Chapter VI

GEOPHICAL ASPECT OF ADMINISTRATIVE REORGANIZATION
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The spatial pattern of Local Governmental areas in Afghanistan dearly indicate the political objectives that had inspired such a reform(s). With a high degree of correlation, the constituent divisions exhibit a strong tendency of historic, economic and physical affinities. As a result, the influence of external tensions, there has been reorientation of internal forces; which as a consequence realigned the Local Governmental areas. This in turn indicated the high degree of regionalism prevailing in the land-locked states.

The present administrative system of Afghanistan evolved from the tribal organization. The political implications of the pyramidal political structure and the impact of the traditional code of Pukhtunwali (in intra-tribal political relations) is evident in the Afghan society as has the role of war and conflict revealing the tribal units engaged in political activity. Apart from the urbanized centres, the tribal units were definitely expressed in a spatial framework. Each of the constituent tribes (who form a corporate group) have definite area, which was both a geographical and a political unit; thereby indicating the segmentary character of their society evolving around specific structure of space and by articulation. To be more precise, the former included the entire population, while the latter coincided with the state area.
The internal relations suggested an administrative convenience based on authority and hierarchy of power structure of the tribes. It then led to an analogy that the political life of the essentially tribal society revolved around alliances and confrontations - fusion and fission that affected the alliance through realignment of the territorial structure which was subjected to relatively frequent subdivisions.

Ahmad Shah was able to superimpose the central authority and administration over the predominantly tribal areas which constituted his state and empire. It should be noted that the tribes had their own system of administration which was determined by the principle of the Pushtunwali. Each tribe was broken into a main group and sub-group, whose members often inhabited in close proximity of each other. Each Khel (main group) had its own jirgah. The members of the same lineage and tribal group had their own council known as Loe jirgah (Assembly of the Chiefs).

Evolution of the local governmental areas in Afghanistan has undergone a long process (see chapter II), and were influenced by factors of central origin. As a result, there were two types of provinces: a Wilayat or a Major province, and, a Hukumat-I-Ala or Minor province.

The local government area of the Afghan empire was divided into 8 Wilayats or Major provinces and 15 Hukumat-I-Ala
or Minor provinces. A Wilayat was further divided into 'Mahals', 'Towns' and 'Villages'. The provincial governor or Hukumat was appointed by the Shah. The pattern of provincial administration was as follows:

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<tr>
<th>Provincial Governor or Hukumat</th>
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<tr>
<td>Administrator of Law</td>
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<tr>
<td>Commander of troops</td>
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<td>Keeper of troops</td>
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<tr>
<td>Revenue collector</td>
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<td>Transport officer</td>
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The Hakim was usually assisted by one or two deputies and was responsible to the Hukumat for his Hukumat-I-Ala.

The Central Government exercised very little control over the distant provinces. The administrative structure was continuously undermined by the geographical factors which included: "...remoteness, ethnic differences, and specialized economies which together...fostered a distinct regional identity". Yet, to balance the centrifugal forces to regulate the administrative set-up, the King Chief of Chiefs often dismissed the local leadership of towns and

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villages. Provincial and regional areal units followed no strict principle and were largely based on the territorial extent of the inhabitants and the immediate area of their influence. The boundaries of the provinces and empires constantly shifted while governments rose and fell.

The successive rulers followed this pattern of administration. This was largely due to the geographical diversity and the doubtful allegiance of the constituent units. The boundaries of the provinces fluctuated constantly and revealed the influences of terrain, tribal polity and peripheral pressures. The concentration of highly politicized groups in the east and to a lesser degree in the north adequately represented these influences. In the nineteenth century, however, the political instability and the expansion of Britain and Russia, had serious repercussions on the territorial content of Afghanistan. The outlying and peripheral provinces were absorbed and a major realignment of central administration was [It was this phenomenon, in a modified form, which Zahir Shah successfully used between 1963 and 1973. The selection of the Prime Minister was the King's prerogative. As often the case was, the King used the Prime Minister to retain monarchical hold on the internal politics of the land-locked state, even when the country was declared as a constitutional democracy.]

The pattern of the provincial system in Afghanistan hardly changed till 1963 (from the Achaemenian period), though there were relatively few minor readjustments. See Ch. II; and also A.T. Olmstead, History of the Persian Empire, 3rd edn. (Chicago, 1960).
carried out within the state. At that time Abdur Rahman of Afghanistan had centralized administrative structure with important sectors like department of interior, the military organization, finance, justice and local government was directly under the supervision of the King. For the purpose of local administration, the state was divided into six major provinces and four minor provinces. The provincial governors were appointed by the King and were usually the member of the ruling elite.

Moreover, as each of the constituent units supported their respective administrative structure from the resources available within the provinces. It enabled the centre to diffuse the secessionist tendencies by strong military force. On the other hand the central aid to the deficit provinces enabled it to dominate the regional political scene.

Under Amanullah, there was rapid changes in the administrative set-up. For the first time, he promulgated the constitution which not only contemplated the changes in the administrative hierarchy but also called for modernization.

For administrative convenience, the central power was diffused among the various independent ministries. Each ministry had its own network throughout the state, and were responsible to the King, the Chairman of the Council of Ministers; while the local government areas retained their existing boundaries. For the purpose of local government, the division of territory and power were interrelated and
AFGHANISTAN
Administrative Changes
(1962-73)
reorganized to conform with the need for modernization. The changes were: 1) Hukumat-I-Ala, equivalent to the province but was politically less important; 2) Hukumati with three categories which was responsible to the provincial governments; and 3) Alakadari or districts which was supervised by the Hukumati. Apart from this, there were local councils, like that of the State Council at Kabul, and at every provincial, sub-provincial and district centres. The tribal territory was left untouched and was considered as distinct from the administered areas. The tribal regions of eastern Afghanistan were given special privileges.

Under Nadir Shah, however, pre-Amanullah pattern of administration was reintroduced. The distinctiveness of tribal territory from that of the administered areas was abolished. There was more centralization of power and the provincial administration came under the direct purview of the Central Government. Proclaiming the constitution in 1931, Nadir Shah brought modification of the centralized power in the form of bicameral parliamentary system. Though for all practical purpose, this modification was often bypassed. For the local government, the country was divided into four major provinces and four minor provinces (see Map No. 1), 10 districts, 97 prefectures and 158 cantons. The chain of command usually

5 Wilber, n.24, p.81. See also Ikbal Ali Shah, Modern Afghanistan (London, 1938)
went from the province to districts to sub-districts, with few instances of direct relationship between the province and the sub-districts. This system was retained till 1963, when a major administrative reform was taken up (see Map No. 11).

The new reforms not only included newer elements in the central power but also brought significant changes in the provincial system. Unlike the earlier changes in the provincial distribution which mainly contemplated upon the extension of the central authority, this change adjusted itself to the growing need of economic and political development of different distant regions of the state. The new provinces varied in size and are largely due to their accessibility. Therefore, it can be seen that "...the more accessible the area is to roads and communication, the larger the province; those geographic regions with forbidding zones of inaccessibility are the smallest".

Geographically, these changes in the administrative provinces, suggested the strategic and political importance of the marchlands. The concentration of provinces (see Map Eo. 11) along the eastern and to a lesser extent in the northern Afghanistan indicate the latent influences of the Pushtuns and non-Pushtun elements in the state's politics. However, particularly in the eastern Afghanistan, the numerous sub-divisions

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of the provinces are suggestive of significance of terrain, inhabitants and the nature of economic activities. The new provincial system attempted to decentralize in order to speed up economic and political development. At the beginning, the concept seemed to be illogical, but, on a closer examination it reveals a practical approach for development. The provinces vary in size, shape and population. The more accessible the area is to transportation and communication, the larger the provinces. It is only those regions which are geographically isolated and remote which are smallest. Likewise, the sub-division of the provinces was based on the same principle.

These reforms made a major break with the earlier traditions of dividing the country. It was no longer felt that the decentralization of power was a source of threat. The state had come to stay and with relative period of political stability, the traditional disruptive forces were replaced by the western educated urban elite and who provided the base for rapid economic and political development of the state which necessitated the change in the provincial distribution. The ministries of interior, health, education, justice, and agriculture and irrigation began their development planning on a national scale, which with the changes in the administrative organization of the state had more impact and were able to off-set the effect of the geographical environment.

Below the national level, there were 28 provinces (see Map Nos. 1 & ), 174 districts and 118 sub-districts. Each of
The provincial centres was accessible to the subordinate districts and sub-districts. It was a functional base for this system of division, in which the relationship among the constituent units was hierarchically ordered for effective administrative and development purposes.

Comparisons of Provincial Systems: Afghanistan

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<tr>
<td>Name of unit</td>
<td>Name of Governor</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wilayat (major provinces)</td>
<td>Naib-i-Hukumat (called Wali in Kabul province)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hukumat-i-Ala (minor province)</td>
<td>Hakim-i-Ala</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hukumaran (or Hukumat-i-Kalan sub-province)</td>
<td>Hakim-i-Kalan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hukumat (District 4 grades)</td>
<td>Alakadari (sub-districts 2 grades)</td>
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This reorganization tended to give a more favourable latitude for planning and development. At the same time, numerous sub-divisions suggest that the Central Government,  

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7 Ibid., p. 369.
apart from geographical factors, were bent diffusing the tribal and other regionally based power-pressure groups. Yet, though in principle such efforts may sound genuine but at the end proved decisive to the viability of the state.

However, with the revolution in 1973, the centralization of power called for readjustment of the provincial distribution. Though the earlier distribution was retained, two of the twenty-eight provinces were merged with others (Kapisa with Parwan and Konar with Nangrahar). Further, it was found that the lack of adequate statistical information under the existing system, had not only thwarted effective implementation of development programmes but also the government's inability to determine the quantum of central assistance for the regional, political and economic development. Nevertheless, the correlative function of the various ministries in the various provinces, districts and sub-districts, had given relative stability to these areal units through time. These gave rise to Minor Civil Divisions (each of which included a functional centre, whose boundaries were usually along the mountain ranges, watersheds, or large rivers.

There are four types of Minor Civil Divisions. They are: 1) Provincial Centres (Markaz-i-Wilayat); 2) Sub-Province

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9 Ibid., pp. iii-iv.
(Loe Woluswali); 3) Districts (Woluswali); and 4) Sub-districts (Alakadari).

The provincial centres were assigned an administrative grade (1, 2 and 3) as were the districts (1, 2, 3 and 4). They roughly coincided with the population and their number by the physical terrain (see Appendices VI and VII).

With the changes in the administrative divisions in the country, there are now 325 Minor Civil Divisions in Afghanistan and they form 26 provinces, 6 sub-provinces, 175 districts and 118 sub-districts.

The political geography of local administration of the Afghan state differs sharply from the traditional tribal organization of power. Whereas the local administration of the tribes is the product of over a hundreds of years of development and change, that of the Afghan state is the product of an arbitrary action of the monarchs to effect greater state control. The former had given as much power as possible (to the point of total autonomy within the framework of the major tribal group) to the local units of the tribes, whereas the latter centralized most of the political power in Kabul. The former had perpetuated the traditional regionalism and territorial divisions, while the latter had tried to obliterate these and make the state one homogeneous administrative unit.

The ability of the Central Government in establishing its hegemony over distant and autonomous tribal regions had enabled it to effect changes in the boundaries of local
government areas to fit the need of the peoples as well as for general economic and political development of the country. On the other hand, in the essentially tribal regions, the physical environment had abetted the tribal resistance to any changes in the boundaries.

The above analysis suggests that the geography of the state is an important criterion in the reorganization of local government of the state. For, it becomes obvious that while creating new areas of local government, that there were attempts to identify with cultural groups, fixed with historical pattern of migration and custom. Still further it is also obvious that regions where the Central Government perceive threat to emanate, to be divided so frequently as to loose any advantage accrued from such reforms. This resulted in areas falling under different spheres of economic influence and activity.

The successive administrative reforms that were carried out indicate that the degree of local autonomy sought by the people involved has often been viewed as a separatist movement by the government at Kabul. This is clearly understood by frequent mergence and separation of the provinces of Parwan, Kapisi and Nangrahar; while it is also evident from the creation of special district, e.g., Khost in Paktya province. This leads to an inference that the territorial contiguity of the tribes and the administrative authority (also tribal) vested upon the people to maintain a recognized territorial administration.
The various despotic regimes tended to create more provinces in order to weaken the possible opposition. In the Afghan case, however, this culminated in the fall and decay of the Pushtun hegemony. As noted earlier (see chapter II), the rivalry of the Afghan North with South had created a unique balance. Though the earlier regimes and the rulers of the 1973 coup gave overriding importance to the division, it indicated the rising strength of the north. Gradually, the 1978 coup was a return of the Afghan North with a strong politico-economic base. It can also be considered as the return of the Amanullah period when the north due to favourable relief was given more share in the development. In consequence, the various reforms had weakened the Pushtun power. The relief had also contributed its share in the low rate of growth; that it became politically secondary to the North. Kabul valley retained its cosmopolitan character and reinforced the supremacy of the northern Afghanistan over the rest of the country.