ETHNICIZATION OF POLITICS IN AFGHANISTAN

by

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ABSTRACT

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This thesis project examines the relationship between ethnic identity and politics and explores how ethnicity has influenced post-Taliban state building, the electoral system, and recent presidential and parliamentary elections in Afghanistan. First, in order to better understand the problem of ethnic politics in Afghanistan, I provide detailed information on the background of Afghanistan including the historical background of the country as an independent state, ethnic groups, and Afghan national identity. Then, I discuss the problem of ethnic politics, particularly in post-2001 Afghanistan. In order to find a permanent solution for the problem of ethnic politics, this thesis discusses some of the most important ways in which democracies have responded to the demands of different ethnic groups in a multiethnic country like Afghanistan.

Ethnicizing political issues is prevalent throughout the world, but it is highly pervasive in the case of Afghanistan. Historically, Pashtuns have ruled the country and excluded other ethnic groups from the political scene. Many sensitive issues act as an impediment to democratization. Some of these include: the development of an inclusive national identity, clarifying the relative size of each ethnic group via a census, electoral system that fits in the context of the country, equally distribution of power among the distinct communities, and particularly re-establishment

of political authority, are not solved in the post-Taliban era of Afghanistan. This thesis argues that the formation of a broad-based federal structure or a power-sharing parliamentary system that reflects the ethnic composition of Afghan society as a whole would be one of best options to solve the crisis of ethnic politics in Afghanistan.

In order to achieve an everlasting, stable, democratic, and peaceful country, I offer a series of fundamental recommendations. First, conducting a clear and transparent census is vital and a foremost significant step toward eradication of ethnic inequalities in socio-political arena. Second, solving the crisis of "Afghan" national identity by adopting a pluralistic national identity, which is acceptable by all ethnic groups, will build trust between Pashtuns and non-Pashtuns. The term "Afghan" is highly controversial in Afghanistan and It is strongly believed that "Afghan" stands for Pashtun. For this reason, a non-Pashtun abstains or at least hesitates to identify himself or herself as "Afghan" rather than Tajik, Hazara, Uzbek, Turkmen or Aimaq. Third, changing the current electoral system is another crucial step toward democratization of Afghanistan. A party-based proportional representation (PR) system will be a suitable electoral system in the case of a severely divided Afghan society. Fourth, because strong centralized governments have failed in Afghanistan, an alternative form of government should be reestablished. Thus, a parliamentary or a federal system would be the best option instead of a strong centralized government. Fifth, more importantly, a new democratic, pluralistic and inclusive constitution for a stable Afghanistan is inevitable. I argue that without solving the mentioned problems, a stable and developed Afghanistan will remain as a dream.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Statement of the Research Questions

In this thesis project, I examine the relationship between ethnic identity and politics and explore how ethnicity has influenced post-Taliban state building, the electoral system, and recent presidential and parliamentary elections in Afghanistan. The major research questions include: How has ethnicity influenced post-Taliban state-building, the electoral system, and presidential and parliamentary elections in Afghanistan?; How can the ethnic problem of Afghanistan be solved?; and Which governance system would be best for Afghanistan? I also present a series of recommendations to address the ethnic problem of Afghanistan. These recommendations focus on systems of governance, such as parliamentarianism and federalism. Their primary objective is to increase political participation among minority groups, diffuse political power, and strengthen democracy.

1.2 Methodology and the Importance of the Thesis

In my thesis, I present a case-study analysis focusing on ethnic politics in Afghanistan. The purpose of my thesis is not to summarize or rebut the existing case studies on ethnic identity in Afghanistan and its relationship with political issues of the country. In contrast, I will attempt to build an argument and elaborate on it by providing empirical evidence from the case of ethnic politics in Afghanistan. Case studies are not atheoratical; to the contrary, they help inform general theory and explain conditions that deviate from conventional theoretical explanations (Bradshaw & Wallace, 1991).

This thesis project draws upon a variety of source materials ranging from published academic works, books, articles, reports and journals. I use English language sources as well as Farsi and Turkish sources, which helps us to look at the topic from a broader perspective.

Since no systematic documentation effort was undertaken by Afghan governments (with the exception of 1979 census, which also could not be completed), available primary source materials are scarce. Additionally, there has been considerable destruction of records during three-decade civil war and authenticity of the few surviving sources remains deeply contested in the country. The research also draws upon the author's experience as being from the region. I will use all of these materials to make a one-country case study of Afghanistan.

This thesis's main contribution is to provide an insightful analysis of a common sociological phenomenon that is understudied and to serve as a point of departure for future studies of kindred phenomenon. Because the correlation between ethnic identity and politics in Afghanistan is not discussed in such detail, this study devotes most of its attention to analyzing this specific case and exploring the relationship and outcomes of ethnicity and politics.

1.3 Outline of the Thesis

My thesis project contains five chapters. In chapter one, I introduce and discuss the main research questions of the project: How has ethnic identity shaped politics in Afghanistan?; How has ethnicity influenced post-Taliban state-building, the electoral system, and presidential and parliamentary elections in Afghanistan?; How can the ethnic problem of Afghanistan be solved?; and Which governance system would be best for Afghanistan? I also discuss the methodology and the importance of the topic.

In chapter two, I provide information on the background of Afghanistan. Among the topics are: a discussion of the historical background of Afghanistan as an independent state, ethnic groups, and Afghan national identity.

In chapter three, I explore the relationship between ethnicity and politics in Afghanistan. First, I discuss the role of ethnicity in the political context of Afghanistan from the establishment of Afghanistan as a state in 1747 to the Taliban period. Second, I discuss how ethnicity shaped political decisions both in the interim and transitional governments of post-Taliban Afghanistan.

Finally, I discuss how candidates manipulate ethnic division both in parliamentary and presidential elections in order to gain political support and power.

In the fourth chapter of my thesis, I focus on the comparative aspects of democracy, such as federalism, representation rights, and polyethnic rights in a divided country. Here, I will try to find a solution for the mentioned problem of Afghanistan by focusing on how democracy in various forms may contribute to the long-term stability of Afghanistan. As preferable state forms, the parliamentary system and federalism will be discussed.

In chapter five, I provide a summary of my thesis project as well as a series of recommendations to promote peace, stability, and democracy in Afghanistan.

CHAPTER 2

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

In this chapter, I provide detailed information on the background of Afghanistan. Among the topics are: a discussion of the historical background of Afghanistan as an independent state, ethnic groups of Afghanistan focusing on the characteristics used to differentiate between them, such as language, religion, regional concentration, and group size. In addition, I also discuss the construction of a larger national identity, "Afghan", including the debates over the term "Afghan", and the new Afghan national identity card. I argue that providing information about Afghanistan, ethnic groups and their size, knowing the history and the motive behind the construction of "Afghan" national identity and the discussion of debates on the terminology of "Afghan" will help us to understand the problem of ethnic politics in Afghanistan. Thus, based on the brief explanation, this chapter offers an insightful background for better understanding the following chapters and the main argument of the thesis. Now, I give background information about the history of the country.

2.1 Historical Background of Afghanistan as an Independent State

Throughout both its ancient and modern History, Afghanistan has been a prominent crossroad between empires, nations, cultures, and languages. To say shortly, in its entire history, the country became "a highway of conquest" in the words of Arnold Fletcher (Afghanistan: Highway of Conquest 1982). In his book, *Taliban: Militant Islam, Oil and Fundamentalism in Central Asia*, Ahmed Rashid (2010) rightfully states, "Afghanistan's geo-strategic location on the crossroads between Iran, the Arabian Sea and India and between Central Asia and South Asia has given its territory and mountain passes a significance since the earliest Aryan invasions 6,000 years ago" (Rashid, 2010. p. 7).

Afghanistan is a mountainous and landlocked country located in south-central Asia, which has borders with Pakistan in the south and east; Iran in the west; Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan in the north; and China in the far northeast. Afghanistan is slightly smaller than Texas and it is 647,500 square kilometers. The capital city is Kabul, the citizens are called "Afghan" and the currency is Afghani. Its current formal name is Islamic Republic of Afghanistan.

Its emergence as Afghanistan, an independent state, is typically dated from the commencement of the rule of Ahmad Shah Abdali (1722). The sudden and violent death of Nadir Shah Afshar (1747), the last king of the Turkic Afshar tribe, provided the opportunity for his most trusted Pashtun commander, Ahmad Khan Abdali or Durrani, to create an independent government in Qandahar in 1747 (Shahrani, 2002). An anthropologist and Afghanistan expert Nazif Shahrani (1986) pointed out how the emergence of Afghanistan as a separate political entity in the mid-eighteen century was coterminous with the rise of Pashtun tribal power on the national scene. He argues, "The sociology of Pashtun dominance over the other ethnic communities in the country forms the very substance of political developments and state building in Afghanistan" (Shahrani, 1986. P. 25).

The current political borders of Afghanistan are drawn by Britain and Czarist Russia in 1893 with the Durand Line Agreement. At the start of the 19th century the British Indian Empire and the Russian Empire both started showing interest in Afghanistan embarking on what was later called the "Great Game" (Janjua, 2009). Amid the rivalry between Britain and Russia, Abdurrahman Khan (1880-1901), was forced to request negotiations with the British to agree on the demarcation of the eastern border separating British India, present-day Pakistan, from Afghanistan (Janjua, 2009). Afghanistan's ruler, Abdurrahman Khan, and a British delegation agreed to draw a line between British-India and Afghanistan called the Durand Line. Although the borders were drawn by a Pashtun ruler, Abdurrahman Khan, later Pashtun rulers have refused to acknowledge the Durand Line. The line severely separated Pashtuns as well as other ethnic groups, so there has been mistrust in relation to the demarcation of the border between

Afghanistan and Pakistan. "The borders of Afghanistan were gerrymandered to split members of ethnic groups between or among different neighboring states," argues Shahrani (2002. p. 718) – for instance, "Along the northern frontiers, the peoples of Turkistan, the Turkic-and Tajik-speaking Muslim Central Asians such as the Uzbek, Turkmen, Kazak, Kirghiz and Tajiks, were divided" (Shahrani, 2002. p. 718).

Generally, all the ethnic groups have cultural or religious ties across the borders of Afghanistan. Uzbeks with other Turkic groups like Turkmens and Kazaks are regionally concentrated in the Northern Afghanistan called Turkistan. Before 1880s, Uzbeks were living a semi-independent existence under their own begs, rulers, until gradually conquered by the Afghan (Pashtun) Amirs who latter extended their rule over Turkistan (Ewans, 2002. P. 9). In the Northern Afghanistan, Uzbeks have close cultural and linguistic ties with Uzbekistan, and Turkmens share the same language and ethnic relations with Turkmenistan. However, neither Uzbeks, nor Turkmens, have been in close touch with these countries. The reason is that both Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan stayed away from the political instability and the complex situation of Afghanistan. There is a similar situation with Tajiks in the Northeastern border with Tajikistan. By the Durand Agreement, the Pashtuns (Afghan), the largest ethnic group in Afghanistan, were divided on the eastern borders between Afghanistan and Pakistan. When the British created the state of Afghanistan, there have been massive internal population movements at the instigation of the Pashtun royalty as part of their plan to Pashtunize the country (Allan, 2003). Hazaras are the only ethnic group that resides within the borders of Afghanistan because of their settlement in central highlands in Bamyan and its surrounding. However, Hazaras have had very close and strong religious ties with Iran's Shia regime.

The population of the country is overwhelmingly Sunni and Shiite Muslims, but segmented in complex ways based on ethnic, regional and sectarian grounds. Afghanistan is an extremely diverse country due to being harbor for many different ethnic groups. Historically, Afghanistan has been the link between Central Asia, the Middle East and the Indian sub-continent.

Therefore, Afghanistan is a country made up of many different nationalities. Each ethnic group has its own language, and the members of ethnic groups can easily be recognized by their language. There are two official languages, Pashto and Dari. Because Pashto is difficult to pronounce and read, it is rare for non-Pashtuns to understand it well. Despite this, it has been the official language because of the dictate and the enforcement of Pashtun governments. Dari, on the other hand, has been the interethnic language of Afghanistan, which all the ethnicities can easily communicate. Moreover, Dari served as the lingua franca of the region both in educational and administrative institutions. Beside Pashto and Dari, languages like Uzbeki, Turkmeni and Baluchi are the recognized languages of Afghanistan in their own territories where they are spoken.

Regional context is vital to mention here. Neighbor and nearby countries, such as Pakistan, Iran, India, Russia, Saudi Arabia, and Tajikistan have always played a key role in the instability of the country because they have manipulated ethnic, religious, linguistic, and tribal issues in Afghanistan to their advantage. Especially the invasion of Soviet Union destroyed Afghanistan's socio-economic infrastructures and well as political institutions. The Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan in 1979. Nevertheless, "Russian expansion toward Afghanistan began to first unfold more than a century before the 1978 communist coup as part of the nineteenth century "Great Game" between Russia and Great Britain" (Mullins, 2009. p. 43). In 1978, the Pro-Soviet People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) with the support of Russia overthrew and killed Mohammad Daoud Khan, the president of Afghanistan and seized the central power, but the regime could not control the state. In order to support the communist regime and to reassert its influence in Afghanistan, by the invitation of Pashtun communists, the Soviet Union invaded the country. To fight against the Moscow backed communist regime and then the Soviet invaders, Afghan leaders called mujahedeen, especially non-Pashtuns, established new political parties in Pakistan and created guerrilla forces. They received military and financial support from different countries including the United States. Russia failed to control the country, and as

a result, it was forced to withdraw in 1989. Before the invasion Afghanistan was stable and economically in a good position. Unfortunately, after the Soviet's direct involvement the country has never experienced the economic progress and political stability that is has before the invasion.

The manipulation of ethnicity, in particular, has led to the civil war, which has brought so many tragic events. For example, ethnic cleansing and ethnocide occurred frequently in Kabul between 1992 and 1994, in the Shomali plains between 1996 and 2001, in the Hazarajat between 1998 and 2001 and in Northern Afghanistan, especially Mazar-i Sharif during the Taliban Regime (Saikal, 1998). The civil war in Afghanistan has changed the traditional balance of power among the ethnic groups. Its evidence is that non-Pashtun ethnic groups are more powerful today than they were 20 years before. Both during Afghan resistance against the Soviet Union's intervention and civil war, the non-Pashtuns established political parties, came to the same level in political power as Pashtuns. They gained a great chance to demand political and linguistic recognition and the recognition of their own ethnic identities, such as Tajik, Uzbek, Hazara, and Turkmen. If I make an analogy, the ethnic war or Afghan civil war looks like some fighting of American Wrestling, in which each wrestler struggles for his own victory, but sometimes in order to decrease his enemies, makes a short-term deal with his rivals. Unfortunately, ethnic leaders played the same wrestling in the bloody ring of Afghanistan.

The tragic and shocking 9/11 terror attacks on American soil and the start of U.S. military action against the terrorist organizations, Al-Qaeda and the Taliban, injected new urgency into the search for a government that might replace the Taliban. Once the defeat of the Taliban was certain, a conference was organized in Bonn and on 5 December 2001 for the post-Taliban Afghanistan. The goal was to lay the groundwork for Afghanistan's future political processes and institutions of governance based on the commitment of 'the right of the people of Afghanistan to freely determine their own political future in accordance with the principles of Islam, democracy, pluralism and social justice (Johnson, 2006). Ethnicity played a crucial role in

the overall strategy for the political reconstruction of Afghanistan. It was identified as the dominating line of conflict in the Afghan war, and the establishing of an ethnic balance in all government issues came to the fore of political decision-making of the international community (Schetter, 2005).

The peoples of Afghanistan are in need of a fundamental change in their system of governance, especially related to equal socio-political opportunities for all ethnic groups. After the defeat of the Taliban all ethnic groups – particularly the non-Pashtun groups – were optimistic about their sociopolitical futures and they were thankful to the international community, especially to the U.S. They were optimistic because they were expecting to have their voice heard and to have equal representation in the new central state. Nevertheless, they were really disappointed and continue to be because the unequal distribution of power is prevalent in the Post-Taliban governments as it was during the Pashtun Taliban regime and its preceding Pashtun regimes. The international community, including the United States, has not paid enough attention to solve the ethnic problem. For example, a number of prominent Afghans including Northern Alliance were invited by the United Nations in Bonn to decide on a plan for governing the country and to establish an interim government. They made a mini election; giving the chance for the winner to run the future interim government of Afghanistan. Abdul Sattar Sirat was one of the candidates to lead an interim administration in Afghanistan. Although he was a chief negotiator at the Bonn talks who gained the majority of the votes, his Uzbek background prevented him from becoming the head of Interim Government. Hamid Karzai was thought by international figures to be favored due to being from a Pashtun ethnic group, the largest group in Afghanistan. That non-democratic policy of international players which began is still continuing, and thus Afghanistan has become increasingly ethnicized since the Post-Taliban era.

2.2 Ethnic Groups, Residential Segregation and the Group Size

Because of wars as well as external and internal migrations, there is not an accurate census of the population in Afghanistan. Thus, the size of ethnic groups is based on estimations. The last official census took place in 1979, which registered a population of 15,551,385 (Farhang, 1993). In March 22, 2011, the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) estimated the population to be 29,835,392. However, none of the estimations are accurate. "The 1979 data was incomplete because the mujahedeen were fighting against the Russians and their puppet government, and the census group could not to the regions that were controlled by the former" (Abbasin, 2005), said Muhammed Ali Watan Yar, Head of Central Statistics Department. According to the report of the Central Statistics Authority of Afghanistan in 2009, the population of Afghanistan is only 23 million (Central Statistics Office of Afghanistan, 2009).

As far as the ethnic groups of the country are concerned, there are dozens of ethnic groups within the country, and I just mention the largest ethnic groups due to their influence on the political, social and economic institutions of Afghanistan. Afghanistan has some fifty-five different ethnic groups of whom four account for a large majority: Pashtuns, Tajiks, Uzbek, and Hazaras. Each ethnic group has its own history, culture, experience, and unique perception of the situation in their county, Afghanistan. Indeed, having knowledge about the demographics of some large ethnic groups are significant in understanding their collective preference of state formation and politics. The country does not have a majority ethnic group. It is comprised of minor ethnic groups although there is tremendous difference in size between ethnic groups. The largest community, the Pashtun ethnic group, does not comprise a majority, but by most estimates is a plurality of the population at 32%-42%. The Tajiks are the next largest community with 27% of the population. The Uzbeks and the Hazaras are approximately 9% each. The remaining 13% is divided among smaller communities (Adeney, 2008). The estimations of population in Afghanistan differ widely because of politics of government and controversies on

ethnic group sizes. Since 2001, after the collapse of tyrannous Taliban regime, the government has abstained from taking an accurate census and specifies the percentage of each ethnic group in Afghanistan. There is a substantial correlation between group size and state control and obtaining positions in the government in Afghanistan. The larger population and group size, the greater is the chance to maintain administrative power and hold political institutions. In contrast, the smaller the group size, the less likely the group is to gain administrative duties. The Pashtuns, for example, are the largest group in Afghanistan and holds key administrative powers including the presidency. Then chronologically, Tajiks, Hazaras and Uzbeks and other ethnic groups follow them.

Afghanistan did not suffer from religious identity conflict. Beside the ethnic diversity, Afghanistan has religious diversity. Approximately, 80% of Afghanistan's population is Sunni Islam, 19% is Shiite Islam, and 1% is represented by religious communities, such as Hindus and the Jews. Islam in Afghanistan embraces a wide range of beliefs. The major ethnic groups are predominately Sunni, with the exception of the Hazara who are Shiite. A significant number of Afghans, however, are followers of the Sufi tradition, an Islamic tradition that fosters values of tolerance and peaceful co-existence with other religions. The Wahabi tradition has only recently been imported from Saudi Arabia and the Taliban, who received their Islamic training in the refugee camps of Pakistan, are the followers of the intolerant Wahabi tradition (Tremblay, 2001). At the community level, these religious groups never fought against each other. However, at the state level, there are two exceptions: First, Abdurrahman Khan (1880-1901), the Iron King, started a fight against some Pashtun tribes and the non-Pashtun ethnic groups and Hazaras in particular. Second, Taliban extremism systematically targeted the Hazaras both because of religious and ethnic issues. Joseph Collins (2011) rightfully says, "For most of the modern era, aside from the Taliban period of rule, the Sunni-Shia schism has not been as divisive a factor in Afghanistan as it has been in Iraq."

Pashtuns or Pakhtuns are the largest ethnic group in Afghanistan. The estimated population of Pashtuns ranges between 32% and 42%. Pashtuns were further segregated into tribes; most famous among whom are Durrani and Ghilzai. They can be easily recognized from other Afghan ethnic groups due to their Pashto language. There is a consensus between the historians that the original homeland of Pashtuns lays between the Indus River of North India and the sides of Himalayas. Firstly, they had come to the south and the southeast parts, then at the 18th and 19th centuries by the ethnic-based policy of Pashtun government, they had settled to the north and north-east parts of present Afghanistan (Farhang, 1993). Most Pashtuns work in farmlands to earn their livelihood, and many of them live a nomadic lifestyle, they are called Kochi. These nomads or Kochis live in tents made of black goat hair. Today, Pashtuns intensely live in the south, south-east and south-west parts of Afghanistan. They are scattered in all the regions of Afghanistan; as a result, it is possible to find small Pashtun groups in all provinces of Afghanistan. Pashtunhood, ethnic and tribal allegiance or in a proper verb nationalism is very strong among Pashtun ethnic groups. In some cases, obedience or loyalty of a Pashtun to the decrees of tribal leaders is more important than the law or the orders of central government (Oguz, 2001).

As I mentioned, Pashtuns came to power after the violent and sudden death of Nadir Shah Afshar (1688), the last king of the Turkic Afshar tribe, and still maintain the power. The exceptions to this are the nine months of Tajik rule in 1929 (Farhang, 1993) and the mujahidin's (fighters against Soviet occupation) control of Kabul in 1992-96. The most brutal Pashtun regime was the tyranny regime of the Taliban. Despite the fact that the Pashtun ethnic group does not form an overwhelming majority at only 32-42% of the population, they have still always been the major player in the country's socio-political scene. Throughout Afghanistan's history, Pashtuns have had a strong belief that they are the only rightful rulers of the country and they want a strong Pashtun-run central state. None but the Pashtuns claim Afghanistan as their chief area of habitation. Every ethnic group in Afghanistan has co-ethnics living across the borders of

the country (Eden, 1980). In general many Pashtuns and in particular the Pashtun Taliban has had the slogan that "Uzbeks should go to Uzbekistan, Turkmens should go to Turkmenistan, Tajiks should go to Tajikistan, and Afghanistan is for Afghans (Pashtuns)." However, the proportion of Pashtuns who live in Pakistan is quite higher than the proportion of Pashtuns in Afghanistan. The fact is that not only Afghanistan but also the mentioned countries were parts of big empires that had many distinct ethnicities. That is why all the ethnic groups are the original inhabitants of present day Afghanistan.

Tajiks constitute the second largest ethnic group in Afghanistan and are traditionally the closest rivals to the Pushtuns for power and prestige. They do not organize themselves by tribes and refer to each other by the provinces or regions they are from; such as Kabuli, Panjsheri, Herati and Mazari. Unlike the Pashtuns, the sense nationalism is not strong among the Tajiks. They generally live in the central city of Kabul, and in northern and northeastern provinces of Afghanistan. Many Tajik people extend into the central mountains, and it is also possible to find them in the south, such as in Kandahar, and in the southeast, such as in Helmand provinces. Tajiks speak the Dari Persian language, which is the most commonly spoken language between all Afghan ethnic groups. Tajiks have also enjoyed short periods of time when they ruled Afghanistan; nine months of Habibullah Kalakani's rule (January 1929-October 1929) and four years of Burhanaddin Rabbani's rule (June 1992-September 1996).

The third largest ethnic group in Afghanistan is the Uzbeks, a Turkic ethnic group. Uzbeks are also one of the old ethnic groups living in Afghanistan, but some of them migrated from Uzbekistan to the northern region of Afghanistan during the Soviet invasions of Uzbekistan. They live across the northern and northeastern areas of Afghanistan. Uzbeks also can be found in the southern and southeastern areas, however, most of them assimilated and lost their language. Most Uzbeks earn livelihood by farming and herding. Uzbek social structure is patriarchal and leaders that have the title Beg, Arbab or Khan enjoy considerable power.

Another influential and ethnic group is Hazaras, a Persian- speaking group. The major population of Hazaras is Shiite Muslims, but some other ethnic groups have Shiite Muslims as well. Among the overwhelmingly Sunni Pushtuns, the Turi tribe is Shia; Tajiks also are overwhelmingly Sunni, but some in western Afghanistan are Imami Shiites and others in Badakshan are Ismaili Shiites; some Hazaras are Sunni and the Hazaras of the Shibar area are distinctively Ismaili Shiite in contrast to the great majority who are Imami (Newell, 1989).

The origins of Hazaras have not been reconstructed and there are many controversies on their background. Most scholars state that Hazaras have Mongolian ancestry because of resemblance of physical attributes and cultural characteristics to Mongolians. Others say that they have Persian ancestry (Davlatabadi, 1993). The central regions of Afghanistan, known as Hazarajat, are inhabited by the Hazaras. A large number of Hazaras also dwell in the northern part of Afghanistan. Like Tajiks, they speak Dari or Persian language, and they have a great sense of Hazara identity.

2.3 The Theory of Identity

The notion of identity has been used in many distinct ways because identity encapsulates many dimensions. As a result, there are identities such as cultural identity, religious identity, ethnic identity, and gender identity. The focus here is national identity. Sadowsky (2008) describes national identity as, "a group identification with the population treated as one's own nation, feeling of the distinctness from the others, territorial identification ("my country", "my land", and "motherland") and the cultural identification" (p. 13).

An ethnic group is a human population that has a name and thinks of itself as a group; possesses perception of a common ancestry, historical ties, and historical memories; and a shared culture, which can be based on a combination of race, language, religion, laws, customs, institutions, dress, music, crafts, and food (Michael, 1997. P. 13). In Afghanistan, ethnicity and kinship, which are expressed linguistically through the same terms, qawm (people, tribe, community), wulus (nation, tribe, relatives), and tyfah (clan, tribe, group). All the

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mentioned terms represent the same or similar ideological frame-works in Afghanistan. Together with religious identity, they provide the most fundamental bases for individuals and collective identities and loyalties. Ethnic identities, in Afghanistan, are the most persistent and pervasive potential bases for the organization of social formations, exercising political rights, and for the regulation of social interaction among individuals and between ethnic groups. Among different ethnic groups a sense of ethnic identity strongly exists; however, that strong sense is not visible in national identity.

2.4 History and Crisis of National Identity in Afghanistan

Beside ethnic identities, such as Uzbek, Hazara, Tajik, Pashtun, and Turkmen, there is a national identity of "Afghan" for all individuals who live in Afghanistan regardless of ethnic or religious ties. The word "Afghan" has been presented to the world as a common national identity for all ethnic groups including Pashtun and non-Pashtun ethnic groups. However, non-Pashtun groups generally dislike using the identity of "Afghan", arguing that it just identifies the Pashtuns, not Tajiks, Uzbeks and other ethnic groups. They are reluctant to use the term because there is a considerable amount of debate over the term "Afghan" to identify a specific ethnic group. In fact, the history behind the term "Afghan" is quite controversial due to various sources of where it originated from. In Persian, the meaning of "Afghan" is to shout, to whine and to moan.

There is strong evidence that "Afghan" only referred to the Pashtun ethnic group, but later on it was extended to the whole population by the political dictates of Pashtun regimes. The history of Afghanistan shows that the term "Afghan" referred to only one ethnic group not only before Ahmad Shah Abdali, but also during and after his kingdom. Ahmad Shah Baba, the founder of Afghanistan, in his letter to Ottoman Emperor Sultan Mustafa the third, repeatedly mentioned a great tribe called "Afghan" and referred it to Pashtuns (Ansari, 2009). Just like in conversational language today, the word "Afghan" was used as opposed to "Tajik", "Uzbek", "Hazara", and "Arab" at that time. In addition, Sayed Jamaluddin Afghani (1897), a great Afghan

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scholar, historian and political activist, in his book "Tetimmetu'l Beyan fi Tarikhi Afghan" discusses the history and the meaning of the term "Afghan". He says, "Persians used to call them 'Afghan' and the reason was they were shouting and whining when they were captured by 'Bakht Nasr'. In Persian, 'Afghan' means to shout or to whine, and ordinary Persian (Farsiwans) call them "Awghan" (Afghani, 1901. p.13). In another place of this book, Afghani states that the language of the Afghans is called Pashto (Afghani, 1901. p.19).

Anthony Hyman (2002), an expert of Afghanistan, argues that the term "Afghan" was always specifically identified with Pashtuns and Pashtun dominance. He continues, "The usage of the term 'Afghanistan' came about naturally enough, because 19th-century British writers approached the country from the south where, of course, Pashtun tribes were settled, while Pashtun rulers were also dominant politically" (Hyman, 2002). It is ironic that the name of country as Afghanistan is given by the British when they first invaded Afghanistan in 19th Century. The areas that they encountered were predominantly Pashtun and since they knew "Afghan" as synonymous with "Pashtun" they therefore erroneously declared the entire country as "Land of the Afghan" or "Afghanistan" (Rasanayagam, 2005. P. xv). Bellew (1880) in his book, The Races of Afghanistan, says, "The principal nationalities which together compose the inhabitants of Afghanistan, are the Afghan, the Pathan, the Ghilzai, the Tajik, the Hazarah and the Uzbeks..." (p. 13). Interestingly, he argue that the Afghan, the Pathan, and the Ghilzai are the Pukhto (Pashto)-speaking races (Bellew, 1880. p. 16).

The Post-Taliban constitution of Afghanistan (2004) officially recognize the term "Afghan" as a national identity of the country. In its fourth Article it states, "The nation of Afghanistan consists of all individuals who are the citizen of Afghanistan. The word Afghan applies to every citizen of Afghanistan." There were many debates in the constitutional making process in Afghanistan. One of the major debates in the constitution making process in Afghanistan was whether to formally recognize "ethnicity" within institutions of the state and just accept the word of "Afghan" as a national identity (Adeney, 2008). However, in Loya Jirya of

2003 the members demanded that citizens should be called "Afghanistani" and that the name of the currency be changed from the Afghani to the paisa (Rubin, 2004). A well-known expert of Afghanistan, Barnett Rubin (2004), states that the Pashtuns are the titular ethnicity of the country. That is, he says, the word *Afghan* was originally nothing more than a variation of the word Pashtun, making Afghanistan literally the "land of the Pashtun."

One of the primary problems in the issue of ethnic politics in Afghanistan originated from the crisis of national identity because we do not have a clear definition of national identify and the debates over it still remain unsolved. For this reason, "Afghan" national identity is not an inclusive identity that embraces all ethnic groups. The real problem is that this word, "Afghan", is being forced upon the country for all non-Pashtun ethnic groups and they are told to go by this name. As mentioned above, it is registered in the constitution that each person should be referred to as an Afghan. Despite the fact that the term "Afghan" refers to Pashtuns and Pashtun elites imposed it as the country's national identity, today, a sense of Afghan national identity does exist among non-Pashtun ethnic groups. However, members of these groups are reluctant to use the term "Afghan". Instead of "Afghan", they use the term "Afghanistani" to identify themselves. Most prestigious magazines and newspapers that belong to non-Pashtun groups, such as *Kabul Press, Kokcha Press*, and *Afghanpaper* are reluctant to use the word "Afghan" and prefer to use the word "Afghanistani", which means who lives in and holds citizenship of Afghanistan.

2.5 New Afghan National Identity Card and the Controversies on It

The crisis and debates over Afghanistan's national identity have taken a more serious and problematic turn when the Afghan government decided to distribute a new Afghan National Identity card. It seems to have created more problems and fueled polarization among the citizens of Afghanistan. In 2010, the government of Afghanistan planned for a $100 million electronic identification system with cards to be issued to all Afghans within five years. A chip in the wallet-size identification cards will hold a drivers' license, vehicle registration, signature and

voting registration and would aid fairer, more transparent and efficient future elections (Nichols, 2010). Although the need for having proper identification is a very significant matter, as a war-torn and one of the poorest countries of the world Afghanistan has other serious and urgent matters to spend that huge amount of money on.

There are various ways to oppress people. One way is by taking away their identity. Afghanistan as a country of different ethnicities has always seemed to be troubled with its identities. The new identity card only recognizes the word "Afghan" as a supreme identity for all ethnic groups and it omits the name of each ethnicity. The omission of the names of ethnic groups is against the current constitution. The constitution recognizes and mentions the names of all ethnic groups. In its fourth article it says, "The nation of Afghanistan is comprised of the following ethnic groups: Pashtun, Tajik, Hazara, Uzbek, Turkmen, Baluch, Pashai, Nuristani, Aymaq, Arab, Qirghiz, Qizilbash, Gujur, Brahwui and others." Because the word "Afghan" does not originate from their own ethno-social bases, Tajiks, Hazaras, Uzbeks, Turkmens, and other non-Pashtun social groups can not sufficiently identify themselves with this Afghan national identity. For this reason, enforcing this identity as the country's only identity and omitting the names other ethnic groups from the Afghan National Identity Card could cause major problems. In contrast, the Pashtuns do not reject the current national identity because they look at it as representing the Pashtun identity.

Both politicians and experts of the country believe that communities will be insecure without recognition of each distinct ethnicity and it will leads to a further politicization of identities and potentially escalating tensions (Adeney, 2008). Some Afghan scholars argue that dictating the word "Afghan" in the new identity card is a circulation of a tribal identity to a national identity and it deprives non-Pashtun ethnic groups from political participation (Deljo, 2012). The name of the country and the names of ethnic groups are profoundly significant because they acknowledge the diversity and cultural richness of Afghanistan. Each ethnic group is important, so by recognizing the value of each one will encourage the members of each ethnicity to get

closer to one other. A Tajik, a Hazara, and an Uzbek are distinct ethnic groups and they should be known and remained as separate.

A new open, fair and encompassing census will clear up decades of uncertainty over the size of the whole population in general and the population of each ethnic group within the country in particular. In contrast, politicization of the issue and not conducting a complete census will most likely cause political instability in the country. We Afghans hope and have a strong belief that accurate demographic data is vital in order to rebuild the war-ravaged country and helps to establish an enduring political stability in the country. In the upcoming chapter, I attempt to discuss the ethnic politics and observe how ethnicity influenced the post-Taliban government and elections.

CHAPTER 3

ETHNICITY AND POLITICS

This chapter of the thesis seeks to advance our understanding of the association between ethnicity and politics. Thus, it is the essential part of this thesis project. First, I will discuss the role of ethnicity in the political context of Afghanistan from the establishment of Afghanistan as a state in 1747 to the Taliban. Next, I will discuss how ethnicity shaped political decisions both in the interim and transitional governments of post-Taliban Afghanistan. Finally, I will discuss the electoral system of the country, ethnic manipulations in elections, and how the candidates manipulate ethnic division both in parliamentary and presidential elections in order to gain political support and political positions. I argue that the ethnic composition of the candidates and the manipulation of ethnic fractions reflect the existing political cleavages within the Afghan society.

Afghanistan is a multinational state. It harbors many distinct ethnic groups with their own unique languages, cultures and historical values. The issue of ethnic politics is prevalent throughout the world, and almost every country faces ethnic problems of one kind or another. Afghanistan, however, is one of the most complex countries in the world from the ethnic standpoint. Donald Horowitz (1995) in *Ethnic Groups in Conflict* argues that virtually all political events have ethnic consequences in societies where ethnicity suffuses organizational life. He continues, "Where parties break along ethnic lines, elections are divisive, armed forces are ethnically fragmented, military coups, and whole systems of economic relations are crystallized around opportunities afforded and disabilities imposed by government policy in particular ethnic groups (Horowitz, 1995. P. 12). This is surely the case in Afghanistan. Certainly, the discussion of historical overview of ethnic politics in Afghanistan will provide empirical evidence for my argument.

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3.1 Historical Overview of Ethnic Politics in Afghanistan

Ethnicity played a most significant role in the overall strategy for the political reconstruction of Afghanistan. It was identified as the dominating line of conflict in the Afghan war. Establishing an ethnic balance in all government issues came to the fore of political decision-making of the international community (Schetter, 2005).Throughout Afghanistan's history, all politics of Afghan governments have become ethnicized. All Afghan (Pashtun) monarchies from the first monarch, Ahmad Shah Durrani (1747), to the last one, King Zahir Shah, favored a single ethnic group, the Pashtuns, to non-Pashtun ethnic groups. In order to establish a so called sovereign and a unitary government, they used a brutal regime apparatus toward non-Pashtun communities. Political, social and economic issues, employment opportunities and education facilities in Afghanistan were based on ethnic background. Legally, for example, an individual who belonged to Hazarah ethnicity was not allowed to go to medical and military schools (Mahdawi, 2011). Nazif Shahrani (2002), a foremost expert of Afghanistan, argues that the transformation of tribal structure and ethnic differences into groups fragmented along ethnic, linguistic, and sectarian cleavages, were the direct consequences of the policies of centralizing governments. In the political spectrum of Afghanistan, the central governments have spent most of their energies on controlling the antagonist groups. The reason is/was simple. It was for re-enforcement of the Pashtun-run central government because they have a strong belief that Pashtuns are the only and the natural masters of Afghanistan. For this reason, they believed all the ethnic groups other than the Pashtuns should be excluded from the political scene. Then this culture of discrimination took a legal shape (Mahdawi, 2011).

The root of ethnic politics and discrimination toward non-Pashtun ethnicities is not coincidence with the "buffer state" of Abdurrahman Khan from 1880 to 1901. Actually, it had started when the country emerged as an independent entity during Ahmad Shah Durrani (1747). Ahmad Shah's policy in order to control Turkistan, the Northern region, and Hazarajat where Hazara ethnicity inhabits, was to force Pashtun families especially the Kuchis, Pashtun nomads,

to emigrate to that lands and create new settlements. Ahmad Shah's policy became the central policy of later Pashtun governments, particularly Iron Amir Abdurrahman (1880-1901).

Ethnic bigotry and oppression of out-group, non-Pashtuns, reached its maximum level during the Iron Amir. The divide-and-rule policy found its most extreme expression as the government employed Pashtun tribes-men to repress non-Pashtun resistance, their methods being the confiscation of land, looting and killing (Simonsen, 2004). In 1893 (Rasanayagam, 2005. p. 10), Abdur Rahman mobilized large groups of Durrani Pashtun nomads from the south to occupy large areas of pastureland in central Afghanistan belonging to Hazaras (Shahrani, 1986).

In order to establish a strong centralized state and keep so called sovereignty of the country, the Amir used both Islam and ethnicity as tools. For example, he relied on the Sunni school of Islam to suppress Hazarah Shiites. He also strongly relied on Pashtunwali, the tribal code of the Pashtuns, to take the control of non-Pashtun territories. In Pashto language, the meaning of Pashtunwali is "the way of the Pashtuns," and it is integral to Pashtun identity (Kakar, 2003). There are nine main principles of Pashtunwali code, such as Sabat (loyalty), Ghayrat (self honour), Namus (gender boundaries), Melmastia (hospitality), Badal (taking revenge), Istiqamat (trust in God), Imandari (righteousness), Nanawatai (giving asylum), and Turah (bravery). By adhering to Pashtunwali a Pashtun possesses honor (izzat); without honor s/he is no longer considered a Pashtun, and is not given the rights, protection, and support of the Pashtun community (Kakar, 2003). He favored Sunnis over Shiites and Pashtuns over Non-Pashtuns. The other discriminatory and oppressive policy of Amir was to give the pasture lands of the Hazaras in Hajarajat and Uzbeks and Tajiks in Turkistan and Qataghan to the Pashtun Kuchis (Shahrani, 1986). He also resettled tens of thousands of Pashtun tribesmen from the south in the strategic parts of Afghan Turkistan along the borders with Central Asian Khanates under czarist Russian control. By doing so, he laid the ground for the enforcement of century-

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long policies that were nothing but a crude form of internal colonialism run by the ruling clique in Afghanistan (Tapper 1973).

The same ethnic discriminatory policies and practices were followed in more or less the same way by the later Pashtun kings and Presidents. This system of state control by a single tribe or ethnic group lasted until the 1960s when a very small window of opportunity for democratic experimentation opened up as a result of constitutional changes between 1964 and 1973. It was during this short period in the entire history of the country that some freedom of press, language, and rudimentary forms of political activity were allowed. For example, King Zahir Shah had decided to allow political parties to operate (Suhrke, 2008).

As I discussed, after the establishment of Afghanistan, it had been dominated by Pashtuns before 1979, and this domination was reflected in government appointments and official histories, which tended to erase the contributions of non-Pashtun groups to the country. After 1978, some political rights were given to non-Pashtun ethnic groups. During the era of Marxist regime (1978-1992) some initiatives were undertaken by the Communist regime under Soviet patronage to win support of non-Pashtun ethnic groups. The Communist Pashtun regime made some so-called language, educational, and cultural reforms. For the first time, for instance, classroom materials in local languages like Uzbeki and Turkmeni were distributed by ministry of education into the non-Pashtun regions. In order to control the whole country, the communist regime hoped to tie some ethnic groups closer to the regime by raising them to the status of nationalities. For the first time in modern Afghanistan's political history, a member of Turkic ethnic group, Abdul Hakim Shara'i jauzjani, was appointed as Minister of Justice and Attorney General in 1978 (Adeney, 1980). In addition, some members of non-Pashtuns were appointed in the revolutionary council and cabinet. However, the regime's main policy was to dictate the philosophy of Communism to the Muslim society and in order to achieve that goal they used brutal force. As a result, like other oppressive regimes, the communist regime failed as well.

During and after that period, there were political parties. It is a fact that those parties were created in order to fight and remove the Soviet Union's troops, but in the last two decades they left their old ideas and chose ethnic ideology. Right now, the signs of ethnic identity are strongly visible within the political agendas of those parties, and they fight for the interest of their ethnic supporters. Actually, they did fight in order to gain more power and for the interest of their ethnicity rather than the interest of the country. Naturally, there were many factors behind the civil war. However, ethnicity was the main factor and there was no greater reason for the start of civil war other than the ethnic issue.

According to Nazif Shahrani (2002), they were the policies and practices of the Amirs, Kings and Presidents of Afghanistan that contributed to the ethnic divisions and politicization of tribes and ethnic communities. Ultimately, that ethnic polarization and ethnicization of politics led to three decades of war and agony. The rise of the Taliban constituted yet another serious step towards ethnicizing conflict in the country. The Taliban movement rose from the conservative heart of Pashtun land, Kandahar, and it remained completely dominated by Pashtuns. The aims of this extremist Pashtun group under Mulla Mohammed Omar, the self-proclaimed Commander of the Faithful, and it is strategy of brutality and terror were similar to those of the British-installed Iron Amir Abdurrahman. The similarities between the bloody events of the late 19th century under Iron King and Talibanized Afghanistan were the military conquest, re-subjugation of the self-governing non-Pashtun territories, and using the extremist views of interpretation of Islam as a justification of terrorizing the regime's assumed enemies into submission (Shahzad, 2004). The Taliban's brutality by using both ethnicity and radical views caused Hazaras, Uzbeks and Tajiks to join force and leave rivalry.

Although the Taliban movement is basically a religious movement, ethnic identity plays a prominent role within the movement and its policy. The ethnic exclusionary policies of the Taliban, who were primarily Pashtuns, continued this practice during their rule from 1996 to 2001 (Adeney, 2008). They ruled Afghanistan tyrannically with a crude mixture of theocratic

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intolerance, ethnocentrism, anarchy and brutality. Nigel Allen (2003) points out, "Contrary to popular belief, the Taliban was an ethnic movement, not a religious group." It is extremely hard to disapprove Allen's statement because twenty-six out of twenty-seven members of the Taliban government's leadership were Pashtuns. Many of them with a strong belief in Pashtun-wali code determined to bring the non-Pashtun ethnic groups under traditional Pashtun conservative rural and ethnocentric culture. For example, the Taliban and their regime's brutal policies of ethnic cleansing were directed against the Hazara, Uzbek, Tajik, and other populations in central, western, and northern Afghanistan. This was a brief explanation of history of ethnic politics till the post-2011 International Community backed government. Now, we attempt to examine the relationship between politics and ethnicity in the post-Taliban government and elections.

3.2 The Role of Ethnic Identity in Afghan Interim Government

As far as the role of ethnicity in the post-Taliban era is concerned, ethnicity plays a significant role in political institutions, policy making, and exclusively in elections. Post-Taliban governance and politics are organized by ethnicity. The tragic and shocking 9/11 terror attacks on American soil and the start of U.S. military action against the terrorist organizations, Al-Qaeda and the Taliban, injected new urgency into the search for a government that might replace the Taliban. Once the defeat of the Taliban was certain, a conference was organized in Bonn on 5 December 2001 to create the post-Taliban Afghanistan. The goal was to lay the groundwork for Afghanistan's future political processes and institutions of governance based on the commitment of the right of the people of Afghanistan to freely determine their own political future in accordance with the principles of Islam, democracy, pluralism and social justice (Johnson, 2006).

The Bonn Agreement called for establishment of an interim governing structure and set a timetable for a transition to a more broad based gender-sensitive, multi-ethnic and fully representative government. Through talks in Bonn sponsored by the United Nations, agreement

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was reached in December 2001 to establish a six-month interim government known as the Afghan Interim Authority (AIA). Hamid Karzai, an ethnic Pashtun from Kandahar province, southern Afghanistan, was elected as its Chairman (Johnson, 2006).

Karzai was selected as the president of the interim administration because his selection had several advantages from the United States' perspective. First, he was a member of Pashtun ethnic group, the traditional ruling ethnic group. Second, he did not have strong ties to any of the political exile factions or the powerful mujahedin factions. As such, he was a potentially unifying figure in Afghanistan's famously divisive political landscape. This fact also made him heavily dependent upon his external patrons and, presumably, cooperative. Third, his long-time residence in the United States made for easy cross-cultural communication with Washington (Suhrke, 2008).

As a matter of fact, some of the past discrimination against certain ethnic groups was abandoned in the long decade Karzai government. However, the centralized system failed to balance the power sharing among ethnic groups and deliver governance at the sub-national level. Rob Aitken (2007) points out that recent international interventions and peace processes have emphasized peace building and reconciliation, yet ethnic divisions do not seem to have been reduced in post-conflict situations. He argues, "Afghanistan has become increasingly ethnicized since the 2001 invasion" (Aitken, 2007).

The three most powerful ministries of this cabinet went to Panjshiri Tajiks of the Northern Alliance that controlled the militia in possession of Kabul since the Taliban's defeat. Younis Qanooni, who led the Northern Alliance's Bonn delegation, was selected Interior Minister. General Mohammad Fahim, Commander-in-Chief of the Northern Alliance, received the Defense Ministry, and Dr Abdullah Abdullah was selected as Foreign Secretary. The thirty-member interim cabinet included 11 Pashtuns, eight Tajiks, five Shi'a Hazara and three Uzbeks, with the remainder, three, drawn from other minorities. More than 1,500 delegates to the emergency loya jirga, a deliberative meeting of tribal notables traditionally called by the King or

President, that elected Karzai as transitional president in June 2002 were themselves chosen through UN-organized elections in eight electoral zones (Shahrani, 2004). By an overwhelming margin, the *loya jirga* selected Karzai to lead Afghanistan until national elections to be held June, 2004 (Katzman, 2004). Pashtuns were unhappy with situation of giving up three key ministries to non-Pashtun groups, so expected this imbalance to be corrected in the Emergency Loya Jirga (which was to select the Transitional Administration). Actually, Pashtuns had voiced their discontent about the conduct of the Bonn political process even before the Loya Jirga. Their grievances were aggravated by the growing influence of non-Pashtun armed factions during the Interim Administration (Riphenburg, 2005).

Karzai was expected to shift the balance of power back to Pashtuns and give the former king, Zahir shah, a prominent national role. It was no surprise that Harmid Karzai was selected as Transitional President at the Emergency Loya Jirga of June 2002. Karzai increased Pashtun representation in his new Transition Administration. Pashtun membership increased from the eleven members in the Interim Administration to sixteen members while the remaining ethnic groups stayed constant relative to their total representation in the Transition Administration (Johnson, 2006). This example provides strong evidence for the ethnicization of administrative institutions in Afghanistan. By appointing five more Pashtuns, Karzai increased the number of Pashtun ministries. In contrast, he decreased the numbers of non-Pashtun ministers. This makeup of the cabinet, in favor of Pashtuns, broadened the gap between the non-Pashtuns and Pashtuns. Ironically, some Pashtun elites were still dissatisfied. So, it allowed for the perception to develop in their minds that the President had betrayed his ethnic Pashtuns (Riphenburg, 2005). It shows that this single ethnic group always wants to dominate the political and power scene of the country. Additionally, it demonstrates how tribal mentality is pervasive in Afghanistan.

Ethnic favoritism and discrimination are strongly visible in administrative on ministries and local governance. For example, most appointments in the Ministry of Defense in 2002 were

biased toward a single ethnic group, the Tajik. Former defense minister and current vice-president, Marshal Qasim is a member of Tajik ethnic group. During his ministry, there were thirty-eight generals who were chosen by Fahim to constitute general staff of Afghan Army and thirty-seven of them were from the Tajik ethnicity and one was Uzbek (Giustozzi, 2003). The case is not different in other ministries. In order to balance power sharing among ethnic groups, despite the over-representation of some ethnicities, the ministries are distributed in proportion to each ethnic group. However, each individual ministry uses the ethnic cards. For example, when Dr. Spenta, a Tajik, was the head of Foreign Affair, most of the members of this ministry were from the Tajik ethnic group. Now, Zalmay Rasool, a Pashtun, leads it and he Pashtunized the ministry. In Afghanistan all politicians are seriously affected by tribal mentality.

3.3 Electoral System of the Country and Ethnic Manipulation in Elections

Elections or electoral systems are powerful instruments for shaping the content and practice of politics in Afghanistan because the country has a diverse ethnicity. For instance, Donald Horowitz (1991), argues, "the electoral system is by far the most powerful lever of constitutional engineering for accommodation and harmony in severely divided societies, as indeed it is a powerful tool for many other purposes" (Horowitz, 1991. P. 163). According to the Bonn Accords, free and fair elections were to be held no longer than two years from the date of the convening of the Emergency Loya Jirga. Elections for the Afghan Presidency, National Assembly and Provincial Councils, were all to be held concurrently in the spring of 2004 (Johnson, 2006).

The electoral system for Afghan presidential election is a majoritarian voting system. According to this system, if one candidate gets the majority of votes, for example, 50% plus 1%, then he or she will be elected as the president of Afghanistan. This system does not solve the ethnic problem of Afghanistan; instead, it enhances the problem. For example, in a multiethnic country like Afghanistan a Pashtun candidate can win the elections by manipulating ethnic identity. Someone may ask; what is the problem when a person wins the elections with gaining

the majority of votes? The answer would be that this voting system will turn to the oppression of majority over the minority; the oppression of Pashtuns to non-Pashtuns. I will discuss late how Hamid Karzai won two terms of presidency via this voting system and became as an elected Pashtun King in Afghanistan.

Afghanistan's parliamentary electoral system is Single Non-Transferrable Vote (SNTV) system. This electoral system favors independent candidates rather than political parties (Adeney, 2008). According to the majority of scholars, this system does not fit in a severely divided country like Afghanistan (Johnson, 2006; Shurke, 2008). People vote for individual candidates, not the political parties. Because of the high politicization of the elections, ethnic groups are accepted as political parties both for the candidates and voters. The main reason for the ethnicization of the elections is that they produce losers because the country is made up many ethnic groups. As an instrument to foster unity in a plural society of Afghanistan, the SNTV is useless. For this purpose, a party-based proportional representation system would have been more suitable (Shuhrke, 2008). In addition, they may lead to the permanent exclusion of the candidates from power if institutional mechanisms for distributing and dissolving power are not established at the same time.

3.3.1 Presidential Elections

The current constitution of Afghanistan sets up a presidential system, with an elected president and a separately elected parliament. According to the constitution, the president of the country is directly elected by the people. Article sixty one of Afghan constitution states, "The President is elected by receiving more than 50% of the votes. If none of the candidates succeeds to receive more than 50% of the votes in the first round, a run-off election shall be held within two weeks" (Government of Afghanistan, *The Constitution of Afghanistan 2004*). However, the mentioned Article points out that in the second round of elections, only two candidates who have received the highest number of votes in the first round can compete. The elected President serves a five year term, with no more than two terms (Article 62).

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On 9 October 2004, the presidential election took place with eighteen eligible candidates on the Afghan presidential ballot. Although both presidential and parliamentary elections were scheduled to be held in June, they were postponed. One of the main reasons for this postponement was insecurity in some areas of the south and east where nearly all inhabitants are from Pashtun ethnic group. Among the original eighteen approved candidates for president, there were eight Pashtun, six Tajik, two Uzbek and one Hazara. The ethnic composition of the candidates reflects the existing political cleavages within the Afghan society. Hamid Karzai was the most powerful and internationally favored candidate of the presidential election. Karzai's main opponents were Tajik Yunus Qanooni, Hazara Mohammed Mohaqiq and Uzbek Abdul Rashid Dostum.

With some exceptions, the results of the Afghan presidential election primarily reflect long-standing ethnic and regional divisions in Afghanistan. The majority of Pashtuns voted for Hamid Karzai, Tajiks for Yonous Qanuni, Uzbeks and the majority of Turkmens for General Abdul Rashid Dostum, and Hazaras for Mohammad Mohaqiq. As an Afghan voter and observer of the election, I can emphasize that no candidate received significant support outside of their particular ethno-linguistic group. For example, Karzai received the most votes in the Pashtun east and south as well as a firm majority in the multi-ethnic west urban centers, including Kabul. He received 55.4% of the vote. Karzai also performed well among the Pashtun refugee population especially in Pakistan. Karzai's former minister of education, Younous Qanooni, received 16.3%. Third-place finisher Haji Mohammad Mohaqiq who received 11.7% led in two Hazara-dominated provinces and finished a narrow second among Afghan refugees in Iran, while the Uzbek General Abdul Rashid Dostum by receiving 10.0 % finished fourth and led in four provinces, especially the north-central Uzbek part of the country (Goodson, 2005).

Because Afghanistan does not have a majority ethnic group, all candidates are invariably forced to reach out to other communities to be elected rather than relying exclusively on their own community (Adeney, 2008). They rightly assumed that at least some voting takes

place along ethnic lines. The presidential electoral system placed higher hurdles in the path of non-Pashtun candidates. It was hard for a non-Pashtun nominee to win the election both because of low population of their ethnic groups and reaching out to other ethnicities. However, a Pashtun candidate had more chance to win the election because a Pashtun candidate would only have to reach out to one other ethnic group for support to be elected, whereas a non-Pashtun would have to reach out to more than one ethnic group. For this reason, by appointing two vice presidents for Tajik and Hazara as his running candidate, Pashtun Karzai reached other groups. Moreover, the candidates received more votes in regions of ethnic groups. For example, Qanuni received 95 percent of the votes in his native Panjshir province, yet got less than anticipated of the Tajik vote in other provinces. Other leading candidates, Abdul Rashid Dostum and Hajji Muhammad Muhaqqiq received their largest number of votes from Uzbek and Hazara voters, respectively (Riphenburg, 2007). If I give another example, in Afghanistan's Panjshir Province, runner-up Yoonus Qanooni received 95.0% of the vote. In Paktia Province, incumbent Hamid Karzai received 95.9% (Dubow, 2009).

External power also had a big influence on the elections in favor of Pashtun Hamid Karzai. The International Community especially the United State thought that Karzai would be the best candidate to control and unite the country. For this reason, he was the only candidate who enjoyed access to US military aircraft for campaign travel as well as round-the-clock protection by a private US security firm. The Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit (AREU) report also found ambient suspicion that the US had allocated $30 million for the registration of Afghan refugees in Pakistan, who are primarily Pashtun, to enhance Karzai's chances for reelection. The appearance of favoritism in the ethnically charged climate of Afghan politics makes it seem that the goal of the campaign is to elect a president at any cost, especially in the eyes of the often ignored and abused non-Pashtun ethnic groups (Shahrani, 2004).

Tajiks, Uzbeks, and Hazaras opposed to the adoption of a strong presidency, fearing it would exclude them from power. Because Pashtuns are not a majority of the population, all

candidates are invariably forced to reach out to other communities to be elected rather than relying exclusively on their own community, assuming that at least some voting takes place along ethnic lines (Adeney, 2008). This reality provided a good opportunity for the creation of an informal multiethnic ticket for Karzai to become an elected president. By creating two vice presidents, Karzai played a successful ethnic card in both of the presidential elections. In the first presidential elections of 2004, for example, Karzai nominated a Tajik (Ahmad Zia Masood) and a Shia Hazara Karim Khalili as his running mates. As a result, both with international and ethnic favoritism Hamid Karzai won the elections of 2004. For the second presidential election, Karzai's running mates were Tajik General Fahim Qasim and Hazara Karim Khalili.

When we look at the second presidential election in 2009, we can observe the previous ethnic games as well. During the second presidential elections, there were 32 candidates from different ethnic groups mostly from Pashtuns and Tajiks excluding Uzbeks. Dustom and Mohaqeq were both Karzai's rivals in the 2004 elections and after Karzai's victory. However, they vowed to support Karzai and in return, they wanted Karzai to give five ministerial posts each for Uzbeks and Hazaras if he was reelected. Again the winner of the second presidential elections was Hamid Karzai. This time he nominated another influential Tajik, Qasim Fahim, the leader of Northern Alliance after the death of Masood and former defense minister, and the same Hazara Kharim Khalili. He nominated them in order to gain more Tajik and Hazara votes, and the plan was successful. However, when a Tajik voted for Karzai, it meant that she or he preferred a Tajik vice-president and a Pushtun president to a Tajik. Also a Tajik voted for Pashtun Karzai with a Tajik vice-president because he or she saw little chance for a Tajik to win. Maybe for some Tajik voters, ethnicity was not an important enough factor to determine their vote. I can say the same thing for a Hazara voter because there was a vice-president nominee from the Hazara as well.

3.3.2 Parliamentary Elections

Afghanistan held its first post-Taliban parliamentary elections in 2005 and the second one in 2010. Under the new electoral law that was adopted in 2004 a 249-seat lower house (i.e., the Parliament also known as the Wolesi Jirga) was chosen by direct election. The electoral law of Afghanistan adopted the Single Non-Transferable Vote (SNTV) system for parliamentary elections. This system allows voters to cast a single vote for individual candidates, not political parties (Ghadiri, 2010). Thus, there were no party lists and no party identification nor affiliation of candidates on the ballot. Each province has been granted seats in parliament in proportion to its estimated population. Each voter can only vote for one candidate, and the top vote-getters win the seats. The current electoral system, Single Non-Transferable Vote, is against the nature of multiethnic Afghan state. For this reason, Afghan-international Joint Electoral Management Body advised the government not to adopt the system. Furthermore, Brussels-based International Crisis Group warned Afghan government that the SNTV system does not bring democracy in the country. Yet Karzai resisted, and after a year-long debate pushed the SNTV through a final Cabinet decision in February 2005 (Suhrke, 2008). This shows that Karzai and some of his Pashtun bureaucrats may have made an ethnic calculation. The Pashtun elites may have thought to mobilize the Pashtun votes in the Parliament.

By the electoral law, female candidates are guaranteed a number of reserved seats. The lower house is mandated to be at least 28% female (68 persons) an average of two for each of the 34 provinces (Katzman, 2012). In a country like Afghanistan where most of its people rely on agriculture, every community has nomad groups called Kuchi. However, there are quotas of reserved seats for the Pashtun Kuchis (nomads), not for non-Pashtun ethnic groups. There is not any restriction in Afghan electoral law on the educational qualification of the candidates. Therefore, there are hundreds of candidates with low or almost zero qualifications running for Parliament.

Ethnic identity plays a significant role in parliamentary elections, within the parliament after elections, and in presidential elections in Afghanistan. Different ethnic groups and ethnic political leaders spend their efforts in order to gain more seats in the Afghan parliament. For example, in 2005 parliamentary election, Karzai, a Pashtun President demanded more seats for his ethnic and tribal block in the parliament (Khairy, 2010). Abdullah Abdullah, runner-up in last year's presidential race, recently accused the president of using his allies to lavishly fund loyal candidates in order to tame parliament (Burch, 2010). Although candidates stand as individuals, there are blocs in parliament based on ethnicity. The new formed parliament is divided along ethnic lines. The results of parliamentary elections indicates that from 249 seats Pashtuns won 118 seats, Tajiks 53 seats, Hazaras 30 seats, Uzbeks 20 seats, and other minor groups won 28 seats (Adeney, 2008). Both because of electoral system, SNTV, and political subjectivity of distributing seats based on the estimated population of each province, the ultimate results of parliament do not reflect the political achievement of ethnic groups. For example, due to the electoral system, a person from Kabul by getting 2000 votes can be elected while another person from Faryab who gets 3000 votes cannot go to the parliament. Also, it is up to the central government's will to designate how many seats for each province. Because of the unknown demography of each province and the politicization of elections, the government might assign more seats for a province with a smaller population and fewer seats for a province with a larger population.

The second parliamentary elections were held in 2010, immediately after the controversial 2009 presidential election that was mostly charged with fraud and cheating. According to the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (2010), the elections were competitive with 2,506 candidates competing for 249 seats split proportionally among the 34 provinces, thus offering a large and genuine choice to voters. The parliament became the safe house for two kinds of candidates; people who have played the ethnic card for their own interests and warlords as well as drug lords. It is also the place for the loser of presidential

candidates from non-Pashtun ethnic groups against Hamid Karzai. For example, Tajik Qanuni and Hazara Mohaqiq, the losers of 2004 presidential elections, nominated themselves in parliamentary election. By looking at both presidential and parliamentary elections, it can be stated that all votes reflect the deep ethnic polarization of the country.

Ethnic tensions over electing a house speaker kept busy the parliament for 5 months. Although the parliament officially opened, both an ethnically and ideologically divided parliament could not select a speaker. There were always two candidates; one candidate from Pashtuns and one from Tajik, and no one could gain the required votes, so the parliament remained without an elected speaker for a long time. Finally, all the members agreed that a third person from non-Pashtun and non-Tajik should be chosen, so did they. For the first time, an Uzbek became the speaker of Afghan parliament.

To conclude, ethnicity has played a fundamental role in the political history of Afghanistan. Ethnic conflicts after the withdrawal of Soviet Union have led the country into more destruction. Post-Taliban Afghanistan has become more ethnicized. Both in presidential and parliamentary elections, candidates used ideological, religious, and particularly ethnic issue to be elected. People have also voted along ethnic lines. There is no doubt that holding elections is a democratic exercise that has to happen. What, however, matters the most in the case of Afghanistan is that holding elections does not make Afghanistan a democracy. Afghanistan is a country where civil society is so weak and ethnic identity of a politician is more important than his or her skill and political ability. The country needs permanent political reforms especially regarding to the electoral system. The majoritarian voting system for presidential elections does not work in multinational Afghanistan. This system helps a single ethnic group to maintain its domination via elections. Even though it may come through elections, a strong centralized government is not an appropriate form in the country. The electoral system of the country needs to be changed. Afghanistan should adopt a list-based proportional representation (list-PR) system rather than a single nontransferable vote (SNTV). I believe that a list-based proportional

representation system will contribute to the de-ethnicization of elections. It also may limit the

role that political parties play. The following chapter seeks to find out a solution for the problem

of ethnic politics in Afghanistan.

CHAPTER 4

THE SOLUTION

In the current chapter of the thesis, I focus on the comparative aspects of democracy; such as federalism and parliamentary democracy in deeply divided Afghanistan. In this section of my thesis, I will attempt to find a solution for the problem of ethnicization of politics in Afghanistan by focusing on how democracy in various forms may contribute to the long-term stability of Afghanistan. As I discussed earlier, Afghanistan is the homeland of many distinct ethnic groups. Therefore, some of the most important ways in which democracies have responded to the demands of different ethnic groups in a multiethnic country, in this case Afghanistan, will be discussed. The current system is a presidential one in which the president will be elected by the fair and free elections. This is one aspect of democratic governance system. There are other forms of government, such as parliamentary democracy and federalism. I discuss these separately to see which one of them might be more effective in ethnically divided Afghanistan. In a multiethnic and multicultural country like Afghanistan, one of the major mechanisms for accommodating cultural differences and balancing competing demands is the protection of political and civil rights of individuals of every ethnic group.

Before starting to discuss the topic, it is required to provide some information about the state form of present-day Afghanistan. The current state form in Afghanistan is a unitary one. Afghanistan experienced feudalism (1500-1747), monarchism (1747-1800), "buffer state" monarchy (1880-1964), authoritarian presidentialism (1964-1978), communism (1978-1992), Mujahidanism (1992-1996), radicalism (1996-2001), and unitary presidentialism (2001-present). All of them miserably failed (Shahrani, 1986. P. 25) and are prone to fail because none of the state forms was inclusive nor did they guarantee social justice and democracy. Shahrani (2001) summarizes their history as, "The painful lesson of Afghanistan's history has been that strong

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centralized government in any form will only lead to hegemony by one group, whether ethnic, linguistic, or religious, and abuse by the ruling group at the expense of justice for all citizens of Afghanistan" (p. 2).

"Societies", as Michel Nicolas (2000) points out, "can only develop and blossom if they have minimalist governmental control over their destiny" (p. 196). In Afghanistan, the overall destiny of ethnic groups, exclusively the non-Pashtuns, were under the control of tribal and single-person centered governments. There is a lack and a deficit of political recognition for ethnic groups. In a multiethnic state there are at least three forms of political recognition: self-government rights, polyethnic rights, and representation rights (Kymlicka, 1995. P. 27). The main institutional choices arising from these categories relevant to Afghanistan concerned whether the country should become a federation or a unitary state, whether it should be a presidential or parliamentary democracy, and whether consociational forms of power sharing in elected and non-elected institutions of the state should be adopted (Adeney, 2008).

According to Kymlicka's classification of different types of political recognition, self-governing rights are closely equated with regional autonomy. Regional autonomy is often realized through the federal form of government. Thus, a federal model can be one mechanism of granting autonomy to regionally concentrated ethnic groups in Afghanistan and thus admitting self-governing rights. When the oppressive regime of the Taliban was gone, the most controversial topic was the type of government. The Pashtun elites strongly demanded the establishment of a strong centralized government, but the non-Pashtuns opposed it. A president almost inevitably belongs to one ethnic group, and hence presidential systems are particularly inimical to ethnic power sharing (Lijphart, 1991).

Will Kymlicka's second form of recognition is Representation rights. This form is similar to elements of Arend Lijphart's (1985) consociationalism. Lijphart attempts to show how consociational democracy could be an alternative to majoritarian democracy in divided societies. "Consociational democracy can be defined in terms of two primary attributes-grand

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coalitions and segmental autonomy-and two secondary characteristics-proportionality and minority veto", says Lijphart (1985). According to Him, "grand coalition", also called power sharing, means that the political leaders of all of the significant segments of a plural (deeply divided) society govern the country jointly. Afghanistan needs a representative process that would reflect the diversity of the country and include all members of different groups. The issues of representation were at the forefront of debates both before and after constitution making process.

The third form of recognition is polyethnic rights, which are intended to help ethnic groups and religious minorities to express their cultural particularity (Kymlicka, 1995. P. 31). Adeney (2008) argues that polyethnic rights are the weakest form of recognition and are not dependent on a community being territorially concentrated. Although the Afghan Constitution rejected both self-governing rights and representation rights, it made a prominent change in the recognition of polyethnic rights. For the first time, for example, beside Dari and Pashtu, it recognized the languages like Uzbeki, Turkmeni, Pashaie and other languages. However, these languages are not the official languages of the state. They are official languages in areas where they are spoken. Also, Article 16 of the constitution states that the state shall design and apply effective programs to foster and develop all languages of Afghanistan (Government of Afghanistan, *The Constitution of Afghanistan 2004).*

Only limited recognition of languages has not adequately responded to the sheer need for ethnic representation in power-sharing. For this reason, ethnicity has become more prominent in the country's politics today than any time before. What is the way out of this situation? How can we reverse the ethnicization of politics? Based on the explanation of ethnic politics, its history, and governance system of Afghanistan, I argue that a strong centralized presidential system does not work in an ethnically divided society like Afghanistan. The presidential system with some limited polyethnic recognitions does not work because in this

system all of the political power and decisions are under the control of one single person or a tribe.

As stated, the current state of Afghanistan is a strong centralized unitary state that is defined in the post-Taliban era constitution of 2004. The constitution, by approving a unitary form of government, laid dead all expectations and speculation about federalism. In Article one of the current constitution it is stated, "Afghanistan is an Islamic Republic, independent, unitary and indivisible state" (Constitution of Afghanistan, 2004). As stated, the form of state in Afghanistan is a unitary one in which all political authority is vested in the central government. According to the current constitution, "The President is the head of state of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, executing his authorities in the executive, legislative and judiciary fields in accordance with the provisions of this Constitution" (Government of Afghanistan, *The Constitution of Afghanistan 2004.* Article Sixty). As it is seen, executive, judiciary and legislative powers of the state under the control of one single person, the president. Despite of Afghanistan's ethnic and cultural diversities and painful experience of strong centralized government, the principle of strict centralism is followed. Although there was strong opposition toward the establishment of a unitary state and many supported a federal system that would be more suited to the need of severely divided Afghan society, the members of constitution commission who were appointed by the president, Hamid Karzai, central government rejected outright the idea of a federal state. As it was decided in the Bonn Agreement, Afghanistan needed a new constitution, so Karzai invited delegates from different group in Constitutional Loya Jirga to make a constitute.

Historically, in Afghanistan, the King was the highest source of authority within the state's political structures. Therefore, he imposed his authority over the judiciary and legislative powers. When we compare this historical pattern of authority with the new one, there is no difference between the kings and the elected president in practice. The only difference is in names. For example, Zahir Shah and other monarch were called Padishah (King) and the

recent president, Karzai is called Rais Jumhur (President). Like the old monarchies and the

Taliban, Hamid Karzai's regime share the same myth first fabricated by British India that the

Pashtuns have the only right to rule in Afghanistan. This myth has brought the country to the

brink of total disaster. If it is not shattered, it will continue to threaten the future viability of a

peaceful and stable Afghanistan. Therefore, as Professor Shahrani (2001) rightly pointed out

that the priority should be given to the question of how to run Afghanistan not who will run it.

Traditionally, the central government ruled the whole of the country as a single unit despite the

fact that the country has been divided into development regions, zones, and provinces. From

the beginning to the present, they all are under the sole authority of the central government. For

this reason, I try to look at alternatives to the unitary state model.

4.1 Comparative Aspects of Democracy in Ethnically Divided Afghanistan

Even the president comes by elections; in the case of Afghanistan, the election

becomes an oppression of majority over minority. For this reason, in order to have a permanent

solution, it is the best to have a discussion on governance options for Afghanistan. The systems

of parliamentary democracy and federalism seem to be more appropriate than the presidential

system for the country. Therefore, it is time to start looking at what is actually possible in

Afghanistan and work toward the most acceptable options. It is a fact that democratic

mechanisms for the creation of a most suitable state form in a multiethnic society may vary from

one society to another. In the case of Afghan society, according to us, the option is a

parliamentary system or a federal one. Despite the fact that establishing one of the two systems

would be beneficial for all Afghans, convincing the dominant group will not be an easy task. The

establishment of a federal system has many obstacles because there are non-Pashtun political

entities who disagree with it. For example, Dr. Abdullah Abdullah, Karzai's main opposite,

disapproves the federal system; instead he favors the parliamentary system. Convincing the

Pashtuns to accept a parliamentary model will not be as difficult as convincing them to accept

federalism. First, Afghanistan had a parliamentary system under monarchy of King Zahir Shah,

and Mohammed Dovoud, who then established the republicanism, was the prime minister. More importantly, the International Community and particularly the United States can easy convince the Pashtuns both in favor of federalism and parliamentarianism.

4.1.1 Parliamentary Democracy

The first or perhaps the most preferable option that has been recommended as one way of rebuilding the multiethnic state of Afghanistan is parliamentary democracy. This form of government is related to the representation rights that I discussed earlier. Arend Lijphart (2004) points out, "In countries with deep ethnic and other cleavages, the choice should be based on the different systems' relative potential for power sharing in the executive. As the cabinet in a parliamentary system is a collegial decision-making body—as opposed to the presidential one-person executive with a purely advisory cabinet—it offers the optimal setting for forming a broad power-sharing executive" (p. 101). In parliamentary systems, the prime minister usually serves only as head of government, while a constitutional monarch or a mainly ceremonial president occupies the position of head of state (Lijphart, 2004). As I discussed, politicization of ethnicity is an old issue and in a sense a structural feature of politics in Afghanistan. However, the parliamentary issue seems to reduce the ethnic tensions and embrace both Pashtun and non-Pashtun peoples. Therefore, three years after the collapse of the Taliban, opposition groups, mostly non-Pashtuns and some ex-Communists, under the leadership of Dr. Abdullah Abdullah managed to form what they called a United National Front. One of their main demands was a constitutional amendment to build a parliamentary system.

During the post-Taliban constitution-making process, the first draft accepted the parliamentary system and wanted a prime minister to be selected by parliament. However, the later draft offered a prime minister appointed by the president, and after that the draft was taken from the commission and secretly changed. After a couple of months, however, when the document was made public, the position of the prime minister had been eliminated altogether. Instead, two vice-presidents selected by the president were added to the constitution. Of

course, the decision makers and inventers of creating two vice-presidents did not randomly come up with that idea. The invention was so well-planned for the long term of Pashtun domination via elections. For example, we saw in chapter three that this was how president Karzai, a Pashtun, won the elections (i.e., by selecting two non-Pashtun vice-presidents as his election mates). Since Afghanistan does not have a majority ethnic group and the Pashtuns by estimation constitute 32%-42% of the population, a Pashtun presidential candidate must reach out to other ethnic groups. Keeping in his mind this reality, Karzai selected two influential individuals one from the Tajiks and one from the Hazaras and this policy helped Karzai to be elected as president.

Once again in recent days the debates both over parliamentary system and decentralization of Afghanistan have reached their peak. Three prominent non-Pashtun leaders-Tajik Ahmad Zia Masoud, Hazarah Haji Mohammed Mohaqqiq and Uzbek Abdul Rashid Dostum- came together and established the Nation Front of Afghanistan (NFA) in late 2011. They signed a joint declaration and held a conference with participation of four U.S. Congressmen in Berlin, Germany. The National Front "calls for a national dialogue on a revised Constitution to correct the inherent flaws in the present power structure by decentralizing the political system, making it more compatible with the diverse political, social and cultural nature of Afghanistan. The Afghan people deserve and need a parliamentary form of democracy instead of a personality-centered Presidential system" (Setmayer, 2012, P. 2). It strongly opposes a process that calls the Taliban to join in the post-American government of Afghanistan. Not only does this group oppose it, but all non-Pashtun ethnic groups do as well because they rightly fear that when the Taliban comes to power, by manipulating radical views of Islam and Pashtunwali code, they will oppress the non-Pashtuns. In addition, the strongest opposition comes from women's organizations because the Taliban ban women from school, politics and every aspect of life. The National Front also demands a change in the Electoral System from a Single Non Transferable Vote System to a nationally accepted system of the Proportional Representation system with equal

opportunities for both independent candidates and political parties. It is the first time that prominent politicians from the United States showed their support in establishment of a federal government in Afghanistan. This shows the failure of the U.S. backed central government or at least its failure after the withdrawal of the International Community. Furthermore, it also denotes that the international community reached a point that there are other prominent ethnic groups other than Pashtuns and they also have the right in sharing power in Kabul. Before there was not enough information about non-Pashtun ethnic groups and their voice had not been heard.

I argue that parliamentary democracy with proportional representation is the best solution for the current ethno-political crisis of Afghanistan. Why is parliamentary democracy one of the best solutions? In a strong centralized presidential system in a divided Afghan society, any candidate who gets the majority (i.e. 50% plus 1) will be declared the winner. As I discussed in chapter three, keeping in mind the ethnic problem of the country where the candidates manipulate the issue of ethnic identity to gain more votes and most of the people vote along ethnic lines, serious problems and questions arise. Although post-Taliban Afghanistan experienced so called democratic and fair elections, the problem of ethnic discrimination in political institutions, appointing governors, and educational facilities are strongly visible.

Contrary to the strong centralized government, a parliamentary democracy in Afghanistan seems to be more effective, representative, and inclusive. It is a better model because each ethnic group's vote will be counted and all ethnic groups will have their own representatives in parliament according to their group size. Moreover, in a parliamentary form of government, executive power is part of legislative power and it makes the government more representative and more accountable. The parliamentary system of governance may contribute to the political party culture. Currently, there are more than one hundred registered political parties, but the function of the party system is so weak in the country. A parliamentary system will make political parties more functional. Another advantage of the parliamentary system in Afghanistan would be that there would be no need for presidential elections. Reducing elections, thus avoiding

extra spending, significantly contributes to the economy of a war-torn and poor country like Afghanistan.

4.1.2 Establishing Federal Government

Another form of democratic governing that would be a better option for Afghanistan is federalism. This thesis argues that the formation of a broad-based federal structure that reflects the ethnic composition of Afghan society as a whole is one of best options to solve the crisis of politicization of ethnicity. There are various definitions of federalism. For example, Elazar (1987.) defines federalism as "It combines self-rule and shared rule and constitutionally allocates power to the general and the constituent-governing bodies" (P. 12). According to Lijphart (1985), the primary federal characteristic is a guaranteed division of power between central and regional governments. A federal system obviously divides powers between the central government and regional subunits, in the case of Afghanistan, such as provinces or a set of provinces. That is why, the distribution of power is the essence of a federal system and it determines the form of federation. Donald Horowitz (1993) highlights federalism as a means of managing ethnic conflicts.

The concepts of federalism and decentralization are often assumed to be complementary or even interchangeable (Rodden, 2004). In addition, these two concepts are used as synonyms in the context of Afghanistan, so I use them as equivalent terms. According to Nazif Shahrani (2001), Afghanistan needs to create a loosely structured federal government that is decentralized and adapted to the local and national conditions in post-Taliban Afghanistan. In a country that is ethnically, linguistically and culturally diverse, "federalism seems to offer a constitutional mechanism that not only tolerates but can also promote diversity" (Fleiner, 2003, p. 48). According to my view, a federal system not only limits state power, but it also enables the distinct ethnic groups including regional minorities to participate in government.

After the collapse of the Taliban regime, there has been much talk of the creation of a federal system for Afghanistan, especially among the non-Pashtun political leaders and regional

anti-Taliban commanders. There was even talk of a canton-based government system, similar to Switzerland, to be emulated by Afghanistan. In fact, Karzai himself has approached the Swiss government for consultation (Tarzi, 2003). The initial Swiss reaction was that a federal system would not work for Afghanistan until the country establishes stability, whereby the center can give power to the periphery or a national dialogue is held between the center and the periphery on an agenda for a unified federal state (Tarzi, 2003). Both during the Bonn Agreement and later on, exclusively during the constitution making process, some leaders proposed to establish a federal system or decentralization rather than a unitary one.

As I pointed out earlier, during the constitutional draft of 2004, there were so many controversial issues, but one of them was viewed as the most critical and debatable issues. It was adopting a form of governance for post-Taliban Afghanistan. As today, there were hot debates on whether the form of the post-Taliban government should be a purely presidential or a mixed structure having a prime minister. Obviously, the debate of this issue was so quickly cast in ethnic terms like Tajiks, Uzbeks, Hazaras, Turkmens, and Qizilbashs, and the non-Pashtun ethnic groups were most outspoken in opposite of a purely presidential form of state. They were seriously outspoken in favor of establishing a federal system or maintaining the position of a prime minister.

At the beginning there was only one party leader, Latif Pedram, A Tajik, who completely advocated for the establishment of federal system in Afghanistan. Pedram is a current member of parliament and the leader of National Congress Party of Afghanistan. His main argument is that the only cure for Afghanistan is federalism. Due to his strong demand for federalism and decentralization of Afghanistan, some Pashtun elites, especially the members of "Afghan Millat", a Pashtun nationalist political party, called Pedram "National Traitor." One of the important ethno-political groups within Afghanistan pressing the Constitutional Commission not to accept a unitary system in the country was the Junbish Party of General Abdul Rashid Dostum. Dostum is the leader of the majority Uzbeks who emerged as a military commander during

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President Dr. Nacibullah and later on played the most significant role for the collapse of the Communist regime in Afghanistan. The Junbish Party recommended a new national state by the name of "United Republic of Afghanistan", which divides Afghanistan into multi-province states. Based on the recommendation, each state would have and elected a governor and also determine its own budget. Beside the Junbish Ismail Khan a Tajik leader and Haji Mohammad Mohaqiq, the leader of the Hazara Party, Hizb-I Wahdat, were the strong supporters of federalism.

Opinions among the scholars were sharply divided. David Cameron (2001), for example, pointed out that "Afghanistan looks like a perfect candidate for federalism" (P. 3) He explains the reason to his points, "Much in its history, geography and social composition suggests that the introduction of a federal form of government might be part of the cure for the country's ills, once the Taliban is removed from power and the moment has come for a new constitution" (p. 3). However, he warned about the exact configuration of federalism. Cameron continues, "Federalism may provide helpful tools for managing the political and ethno-linguistic complexities of a post-conflict Afghanistan" (Cameron, 2001, P. 4). On the other hand, Omar Zakhilwal (2001), a Pashtun scholar, argued that federalism in Afghanistan would be "a recipe for disintegration" (p. 11).

Since federalism is one the best factors amongst others in Afghanistan, according to us, a question comes to mind how to divide the country in federal units. The history of federalism suggests that federal systems are likely to work where there are a reasonably large number of federal units with no single one which can dominate, federal boundaries which do not coincide with communal divisions and a party system which produces linkages across the boundaries of member states (Aitken, 2007). Where boundaries are drawn to coincide with ethnic, linguistic or religious groups there is a much greater likelihood that communalism will escalate into conflicts between federal units (Aitken, 2007).

Even if the federal system is the best option for Afghanistan; it will not do simply to emulate the tradition of federal systems in the West. Federalism in the West discourse has been traditionally well formulated within the framework of center-state relations. However, in the case of Afghanistan, it is profoundly needed to make a departure and view the federal system as a project of both creating territorial and non-territorial subunits. Some politicians and advocates of federalism claim that it is the best to divide Afghanistan into four regional federal authorities and some say seven. So, what are these new emerging political regions?

People who suggest creating four regional subunits state that Afghanistan consists of four major ethno-geographical areas called Semt (Smith, 2001). The first geographic area is Southern and Eastern Afghanistan including Kabul, the capital city. This area is inhabited by Pashtun and it has close political, socio-economic and linguistic ties with Pakistan in general and North-West Pashtun provinces of Pakistan. Northeast is the second regional territory and this is where overwhelmingly Tajiks live. This area is located at the border with Tajikistan and it has had close relations with it. The third area is the Western part of Afghanistan, which is populated by Dari-speaking Hazaras and Tajiks. This area is at the border of Iran and historically has religious, economic and cultural ties with that country. The final area is Northern Afghanistan, which is called Turkistan. It is home for Turkic peoples including Uzbeks and Turkmens and it has borders with Turkic central Asian countries like Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan. This decentralization proposal has one main problem, which is related to the Hazarah ethnic group. Besides the fact that Hazarah is a distinct ethnic group, an overwhelming majority of Hazarah follows the Shiite sect of Islam. For this reason, this issue is very fragile and needs to be established very carefully. Nevertheless, implementing this proposal and dividing the county into four categories would be relatively easy because peoples are familiar with four regional zones; North, South, East, and West. They are called as "Safahat Chahargana-e Afghanistan.

According to the second proposal, Afghanistan would be divided into seven regions (Allen, 2003). The first region is in the West with Herat city as its capital. The second autonomous region would be located in the North and would include Mazar-i Sharif as the capital. Third region encompasses Harajat, with a capital in Bamiyan. The fourth area would be in the Northeast, designating Faizabad, Badakhshan as its capital. The fifth region would be in central Afghanistan, with Kabul as the capital. The sixth region would be in Eastern Afghanistan and would have Jalalabad as its center. Finally, the seventh regions can be established in the south where Kandahar city would be the capital.

Both of these proposals (i.e., dividing the country into four versus seven regions) are imaginary offers. I think, however, that they are not well-planned proposals. The reason is that there is no scholarly discussion of how to divide the country. All the academic articles discuss the advantages and disadvantages of federalism. Clearly, one who rejects a federal Afghanistan does not talk how to divide it; however, the authors that I cited did not discuss the issue. For this reason, the two proposals are not consensus-based proposals. That is why I suggest that decentralization of the country should be discussed in detail by observing all the realities of Afghanistan.

However, from my point of view, dividing Afghanistan into four regional autonomies seems to be easier than dividing into seven autonomies. As I mentioned in chapter two, there are four major influential ethnic groups in Afghanistan; Pashtuns, Tajiks, Hazaras, and Uzbeks. These four groups have historically fought over power, thus this first proposal may solve this long-lasting problem. For example, based on the first proposal, southern and eastern parts, where Pashtuns are territorially concentrated, will be given to Pashtuns ethnic group. The Northern zone will be given to Uzbeks because Uzbeks inhabit in this area. Because Tajiks are overwhelmingly in the Western region, this area will be given to them. Finally, the Western part including Hazarajat will be given to the Hazaras. The fact that some minorities and members of

each ethnic groups can be found in all four regions, so the new decentralized territories should ultimately be careful about the rights of minorities.

The greatest outcome of federalism and decentralization is that it presents opportunities for a de-ethnicization of politics. Furthermore, one way to weaken the religious extremist appeal of the Taliban might be to play to regional or ethnic loyalties as a basis of support and legitimacy for the new state. By 2014 the United States will withdraw its troops from Afghanistan and the Taliban is waiting for the due date. For this reason, non-Pashtuns worry about their future and thus demand the right to establish their own regional autonomy. They do not have any choice other than fighting against the Taliban, if they do not accept to be a part of current Afghanistan. Moreover, a federal model of political arrangement embodies the will of all ethnic groups and corresponds to the reality Afghanistan's ethnic diversity. If it is formed, under a federal system the regions inhabited by a particular ethnic group will enjoy autonomy in the domestic arena.

Why there are different reactions between Pashtuns and non-Pashtuns toward a highly centralized government? The Pashtun elites strongly argued that Afghanistan needed a strong executive in order to overcome the catastrophic divisions of the past and to provide a unifying leadership for the future (Rubin, 2004). According to the Pashtun elites, therefore, establishing a purely presidential form of government was the best. As stated in the previous sections, Pashtuns have tasted leading Afghanistan without letting other ethnic groups to share the power, so quite obviously strong central government has been the most appropriate system for them. Although the non-Pashtun ethnic groups represented approximately 60 percent of the Afghan population or even more, they were divided on some issues. They feared that a Pashtun president, which was a given, would be able to mobilize the Pashtun vote as a bloc on critical issues, and get enough additional support from other ethnic groups to muster a majority (Suhrke, 2008). Therefore, the non-Pashtun groups wanted a power-sharing state and favored a mixed mechanism with a president and a prime minister.

Most of the objections to the parliamentary system and decentralization come from Pashtun elites. They reject and object to a new form of governance other than a strong centralized government for obvious self-interests. It is quite obvious that they fear that they will lose their political superiority over other ethnic groups. When the new formed opposition, the National Front, demanded a constitutional amendment and a decentralized Afghanistan, President Karzai strongly criticized it. He said, "Afghanistan in not a political laboratory of foreigners" and he laid further stress that the current system of Afghanistan has been established based on popular will and he would be ready to give his life to safeguard it (Rezaie, 2012). Interestingly, the harshest criticism came from the international community's and Afghan government's enemy, the Pashtun Taliban. The Taliban declared that the leaders or individuals who demand to decentralize Afghanistan are the enemies of Afghanistan and the enemy of the Islamic Emirate of Taliban, so their penalty would be death. All these demonstrate that decentralization is against the interests of Pashtuns. Indeed, decentralization of power not only will empower all ethnic groups, but also liberates the Pashtun ethnic group from the exploitation of self-claimed Pashtun leaders who think self-interest.

In the case of a decentralized Afghanistan, what will be the role of military and police forces? Is it possible to mobilize the army against a particular ethnic group? What is the ethnic composition of national army and police? The main branch of the military of Afghanistan is Afghan National Army (ANA), which is under the Ministry of Defense. It was rebuilt in 2002 by financial and training support of United States and NATO forces. The current chief of ANA is General Sher Mohammed Karimi from the Pashtun ethnic group. The size of the Afghan National Army is approximately two hundred thousand. As far as its ethnic composition is concerned, it is made of all ethnic groups. It is uncertain; however, how many members from each community are involved. However, the recent data indicates that Tajiks have been overrepresented in the officer corps (Porter, 2009).

Beside the National Army, Afghanistan has a National Police Force, which is under the direction of the Interior Ministry (headed by a Tajik, Bismillah Khan). The main challenger for these two forces is the Taliban. In the case of Afghanistan, it is a fact that each family has at least one Kalashnikov. Both the invasion of Afghanistan by Soviet Union and the civil war resulted in arming of various ethnic groups. Keeping in mind this reality of the country, no one can dare to mobilize the Afghan National Army or the National Police against a Pashtun or non-Pashtun ethnic group.

In conclusion, the main reason for the lack of harmony between ethnic groups and a stable government in Afghanistan is the existence of significant ethnic inequalities in governmental institutions and customary ethnic discrimination. Although Afghanistan has not suffered from a secessionist movement, after the fall of the Taliban in 2001 ethnic politicians and intellectuals from different groups advocate different views of how to constitute the Afghan state. The history of Afghanistan shows that an attempt to establish a strong central authority invariably has been in conflict with the regions where the people wanted to have rights. Therefore, the strong centralized regimes could not have been maintained without significant foreign backing. Since 2001, as an example, with support of international community Hamid Karzai's government has pursued the model of centralized state model. Consequently, once again Afghanistan is a de jure unitary system.

Because all of the central governments have failed to establish a just, inclusive, and a democratic state that embraces all the ethnic groups and because the peoples of Afghanistan especially the non-Pashtun communities suffered from tribal states, a federal or parliamentary form of government just might be the most suitable arrangement in Afghanistan. Maybe immediately after the fall of the despotic regime of the Taliban it was a good idea to build a unitary system. However, more than one decade of experience of the post-Taliban central government has once again showed us that a unitary system was/is not an appropriate system for Afghanistan. Instead, what Afghanistan needs is to throw away the centralization of power

and help in envisioning and creating a decentralized or parliamentary government with a strong national constitution. Nevertheless, federalism or decentralization will not cure the deplorable pain of the country and cannot guarantee an inclusive state if other measures are not included. Those other measures might be a healthy educational policy, economic development, language policy, and selecting an appropriate electoral system based on context of the region. The mentioned measures are vital because even if the country is decentralized, still in each part there will be more than one ethnic group and language. That is why a federal and decentralization approach requires the protection of all communities' rights at all levels.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Summary

Afghanistan is a country that is frequently discussed and debated in social media, academia and the political arena because of its complex situations. There are issues, such as culture, economy, religion, geography, and ethnicity that each has its own influence in the political history Afghanistan. However, among them ethnicity has a unique impact on politics. Due to its geographic and geopolitical importance, Afghanistan has suffered from chronic instability, invasions, civil wars and ethnic purges both during its classic and modern history. Afghanistan is the homeland for various distinct ethnic groups of whom Pashtuns, Tajiks, Uzbeks and Hazaras are the largest. These groups are the main actors in the socio-economic and political scene of the country. There is not a majority ethnicity despite the fact that the groups are tremendously different in size. For example, Pashtuns constitutes 32%-42% of Afghan population while another important ethnic group, Uzbeks, makes almost 10%.

Chapter three of the thesis demonstrates that the ethnicization of politics is a historical reality for Afghanistan. When the country emerged as a political entity under a Pashtun ruler, Ahmad Shah Durrani, Pashtunization of Turkistan, Hazarajat, and Tajik regions began. However, the land occupation turned into the systematic ethnic oppression of non-Pashtun communities during the ethnocentric regime of Iron Amir Abdurrahman Khan between 1880s and 1901s. After a century, in 1992-2001, ethnic discriminatory policy of Iron Amir mixed with radicalism under Pashtun dominated regime of the Taliban manifested itself in a harsh way.

The defeat of the Taliban under the "war on terror" and spreading democracy opened a new door of hope for war-torn Afghanistan, in general, and oppressed Uzbeks, Harazas, Tajiks, and other minor groups, in particular. In fact, so many good things, such as opening school

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doors for women, granting some political rights for all individuals regardless ethnic, religious, and gender background, and holding elections, have happened since then. Nonetheless, internal and external actors of post-Taliban Afghanistan ignored the problem of ethnic politics. They failed to establish an ethnically balanced and inclusive government. Instead of establishing a power-sharing state, political elites of the Bonn Conference insisted in maintaining a single person-run strong centralized governance model. Although post-Taliban Afghanistan experienced two presidential and two parliamentary elections, it is really hard to claim that Afghanistan was on the right track toward democracy. Because of adopting an inappropriate electoral system for a severely divided country and maintaining the tribal mentality, elections were ethnicized. Moreover, elections turned into a modern Pashtun domination via ethnic manipulation in elections.

In chapter four of this project, I tried to find a way out of these ethnic problems by focusing on comparative aspects of democracy in the case of Afghanistan. Chapter four indicated that a parliamentary or a federal system is the best option for multiethnic Afghanistan. A parliamentary form of governance with a prime minister is one of the most preferable politically if the ethnic diversity of the country is taken into consideration. In this system, instead of people the parliament will elect the head of the state. Because Pashtuns are not the majority and thus cannot win the majority of the seats, they will be forced to make a coalition with non-Pashtun groups. In the coalition government, if a Pashtun is elected as a president, the prime minister will be a non-Pashtun or the reverse. This power-sharing is better than a unitary system.

A federal system in the form of decentralization is another preferable form of governance although it is a contested system in the context of Afghanistan. As I stated, most of the strong objections to the decentralization of the country come from Pashtun leaders including Afghan (Pashtun) Taliban because of ethnic interests. Because a strong centralized state is against the nature of the ethnic diversity of the country and it is a failed system, creating

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regional autonomies can reserve the ethnicization of politics. However, it seems that ethnic

politics is likely to remain a significant issue in the political context of the country. The relative

importance of the problem will vary and will be affected by the character of the central

government. If the central government will be able to establish an ethnic pluralistic and equal

power-sharing state along its ethnic groups, this problem will be removed or at least will be

significantly reduced. Below, there are some significant recommendations that suggest how to

solve politicization of ethnic identity and reestablish a democratic Afghanistan.

5.2 Recommendations

My first recommendation for the future stability of Afghanistan is for the completion of

an accurate census of the population. Since Afghanistan does not have accurate demographic

data, both the country's population and the size of each ethnic group are based on estimations,

which are generally believed to be very poor. The issue of conducting a census itself is a

politicized issue. Throughout Afghanistan's history, the Afghan governments did not want to

conduct a clear census because the Pashtuns, the ruling ethnic group, always claimed that they

constituted more than half of the population. Due to their claim and holding the central state,

they wanted to ignore other ethnic groups. Thus, Pashtun-run governments did not want make

clear both the size of Pashtuns and non-Pashtun ethnic groups. For example, although it was

decided in the Bonn Agreement to have a census in post-Taliban Afghanistan, Karzai's

government did not implement it. One of the main reasons for ethnicization of politics is the lack

of an accurate count of each ethnic group. If the government holds a census, there will be equal

political, socio-economic, and educational opportunities for all ethnic groups based on the

group's size.

My second recommendation is solving the crisis of national identity of the country. In

terms of ethnic politics, one of the most controversial and problematic issues is the crisis of the

construction of a national identity. "Afghan" is the national identity of the country, so the citizens

of Afghanistan are referred to as "Afghan". Historically, the word "Afghan" has been a synonym

of Pashtun. Instead of the term Afghan, most non-Pashtun individuals prefer to use "Afghanistani" to identify themselves. As I pointed out in chapter two, the word "Afghan" refers to Pashtun, on the contrary, the term "Afghanistani" refers to an inhabitant and a citizen of Afghanistan. Therefore, using the term "Afghanistani" is more preferable than the term "Afghan" and also it may reduce the tensions among the ethnic groups over national identity. For this reason, the dictate of the term "Afghan" as the national identity in a country where so many different ethnic groups inhabit is not meaningful, so it must be solved. Otherwise, the dictation of Afghan leads non-Pashtun groups to gradually lose their own identity. For example, as a citizen of Afghanistan who belongs to Uzbek ethnic group, I strongly want to keep my own identity and it is my fundamental right.

My third recommendation is changing the current governance system, the strong centralized unitary system. After the collapse of the ethno-religious extremist regime of the Taliban, there were more hopes that the warn-torn country will take its place beside the democratic and developed countries. However, after passing more than a decade from the establishment of the international community-backed Karzai's government, those hopes have faded. Moreover, another civil war or ethnic conflict is waiting Afghanistan, especially after withdrawal of International Community in 2014. After 2014 no one can predict whether Afghanistan will experience heaven or hell. Two decades of civil war in the country were in large part caused by the Pashtun-tribal state's inability to move beyond notions of ethnic domination. As I mentioned earlier, the Taliban was a return to this tradition. Unfortunately, the post-2001 government has followed the tradition of ethnic domination of Pashtuns to non-Pashtuns. Maybe after the collapse of the Taliban, the international community decided to unify the country via establishing a strong centralized government. It is possible that the U.S. was convinced that a centralized government was the best for Afghanistan. However, right now in this sensitive period the international community still has a chance to bring a permanent solution in Afghanistan. They should seriously discuss the post-2014 political order and the state form.

The current regime of Afghanistan carries the dream of the myth that only the Pashtuns have a right to govern the country. I strongly suggest that the priority of governing Afghanistan should not be given to the question of who should rule the country; instead, the priority should be given to how to run the country. For this reason, any attempt to re-impose a strong centralized regime controlled by a single tribe, family or ethnic group will be strongly resisted after withdrawal of U.S. and NATO forces. As I explained throughout the thesis, the strong centralized government ruled by a specific ethnic group did not and does not work in an ethnically divided Afghan society. If it is re-imposed after withdrawal of Coalition Forces, it will breed nepotism, ethnocentrism, internal colonialism, and eventually a second civil war. Unfortunately, the international community ignored this historical reality of Afghanistan. As it is stated in a Turkish proverb, mending a fault without being too late is still a success. It is never too late to mend the situation in Afghanistan.

In May 2012 there will be a conference on Afghanistan in Chicago and the main theme of this conference seems to be the discussion of post-American Afghanistan. The United States should seriously discuss an alternative form of government to the strong centralized government. The long-lasting and the fundamental contribution that the United States as a main actor will be establishment a federal form of decentralized or a power-sharing parliamentary government in post-2014 Afghanistan. Because all of the central governments failed to establish a just, democratic, and inclusive state and because the non-Pashtun communities suffered from Pashtun tribal and single person-centered states, a federal or parliamentary form of government just might be the most suitable arrangement in Afghanistan. Changing the current model of governance and adopting a new system of power-sharing will solve the ethnic tensions in the country.

My fourth recommendation is the amendment of the electoral system. The current parliamentary electoral system, Single Non-Transferrable Vote (SNTV) is not an appropriate system in multiethnic Afghanistan and should be changed. In this system there is no recognition

of political parties, thus the parliament became very fragmented and very weak. In the case of Afghanistan, as discussed earlier, a list-based proportional representation (PR) would be a better electoral option. Moreover, the electoral system for presidential elections has to be amended. Instead of people, the parliament should appoint the Afghan president because only this way would it be possible to limit the power of the president. A president with a full authority holding all the powers like a king is against the nature of plural society of Afghanistan.

My fifth and final recommendation, which is a sheer necessity for Afghanistan, is adopting a new constitution based on democracy and ethnic and religious pluralism of Afghan society. The current constitution is a remnant of the 1964 constitution under Zahir Shah, the last king of Afghanistan. It is in favor of empowering of a single tribe instead of empowering common people. In order to ensure the broad representation of ethnic diversity, the statement should act responsibly and realistically to solve the existing ethnic problems and the deficiency of the political system. In this regard, adopting a more democratic constitution significantly contribute to solve the pervasive ethnic discrimination against particular ethnic groups. Therefore, it an urgent and inescapable need to amend the current constitution of Afghanistan.

From the Bonn Agreement to the present, the international community and some elites in the Afghan government have ignored the abovementioned utilization of ethnicity in Afghanistan's political history. As a result, the problem of ethnic politics has remained unsolved. As long as it remains unsolved, the road to prosperity for the country gets longer and longer. There is perhaps a real opportunity to design a system recognizing the rights of all the citizens incorporating non-Pashtun peoples into the state. If this opportunity is not seized, once again Afghanistan will be in chaos and its people will lose their faith in democracy.

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