has classified the Afghans into three ‘physical types’, viz. Caucasoid, Mongoloid and modified Australoid.\textsuperscript{79} Few Afghan groups have maintained racial homogeneity outside the Pashtun areas of south and east, but even there breakdowns have begun to appear.\textsuperscript{80} Where groups have practiced miscegenation for centuries, broad bands of ethnic grey zones exist alongwith composite

\textsuperscript{76} Dupree, n.3, pp.95-111.
\textsuperscript{77} ibid., p.104.
\textsuperscript{78} ibid., p.57.
\textsuperscript{79} ibid., pp.57-65.
communities. And where 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. Many darker-skinned Baluch and Brahui also have blue,
green or mixed eyes. While some of the Pashtuns may tend to take
daughters from the Uzbek and Tajik families the Uzbek or Tajik men
rarely marry Pashtun women. These ethnic groups, professing either of
the two major sects of Islam, have also developed local variations of
Islam's major doctrines, incorporating distinctive cults and beliefs that
predate Islam. It is estimated that 80 per cent of Afghans belong to the
Sunni branch and the rest, mostly inhabiting the more remote parts of
the country, are Shias.

But in the decade following the April 1978 coup major changes
occurred in the Afghan society. The Soviet intervention and the
subsequent Afghan resistance led to the death of nine percent of the
population by the end of 1987. Approximately, 1.25 million to 1.5 million
people had died. It escalated the exodus of refugees. For the Muslims
the exodus or hijra becomes an obligation if infidels come to rule.
Therefore, between April 1978 to December 1979 there was a trend
towards exodus. Since December 1979 instances of hijra increased but
then it stabilized. Presumably because the population adapted to the war
through auto-selection and learning. Auto selection was either defeatist
where one chose exile to avoid war; or, it was bold where people resisted

81. Dupree, n.3, p.65.
82. ibid., pp.187-88.
the might of the Soviets. The learning process helped those who stayed back to avoid and minimize the dangers of war. 85


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Sources: Marek Sliwinski 'The Decimation of a People', *Orbis*, Winter 1989,

The *hijra* also changed the ethnic structure of Afghanistan. While in 1978 the Pashtuns were the dominant ethnic group followed by the Tajiks with 39 and 26 percent of the population respectively. The situation had changed by the year 1987 of the migratory population who had give to Pakistan the Pashtuns made up 85 percent while only 6 percent of the Tajiks has migrated there. Thus in Afghanistan, the Pashtun population was reduced from 39 percent to 22 percent while the Tajiks grew from 26 percent to 34 percent. 86 Therefore for the first time the Soviets could seek to influence the most dominant Afghan ethnic group, in this case the Tajiks, along cultural and linguistic lines by the Tajiks living in the USSR. At the same time Soviets sought to isolate the resistance and establish communist power centres in the different zones of the country. Soon, many of the agriculturists had left Afghanistan.

85 Sliwinski, n. 83, p.42.
86 ibid., pp.46-47.
According to Sliwinski 97 percent of the Afghan refugees in Pakistan were of rural origin. Agricultural output declined due to the rural depopulation. As a result experts began to warn of disastrous ecological consequences. With non-availability of the agriculturalists it was feared that erosion and desertification of Afghan regions would increase, resulting in the decline of agricultural productivity. This could accentuate the rivalry between the ethnic groups for the scarce resources.

The tribal, ethnic, regional and sectarian groups have often quarreled for the spoils. In Afghan society the real units of cooperation in social actions can not transcend ethnic identity. Therefore, categories of ethnic ascription are not in fact the categories of socio-political action. Nonetheless ethnic and tribal loyalties have played an important role in the country for mobilisation purposes. To understand the Afghan society we must, therefore, examine the various ethnic groups and their role in forging the various networks.

The 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 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 eighth and tenth centuries. They profess the Hanafi Sunni sect of Islam. Their language is Pashtu, which belongs to the family of Indo-European languages. Their approximate population is around 6.5 million. Around 12 million Pashtuns live across the border in Pakistan. They are of Mediterranean substock of the Caucasoid stock. Most Pashtuns are

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100. Duprec, n.3, pp.59-64.
farmers, but many mix agriculture with herding. As many as one million of them are entirely nomadic. Nearly all are tribally organised.

The Pashtun tribal structure has originated from sources of unwritten history that emphasise upon the lineage of the Afghan tribes. A sixteenth century manuscript tells of the descendents of Bani Afghana who fought for Islam under the aegis of Prophet Mohammad. Afghan Pashtuns trace their origin from the three sons of their great leader. The Abdalis are said to be the descendents of Sharkbun and the Yusufzai the descendents of Kharshbun. The Ghilzai, however, trace their family genealogy and tribal origin from a female line and consider themselves to be the descendents of Zohak. But according to Ahmed Rashid, Qais, a companion of the Prophet Muhammad is considered the common ancestor of the Pashtuns. As such the Pashtuns belong to the Semitic race but anthropologists consider them to be of Indo-European origin. The Durrani trace their origin from Qais's eldest son Sarbanar and the Ghilzai from his second son. Qais's third son is said to be the ancestor of the other Pashtun tribes like the Kakars of Kandahar or the Safis who live in and around Peshawar in Pakistan. But Glatzer says that there is no agreement about the common ancestor of the Pashtuns. Few call him Qais Abdurrashid, others say it was Daru Nika or Khaled bin Walid the legendary general of the army of the Prophet of Muhammad.

In the 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. It is simple but demanding.

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92 Ahmed Rashid, n.44, p.10.
93 ibid., p.10.
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 valorous Pashtuns. Pashtun tribalism has its own significance. An interplay between leadership (khan) and lineage (khel), makes up the Pakhtun social structure. The Pashtuns, living on the eastern side, are different from the Durranis. The former put into opposition the seats of government (hukumat) to the lands of freedom or unrestraint (yaghistan).

Although there may be doubts about the origin of the Pashtuns and the name of their common ancestor, it cannot be denied that the Pashtuns belong to one large kinship group or a super family. Their common ancestor had many progenies and each had many sons and daughters and so forth. This led to the division among the Pashtuns and resulted in the creation of the many tribes and sub-tribes, clans, lineages and families. Every male member of the tribes, clan lineage aspires for leadership, but such offices are not hereditary. The good and great qualities of a leader get buried with him in his grave. The prerequisites of a great leader are the qualities of bravery, generosity, concern for the well being of their lineage and wisdom in council. Ahmed has distinguished four kinds of leadership: malik- the petty chief; mashar- the elder and is an informal position; government appointed malik; and the kashar or the young man who aspires for leadership, but is a less influential person.
The tribal structure of the Pashtuns is more akin to a trapezoid and the governance depends upon the plurality of male members and a mixture of birth, status and accomplishment determines the leadership position. The khans/maliks have to prove their leadership qualities by constantly protecting their kinsmen and followers from conflict and by providing material need. He can then represent the 'will' of his people in the tribal councils. The tribal councils known as the Laya Jirga (Grand Assembly) are attended by men of all communities and decisions are reached on the basis of consensus. Each man attending the Jirga is sovereign and this prevents the concentration of power. A Pashtun leader, thus, only acts as a primus inter pares but his voice gains weight with increasing age. Janata has described the Pashtun political system as a 'gerontocracy of whitebeards'.

A distinction can be made between the tribal structure of the Pashtuns of Afghanistan with those of Pakistan. The Durranis of Afghanistan had established an empire under Ahmad Shah Abdali in 1747 AD. Abdali had taken the title of Durr-i-Durran meaning 'pearl of pearls'. On the contrary, the eastern Pashtuns 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 categorized as nang (honour), and the other based upon ranked groups with super- subordinate social positions, associated with irrigated lands and was termed as qalang (taxes and rents). The reason why nang tribes did not establish themselves politically or militarily lies, in part, in the structure and organisation of the tribes, and

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100 Magnus and Naby, n.77, p.14.
in the economic and ecological limitations on such adventures. Pashtuns make distinction between paternal (kaka) and maternal (mama) uncles. Kinship terms, therefore, reflect the masculine bias of the society, with the emphasis on the patrilineal side. Thus, when members of two ethnic groups marry in Afghanistan the kinship terms reflect the process and the terms of the dominant group.

The Pashtun rulers have ruled Afghanistan for over 250 years. But the governance was possible only because the day-to-day administration was left into the hands of the non-Pashtuns who were to a large extent Persian-speaking urban elite. The rise and fall of the Pashtun empire, where fissiparous forces became more dominant than the cohesive forces, has a striking resemblance to the work of Ibn Khaldun’s law of the rise and fall of empires.

**Tajik:** Tajik, the second largest ethnic community in Afghanistan, constitute nearly a quarter of Afghan population. Most of the estimated four million Tajiks live in settled communities, usually as farmers or towns people. Their religion is Hanafi Sunni though a few in the north may practice Isma‘iliya Shia. Their language is Dari and Tajiki dialects. The Tajiki is different from that spoken in Tajikistan. The Tajiks often refer to themselves with geographic rather than kin-tribal designations i.e. Panjsheri, Andarabi, Ghorbandi. Among the Tajiks the regional differences could be very strong and fierce. In support of our argument we can cite the example of two communist leaders Ghulam Dastgir Panjsheri and Dr. Tahir Badakshi who could not overcome their

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104 *Dupree*, n.3, p.187.  
105 *ibid.,* p.188.  
108 *ibid.,* p.183.
provincial and personal prejudices. When the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) had been divided into the Khalq and Parcham factions never did the two leaders supported a common faction. Invariably when one supported the Khalq led by Taraki, the other supported the Parcham faction of Karmal.109

Many of the Tajiks are the descendants of the families of refugees who came to Afghanistan from Ferghana and other regions of Central Asia in the 1920s and 1930s, after the turmoil of the Russian revolution, civil war and forced collectivisation.110 Since then and especially after 1992 contacts have flourished between the groups of Tajiks living on either side of the international border.111 Many of them, in particular the Ismailis of Badakhshan, in northeastern Afghanistan and Tajikistan's own Badakhshan Autonomous Region (which declared its independence from Dushanbe in April 1992 only to renounce it later) have had to cope with the civil wars and changes of regime in Afghanistan and Tajikistan in 1992. This has resulted in the flow of refugees from Tajikistan into Afghanistan and other Central Asian Republics. Another wave of Afghan refugees, mainly from Kabul, took refuge in Tashkent, Dushanbe and Moscow.112 It seems ironic that people fled Kabul for safer places considering the fact that Kabul had been the international capital of this region ever since the 1920s when Afghanistan joined the League of Nations as one of a handful of independent Asian states.113 The word Tajik is an analytical term used to designate those who do not belong to a tribal society, who speak Persian and profess the Sunni faith. But some


111 Ibid., p.78.

112 Ibid., pp.78-79.

113 Ibid., p.79.
non-tribal Persian speakers of the western region, the Farsiwan, often identify themselves as Tajik while conversing with outsiders. The Tajiks' language Dari or Afghan Persian and Tajiki belongs to the Indo-European language family. Newell and Newell argue that the language of the Tajiks "indicates that they and the Iranians share a common origin." The Tajiks' contribution to Afghanistan has been as productive farmers. But with the onset of modernity many Tajikis have become doctors, engineers, and taken to teaching and other professional careers. With regard to their physical characteristics it can be said that they are of Mediterranean substock. However, due to the practice of miscegenation with the Uzbeks, Mongoloid attributes increase from south to north.

Uzbeks: Of the Turkish people dominating the extreme northern plains of Afghanistan, the most numerous are the Uzbeks. Numbering about 1.7 million they live near the Amu Darya (Oxus River). Their religion is Hanafi Sunni. Their language is Uzbek and Turkic belonging to the Uralic-Altaic family. Uzbeks still use old names of political units, popular during the great days of their power in Central Asia. The Uzbeks, like the Pashtuns, practice a mixture of farming and herding. Their most famous products are the fur of the lamb foetus, karakul (Persian lamb), and tribal rugs. 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. Many Afghan Uzbeks are relatively recent migrants from Central Asia. These people have developed economic and cultural relations with their ethnic community, living across the border, who now have their own independent Republic.

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114 Dupree, n.3, p.59.
115 Newell and Newell, n.9, p.25.
116 Dupree, n.3, p.59.
117 Newell and Newell, n.89, p.25.
Hazara: The mountainous central region of the country is inhabited by Hazaras. Stocky in build and Mongoloid in appearance, they have suffered much from the rigours of their climate and intrusions by their neighbours. At present their population is about 1.5 million. Their religion is Imami Shia, although some follow Isma'iliya Shia faith while a few others are the followers of Sunni version of Islam. Their language is Hazaragi, a Dari dialect, of the Indo-European family.

The Hazaras had probably arrived in Afghanistan between A.D. 1229-1447 but not as the descendants of army of Chinggis Khan, as popularly believed. They constitute the majority of Afghanistan's Shia religious minority. During the last four decades, labour migration has become increasingly important for the regional economy. The Hazaras have been under-privileged to an extent reminiscent of an outcaste in a caste society. Among them religious difference, geographical separation, economic subordination and phenotype act together, constituting strong boundaries between them and other ethnic communities of the country. For the Hazaras, their ethnic (qawm), political (millat) and religious (mazhab) identity are often one and the same thing and the three terms are often employed interchangeably, though qawm in Hazarajat means ethnic group rather than extended family. Of late feeling of cultural identity has developed, especially amongst the young intellectual emigree's, which has led to the emergence of Hazara nationalism.

118. Dupree, n.3, p.60.
The modern Hazara nationalists claim descent from Chinggis Khan in order to alleviate their status, among the ethnic groups of Afghanistan. In a recent study Iesha Singh explores the nature and the extent of violence carried out against the inhabitants of Hazarajat. She highlights the strategy of the Pashtun government in the 1880s and 1890s, which destroyed the Hazara tribal institutions with the Taliban offensive against the Hazards in 1997 and the economic blockade. She concludes by saying that violence against the Hazaras has been both structural and personal and the environment constraints in Hazarajat has led to differential power relations vis-à-vis the other dominant ethnic groups, in particular the Pashtuns.

When the Pashtuns went to the Hazarajat as administrators, merchants, money lenders, nomads, they were seen as outsiders who sought to extract the resources away from the region. The Hazaras disliked the Pashtuns and when the Hazaras liberated the region from the communist regime in 1979 they denied to all the Pashtuns access to central Afghanistan. Even during the resistance many networks and parties were active and opposed the communist regime and many Radical Hazaras had joined the Maoist or Shia Islamist organisations. Until 1992 the Hazaras were divided and there existed many groups. But then at the behest of Iran the Hazaras united, becoming the “first major ethnic group in Afghanistan which is able to act as a coherent unit”. The pro Iranian *Hizb-e Wahdat* (Party of Unity) bore the brunt of Taliban offensive. When Bamiyan the main Shiite town in Hazaraarajat fell to Taliban in September 1998 the leaders of the Shiite opposition were

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122 Glatzer, n.94, p.171.
124 Glatzer, n.94, p.171.
126 Roy, n.45, pp.139-148.
127 Glatzer, n.94, pp.171-172.
flown out to Iran for safety.128 Thus, for over a century the Hazaras have been subjugated and discriminated by the Pashtuns. The few, who benefitted from modern education have risen to leadership position in their community. But the Hazaras, as a community, have faced systematic disadvantages due to their district oriental features, that finds a parallel in Weberian style social closure. 129

Nuristan: The Nuristanis live in the mountainous region north of the Khyber pass. They have never fitted comfortably within the modern Afghan political system.130 Divided into five major tribes, they number around 100,000.131 These people were Kafirs but were forcibly converted to Islam in the late nineteenth century by Amir Abdur Rahman. Despite their conversion they have remained a people apart developing an independent culture whose origin is disputed. Their usually light hair and blue or grey eyes have prompted suggestions that they are the descendants of the soldiers of Alexander the Great.132 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. For many years these people have felt a serious disadvantage 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.133 To maintain internal autonomy they regulate and mediate affairs within the community. But this task has become increasingly complicated with the intrusion of external authority personified by the governor and the police.

129 William Maley, “Interpreting the Taliban” in Maley, n.94, p.5.
130 Newell and Newell, n.89, p.98.
131 Duprec, n.2, p.62.
133 Newell and Newell, n.89,p.98.
Since Nuristanis were excluded from such offices. Khan's responsibility was to maintain an effective shield of isolation against the tax collectors and other vexations. Critical areas of outside interference were law, public education that was carried out in Dari and Pashtu and the development projects that threatened their control over the land and forests.

Since Nuristan has occupied a strategic position with its border with Pakistan, the central authority have had reasons to be sensitive to their political situation and quite a few Nuristanis were recruited into the central military forces. Under Daoud several Nuristanis held senior ranks in the armed forces and the police. Efforts to integrate them into the Afghan polity have brought about mixed results. The Nuristanis now practice Hanafi Sunni religion. Their language is Kafiri, belonging to the family of Indo-European languages. Their physique resembles those of the Mediterranean people though their exists blondism in about one-third of their population.

Turkmen: Primarily semi-sedentary and semi-nomadic and numbering around 600,000, the Turkmen live in northern Afghanistan. They are credited with bringing in the karakul sheep (Persian lamb) and the rug industry in Afghanistan during 1920s. Many of these people had migrated from Soviet Central Asia during the Basmachi revolts against the Bolsheviks. The Turkmen women are known for making carpets, and with such talents they are able to earn their livelihood. They live in Herat, Andkhui, Maimana, Daulatabad and Maruchak.

134. ibid., pp.98-99.
136. ibid., p.62.
137. ibid., p.61.
The Turkmen are of aquiline Mongoloid origin and they practice Hanafi Sunni faith of Islam and speak Turkic dialects.\textsuperscript{139} But with the emergence of independent Turkmenistan Republic in the north, the Turkmen tribes are aspiring for more political autonomy from the centre.

**Kyrgyz:** Several thousand of them live near the Afghan Pamir mountains in close proximity the Chinese border as nomads. During severe winters they often have to bear the brunt of nature and to escape the fury of nature they often have to move their livestock seasonally, thereby living as transhumants. 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 Soviet Central Asia to escape the wrath of the Red Army.\textsuperscript{140} Their religion is Hanafi Sunni version of Islam and they speak Kipchak Turkic dialects of the Uralic-Altaic family of languages.\textsuperscript{141} Though Afghanistan does not share its border with the new republic of Kyrgyzstan, during the years of the civil war movement of people from one country to another had complicated the problem.

**Farsiwan:** The Farsiwan practice the Imami Shi'ite faith and speak Dari language. They number about 600,000 of which many are agriculturalists. They live near the Iranian border and also in the towns of Herat, Kandahar, Ghazni and other southern and western Afghan towns. They are often mistakenly referred to as Tajiks.\textsuperscript{142} The Farsiwan are of Mediterranean substock. The Farsiwan farmers of western

\textsuperscript{139} Dupree, n.3, p.61.
\textsuperscript{140} Hyman, n.110, pp.76-79.
\textsuperscript{141} Dupree, n.3, pp.61-64.
\textsuperscript{142} ibid., p.59. Dupree makes a distinction between the Farsiwan and the Tajiks.
Afghanistan speak Iranian Farsi while the urban Heratis have developed a distinctive style and dialect of their own. 143

Qizilbash: The Qizilbash is 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. Though mainly professing Imami Shia faith, some have used the Shia practice of taqiya (dissimilation) to pass for Sunni Muslims in order to escape discrimination. 144 Their language is Dari and they are of Mediterranean substock.

Aimak: Numbering about 800,000, the Aimaks of the country practice Hanafi Sunni Islam. They have been referred to as 'Chahar' ("four" in Dari) Aimak (Turkish tribe). These people themselves never use 'Chahar' unless prompted. 145 They usually refer to themselves with their tribal designations. Those separated and living in Iran are called 'Barbari' or 'Berbari'. They speak Dari dialects with a mixture of Turkic vocabulary. They basically have Mongoloid features, but much less than that of Hazaras. 146 Many of them are of Mongoloid and Mediterranean admixture. The Aimak territory in Ghor province has witnessed the growth in the teachings of Sufi doctrine. 147 One of their pirs - spiritual master - of the Naqshbandi order, Baha'uddin Jan, was killed under Taraki regime, together with two of his sons.

143. ibid., p.70.
144. ibid., p.59.
145. ibid., p.60.
146. ibid., p.60.
147. Roy, n.15, pp.41-42.
Mughal: Originally they were concentrated in Ghor but now several thousand of them live scattered through central and north Afghanistan. They probably broke up from their original area some 150 years ago. The Mughals may be the descendants of the armies of Chenggis Khan. Their features are Mongoloid with occasional Mediterranean admixture. They practice Hanafi Sunni faith of Islam. Most of the Mughals speak Dari language, 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, while many of the southern Mughals also speak Pashtu.

Kazakhs: Like other ethnic groups, which now have a separate homeland in the north of Afghanistan, the Kazakhs had migrated into Afghanistan in 1920s and 1930s. but with the emergence of independent Kazakhstan there was a refuge flow or rather ‘homecoming’ of about 4,000 ethnic Kazakh refugees from Afghanistan and Iran. 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 coordination 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.

Baluch: There are nearly 100,000 Baluch living in Afghanistan. They were basically the caravaneers, nomads and were even used as slaves until the British ended slavery in the nineteenth century. Now they are semi-sedentary or semi-nomadic living in the northwestern

149. Duprev, n.3, p.60.
150. Hyman, n.43, pp.78-79.
region of Afghanistan. Their movement is from Sistan to Herat in the
summer and return to Sistan in the winter. Most Baluch belong to the
tribe which includes Rakhshani main sub-groups such as Sanjarani,
Nahrui, Yamarzai, Sumarzai, Gumshazai, Sarabandi, Miangul, Harat and
Salarzai. A specialist Baluch group of hunter-fishermen, called the
Sayyad, live in the Sistan town. Some Sayyad are Farsiwan. The
Gaudar, another Baluch group, specialise in cattle raising. The Baluch
are of Mediterranean substock with more brachycephalic tendencies.
Their religion is Hanafi Sunni and language is Baluchi of the Indo­
European family. Baluch also live in the southeastern Iran and
Baluchistan province of Pakistan. Since the mid-1970s, some
2,500 Baluch guerrillas, fighting for autonomy in Pakistan, have taken refuge in
Afghanistan. But their cause has not received international support due
to the reprisals actions in Pakistan and Afghanistan. Iran too has come
down heavily on the Baluch harbouring separatist tendencies.

**Brahui:** Many Brahui work as the tenant farmers or hired herders
for Baluch or Pashtun landlords. Their population is around 200,000
with majority of the people living in the southwestern Afghanistan. They
practice Hanafi Sunni religion. Their language is Brahui which belongs
to the Dravidian language family. However, some of them also speak
Pashtu or Baluchi. They also refer to themselves as a Baluch sub-group.
They belong to the Vedoid family with much of Mediterranean
admixture. The main Brahui sub-tribes are Zirkandi, Mamasani,
Lowerzi, Aidozi and Yagozi.

Other ethnic groups are negligible in number. Most of them have
been integrated into the mainstream culture thereby displaying very little

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151. ibid., p.62.
152. ibid., p.62.
153. ibid., p.62.
cultural traits of distinctiveness. The other dominant ethnic groups against their apparent enemies have used some ethnic groups like the Gujjar, Kohistani. This ethno-politics primarily aims at the control of natural resources by one dominant ethnic group and its ally 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 thousands of acres of land. Great wealth has been amassed by the most successful of the banking and trading families. Also, a large number of bureaucratic and commercial elite has great fortunes in the real estate in and near Kabul. This wealth has little bearing on the minimal subsistence conditions endured by many farmers and herders. These people have fought for land and water and their socio-economic status can be gauged in the outcome of the ethnic competition.\(^{154}\) Thus the poverty of most of the Hazaras is the resultant 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 government-supported Pashtun settlers in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.\(^{155}\) The Uzbeks gained control over the rich 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

\(^{154}\) Newell and Newell, n.89, p.78.

\(^{155}\) ibid., pp.78-79.
with the other two communities.\textsuperscript{156}

Such competition created the need for land control, agriculture and herding throughout the country. The dominant realities behind social and economic relations gave rise to a number of 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 struggling household units to perpetuate themselves. But following the Saur coup d'état of 1978, a new form of ethnic rivalry ensued. The Nuristanis, who had a history of friction with the Pashtun tribes and their visible role in the republican government, were made the targets for persecution by the Pashtun dominated Khalq regime which had acquired power. The Khalqis armed the Gujjars, Nuristanis' neighbours, and the latter were also targeted by being branded as infidels, despite their devotion to Islam.\textsuperscript{157} Their villages were bombed. Pashtun tribal auxiliaries and police units were sent 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 remained beyond the army's ability to overcome.\textsuperscript{158}

Similar was the situation 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 brought under effective central control until the


\textsuperscript{157} Newell and Newell, n.89, p.100.

\textsuperscript{158} ibid., p.100.
1890s. Thenceforth their ability to subsist in the arid mountains has become difficult especially since the nomadic groups of Pashtun, Uzbek and Turkomens have taken over their highland pasturage and used the profits from the merging networks of modern trade to buy up some of the best irrigated land. Therefore, the poor Hazara labour force migrates seasonally to the cities, particularly Kabul, to look for work. Also because of their association with the Shia branch of Islam they are, at times, treated as inferior.

But the relatively weaker socio-economic status of the non-Pashtun ethnic groups was the direct result of the government's practice of Pashtun favoritism, the concentration of economic development projects in Pashtun areas and the appointment of Pashtuns to the top administrative posts in non-Pashtun areas which antagonised the minorities, particularly the Tajiks, Uzbeks, and Turkmen in the north and the Hazaras in the central part of the country. To understand Afghanistan's ethno-politics, it is crucial to understand the geographical distribution of various groups, the role of leadership and to analyse the intra-ethnic and inter-ethnic relations. The question of population distribution and the exact number of an ethnic group cannot be stated, firstly, due to the lack of census in Afghanistan and secondly due to the long ensuing war and refugee problems. Yet it would, perhaps, not be wrong to state that the ethnic Pashtun are in a numerical majority vis-à-vis the other ethnic groups.

A majority of Afghan Pashtuns have traditionally lived in the south and east of Afghanistan, although small Pashtun communities have also settled in the western and northern regions of the country. The two Pashtun tribes - Durrani and Ghilzai - have ruled from Kabul as Amirs
and kings. Since the last two and a half centuries only twice did non-Pashtun rule from Kabul - Habibullah, II better known as Bacha Saqqao, in 1929, and Burhanuddin Rabbani from June 1992 to September 1996 as the President of the mujahideen government. The Pashtun leaders have contributed significantly towards Afghanistan becoming a nation-state. But more important than the drawing of boundaries was Afghanistan's internal integration, hampered by a plethora of independent and semi-independent ethnic and linguistic units. The creation of national consciousness was an arduous task for it demanded the evolution of a state of mind as well as overcoming the primordial loyalties to various tribal and ethnic groups. As the leadership set about its task, recognisable and functional rights and obligations between the government and the governed got defined. As is the case in most countries of developing world, various economic, political and social benefits are garnered by the members of the ethnic group that constitute the majority chunk in that country. In the case of Afghanistan, it was the Pashtuns.

The overwhelming majority of the Pashtuns have benefited tremendously from various socio-economic measures of the government. Since the reign of Abdur Rahman (1880-1901) to the emergence of the Taliban and its control over Kabul in 1996, Pashtun leaders sought to centralise political power. But as Roy says that "power in Afghan peasant society resides neither in a specific locality nor in a person, but in an elusive network... which depends upon patronage." The Pashtun khans, through their networks, gained the favour of administration. The malik, an intermediary, maintained the communication between the officials and the village notables. Soon in the locus of power, the administrative post and the malik got co-opted into the ranks of
While the state institutions were attempting to establish themselves, various ethnic groups sought to assert their power and infiltrate those institutions. The elite sought to perpetuate the social structure whilst the intelligentsia challenged those very structures. The failure to reach a broader social understanding resulted in ideological vacuum and in the absence of true national parties, various leaders formed political parties in the 1960s and 1970s with rhetoric of Islam or Marxism.

Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood movement of Sayed Qutb influenced Afghan Islamism. These Islamist are intellectuals and product of modern education of the government education system. They seek to develop a modern political ideology by interpreting the tenents of the Quran, Hadith etc. Burhanuddin Rabbani, a Tajik and Gulbuddin Hikmatyar a Pashtun led the Islamist movement. The Islamists had rejected Pashtun nationalism although Hikmatyar is a Pashtun of the Kharrut tribe and a native of Baghlan. But he had no classical education and was hostile towards traditional clergy, the Ulema and the latter did not trust him. But members of Pashtun communities in the north and few in the east had joined his movement. Rabbani had set up his Jamiat-e-Islami but by 1976-77 Hikmatyar had split to form the Hizb-e-Islami. In 1979 the Hizb suffered a split when Maulavi Yunus Khalis broke away to form his Hizb. The rift reflected regional tensions and affected the Pashtun of Nangarhar and the followers of Jallaluddin Haqani in Paktya. During the fight against the Soviets the Hizb leader Abdul Haq, Pashtun commander of the Khalis faction, had impressed with his guerrilla tactics. Many other Afghan leaders also had trans-national allies.

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163 ibid., pp.21-23.
164 ibid., p.77.
Pakistan and its Inter Services Intelligence (ISI) and the US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) supported Hikmatyar. Soon Hikmatyar aroused violent antagonism from his compatriots as he proved to be a man of few scruples. Before the emergence of the Taliban, Hizb-e-Islami of Hikmatyar was considered to be the most radical Islamist group among the Pashtuns. Although from mid-1992 to late 1994, he served as the Prime Minister under Rabbani, he did not base himself in Kabul. Hikmatyar also teamed up with General Rashid Dostum's forces to form the Shura-e-Hamahangi and fought the forces of Masud. But by June 1996 he began assisting Rabbani to resist the Taliban. In order to appear as a zealous Islamist Hikmatyar ordered ban on music, cinema and football in Kabul, making himself very unpopular. Even Pakistan preferred to by-pass the Hizb territory and Hikmatyar and began supporting the Taliban. The contradictions within the Pashtun leadership weakened them and as a result they began accommodating the ethnic minorities. But the Taliban had emerged as a potent force and they also signified the Pashtun assertion vis-à-vis the Tajik dominated Mujahideen government.

By September 1996 the Taliban had captured Kabul. Its leader Mullah Mohammad Omar Akhund, was born sometime in 1959 in Nodeh village near Kandahar into a poor family of the Hotak tribe, the Ghilzai branch of Pashtuns. He had served in the Hizb-e-Islami (Khalis) and fought under commander Nek Mohammed against Najibullah regime between 1989 and 1992. The Taliban was backed by Pakistan and Saudi Arabia and was financed heavily. Osama Bin Laden, a Saudi dissident also rendered economic aid to the Taliban. Initially the US too

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166 Ahmed Rashid, n.44, p.23.

167 Ibid., p24.
supported the Taliban. Thus, the troika of Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and US enabled the Taliban to capture Kabul.\textsuperscript{168} The Muslim world initially applauded the Taliban but soon their fundamentalist brand of Islam was criticised by the neighbouring Central Asian countries.

Mullah Mohammad Omar was bestowed the title of \textit{Amir-al-Momineen} (the Leader of the Faithful). The Taliban rule soon resulted in social discord as they put a to ban on so many social and cultural practices. Sixteen verbatim decrees were received from the office of \textit{Amar Bil Maroof Wa Nahi An al-Munkar} (Department for the Promotion of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice, also known as the Religious Police). It ranged from the prevention of beard shaving, to prevent music, to prevent sedition and uncovering of women.\textsuperscript{169} As the Taliban moved northwards, their opponents began to fear their rule. But in May 1997 at Mazar-e-Sharif many Taliban soldiers were killed. In a gory fight back many Hazaras were brutally massacred by the Taliban and finally the city come under the Taliban control by 1998.\textsuperscript{170}

The Hazaras have been under-privileged in the Afghan society. Even the communists had targeted the Hazara elites since they did not have much support base in Hazarajat. Established local leaders who received support from the religious authorities led early uprisings against the communists. Harpviken states that the first uprisings among the Hazaras were motivated by the simple need for survival.\textsuperscript{171} By the spring of 1979 the communist government was expelled from Hazarajat and Shura-e-Ittefaq was established which sought to facilitate common understanding on the resistance and local governance, writes


\textsuperscript{170} Maley, n.94, p.13.

\textsuperscript{171} Harpviken, n. 121, p.278.
Harpviken. In the shura most of the leadership position was held by the sayyeds, the religious authorities in Hazarajat. The sayyeds are the descendants of the Prophet Mohammad and in Hazarajat they have formed effective networks to counter divisive tendencies in Hazara society and also to act as the mediators of peace. But soon the shura leadership became corrupt and the Hazara leaders began to look to Iran for support. Thus, the shura became more and more unpopular and the leaders began infighting.

The shura modelled its military apparatus on the governmental army but its forces lacked mobility. Apart from lack of training its conscription method became highly unpopular. As the shura became unpopular, the Sheikh, the formally trained Shia Islamic scholars, tried to control it. The Shia clergy is hierarchically organised but the Hazara brand of Shiism emphasises authority by descent rather than formal theology. Many Shia from Afghanistan attended religious training institutions in Najaf in Iraq and Qum in Iran. Numerous Iranian-supported Islamist groups emerged around Sheikh hierarchies. As the shura leadership was challenged, it became less effective. It indulged in many excesses resulting in the loss of many lives. The Islamists had better organisation, and its cadre groups were educated and organised. The success of the Islamists lay in the establishment of Hizb-e-Wahdat in 1989, involving all the dominant parties of the Hazaras. This new party placed more emphasis on the ethnic rights of Hazaras without disassociating from Islamic practices.
When Kabul fell to the mujahideen, the majority of the Hazara population of Kabul supported the Wahdat and the latter was in turn able to control over half of the capital's territory. According to Harpviken the existence of the Wahdat had boosted the Hazara morale to such an extent that in the early days after the communist fall community-based and formal Hazara groups had taken control over the numerous buildings and localities in Kabul, with little coordination among themselves. But the Wahdat did aid in the establishment of a relatively competent civilian administration in the areas of Kabul that it controlled.\textsuperscript{176}

Thus the emergence of Wahdat, among the Hazara, and its association with the Tajik dominated Jamiat-e-Islami and Uzbek dominated Jumbush-e-Milli posed a direct challenge to the Pashtun dominated outfits. The Tajik-Uzbek-Hazara partnership led to the formation of new ethnic coalitions. Tajik-dominated Jamiat had also attracted few ex-Parchamis. Jamiat leader Rabbani endeavoured to overcome parochialism and primordial loyalties by appealing to the Islamic tenets to provide legitimacy to his outfit. Founded in 1973, the Jamiat had been instrumental in fighting the Soviet. Few of its charismatic commanders like Ahmad Shah Masud and Ismail Khan recruited fighters from different ethnic groups and bolstered their outfits.

The social organisation of the Tajiks resembles that of the settled Pashtuns of the country. But unlike the Pashtuns the largely kinship-based Tajik deh (village) is the basic unit of collective action. The Tajiks are also tied to one other through the exchange of favours, services and the reciprocity which their economy may require in the region. The rule of mutual cooperation is heightened by abdurzadagi, which establishes the code of behaviour and the mode of cooperation among the village-

\textsuperscript{176} ibid., p.280.
based kin-groups; determines whom to compete with, whom to marry and provides the basis of 'individualism' in a 'communitarian society'. This symbiotic relationship expressed in various village mosques plays an important role in the furtherance of social and moral order of the deh Tajiks living in valleys and smaller areas very often trace their roots to one or more common ancestors. Since they refer to themselves by regional name, social boundaries of regional affiliations are not rigidly drawn. Scholars like Canfield categorise this form of social organisation as 'peasantised'.

Moreover, the Tajiks who migrated to the urban areas, having benefited from modern education, acquired professional qualification. Many educated Tajiks assumed leadership role holding high positions in the vista of administration. Also, their contribution to Afghan culture and society has been tremendous. Since they form the second largest ethnic group in the country they also contributed significantly during the Afghan resistance movement. Rabbani provided the leadership in diplomatic deliberations while field commanders like Masud, Ismail Khan and others mobilised fighters in the north. Few Pashtun fighters also joined the forces of the two commanders. Rabbani too sought to provide cosmopolitan character to his Jamiat by associating Pashtuns, Uzbeks and Hazaras. The Tajiks have constantly opposed the hegemonic rule of the Pashtuns. Twice, in 1929 and again in 1992, the Tajiks came to rule over Afghanistan from Kabul. In 1929 the nine-month rule of Kabul by Habibullah Ghazi, also known as Bacha Saqao (the son of the water carrier), marked the first instance of the Afghan monarchy's passing to a non-Pashtun, in this case a Tajik. Rabbani's four year rule from

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178 Magnus and Nabhy, n.2, p.43.
Kabul was marked by inter-mujahideen fighting. As a survival tactic he endeavoured to accord adequate representation to leaders of other ethnic groups like the Hazaras, Uzbeks and a few Pashtuns. Rabbani had also roped in the Uzbek military leader Gen. Dostum, an ex-communist, who was instrumental in the downfall of Najibullah regime. But Dostum's constant defections made him untrustworthy.

The Uzbeks of Afghanistan are concentrated in the country's northern plains, and the Amu Darya separates them from their ethnic brethren of Uzbekistan. The production of gas, oil and fertilizer in northern Afghanistan created jobs in plenty. It generated economic development and the population became self-sufficient. But the region's remoteness from Kabul has resulted in limited interaction with the central government and official institutions of the country. The Uzbek qishlaq, or village, has acted as the centre of authority, economy and social organisation. In the qishlaqs the social relationships revolve around the mode of interaction between the peasants and the arbab, landlord. The latter are important figures for not only are peasants dependent on them for jobs but also for social and political patronage. The arbabs also help in sorting out the community matters and deal with the officials. Wardak writes that the qishlaq provides the fundamental social context for political and social action with the traditional structure of authority and the main figure being the arbab. The social organisation of the qishlaq and the arbab are intricately linked to the local mosque. During the Afghan resistance the mosques played an important role in the recruitment of fighters.

180 Ibid., p.80.
In a society where qawm membership precluded the formation of a national-level broad-based resistance, the ulema invoked the sharia to create the universal principles that could guarantee unity among the groups. The rhetoric of jihad and Islamic principles sought to provide a system of norms, codes for regulating human relations and to act in accordance with, an ethical model. Although the peasant’s life in Afghanistan is permeated by religion and the social basis of this religion varies according to whether the context within which it exists is tribal or non-tribal, rural or urban. Therefore, the link between an ideology and religion varies depending upon in type of ideology professed by the group. But in Afghanistan where the Islamic principles are diluted with tribal and non-tribal practices, customary Islam remains enjoined with the Islamic tenets.

Islam developed out of the Judaic-Christian matrix and theoretically eliminated the contradiction of the earlier theology. To the Muslims, Allah (God), is divine, transcendent, powerful and merciful being. The basic sources of the Islamic legal and theological framework are the Quran and the sunnah (tradition) of the Prophet. In Afghanistan tribal belief system coupled with non-Islamic practices make up for much of the lived Islam. In order to understand how Islam has influenced and shaped the Afghan society we must first seek to understand the meaning of Islam and then analyze how far it has addressed the various social and political problems of a traditional society.

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182 Duprec. n.3, pp.95-111.