THE HĀZARAS OF AFGHANISTAN: A STUDY OF ETHNIC RELATIONS

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ABSTRACT

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This thesis deals with the emergence of the modern state of Afghanistan and the consequences of centralization of power, as well as the creation of a national myth, for the Hazāra people, one of the country's most significant minorities.

The Hazāras, who inhabit the central highlands of Afghanistan and constitute around 20% of the national population, have not only been marginalized economically and socially, but have also been denied a place in the history of the country. The thesis investigates their history over the last century and charts their struggles in the light of the last two decades of upheaval in Afghanistan, arguing that accommodation and compromise with the ethnic minorities is essential to building a modern, post-Ṭālibān Afghanistan.

Résumé

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Ce mémoire traite de l'émergence de l'état moderne de l'Afghanistan et les conséquences de la centralisation du pouvoir ainsi que la création d'une mythe nationale pour le peuple Hazāra, l'un des minorités les plus significatives du pays.

Les Hazāras, qui habitent le centre de l'Afghanistan et qui constituent environ 20% de la population du pays, se voient non seulement marginalisés sur les plans économiques et sociaux, mais aussi refusés une place dans l'histoire nationale. Ce mémoire examine leur histoire pendant le siècle passé et décrit leur lutte pendant les deux décennies de bouleversements qui viennent de s'écouler en Afghanistan, tout en soutenant que l'accommodation et le compromis entre les minorités ethniques sont essentiels pour construire un Afghanistan après-Ṭālibān moderne.

TRANSLITERATION

The system of transliteration that has been employed throughout this work for both Arabic and Persian is the one recommended by the Institute of Islamic Studies, McGill University.

For standard place-names I have used *Webster's New Geographical Dictionary* (Springfield, Mass.: Merriam-Webster Inc., 1984). As for names of individuals, I have used the spellings listed (where available) in *Webster's New Biographical Dictionary* (Springfield, Mass.: Merriam-Webster Inc., 1988).

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Introduction

Afghanistan is passing through the most critical phase of its history since the advent of the Soviet- backed Communist regime in April 1978. The current phase of crisis has attracted the attention of many people around the world, especially since the events of 11th September. There has been a flood of information recently on this topic in the form of books, articles, news stories and commentary. However, most of what has been written or said about Afghanistan is either partial or incomplete in many respects. Most western authors have focused on the external dimensions of the crisis vis-à-vis the superpowers' involvement in the Afghan crisis. The Soviets and their supporters in Afghanistan on the other hand published much propaganda material justifying their maneuvers and actions, while western literature focused on the illegitamacy of the Soviet intervention. Needless to say, each side holds the other responsible for the state of affairs prevailing in Afghanistan.

The same is true as well of earlier writings, with a few rare exceptions, nineteenth and early twentieth century European (predominantly English) historical literature on Afghanistan either deals with the geopolitical importance of the region and its topography, or consists of memories and accounts of the First and Second Anglo-Afghan wars, the Russian advances in Central Asia,

and the position of Afghanistan in the power struggle between two imperial rivals, Great Britain and Czarist Russia. As a result, historical data and information about Afghan socioeconomic and political institutions and culture of the period are fragmentary, scattered, and negligible.

Afghanistan shares, with most developing countries, the problem of forging national unity out of a heterogeneous population. The difficulty of this task in Afghanistan, however, is further compounded by the fact that these disparate ethnic groups have been brought together by the use of force usually exercised by one such group exercising domination over the others, and by historical accident rather than shared historical experience. In fact, events in Afghanistan led to one group-- the Pashtuns-- developing a sense of superiority over the others, whom it considered as second-class citizens. As a result, all political and economic power came to be concentrated in the hands of the Pashtuns. The problems emanating from uni-racial rule in a multi-racial country are bound to be many and complex when the only shared historical experience is that of mutual antagonism. The non-Pashtuns in Afghanistan continue to resent (even today) any suggestion that they may be denied an equal share in policy-making and in the fruits of economic development.

Until the events of 11th September 2001, Afghanistan was a forgotten story as far as the world at large was concerned, but after the collapse of the Ṭālibān, the world community made a commitment to the reconstruction of the country. For the first time in more than two centuries of ethnic Pashtun rule, the minorities in Afghanistan feel that they may be in a position to participate fully in the political process. The dominant Pashtun tribes also realize that their golden age of domination is over and that all ethnic groups must now share political power and actively participate in the socio-political life of the country on an equal basis. It is also clear to one and all that, should this task not be accomplished or abandoned half way through , it is likely that unity will never be attained and probable that hostility will continue to claim more lives from each side.

Of all the country's ethnic groups, it is the Hazāras who appear to be the most vulnerable owing to their distinctive social and religious background, but also because of their fewer numbers. They have made considerable progress over the last few decades, though not without struggle and sacrifice. However, they still do not posses full civil rights. Indeed, the last two decades of the twentieth century have proved to be the most turbulent part of modern Hazāra history, but they have yet to be subjected to scholarly study. Thus, this period will be the central focus of the

thesis, which will analyze those events directly relevant to the political and social life of the Hazāras in particular, and of Afghanistan in general. Hence, the thesis will examine and analyze an almost completely neglected Muslim group, but it will also contribute to the study of ethnic relations among Muslim populations in general against the backdrop of Afghanistan.

An attempt is also made to enumerate some of the problems that the Hazāra community continues to face in Afghanistan, to identify the efforts made to resolve them, and to assess the degree of success that has attended these efforts.

CHAPTER: 1

THE HAZĀRAS: ORIGINE AND HISTORY TO 1978

Around the middle of the second millennium B.C. a stream of people began to pour out of Central Asia into the lands to the south. Some of them passed through Afghanistan on their way to India; others proceeded to the West of the great Hindu Kush range and settled in Iran; and still others remained in Afghanistan itself. The first of these waves was that of the Indo Āryāns, who are believed to have crossed the mountain passes of the Hindu Kush on their way to the fertile plains of northern India, where they eventually settled.[1] A few centuries later the Persians arrived on the Iranian plateau. Then, in around the seventh century A.D., peoples speaking different languages began to appear, first the Turks and then later, in the thirteenth century, the Mongols. The last great migration from Central Asia was that of the Turko-Mongol Uzbegs, who in the fifteenth century A.D. formed a tribal confederation and gradually established themselves as rulers of the city states of Turkistān, along the river plains of the Amu Daryā and Syr Daryā.

The Emergence of Afghanistan

In the year 1722 Shah Maḥmūd of Qandahār, son of Mirwais Khān and chief of the Ghilzai Pashtuns, declared war against the Safavid ruler of Iran. After defeating the Persian army he entered the Safavid capital Isfahān. However, this Pashtun occupation was to be short-lived. In 1736 Nādir Shāh Afshār, a Turkoman chieften, raised an army and not only destroyed Shāh Maḥmūd's army, but also captured Afghanistan and extended his rule over India. In the year 1747 he was assassinated. Seeing an apportunity, one of his commanders, Aḥmad Shāh, an Abdāli Pashtun from Qandahār, returned with his army to this city and seized the throne, quickly establishing his rule over most parts of Afghanistan as well as the Punjab, Kashmir and Sindh.

Thus was Afghanistan, the "land of the Afghans," founded as an empire in 1747 by Aḥmad Shāh Durāni, a tribal chief of the Pashtuns. The society that developed under this ruler and his successors was a heterogeneous collection of ethnic groups linked by blood and history with the people of the lands on its borders—the future nations of Pakistan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan and Iran. Each ethnic group, however, whether settled or nomadic, was concentrated in particular sections of the country, and was divided by language (at least twenty were

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[1] W.K. Frazer- Tytler, *Afghanistan* (London: Oxford University Press, 1950), p. 21.

spoken) and custom, allowing the Pashtuns to control affairs. Thus throughout the 19th century the government of the (steadily shrinking) Afghan empire was controlled by the dominant Pashtun group with two royal lineages, each belonging to a different tribe of the Durāni confederation, taking turns in holding power. At first the *Sadozai* lineage of the *Popalzai* tribe held power and continued to do so until 1835 when, after a quarrel, members of the rebellious *Moḥammad-zai* lineage of the *Bārakzai* tribe took over the throne.

Even today the most casual observer rapidly learns to distinguish members of the different ethnic groups passing by on the streets of Kabul. And if a traveler goes from one province to another, it is as though he enters another world entirely. Each group in Afghanistan is aware of its individual identity through its respective local histories and legends and is proud of it. Indeed, very little of this pride as yet extends to the nation state. To an Uzbeg, Tājik or Hazāra, an Afghan simply is a Pashtun. Originally the term "Afghan" was applied only to the Pashtun, because they formed the nucleus of the state; the application of the term Afghan only became more common in the second part of the nineteenth century. The rulers of Afghanistan tried to convince all the citizens of Afghanistan that, regardless of their origin, they were Afghan, but this idea never made any real headway. Thus Poullada tells of

how, during his stay in Kabul in 1967-1968, his gardener (Bāghwān), a member of a minority group, often spoke with bitter contempt for "those Afghans," referring in this case to the Pashtun ruling group.[2]

Who are the Hazāras?

Although Afghanistan has been a state for over 200 years, it remains a land of diverse peoples not yet molded into a strong, national society. Among the largest of these peoples are the Hazāras, one of the four major ethnic groups in Afghanistan today beside the Pashtuns, Tājiks and Uzbegs. Dwelling for the most part in the centre of the country -- where they have lived for at last seven or more centuries -- their origin is much debated. Since power in Afghanistan has remained in the hands of one ethnic group essentially hostile to the Hazāra people, the study of the latter had, until the past two decades been discouraged to the extent that they have remained unknown as a people to many of their fellow countrymen and to the rest of the world. What little was written about the Hazāras by foreign scholars, diplomats or travelers usually formed part of larger, general studies of Afghanistan and, in most cases, presented a view of their history and origin in accordance with the position of the government of Afghanistan. In the past 15 years, however, works by Hazāra

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[2] Leon Poullada, *The Pushtun Role in the Afghan Political System* (New York: The Afghanistan

scholars have begun to appear. Although not very analytical, they do--in the case of works by authors such as Mousavī, Polādī and the Tājik scholar Temirkhanov -- provide a very detailed and to some extent quite accurate description of the history of the Hazāra people.

References in the early sources to the settlement of the Hazāras in this part of Afghanistan are rare, one of the few (and the earliest) being those found in the Bābur Nāma, written by Ẓahir-ud Dīn Moḥammad Bābur, the founder of the Indian Mughal dynasty, who established his capital in Kabul and ruled from there for some 20 years. In the course of his history, Ẓahir-ud Dīn remarks:

> There are many differing tribes in the Kabul country; in its dales and plains are Turks and Clansman (Aimaq) and Arabs; in its towns and many villages Sarts, out in the districts and also in villages are the Pashai, Paraji, Tajiks, Birkri, and Afghan tribes. In the western mountains are the Hazara and Nikudiri tribes, some of whom speak the Mughuli tongue.[3]

Furthermore he says:

> Just as Turks and (Mughul) clans (Aimaq) dwell in the open country of Khurasān and Samarkand, so in Kabul do the Hazara and Afghans. Of the Hazara, the most widely scattered are Sultan-Masudi Hazara, of the Afghan the Mohmand.[4]

Council of the Asia Society, 1970), p. 28.

[3] Z. M. Bābur, *Bābur Nāma* (New Delhi: Oriental Books Reprint Corporation, 1962), p. 207.

[4] Ibid., p. 221.

The other contemporary source that sheds some light on Hazāra history is a text from the era of Shāh 'Abbās (1571-1629) written by Iskandar Beg Turkmān (1560 – 1632), who makes incidental mention of the Hazāras. He states: "about two to three thousand Hazāra soldiers under the command of Dīn Moḥammad Khan Uzbeg fought against Shāh 'Abbās's army."[5]

Yazdānī, a modern author, writes in his book *Pizhūhish-i dar Tārikh-i Hazārahā* of an early appearance by the Hazāras on the stage of history: "In the year 1003 the army of Jalāluddīn Akbar surrounded the city of Qandahār and punished the tribes of the Hazāra and Afghan who resisted."[6]

About the origin of the Hazāras:

The origin of the Hazarās is shrouded in the mists of history. In fact, it is perhaps the least studied of the major ethnic groups in Western/Central Asia. Nevertheless, over the past two centuries, a number of theories have been proposed to explain their origin. These range from ascribing exclusively Mongol origin to the group to proposing a completely native origin for them. The truth perhaps lies somewhere in the middle, but this dissertation will look at each proposition and attempt to judge it on its historical merit.

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[5] Iskandar Beg Turkmān, *Tārikh-i 'Alamārāy-i 'Abbāsi* (Tehran: Mu'assasah-i Maṭbū'āt-i Amīr Kabīr, 1956), p. 567-9.
[6] Ḥusain 'Alī Yazdānī, *Pizhūhishī dar Tārikh-i Hazārahā* (Tehran: H.A. Yazdānī, 1989), p. 27.

1- The Hazāras as a people native to Afghanistan

The theory of the native origin of the Hazāras was proposed by the French scholar J.P. Ferrier, who traveled in parts of Hazārajāt (the land of the Hazāras in central Afghanistan) during the first half of the nineteenth century. Ferrier believed that the Hazāras had inhabited this area since the time of Alexander the Great and quotes Curtius, the Greek historian (who traveled in the area) as saying that when Alexander the Great passed through the central passes of Afghanistan, he encountered people who were very similar to the Hazāras as we know them today.[7] By mentioning this historical account, Ferrier sought to make a link between that early people and the modern Hazāras. The Afghan scholar 'Abd al-Ḥayy Ḥabībī was among the supporters of this theory; on the basis of linguistic evidence, he states furthermore that: " Hazāra is an ancient Aryan word, meaning 'pure- hearted' and 'generous', in this case , rather than *hazār* (or thousand), the Fārsī translation of the Mogholi [Mongol] *ming.*"[8]

There were also several other western scholars who believed in this theory as well, among them the German scholar Michael

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[7] J. P. Ferrier, *Caravan Journeys and Wanderings in Persia, Afghanistan, Turkistan and Beloochistan, With historical notices on the countries laying between Russia and India* (London: John Murray, 1857), p. 221.

[8] 'A. Ḥ. Ḥabībī, " Āyā Hazāra Kalimay-i Qadīmtar ast?" Āryānā, v.20, n.5, (1962), p. 8.

Weiers who maintains that: " Linguistically the Hazāras and Mongols of Afghanistan have no genetic relation at all."[9]

2- Hazāras as Mongols

A second group of scholars holds the theory that the Hazāras are descendents of the Mongol soldiers who came to Afghanistan with Chengiz Khan's army in the 13th century, and that after settling in the region, they came under the cultural influence of the original people, i.e., the Tājiks, and gradually converted to Islam, accepting the language and traditions of the latter people. This is perhaps the most often quoted theory and indeed it was initially mentioned in the history of Abū al-faḍl Dakkanī, who claimed that the Hazāras are the descendents of the army of Mangu Khan. Subsequent historians, geographers and travelers subscribed to the same idea. In the nineteenth century, British travelers in Afghanistan during the heyday of the British Indian Empire also accepted this theory. Among the first to advance it were Arminius Vambery, Alexander Burnes and Mountstuart Elphinstone. Elphinstone states in his book that:

> Aboolfuzl [the Moghol court historian] alleges that Hazaurehs and Eimauks are the remains of the army of the Mogul Prince Manku Khan, the grandson of Chengheez; and Babur testifies that many of the Hazaurehs, spoke the language of the Moguls up to this time; but he occasions some fresh difficulties by speaking of the Toorkomaun

[9] M. Weiers, "The language of the Hazara people and of the Mongols of Afghanistan: A Lexicostatistical perspective," *Afghanistan Journal* 2, 3, (1975), p. 102.

> Hazaurehs, and by always coupling the Togderrees with the Hazaurehs in the hills, which he asserts the Toorks and Eimauks to have been inhabitants of the plains. There seems no reason to doubt that the Eimauks and Hazaurehs are the same people, though separated since their conversion to Mohammaedanism.[10]

H.W. Bellow was another supporter of this theory; according to him:

> Moghole soldiers were planted here [central Afghanistan] as military colonists in detachments of thousands fighting men by Changiz Khan in the first quarter of the thirteenth century. It is said that Changiz Khan left ten such detachments here, nine of them in the Hazarah of Kabul, and the tenth in the Hazarah of Pakli [Pakhlai] to east of Indus.[11]

The most credible scholar assigning Mongol origin to the Hazāras, however, is W. Barthold. Barthold, the "dean of all Central Asia scholars", supports this theory by pointing to the fact that some Hazāra communities are still identified by the names of well-known Mongol princes and generals.

> The invasion of the mountainous regions and peaks presented the Moghols with great difficulties. Consequently, troops and soldiers were left in these areas; in time adopting the language of the native people. It is likely that these first settlers were in time joined by later Moghol invaders. Identified by the name of their Khans; the most famous of these were Nikuderis (under the command of Nikuder, a Chaghatai prince fighting for Il-Khanids) who settled in these areas at the time of Chaghatais in the 13th century.[12]

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[10] M. E. Elphinstone, *The Kingdom of Kabul* (Quetta: Nisa Traders, 1978), v.2, p. 249.
[11] H. W. Bellow, *The Races of Afghanista: Being a Brief Account of the Principal Nation Inhabiting that Country* (Calcutta: Thacker, Spink & Co., 1880), p. 114.

3- The Hazāras as Descendents of Mongols and Turks

Other supporters of the theory of the Hazāras being Mongols believe that some are descended from various Turkic clans. For instance, Bernard Dorn, professor of oriental literature at the Imperial University of Kharkov in the early 19th century, suggested that the gradual relocation of the Hazāras was due to waves of attacks by Mongols and Turks during the 13th to 15th centuries on central Afghanistan, mainly during the time of Mangu Khan and Arghoon Khan (1284-91).[13]

E. Bacon, who is also a supporter of this theory, wonders why, if the ancestors of the Hazāras came directly from Mongolia to Afghanistan, there are more Turkish words than Mongolian in their Persian dialect. He therefore proposes that:

> The forgoing resume of Mongol history in Afghanistan shows that the traditional statement made by modern writers and historians concerning the origin of the Hazaras is incorrect. The available evidence shows that while Chengiz Khan made several expeditions into Afghanistan, he withdrew his troops as soon as the object of the campaign had been accomplished. There is no suggestion that Chengiz Khan himself left any permanent garrison in the region, although he may have paved the way for future Mongol settlements by killing off part of the former population of the mountain area. The region now known as the Hazarajat seems to have been peopled chiefly by Chagatai Turko-Mongols from Transoxania. Other Mongols, and some Turks may have joined these Chagataians. .[14]

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[12] W. Barthold, *An Historical Geography of Iran* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1930), p. 82.

[13] Bernard Dorn, *History of the Afghans* (London: Murray, 1829), pp. 25-26.

[14] E. Bacon, "Enquiry into the History of the Hazāra Mongols of Afghanistan" *(Southwestern Journal of Anthropology* 7 (1951), p. 241.

A very important role was also played, according to this theory, by the Il-Khānid Mongols of Persia, (13th and 14th century) whose troops were stationed in Khorāsān, the northeastern province of Persia. Rebellion was a common occurrence among the dissatisfied Mongol commanders and governors, so that several revolts occurred during the reign of the Il-Khans. These rebellions were for a long time easily crushed by the Il-Khans, and to avoid punitive retaliations, the rebels had only one choice: to escape to the mountain range east of Khurāsān, i.e., the central region of Afghanistan. Later, under Amir Timur (Tamerlane) and his son Shāh Rukh (the latter having established his capital in the city of Herāt), troops and administrative officials were sent into the area, and it is probable that some of these remained when the Timurids returned to Samarkand. Thus, according to Bacon's thinking, the present Hazāra Mongols are descended, not from military garrisons planted by Chengiz Khan, but from Mongol troops, many of them Chagatāiān, who arrived in Afghanistan between the 13th and 15th centuries.

4- The Hazāras as a mixed race

A fourth group of scholars suggests that the Hazāras are a mixed race, the product of intermarriages between Mongol soldiers, native Tājiks and the Turks who had settled in

Afghanistan before the Mongol invasion. Amongst those who hold this opinion is Lutfi Temirkhanov, a Tājik scholar. [15] H.F. Schurmann, who was one of the first scholars to advance this theory, maintains furthermore that the Mongols of Afghanistan are a completely separate and distinct group at the present time, entirely unrelated either to the Hazāras or to the Aimāqs. What is more, there is no immediate relationship between Hazāras and Aimāqs: all three groups, therefore - - Mongols, Hazāras, and Aimāqs form separate and distinct ethnic and cultural groups at the present time. Schurmann further argues that the Hazāras of Hazārajāt are a mixed population of aboriginal Iranian mountain people and invaders with Mongol affinities.[16] By contrast, many scholars suggest that the Hazāras and Aimāqs are indeed the same people, the only difference between them being that the Hazāras mostly profess Shī'ism whereas the Aimāqs are Sunnī. Today, many Hazāras and Aimāqs in Afghanistan are themselves convinced of their common identity. In the absence of historical proof, it was easy in the past for the rulers of the country to convince these peoples that they were two separate ethnic groups with no cultural relationship, mainly because it was politically convenient to keep them divided.

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[15] L. Temirkhanov, *Tārīkh-i Millī-yi Hazāra* (Quetta: Moghol Pub., 1980), pp. 25-26. The Pashtuns or Afghans (and possibly indo-Iranians), though not to the extent of Moghols and Tājiks would also be included in the mix.

M.H. Kākar, an Afghan scholar of Pashtun origin, is another supporter of the theory of the Hazāras as a mixed race, he states that,:

> Hazaras are the descendents of the Mongol soldiers, mainly Chagataian, who entered Afghanistan at various times between 1229 and 1447, and formed the people today known as Hazara, in the 16th century. These soldiers, who were either unmarried or did not have their wives with them, married aboriginal Barbar (Tajik) women of central and neighboring region of Afghanistan. Intermarriage with the Tajiks, who were of Iranian origin and spoke Farsi, influenced the language of these newcomers and laid the foundation for the new Farsi dialect known as Hazaragi.[17]

5- The Hazāras as Tibetans

The last group of scholars and historians to be surveyed here includes such figures as G.T. Vigne, William Moorcraft and Mohan Lal, who all suggest that the Hazāras originated from Tibet. They base this theory on two considerations, namely, the physical similarity between the two peoples and the fact that the city of Bāmiān (heavily populated by Hazāras) was, before the arrival of Islam, a major centre of Buddhism. Sayyid 'Askar Mousavī, a modern Hazāra scholar also supports this idea, arguing furthermore that all the above-mentioned theories mistakenly focus on the origin of the word Hazāra (the argument being that because it means 'thousand' in Persian, and because the Mongol

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[16] H.F. Schurmann, *The Mongols of Afghanistan* ('S-Gravenhage: Mouton and Hague, 1962), pp. 110-111.

[17] M. H. Kākar, *The Pacification of the Hazāras of Afghanistan* (New York: Afghanistan Council, Asian Society, 1973), pp. 1-2.

army was organized in units of one thousand, the Hazāras must descend from some of the detachments of "thousands" who settled in this area), and also on the resemblance of the Hazāras to the Mongols and Turks of Central Asia.[18] But if we shift our focus from the name (Hazāra) and concentrate in the resemblance of Hazāras, we notice that long before the arrival in Afghanistan of Islam, the Mongols or the Turks, a people very similar to the Hazāras lived in the central part of the country, especially in the city of Bāmiān. Mūsavi quotes Mir G.M. Ghobār, the most famous Afghan historian, as saying:

> During the first century (AD) Bāmiān was one of Buddhism's most flourishing centers. Bāmiān was at that time part of the Kushāni empire (40-220AD), the Kushānis themselves being one of the Seti tribes, and inhabiting the area stretching from Kashgar to the north of Black Sea. The most easterly of the Seti tribes were called Yuechi. Thus the Kushānis were the Yuechi, who had been driven south of the Oxus river (the present-day northern boundary of Afghanistan) following their tribal wars. Although the empire collapsed in the northern Hindu Kush in 220 AD, they continued ruling in the southern Hindu Kush until 425 AD.[19]

After the collapse of the Kushāni empire, another dynasty of the Seti tribes called the Ephthalites (425-566 AD) replaced them. These people also practiced Buddhism, the dominant religion in the region before the arrival of Islam. Therefore, it is possible that the Hazāras, as the main inhabitants of Bāmiān and the central

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[18] S. 'A. Mousavī, T*he Hazāras of Afghanistan* (Surrey: Curzon Press, 1998), p. 37.
[19] Mīr. G. M. Ghobār, *Afghanistan dar Masīr-i Tārikh* (Qom: Kānūn-i Mūhājir, 1980), pp. 46-49.

part of the country, lived there long before the invasion of the Turks and Mongols.

Of all these numerous theories, the one that is most likely to be true in the light of historical fact is the one proposed by Bernard Dorn and E. Bacon, i.e. a mixed descent from Turk and Mongol ancestors. The genealogies provided by different Hazāra personalities from various tribes over the past few decades also support their theory. According to these genealogies, not all Hazāras are of the same descent. Many Hazāra tribal and family names are taken from those of Mongol leaders and many of the traditional tribes bear the names of Mongol officiers known to history. Some tribes even believe that they have Turkish ancestry, such as the Qarluq, Turkman and the Dai Zangi. In support of the genealogical proof, Dorn and Bacon point to many Mongolian and Turkish words in the Hazāragi dialect.

In the absence of any solid historical documentation, local genealogies are just about the only means of determining the origin of the Hazāras. While some scholars doubt the authenticity of these genealogies, one ought to test their historical validity by subjecting them to a rigorous scholarly investigation and accept their historical value in the absence of any proof to the contrary. Historically we know that when Chengiz Khan conquered the region between Balkh, Kabul, Ghazna and Herat, it was inhabited

by people of Turkish origin. This region was the centre of the Ghaznavīd and Ghurid empires, both of them Turkic dynasties.[20] These Turks governed the region for about two centuries and consequently encouraged the settlement of other Turkic tribes, especially the Khalajs and Qarluqs, from Central Asia. Although many of them, along with the original inhabitants, were massacred during the Mongol invasions, especially town-dwellers, it seems that the region still retained a sizeable population. For the next few centuries the Mongols had to intermingle with these Turkish and other segments of the population. This social contact played an important role in the formation of the Hazāras.

In the region itself, the Turkish population seemed to be spread unevenly throughout the territory. In some areas, especially in the south, towards Ghazna and Qandahār, and in the north, towards Balkh, there was a higher concentration of Turko-Khalajs and Qarluqs, who had settled some regions of central and southern Afghanistan before the beginning of the Mongol conquest. Hence, these tribes played an important role in the ethno- genesis of the Hazāra people.

Besides these tribes, the Turkic element among the Mongol armies also played a significant role in the formation of Hazāra ethnic identity. When Chengiz Khan emerged as conqueror, he

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[20] Ḥasan Polādī, *The Hazāras* (Stockton, Calif. : Mughal Pub. Co., 1989), p. 14.

succeeded in welding almost all the steppe tribes into a single entity and led them out to conquer the world. The Mongols had, however, been Turcicized at an early date, so that no more than one tenth of the their armies had ever been composed of Mongols; the rest were Oghuz, Qibchāqs, Turkmans and Uigurs.[21]

In my opinion, therefore, Dorn and Bacon's theory brings a new and more acceptable dimension to the study of the Hazāras, albeit one that needs to be studied further and perhaps tailored to accommodate the salient features of other theories, such as the one proposed by Barthold, for which a degree of historical proof exists.

The Conversion of the Hazāras to Shī'ism

The Hazāras are mostly Shī'īte today; however, not all Hazāras are twelver Shī'ītes, for some of them practice the Ismā'īlī branch of Shī'a Islam, while others are Sunnī.

How the Hazāras became predominantly Shī'īte is little understood, especially as there is no clear documentation. Some sources indicate that Shī'īsm was introduced among the Hazāras during the reign of Shāh 'Abbās of Iran (1571-1629), but if one consults the history of Iskandar Beg,[22] no reference can be found to confirm such a phenomenon accuring during this period.

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[21] Ibid., p. 15.

H.F.Schurmann[23] proposes that both Shī'ism and Ismā'īlīsm (a sub-division of the Shī'īte school) were introduced to the Hazāras from India. However, he doesn't expand on this thesis and provides no historical proof. On the other hand, historical sources clearly indicate that the Ismā'īlī da'wa reached Central Asia in the 3rd century after the Hijra, during the reign of Naṣr II Sāmānī (301-31/ 914-43) and that he himself was converted to Ismā'īlīsm. The 4th century Ismā'īlī philosopher and poet Ḥakīm Nāṣir Khusraw's extended stay in northern Afghanistan further demonstrates that at least Ismā'īlī Shī'īsm had a presence there, particularly in Badakhshān, many centuries before the arrival of the Safavīds. In the verse of Sanā'ī,the famous Persian poet and mystic of the 4th century and a native of Ghazna, one can also find many indications that he was a Shī'ī Muslim. [24]

Another reliable source for the existence of Shī'īsm in Afghanistan is the study by C.E. Bosworth entitled *The Ghaznavīds*, where he mentions that the Sunnī Ghaznavīd Sultans left moderate Shī'ītes undisturbed, but were harsh towards extremist Shī'ītes, because they were involved in politics. [25]

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[22] Iskandar Beg Turkmān, *Tārīkh-e 'Ālamarāy-i 'Abbāsi* (Tehran: Mū'assasah-i Maṭbū'āt-i Amīr Kabīr, 1956), p. 573.

[23] H. F. Schurmann, *The Mongols of Afghanistan* ('S-Gravenhage: Mouton & Hague, 1962), p. 120.

[24] Riḍawī Modarres, *Diwān-i Sanā'ī Ghaznavī* (Tehran: Kitābkhāna-i Ibn Sinā, 1341), p. 467.
[25] C. E. Bosworth, *The Ghaznavīds* (Beirut: Librarie du Liban, 1973), p. 199.

The Ghaznavīd rulers were particularly hostile towards Ismā'īlīs, because of their wide intellectual appeal and their religious and social radicalism, and also because of their links with the Fāṭimīd caliphate in Cairo. Based on all these sources, therefore, we can surmise that Shī'īsm (and especially Ismā'īlīism) came to Afghanistan at an early stage. From this premise we can deduce that local pīrs (missionaries) and sayyids in the old tradition of the Ismā'īli da'wa may have been responsible for conversion of the Hazāras from Sunnīsm and Shī'ism to the Ismā'īlī faith.

The Name "Afghanistan"

As we mentioned earlier, the Afghan nation state was created in 1747 under a ruler who took advice from a council of chiefs. His name was Aḥmad Shāh. That the country was simply known at the time as Khurāsān during his reign is shown in a conversation between his advisor Ṣābir Shāh and the ruler of Lahore, in which the former is quoted as saying: "He [Aḥmad Shāh] is the king of Khurāsān, and you are the Subadār [governor] of the king of Hindustān."[26]

Farhang, a 20th century Afghan historian, further mentions that:

> Noor Moḥamad Qandahārī, who edited Gulshan-i Imārat, a history of reign of Amīr Sher Alī Khan (1861-79), writes during the following century in reference to Amīr Dost Moḥammad, father of Amīr Sher Alī Khan: "At the time

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[26] M. Ṣ. Farhang, *Afghānistān dar Panj Qarn-i Akhīr* (Qom: Ismā'īlīyān Publisher, v. 1, 1992), p. 20.

> when our forgiving, generous and unique king, descended from paradise, Amīr Dost Moḥammad, reigned on the throne of the country of Khurāsān, in the heavenly capital city of Kabul."[27]

The only relevant document available indicates that the name Afghanistan was first used to refer to the political entity as we know it today in an 1801 agreement between Iran and Britain.[28] Mountstuart Elphinstone, who was one of the first British travelers to enter Afghanistan in the 19th century, confirms this when he says: "The Afghans have no general name for their country, they use the name Afghanistan, which was probably first employed in Persia. This name is not unknown to the inhabitants of the country to which it applies".[29]

For more than two centuries, therefore, the name has been used to designate the whole country, home to several different ethnic group such as Tājiks, Hazāras, Afghans (Pashtuns), Uzbegs, etc. -- a name, in short, that does not correspond to the true ethnic composition of the country. For much of this time power has remained in the hands of Afghans (Pashtuns), who found it convenient that outsiders should assume that Afghanistan was inhabited only by Afghans. But in reality everyone, and

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[27] Ibid., p. 20.

[28] Ibid., p. 24.

[29] M. A. Elphinstone, *The Kingdom of Kabul* (Quetta: Nisā Traders, 1978), v. 2, p. 152.

particularly the intellectuals, knew their nation's true heritage and were dissatisfied with the explanation. The name of the country had been Khurāsān for almost fifteen centuries, a name that did not reflect any monopoly on power held by a particular group, but reflected the commun identity of the different groups who considered themselves as Khurāsānī. Indeed, Khurāsān is a major part of the history of the people living in the country today, whereas Afghanistan is a name that represents the monopoly of power by one group and discrimination against all others.

There is no doubt that the name Afghanistan itself is a major obstacle to the unity of the country. To change the name of the country to one more appropriate should not offend anyone, especially as today we have the example of many countries that have adopted new names for different reasons. In the last few decades countries like Benin, Zimbabwe, Iran, Sri-Lanka, Madagascar, etc., have all changed their earlier names. If Afghanistan were to change its name to one more acceptable to all ethnic groups in the country, it will have a positive effect on the minds of the people, and help to restore unity by giving everyone the sense that the country belongs not only to the Pashtuns, but to every ethnic group living there.

The Subjugation of the Hazāras (1890-1893)

Despite the instability of their homeland and frequent invasions by external forces, the Hazāras remained relatively independent until the last quarter of the 19th century; in fact, it was only during the reign of Amīr 'Abd al- Raḥmān (1880-1901) that the Hazāras were integrated into Afghanistan after some three years of resistance and war.

'Abd al- Raḥmān was born in or around the year 1844, and was the grandson of Amīr Dost Moḥammad, who ruled over Afghanistan in the mid –nineteenth century. He belonged to the ruling Durānī tribe, even though he was not a direct descendent of king Aḥmad Shāh. The Abdāli branch of the Durānīs, i.e., the Sadozais, had been supplanted by a rival clan, that of the Popalzais, in the mid-19th century. However a degree of political continuity was established. The Durānīs retained their hold on power with other Pashtun tribes, such as the Ghilzais, as junior partners.

In 1880, after the death of his uncle Amīr Sher 'Alī, and with the help of Britain and Russia, 'Abd al- Raḥmān became Amīr of Afghanistan. He was a man of many contradictions: a very suspicious, cruel and superstitious ruler but a very determined one. Nothing could stop him from achieving his objectives. This may be seen from 'Abd al- Raḥmān's application of criminal law,

which was very savage: torture was frequent and imaginative; luckless prisoners were expected to purchase their food and pay rent for their cells. 'Abd al- Raḥmān deliberately fostered his reputation for cruelty and himself spread many of the tales of his punishments. It is said, for instance, that a young woman who sought divorce from her toothless husband, had her own teeth extracted according to Amīr's order, and that a baker who consistently short-changed his customers was thrown into the oven in which he prepared bread.[30]On the other hand he was the first ruler to establish control over the entire country and bring all the inhabitants under his direct rule. In doing so he destroyed the power of the tribes and the semi-autonomous status they enjoyed. Many historians in fact credit him with transforming Afghanistan into a modern nation state from a medieval monarchy, even if this does not excuse the terrible massacres and human rights abuses that he perpetuated.

We know little about Amīr 'Abd al-Raḥmān's religious policy, but we do have an autobiography attributed to him entitled (in English translation) The Life of 'Abd al- Raḥmān, which sheds light on his personality and belies his claims of piety. One anecdote reads:

> One of the priests who accused me of infidelity, named Abdur Rahim Akhund, had hidden himself under the

[30] Arnold Fletcher, *Afghanistan: Highway of Conquest* (New.York: Cornell University Press, 1965), p. 150.

> prophet's robe. [There is a place in Kandahar called Holy Khirqa, and many believe that the Prophet's cloak is inside that place] I ordered that an impure-minded dog such as he should not remain in that sacred sanctuary; he was accordingly pulled out of the building, and I killed him with my own hands.[31]

'Abd al- Raḥmān's contempt for the law of sanctuary was consistent with his behaviour towards the whole Hazāra Shī'īte population of the country, whom he declared to be infidels and the object of a Jihād.

He furthermore saw the duties of the ruler as of paramount importance:

> Our religion teaches us that every person is responsible for his actions before the Almighty judge on the day of judgment, but kings are not responsible for their actions alone; moreover, to answer for the peace and comfort of the subjects who are placed under their care by their Creator. One of the greatest saints, the Maulvi Roum, gives the following story in the poem: "A goat hurt its foot at the bridge of Baghdad; the ruler of the time, Omar, was reproached by God.[32]

As we mentioned earlier, the Hazāras lived in the central part of Afghanistan and at this time enjoyed a form of semi-independence from the government in Kabul. As soon as 'Abd al-Raḥmān took the throne, however, he appointed non-Hazāras as governors in Hazāra- settled provinces. In the beginning Hazāras accepted the central government's rule and paid their taxes to

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[31] S. M. Khan, *The Life of Abdur – Rahman,Amir of Afghanistan* (London: Murray, 1900),v. 1, p. 216.
[32] Ibid., p. 220.

Kabul, and indeed, some Hazāra Mīrs (chiefs) were given titles by 'Abd al- Raḥmān. But slowly the latter's policy toward the Hazāras changed. His governors, taking advantage of their position, started abusing their powers and making life difficult for the local peoplation. When the Hazāras complained to 'Abd al- Raḥmān about the behavior of one of his governors, he, instead of punishing the official, simply replaced him with another one. When in 1887 the governor of Jāghuri not only insisted on keeping young Hazāra girls in his harem against their will, but also married a Hazāra woman by force,[33] the Hazāras decided that they would no longer accept the situation. They were convinced not only that 'Abd al- Raḥmān would refuse to take any action, but also that he was the one encouraging his officials. They were left with no choice except to defend their integrity and pride; therefore a group of them attacked the governor's residence, released the woman and killed the governor and his clerk.

It was at about this time that 'Abd al-Raḥmān introduced two major policies that were to affect the Hazāras negatively. The first of these was the imposition of the *Ḥanafī* interpretation of Islamic law as the official creed of the country, which led to the active suppression of other religious practices. The second was the adoption of Jihād as the central concept in the political ideology of

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[33] Ḥasan Polādī, *The Hazāras* (California: Moghal Pub. Co., 1989), p. 187.

the Afghan state. Both were given a practical meaning in connection with 'Abd al- Raḥmān's campaign against Hazārajāt (1891-93) and Kāfiristān (1895-6). Both areas, until then outside the control of 'Abd al- Raḥmān, were populated at the time by ethnic groups of different religious persuasion: the Hazāras practiced Shī'a Islam, while the so called Kāfirs, as the name indicates were non- Muslims. The independence of the central highlands of Hazārajāt was clearly a barrier to the amīr's unification of Afghanistan, and at first he tried to exploit internal rivalries among the Hazāras and, through a combination of co-option and coercion, impose the authority of the state upon these areas.[34] However, 'Abd al- Raḥmān's policy of suppression ultimately unified the Hazāras against the Afghan state, with the result that the amīr declared Jihād against Shī'as in general, recruiting volunteers in the rest of the country by promising loot and slaves in return. In his attempt to suppress Shī'ism, the Amīr reportedly went so far as to spy upon suspected Shī'as in Kabul and order them, under the threat of violence, to follow Sunnī practices. Asta Olesen writes of how on 12 February 1895, "a notice from the Amīr was read out in the principal mosque in Kabul before prayers that the people of Hazāra tribe, being Shī'as, should not be considered Muslims and

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[34] S. 'A. Mousavī, T*he Hazāras of Afghanistan* (Surrey: Curzon Press, 1998), p. 121.

should not be left alive, wherever they might be found."[35] Thus two years after their defeat, 'Abd al- Raḥmān was still trying to encourage Sunnī Muslims to destroy the Hazāras.

A modern parallel to this persecution and encouragement to genocide of Hazāras was repeated again in the twentieth century, as we shall see in the following chapter.

There is no doubt that Amīr 'Abd al- Raḥmān had it in mind for a long time to find a reason to crush the Hazāra people. To achieve this he formulated a plan by which he first imposed heavy taxes on the Hazāras, then allegedly encouraged his governors to humiliate them and finally obtained a Fatwā (judicial opinion) from Sunnī scholars declaring the Hazāras to be unbelievers (something that he does not mention in his autobiography). All of this provoked the open revolt he needed to justify mobilizing a huge army against the Hazāras.

M.Ḥ. Kākar, an Afghan scholar who is also a Pashtun, describes the process of obtaining religious justification as follows:

> Because the Hazaras were Shiite Muslims and therefore in perpetual enmity with their Sunni neighbors, the Amīr obtained a Fetwa (judicial edicts) from the Sunni mullāhs easily. For the first time the Khan-e –Mullah of Kabul, in consultation with other mullāhs, declared religious war against Hazaras... in six hundred proclamations which Amir distributed throughout the country, the Hazaras and the Shias were declared Kafirs (infidels).[36]

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[35] Asta Olesen, *Islam and Politics in Afghanistan* (Richmond: Curzon Press Ltd., 1995), p. 78.

Faiḍ Moḥammad, a Hazāra historian who lived during the rule of 'Abd-al Raḥmān and his successor, includes in his book the text of 'Abd-al Raḥmān's decree encouraging the Sunnī population of Afghanistan to join him in quelling the revolt. An excerpt from it reads: "All those who have rebelled against me, the Amīr of Islam, must be annihilated. Their heads shall be mine; you may have their fortunes and children."[37]

Several reasons have been suggested by scholars for the war against the Hazāras. Some maintain that it was their refusal to pay the heavy taxes imposed on them, while others contend that they were used by the Amīr as a means of unifying Pashtuns who were divided by disputes among themselves. Still others say that the Hazāras were being manipulated by Iran's religious clerics to oppose Sunnī rule, and paid the consequences. But 'Abd al-Raḥmān's own words point to a completely different scenario:

> The Mirs of Turkistan, the Mirs of Hazara, the chiefs of Ghilzai were all stronger than their Amīrs, and so long as they were the rulers, the king could not do justice in the country. The tyranny and cruelty of these men were unbearable. I will not mention them for fear of shocking the readers of my book.[38]

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[36] M. Ḥ. Kākar, *The Pacification of the Hazāras of Afghanistan* (New York: Afghanistan Council, Asian Society, 1973), p. 6.
[37] Faiḍ Moḥammad, *Sirāj al- Tavārīkh* (Tehran: Mū'assasah-i Muṭāla'āt va Intishārāt-i Balkh, 1372 [1993]), pp. 809-812.
[38] S. M. Khan, *The Life of 'Abdur-Raḥmān, Amīr of Afghanistan* (London: Murray, 1900), v. 1, p. 217.

Whatever the opinions on how and why this war began, one thing is clear: the Hazāra people had for centuries lived independently, and indeed, no king or ruler from the time of Amīr Timur had been able to subjugate them. Since they were not subject to his rule and were at the same time practicing the Shī'a faith of Islam, they became objects of the wrath and hatred of 'Abd al- Raḥmān. 'Abd al- Raḥmān further justifies himself by saying: "The Hazāras raided and plundered the neighboring subjects for about 300 years past, and none of the kings had had the power to make them absolutely peaceful."[39]

Most scholars, however, dismiss 'Abd al- Raḥmān's arguments, and recognize that the Hazāras were persecuted. For example Fletcher states the following:

> As Shia Muslims and their alien therefore in religion as well as in the race, the Hazaras has always suffered at the hands of their neighbors and had retaliated whenever opportunity offered. [40]

There are other sources as well that support Fletcher's statement, for instance the Iranian scholar Changīz Pahlavān.[41]

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[39] Ibid., p. 279.

[40] Arnold Fletcher, *Afghanistan: Highway ofCconquest* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1965), p. 147.

The Impact of Subjugation

The war between the Hazāras and Amīr 'Abd al- Raḥmān started in 1891 and continued for almost three years; in the prcess, the Hazāras lost their independence and faced the most disgraceful consequences. By the end of 1892 the Hazāras realized that they could not resist any longer against such a huge army and after long negotiations they submitted, with both sides agreeing on terms and the government officials pledging to honor their agreement to restrain their troops from general massacre and destraction. When 'Abd al- Raḥmān however, received the news of the Hazāras' submission and the generous terms offered by his generals, he became angry and sent this order to his representatives in the field:

> You will do your best to kill and destroy these people so that their name should not remain within the boundaries of Afghanistan. And the ones who submit to my authority, you should confiscate their arms and punish them accordingly. Remember: do not hesitate to kill and destroy one who resists and rebels.[42]

After receiving this order the government forces exercised extreme cruelty and did not even spare women and children, selling many

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[41] Changīz. Pahlavān, *Afghānistān: 'Aṣr-i Mujāhidīn va Barāmad-i Ṭālibān* (Tehran: Nashr-i Qatrah, 1999), p. 82.

[42] Faiḍ. Moḥammad, *Sirāj al- Tavārīkh* (Tehran: Mūassasah-i Muṭāla'āt va Intishārāt-i Balkh, 1372. [1993]), p. 834.

of them as slaves in Kabul and other cities. Rape and murder was widespread as well.[43]

'Abd al- Raḥmān declared the enslavement of Hazāra women and children to be legal. Indeed, with the support of Sunnī 'ulema (scholars), he claimed that because the Hazāras were Shī'ites it was therefore lawful. Thousands were sold and this practice became so popular that even the small Hindu community of Afghanistan took advantage of the situation and became actively involved in the business until the Qaẓī (judge) of Qandahār ordered them to stop selling Hazāra slaves. When 'Abd al- Raḥmān learned of this, he found a way to profit from this evil business by ordering that; as a subject sect according to Islamic law, Hindus could not sell or buy Muslim children, and that should they violate this rule, they would be liable to an additional fine of 14,000 rupees.[44]

Again we see how inconsistent 'Abd al- Raḥmān could be when drafting policy, for having just obtained a fatwā from the Sunnī mullāhs declaring the Hazāras non- Muslims, it suited him to regard them as Muslims when it come to other purposes. Nor did their reacquired status in this instance protect them from fellow Muslims who wanted to buy and sell them. According to M. Ṣ. Farhang, Hazāra women and children were not only sold inside

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[43] Ḥasan. Polādī, *The Hazāras* (California: Moghal Pub. Co., 1989), p. 247.

the country, but thousands of them were sold to India.[45] During the three years of war thousands of Hazāra people died, a great number of girls and young women were raped and sold as slaves by government officials and soldiers. The most beautiful of the women and specially the daughters of Hazāra Mīrs and leaders were taken to the royal palace for 'Abd al- Raḥmān's harem, while hundreds more were distributed to his generals and officers as reward for their services. According to eyewitnesses, when the war ended, government officers and soldiers and even ordinary people who had joined in the so-called holy war against the infidel Shī'a Hazāras would seize women and children in their sleep and force them to march barefoot to Kabul or Qandahār where they would sell them or keep them as slaves.[46] This march sometimes took many days, since there was no transportation, and because of the cold weather, lack of food and water, many of those innocent people, particularly children, died on the way. Humiliation and intimidation of Hazāras were openly practiced; they were regarded as second–class citizens (which they were in reality), denied all rights and protection and were left completely defenseless as a punishment for denying the "Iron Amīr".

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[44] Ibid., p. 258.
[45] M. Ṣ. Farhang, *Afghanistan dar Panj Qarn-e Akhīr* (Qom: Ismā'īlīyān Publisher, 1992), p. 395.
[46] Ḥasan Polādī, *The Hazāras* (California: Moghal Pub. Co., 1989), p. 247.

Over the course of three years, tens of thousands of Hazāras were forced to leave their homes and even their country, while at the same time 'Abd al- Raḥmān gradually resettled 12,000 Durāni and 4,000 Ghilzai Pashtun families into the lands of Hazāras. Those Hazāras who left the country migrated to Mashhad in Iran, Quetta in Pakistan and Central Asia. As a result, the city and province of Uruzgān, which had been one of the major centers of the Hazāras, was left with only a small number of them surrounded by a majority of new Pashtun settlers. Those Hazāras who are still living in Pakistan and Iran continue to retain their language, culture and traditions, but the comparatively small number who left for the Central Asia, specially to Bukhāra, were assimilated and all trace of them has been lost.

Kākar has summarized the consequences of the Hazāra war of resistance and also gives a picture of Hazārajāt's destruction:

> 1- Hazara properties and pastures were confiscated and were distributed among the Afghan. Duranis and Ghilzais were settled in the Uruzgan region.
> 2- The Hazara prisoners were sold in the open markets and royal treasury received its share from the slave trade.
> 3- Because of destruction of their houses and crops, and because of the fear of enslavement, many Hazaras took refuge in the neighboring countries.
> 4- The Hazara religious and political leaders were arrested and imprisoned, leaving the masses without any leadership.

5- The Hazaras were religiously persecuted and were forced to follow the Sunni faith. Sunnī religious leaders were stationed all over Hazarajat.[47]

Amīr 'Abd al- Raḥamān died in 1901 and was succeeded by his son Amīr Ḥabibullāh. He tried to make up for his father's cruelty toward the Hazāra people and to that purpose issued a decree abolishing Hazāra slavery. In this decree, which exists in the national archives, he acknowledged his father's atrocities against the Hazāras and asked those who had left the country to return home.[48] However, the practice of slavery continued during the entire reign of Amīr Ḥabibullāh, until 1919 when he was succeeded by his son Amīr Amānullāh Khan, during whose reign the institution of slavery was abolished completely.

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[47] M. Ḥ. Kākar, *The Pacification of the Hazāras of Afghanistan* (New York: Afghanistan Council, Asian Society, 1973), pp. 8-10.

CHAPTER 2:

THE SITUATION OF THE HAZĀRAS LEADING UP-TO THE SAUR (APRIL) REVOLUTION OF 1978

Afghan society is built on family and on semi nomadic tribal units, although with the gradual sedentarization of the tribes, the village community has became increasingly important as well. Among one ethnic group -- the Tājiks -- the traditional tribal organization has all but disappeared. Among all settled communities, tribal influences and allegiances are dwindling or, as in the case of Hazāras, have been discouraged by government action.

The situation of the Hazāras did not change for the better in the last century. The only major improvement was the abolition of slavery, mentioned in the prvious chapter; however, they were still regarded as second-class citizens. In 1929 Amīr Amānullāh Khān was replaced by Nādir Shāh, who had seized power with the help of the Pashtun tribes of the south; in return, he exempted them from paying taxes and from serving in the armed forces, and ultimately came to rely on these Pashtun tribes for the maintenance and consolidation of his power. He pursued the British policy of

"divide and rule," pitting one ethnic group against another to perpetuate a degree of instability and thus prevent any unified opposition to his throne. After four years of rule, however, he was assassinated by a young Hazāra by the name of 'Abd al-Khāliq. The motive of the assassination is not clear, although Yazdānī argues that King Nādir Shāh was killed because of his discriminatory policy towards the Hazāras.[49] 'Abd al- Khāliq, a student and young intellectual, could not tolerate the situation of his people and thought that by killing this man he might change things for better. In the end, however, he and many members of his family were brutally killed by Nādir's brothers Muḥammad Ḥāshim, who was the prime minister from 1930-1946, and by Shāh Maḥmūd, prime minister from 1946-1953. Muḥammad Ḥāshim also served as regent during the minority of the heir to the throne, i.e., his nephew Muḥammad Ẓāhir.

During Muḥammad Ḥāshim's prime ministry, *Pashtunism* became the government's national policy. In an interview conducted in 1937 said:

> from next year it [Pashto] is to become the language of our officials, doing away with Persian. Our legends and our

[48] Ḥassan Polādī, *The Hazāras,* (California: Moghal Pub. Co., 1989), p. 173.
[49]Ḥusain 'Alī Yazdānī, *Pizhūhishī dar Tārīkh-i Hazārahā* (Tehran: H.A. Yazdāni, 1989), p. 260.

> poems will then be understood by every one, we shall draw from them a pride in our culture of the past which will unite us.[50]

This hegemonic national project was fully supported during the (1953-1963) prime ministry of Muḥammad Da'ūd (the king's cousin); nevertheless, it ended in complete failure. Persian had been the lingua franca of Afghanistan for over a millennium as well as being the language of administration, whereas Pashto was mostly a spoken language without a written literary tradition. Louis Dupree tells of how "some non-Pashto speaking, high-ranking officials found it necessary to have clerks translate their Farsi communications into Pashto for transmission to other offices. The recipients, often non-Pashto speaking as well, would have the report to assistants for translation back into Farsi. The scheme collapsed in a welter of translation and retranslation."[51]

From 1929 to 1978, it even became state policy to keep non-Pashtuns, and particularly the Hazāras, out of high- ranking government jobs and to humiliate them at every opportunity. The state strategies of socio-political development, the practice of Pashtun favoritism and the appointment of Pashtuns to administrative posts in non-Pashtun areas continued as usual. Pashtuns continued to serve as governors in most provinces, even

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[50] H. 'Emādī, *State, Revolution and Superpowers in Afghanistan* (New York: Praeger,1990), p. 9.

where the population was predominantly composed of other ethnic groups, whereas a non-Pashtun was never appointed governor of a Pashtun province. The overwhelming majority of administrators were Pashtuns, just as most members of the officers' corps in the armed forces were also sons of Pashtun tribal chiefs.

By pursuing an ill-defined Afghan (Pashtun) nationalist policy, the state officials often, in practice if not in public speeches, denied the existence of 'other', i.e. non-Pashtun, ethno-linguistic communities. Also, in the name of creating national unity, the state consistently and systematically undermined the identity and local autonomy of distinct ethnic and sectarian communities. The invisibility of non-Pashtun groups (even the larger ones like the Tājiks, the Hazāras, the Uzbegs, and the Turkmen) was particularly evident in official histories taught in the government schools.[52] These official histories, written from the perspective of the 'real' Afghans (Pashtun) as the representatives of the true Aryan race, described Afghanistan essentially as a Pashtun creation – an interpretation designed to serve their exclusive identity as the superior race. Members of non-Pashtun groups, including the Tājiks (who also claim to be 'Āryāns) were either denied any positive role in the national historical narratives or

[51] Louis Dupree, *Afghanistan* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1973), p. 66.

were assigned a role that was rendered in a negative light. For example, Amīr Ḥabībullāh, the only Tājik ruler (from January to October 1929) since the creation of Afghanistan until 1979, is described as a thief and dubbed as *Bacha-e Saqao* 'the water carrier's son' in the official histories.

This discriminatory socioeconomic and political policy on the part of governments before 1978 was compounded by the ensuing struggle among various ethnic groups, and particularly by increased tensions between the politically dominant Pashtuns and other national ethnic minorities. This tension was further aggravated by religious differences among the Sunnites, Shī'ites, and Ismā'īlīites.

Some of the most obvious attempts at undermining larger regional identities consisted of redrawing and renaming administrative units (sub-districts, districts and provinces) in the name of 'administrative reforms'. Hazārajāt, the traditional homeland of the Hazāra Shī'īte community, was thus divided and renamed in an effort to undermine Hazāra ethnic memory and social cohesion. The entire scheme of creating and using administrative units as a basis for 'electing' representatives for the two (largely "rubber-stamp") parliaments (*majlis-i shūrā* and *sanā*) and for the (equally meaningless) *Loya Jirga* (Grand National

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[52] William Maley, *Fundamentalism Reborn?* (New York: New York University Press, 1998), pp.

Assembly), was another tactic used by the centralizing state to assure Pashtun dominance of the political process in the nation. At the same time, an imbalance in representation was produced when a much larger number of provinces and districts (*woloswāli* and *'alāqa dārī*) were created in Pashtun areas with fewer inhabitants, compared to a smaller number of such administrative units for significantly larger territories and populations in non-Pashtun regions. During the fifty years between 1929 and 1978, the Pashtunist ethno-centric policy of King Amānullāh's successors, Nādir Shāh and Ẓāhir Shāh, was carried out in the most discriminatory and doctrinaire manner.

The Hazāras, as Farsi speakers, were one of the peoples and cultures most rigidly suppressed during this period though systematic denial of their cultural identity and history. The suppression undergone by the Hazāras during this fifty year period has never been seriously studied, whether in Afghanistan or abroad, although certain aspects have at times been mentioned in passing as part of wider and more general discussions on the Hazāras, such as studies of their origins. Yet, the events of these fifty years were no less destructive and brutal than those experienced by the Hazāras during the much better documented events of the 1980s. These fifty years witnessed the continuous

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and systematic suppression of this people at the hands of those in power.

Indeed, it was as a result of this policy of suppression that the term Hazāra became synonymous with fear and humiliation. In order to escape this humiliation and to prevent any potential harm, many sought to hide their true identity, with some even choosing to change their names. Insults aimed at the Hazāras abound and are still current in some areas of Afghanistan.

> In the 1960s a second Pashtun infiltration of the Hazara area took place once again when about 60,000 Pashtuns from the plains were settled in the Hazarajat. No overt resistance was possible, but this settlement was not welcomed by local population any more than the first. Economic exploitation of the poor Hazaras by the superior Pashtuns with capacity to lend money with high interest rates has further led to friction between the two groups.[53]

The Powindas or Kuchī (terms commonly given to the nomads of eastern Afghanistan), who used to enter India in their annual migration, ultimately occupied the pastures of Hazārajāt and turned this region into their summer camping grounds. This forceful dispossession was shortly afterwards reinforced by the government, which granted the newcomers legal rights and titles to the land. According to Kākar, a *farmān* (order) was issued by the government according to which all pastures throughout Hazārajāt were declared state property. Subsequently, the lands were sold to

the Powindas on a tribal basis.[54] Yet in most cases the state did not even sell Hazāra lands but rather gifted them to Pashtun Powindas in order to encourage them to settle in that area and force the Hazāras to leave the country -- a measure reminiscent of Amīr 'Abd al- Raḥmān's actions a few decades earlier.

Nevertheless, the Powindas did not show any inclination either to settle in the Hazārajāt or mix with the Hazāras. On the contrary, according to Kākar, the two groups collaborated on many levels; and this 'collaboration' made life easier for the Hazāras.[55] Kākar, a Pashtun himself, does not mention the nature of this collaboration or how it benefited the Hazāras. And if this claim is accurate, then it begs the question why, after the events of 1978 (as will be discussed bellow) the Hazāras expelled the powindas from Hazārajāt?

Here another question may be posed: Why did the Pashtun rulers of Afghanistan bear resentment against Hazāras and what was the source of their nationalistic policy for over a century?

According to Gregorian, apologists for Islam placed the major blame for the "backwardness" of Afghanistan on the disunity of believers and their failure to observe and adhere to the laws and true spirit of Islam. Others who held nationalistic views

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[53] Irtizā Ḥusain, *Afghanistan: Some Aspects* (Rawalpindi: Maṭbū'āt-i Ḥurmat, 1984), p. 13.
[54] M. Ḥ. Kākar, *Government and Society in Afghanistan* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1979), p. 126.

in support of the government tried to explain this "backwardness" by historical factors, placing the burden of responsibility on foreign elements, especially the Turko-Mongol invasions of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, which in their view had irreparably damaged the material civilization of the Afghan people during the following centuries and perverted their 'lofty moral fiber'.[56] Among the chief culprits for this were the Hazāras, who were labeled as the descendants of Chengiz Khan. Historical sources indicate that out of the nation's major ethnic groups all, except perhaps the Tājiks, had came to Afghanistan from various places at different times. However, the Pashtun policy makers created and perpetuated the myth that the Hazāras were the outsiders and that they had no right to dwell in this country. Thus, even though the Uzbegs and Turkmen are also of Turkic or Turko-Mongol descent, the Hazāras found themselves more isolated than the latter, first because they were Shī'īte, and secondly because they had no support outside the country. For these reasons the Hazāras made an easy target.

In my view, however, there is another important reason for the traditional hostility of the Pashtuns. In the 10th AH/16th CE century, a Pashtun became, for the first time, ruler of India. This

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[55] Ibid., p. 126.
[56] Vartan Gregorian, *TheEemergence of Modern Afghanistan* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1969), p. 342.

was Ibrāhīm Lōdī, who held power until 932/1526 when he was defeated by Bābur, the founder of the Indian Mughal dynasty. The second Pashtun to rule India was Shir Shāh Sūrī, who in his turn was defeated by Humāyūn, the second
Mughal emperor, in 962/1555. During the reign of Aurangzīb, another Mughal emperor of India, Kushḥāl Khan Khatak, the famous Pashto poet and tribal leader (1613-1689), led a resistance movement against the Mughals until he was defeated and imprisoned in a fortress from 1664 to 1668. On returning to his native land, Khushḥāl Khan led an uprising against Mughal domination. In his speeches and verses he called for the unity of the Afghans and urged them to end tribal discord and internal strife and to join in the struggle against the Great Mughals. During this uprising the tribes that populated the area from Peshawar to Qandahār joined him, but to no avail: in 1664 their persistent and bloody struggle was finally suppressed. Kushḥāl Khan Khatak subsequently became a hero to the Pashtuns and his poetry became a motivation for the nationalist Pashtuns. Since the Mughals had ruled over them, however, and to some extent oppressed them, Pashtun rulers (motivated by nationalist Pashtun scholars) took the opportunity offered by their new power to take revenge upon the so-called Hazāra-Mongols. This historical hatred

continues to cost lives on both sides, even at the present time. Pashtun jingoistic and nationalistic ideals, almost intrinsically hostile to the Hazāras, have even been enshrined in the constitutions of the country. This may be seen from the first constitution of 1931, section one (article 1-4), where it is openly stated that the official religion of Afghanistan would be the Ḥanafī Sharī'a of Sunnī Islam, and where it is specified that the ruler must be a Ḥanafī Muslim. In effect, these loosely worded articles excluded the law and even the legal status of Shī'īte Muslims.[57] Even the constitution of 1964, which was said to be democratic, did not guarantee political and social rights for minorities -- and still less those of the Hazāra Shī'īte minority. Even in this document the Ḥanafī school of law was enshrined as the only recognized school of law in the country.

In order to offset the growing awareness among intellectuals from minority communities and reduce their impact on their communities, the state for the first time appointed two educated Hazāras and one Uzbeg as ministers of planning, mines, and commerce during the constitutional period (1963-1973.) Their roles as ministers within cabinet, however, were largely ceremonial, assigned as they were to unimportant ministries.

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[57] Louis Dupree, *Afghanistan* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1973), p. 464.

The Saur (April) revolution of 1978: its impact on minorities

For almost a century the Pashtun rulers of the country maintained their negative socio-political policy against minorities (and particularly the Hazāras) and implemented it to the extent that even members of these communities believed that the supremacy of the Pashtuns over other ethnic groups was natural and to be taken for granted. The official historians of Afghanistan kept emphasizing this notion as well, until April of 1978. The Saur (April) revolution or coup was a pivotal event in Afghan history, eventhough opinions are divided about it. Since this revolution was led by the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA), a communist party, its opponents have labeled it a coup d'etat, while its supporters and others have continued to claim that it was a revolution. Dozens of books and articles has been published both in favor and in condemnation of this event. However, in this study we have no intention to justify or criticize this incident-- our aim is simply to analyze the impact of this event on the life of the country's minorities and especially that of the Hazāras.

According to the Indian author Refāqat 'Alī Khan, the Saur (April) Revolution was a landmark event in the history of Afghanistan, whose primary effect was to bring the country into the modern era. Writing in 1989, Khan also claims that with this

revolution its leaders tried to end the socio-economic and political backwardness of the country.[58]

We can divide the years after April 1978 into two phases. Phase one lasted until the arrival of the Soviet army in December 1979, while the second phase continued until the capture of Kabul by the Mujāhīdīn in 1992. During the first phase, one faction of the PDPD, called *Khalq* (people), took power and continued the Pashtun nationalistic policy of their predecessors. Power largely remained in the hands of the Pashtun ethnic group, while others were discriminated against; indeed, many influential Hazāras and Shī'ites were sent to jail and ultimately 'disappeared'. Government officials spoke openly of the persecution and genocide of Hazāras. According to Asta Olesen, 'Abdullāh Amīn (President Ḥafiẓullāh Amīn's brother) declared in a public speech in Aibak, Samangān province, in Autumn 1979, that: ' *Tokhm-i Hazāra dar Afghanistan na-memānad*' (i.e. 'the seeds of Hazāras shall not remain in Afghanistan').[59]

Eyewitnesses have confirmed this and other incidents. In June 1979, a group of Hazāras residing in Kabul took to the streets to demonstrate their dissatisfaction with official reforms, only to be stopped and beaten by government forces. After this

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[58] Refāqat 'Alī Khan, *Contemporary Afghanistan and Ppeace Prospects* (New Delhi: New Delhi Publishing house, 1989), p. 13.

incident the government's secret police started searching for Hazāra religious leaders, intellectuals, and other influential people, putting many in jail and executing others. Sometimes even the ordinary people were not spared: in an incident known as one of the bloodiest events in the past few decades of Afghanistan's history, many hundreds of Hazāras perished in the Chandāwul uprising of 1979.

After this incident most of the surviving Hazāras left Kabul and established themselves in villages and rural areas, where they organized resistance against the communist regime. By this means they also managed to expel the Powindas from their lands for the first time in many decades, thereby gaining a measure of autonomy. In December 1979, however, the Soviet army entered Afghanistan and President Ḥafīẓullah Amīn (who during the three months of his rule had killed thousands of innocent people of every ethnic background apart from, but including some, Pashtuns) was killed, following which event power was handed over to the *Parcham* (Flag) faction of Kabul's Communist regime under the leadership of Babrak Kārmal.

With Kārmal's installment as president of the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan, the country had its first non-Pashtun head of the state in more than two hundred years (except for

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[59] Asta Olesen, *Islam and Politics in Afghanistan* (Richmond: Curzon Press Ltd., 1995), p.78.

Ḥabibullah who had reigned in 1929 for 8 months). The return of the Parcham faction to power signaled a change in the ethnic balance as well. In 1981, Sultān 'Alī Kishtmand, a Hazāra, became prime minister of the country, an unimaginable event only a few months earlier. Some other government posts also were given to Hazāras. The constitution of the PDPA in fact explicitly stated:

> All citizens of the Republic of Afghanistan, men or women, regardless of nationality, race, language, tribe, religion, political ideology, education, occupation, ancestry, wealth, social status, or place of residence, are viewed as equals, and entitled to equal legal rights according to the law.[60]

In the wake of this event there appeared the first independent Hazāra publication, *Gharjistān,* in which not only criticism of the government was freely voiced, but many articles were published exposing the inhuman discrimination that Hazāras had suffered in the past at the hands of Pashtun rulers. The most significant improvement, however, was the official recognition of the Hazāras as a people with the same rights as other ethnic groups in Afghanistan. Many Hazāras and other minorities who had fled Ḥafiẓullāh Amīn's persecution returned to Kabul and as a result many of them, especially those in the urban centers, decided to support the government. A few of them even joined the PDPA and were given important positions inside the Party and in

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[60] S. 'A. Mousavī, T*he Hazāras of Afghanistan* (Surrey: Curzon Press, 1998), p. 176.

the government. An increased presence on the part of Hazāras in various institutions was also noticeable, ranging from the university to the army. As a result of the relative freedom enjoyed during the term of office of president Kārmal, many books and articles were published on various aspects of Hazāra society.

Over the previous century, due to the discriminatory policy of the state, the Hazāras had lived on the edge of economic survival; however, during the 1980s, they were finally able to attain a degree of economic prosperity, and perhaps became the best established group in the nation's cities. Their presence could be felt in every aspect of the country's economy. In the summer of 1989, at the opening ceremony of the M*arkaz-e Insijām-e Milliyat-e Hazāra* (Centre for the Coordination of Hazāra National Affairs), the Hazāra Prime Minister of Afghanistan Sultān 'Alī Kishtmand stated:

> The Hazaras as a people have suffered more oppression and violence than any other ethnic groups in the past few decades. They have managed to survive in the face of natural and social obstacles, but have remained deprived of all their national and human rights... [whereas] the Hazaras have over the years contributed greatly, and played a constructive role in the various social and economic areas of the country, they have undertaken the hardest jobs in the public services, and the construction of our cities and roads...risking their health and lives.[61]

[61] Ibid., p. 178.

The fundamental issue for the Hazāras had long been their right to self –determination, and this right was awarded them in the tangible form of permission to establish local administrative offices after the 1980s.

The Position of the Hazāras during the war with the Soviet Union.

Hazāra society was split over the state of affairs in post-1978 Afghanistan, with the majority of the urban Hazāras convinced that they had to take advantage of the new opportunities offered by the Kabul regime and thus cooperate with it. However, rural Hazāras took a different stand. They rejected the government's reforms and, taking advantage of the breakdown of the old regime and the instability of the new one, organized a resistance movement. In the first group were the Hazāras who had remained in Kabul and other cities after 1978 and who co-operated with the Communist regime. They belonged either to the established urban middle class, or the very poor and landless class that had come to the cities either because of the lack of security (due to internal fighting among Hazāra groups) or because economic necessity had forced them to leave their villages.

The majority of those who left their villages came to Kabul, first, because of the better job opportunities and second, because of the egalitarian treatment provided by the government. And in fact many of these joined the second group referred to above, i.e.,

rural Hazāras who took up arms and fought the Soviet army and the Kabul regime until the end, and at the same time remaining suspicious of those urban Hazāras

who did not fight the regime. The war waged by this group of Hazāras' the Soviet army and the Kabul regime was one of the most organized and successful resistance movements of that era. During this period, except for the centre of Bāmiān province, the entire Hazārajāt and all other Hazāra regions were liberated.[62]

Organized resistance by the Hazāra people against the Soviet army and the Kabul regime changed the shape of their own society as well. For anyone familiar with this society before 1978 these changes constituted nothing less than a revolution, in which the outlook, values and social contracts previously dominant in society were exchanged for a completely new set. The roles and meanings of older titles like Mīr, Arbāb, Khan and Sayyed changed completely, so that no longer did these feudal categories exercise control over the less privileged. In many instances, those who have the titles remained local commanders while real control was in the hands of local party leaders. The Hazāra political movement, furthermore, led by the political parties, was developed mainly in Iran. All large and small parties at the beginning had one objective. They all wanted to participate in the resistance

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[62] Ibid., p. 180.

movement against the Soviet occupation, but once this was ended, their objectives changed (as shall be seen in the next chapter). The Hazāra Shī'īte parties outnumbered the Sunnī parties, despite the smaller population of Shī's. The reasons for the emergence of such a large number of Hazāra groups can be summed up as follows. First, this sudden increase in the number of political groups was a clear reaction to nearly a century of political suppression and isolation. Second, these groups were not formed on the basis of clan, tribe or region, but on the basis of different Islamic political ideologies. Third, the Hazāras were divided among themselves into three religious sects, i.e., Sunnī, Shī'īte, and Ismā'īlīte -- a division that had been further aggravated and encouraged by the Pashtun rulers through their policy to 'divide and rule.' Fourth, and last, the Iranian religious and political circles wanted to have an influence on the religious and political life of the Shī'ites and Hazāras of Afghanistan.

The Iranian factor was particularly influentialat that time. As soon as one of the groups created or suppored by the Iranians refused to follow their instructions, they would undermine it and create another one. As a result of this interference, the first half of the 1980s was a period of intense internal fighting within Hazārajāt. The main reason for this conflict was the emergence of

new Hazāra groups from Iran.[63] This is why, ever since the emergence of these groups in the 1980s, Hazāra movements are often described as ' Iranian backed', and as a consequence dismissed and discredited. Nevertheless, although most of Afghanistan's Hazāra and Shī'a groups during this period had (as some continue to have), close links with Iran, an important change began to accur. In the years of Jihād against the Soviet army, Mazāri, the leader of the Waḥdat party, noticed that the Iranian government did not support the Shī'ites of Afghanistan for their own sake, but instead for the sake of bringing them under Iranian influence. He consequently began to distance himself from Iran and started to propagate local Hazāra nationalism. This situation provoked the Iranian leadership and compelled them to support a faction of the Shī'ites headed by Moḥammad Akbari, thereby causing further disunity within the Hazāra community.

In the second half of the 1980s, the need for a united front emerged among the Hazāra and Shī'a political parties. One of the main reasons for this was Iranian pressure, in the face of comparable pressure being put by Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and Western governments on the Sunnī groups based in Pakistan to unite. A second reason was that these political groups had lost their credibility in the eyes of the Hazāra population; therefore,

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[63] Ibid., p. 180.

they had additional motivation to resolve their problems. And finally, the groups themselves came to recognize their ineffectiveness in the domestic, regional and international arenas over the future of Afghanistan, confronted with the reality that their Sunni counterparts in Pakistan and the international community did not take them seriously. For the above mentioned reasons, and also in view of the painful lesson learnt from the failure of the Hazāra uprising of the 1890s, the importance of unity and solidarity was felt among the Shī'a and Hazāra groups and they finally united by the end of the 1980s.

In 1987, as a result of pressure by Iran, eight groups based in that country formed a coalition by the name of *Shorā-e Ittifāq*, which was controlled by Iranian religious circles. Few Hazāras however supported this measure and, consequently, in 1989 there emerged from the *Shorā-e Ittifāq* another party by the name of Ḥizb-e Waḥdat-e Islāmī (Islamic United Party), which was totally independent of Iranian influence; in fact, its leadership was based inside Afghanistan. A people that had never in its history succeeded in organizing under one umbrella, or into a single political unit, had finally come together. For this reason we can assert that the last two decades and particularly the most recent one, have been of exceptional significance in the history of the Hazāras.

Following its formation in 1989, the Ḥizb-e Waḥdat made rapid progress inside Afghanistan. The party brought under its control almost the whole of Central Afghanistan, as well as other Hazāra and Shī'a inhabitants of the country, with two exceptions, one being the Ismā'īlīes, who had their own organization, but were on good terms with Ḥizb-e Waḥdat, and the other being the Ḥizb-e Ḥarakat-e Islāmi,- which consisted mainly of the Sayyeds and Qizilbāsh. In the process peace and security, which was main concern of the population, were restored in the area. In 1991, Ḥizb-e Waḥdat was for the first time invited, as a political force, to participate in an international gathering on Afghanistan, i.e., the Conference of Islamic Foreign Ministers, held in Istanbul. Ḥizb-e Waḥdat was officially invited to take part in discussion alongside the seven Sunnī groups based in Pakistan, and to hold talks with the Soviet deputy President and Foreign Minister in Moscow.[64] In addition, the Ḥizb-e Waḥdat opened representative offices in several countries and organized a review of Afghanistan's political problems. The formation of the Ḥizb-e Waḥdat meant that, for the first time, the Hazāras of Afghanistan were able to be present and act independently at the regional and international levels, to set forth their demands and views and to fight for them. It also meant that Pashtuns finally had to take the Hazāras into consideration.

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[64] Ibid., p. 193.

Until 1978, the general socio-political structure of Afghanistan had made it impossible for the Hazāra people to emerge from isolation. The breakdown of this structure in 1978, however, signaled the emergence of a new social and political structure, which allowed some room for maneuver to all ethnic groups, including Hazāras. This emergence of the Shī'a and Hazāra community from political, social and economic isolation, allowed them to establish contacts and relations with neighboring countries and other sympathizers abroad. Now the Hazāras had their own political organization and solid leadership as well as favourable social conditions. The event of 1978 also marked the end of more than two hundred years of Pashtun dominance and the start of a new era in Afghanistan. Oppression, discrimination and fear of the central government led by the Pashtuns were replaced by hope and opportunity. This historical turning point, along with the power vacuum at the centre, signaled the end of Pashtun domination over the Hazāras, especially in their traditional home of Hazārajāt.

After almost one century of suppression and isolation, taking such a significant role in the national political developments of Afghanistan was a surprise even to the Hazāras themselves. However, because of the relationship that the Hazāras enjoyed with the Islamic regime of Iran they were often under -

estimated and not fully recognized by the international community. All the attention of the Western countries, international community and media was focused on the seven Sunni and mainly Pashtun groups settled in Pakistan. And it was the Pashtuns who received the bulk of the financial aid and won all the credit for the success of the war against the Soviet army and their supporters in Kabul. According to William Maley's observation, moreover, before the civil war the Hazāras were even reluctant to refer to themselves 'Hazāras', but with the war and the events of 1978 this attitude changed; two decades of independence from Kabul led to a remarkable ethnic self-confidence. Modern Hazāra nationalists even began to claim descent from Chengiz Khan, thus hoping to raise the status of the Hazāras within the Afghan value system as it applied to social groups.

CHAPTER 3:

THE HAZĀRAS AND THE POST SOVIET AFGHANISTAN

The Hazāras and the Mujāhidīn regime

For most of the decade after the Marxist revolution of 1978, analysts assumed that the source of Afghanistan's troubles lay in the dispute between Soviet-aligned Marxists and Islamic fundamentalists. But gradually, observers began to consider the role of ethnic and sectarian divisions in the conflict. Islam, which on the surface was the force that united Afghanistan's diverse and multi-ethnic society, was being used as a tool by and against all parties to the conflict. After the arrival of the Mujāhidīn in 1992, the anti-Shi'a and anti-Hazāra pogrom carried out by Burhānuddīn Rabbānī, Aḥmad Shāh Mas'ūd and their Wahabbī ally 'Abdur Rabb Rasoul Sayyāf, did much to denigrate Islam and the unity of the country. For the first time in the history of Afghanistan, the unifying factor of Islam had become a deadly weapon in the hands of extremists, a factor for division, fragmentation and enormous bloodshed.

The structure of Afghanistan's old regime imposed a pattern of ethnic division on the diverse and fragmented local societies. This division defined the relations of various groups to the state, although the local systems of identity and ethnic relations differed

from those defined by the state. The country was also divided into distinct regions with different ethnic compositions. After the departure of the Soviet troops in 1989, the seven recognized Sunnī Mujāhidīn parties based in Pakistan chose (through a council) an 'Interim Islamic Government of Afghanistan'. They excluded all participation by the Kabul regime, the officials of the old regime who had fled to the West, and the Shī'a parties. The council was composed almost entirely of the Ghilzai Pashtuns from eastern Afghanistan. Domination of the council by one ethnic group (Pashtuns) intensified ethnic resentments. By the beginning of 1992, President Najībullāh, who was no longer receiving Soviet aid and could no longer rule by redistributing externally supplied resources, reverted to the time-tested tool of Afghan rulers: manipulating social segmentation. He tried to assert control over the northern supply line by using Pashtun regular army officers. He also created a military command structure for the northern zone that placed Pashtun generals in charge of coordinating the activities of non-Pashtun militias. Nonetheless, the government's political and economic efforts in the north strengthened the capacity for collective action on the part of the region's inhabitants, once the overlay of foreign-assisted, Pashtun dominated administration was stripped away.

Already in March 1990, some high-ranking Pashtun army officers under the leadership of the defense minister Shahnawāz Tanai had united with the Ḥizb-e Islami leader Gulbuddīn Hikmatyār and the Pakistani ISI against president Najībullāh and tried to overthrow him. However, when this coup attempt did not succeed, the Tājiks made a secret alliance with Rabbānī and Mas'ūd, while the Uzbegs joined 'Abd-al Rashīd Dostum in the north. Sultān 'Ali Kishtmand, the only Hazāra in the PDPA Party leadership, resigned in the summer of 1991. He complained of Pashtun domination and supported the political demands of the Waḥdat Party for regional autonomy and representation in the central government.

After the fall of Najībullāh in 1992, four principal armed factions fought for power in Kabul. These groups had different ethnic compositions and all, except the Hazāras, had different sources of foreign support according to the regions in which they were based. Each group, to some extent, also enjoyed income from local taxes or customs, as well as (in some cases) from the drug trade and other enterprises.[65] The first of these, under the leadership of 'Abd-al Rashīd Dostum, consisted of a largely Uzbeg group of former government militia that also included members of other ethnic groups from northern Afghanistan, including the

[65] Aḥmed Rashīd, *Ṭālibān* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), p. 27.

former Tājik president of Afghanistan, Babrak Kārmal, and his followers who joined him in the city of Māzar-e Sharīf. Dostum received support from the government of Uzbekistan and perhaps also from Russia. The second group was headed by Burhānuddīn Rabbāni and his chief commander Aḥmad Shāh Ma'sūd, who led a mainly Tājik militia that contained a limited number of troops from other ethnic groups. They were allied with the small Shī'a party referred to earlier, i.e., Harakat-i Islami which was mainly composed of Sayyeds and Qizilbāsh minorities. After Rabbānī became acting president in June 1992, they received some financial support and supplies from the Saudi government and enjoyed the use of Afghanistan's newly printed bank notes. Later on they received military support from Russia as well.[66] The third group operated under Hikmatyār, who led a mainly Pashtun following. He continued to receive help from Arab and Pakistani Islamic radicals, and also received income from the drug trade. The fourth and final group, the Waḥdat Party, which had its base in Hazārajāt, organized the Shī'a Hazāras of Kabul, and, contrary to the claims of some that it was supported by Iran, operated independently.

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[66] Barnett Rubbin, *The Fragmentation of Afghanistan* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), p. 273.

Under the Pashtuns, Afghanistan had been ruled by a variety of systems, ranging from monarchy to Communism and jihād. In the process, the Pashtun intellectual and educated classes had managed to prolong their domination and nationalistic policies under different guises. But the collapse of monarchy, failure of the nationalistic policy and the imposition of Communism showed that this domination had reached its end and that only with the help of non-Pashtuns could the government survive (as had happened a few times in the past).[67] Those who claimed that Pashtuns constituted more than 50% of the population realized during the war against the Soviets that without the help of other ethnic groups the Pashtuns would not be able to defend the country that they had portrayed as exclusively theirs. They had quietly to accept certain realities. The Tājiks, who in the past had been the junior ruling partner of Pashtuns, and the Hazāras, traditionally assigned the most inferior and difficult jobs in the society, had made a considerable contribution to the war against the Russians. These people had produced first class leaders for Afghan society and had shown to the world that they were no less patriotic than the Pashtuns. They had proved that they had every right to be part of the country's leadership and that, together, they even out-numbered the Pashtuns.

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[67] Changīz. Pahlavān, *Afghanistan: 'Aṣr-i Mujāhidīn va Barāmad-i Ṭāibān* (Tehran: Nashr-I

Foreign involvement in the war saw attempts by Pakistan's generals to put Gulbuddīn Ḥikmatyār (the leader of Ḥizb-i Islami) in power in Afghanistan in order to assure themselves of a friendly government that would give them strategic depth against India and also please the Pashtun population of Pakistan.[68] Their Sa'ūdi and remaining Arab allies on the other hand wanted to expand their own version of Sunnī Islam and to stop the spread of Iranian influence by strengthening the Wahhabi-oriented Sayyāf (the leader of Islamic Unity party).[69] However, Ḥikmatyār and his supporters never achieved their goals and power came to be concentrated mainly in the hands of Mas'ūd, the Tājik commander and Ḥikmatyār's old rival. Even though Rabbāni was the leader of the Jam'īat Party, real power was in the hands of Mas'ūd, his chief commander. In 1992, even before the fall of President Najībullāh, Mas'ūd was leading a poweful army of some 20,000 men, mostly Tājiks. He was one of the most brilliant military commanders and charismatic personalities to emerge from the jihād (holy war) against the Soviets. Named the 'Lion of Panjsher' after his birthplace in the Tājik homeland of the Panjsher valley (north of Kabul), he successfully resisted many huge Soviet offensives and fought against them in the Panjsher valley in the

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Qatrah, 1999), p. 40.
[68] Aḥmed Rashīd, *Ṭālibān* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), p. 184.
[69] Ibid., p. 199.

1980s. Soviet generals called him unbeatable and a master of guerrilla fighting. His enmity against Pakistan for supporting Gulbuddīn Ḥikmatyār and then the Ṭālibān, however, developed into an obsession. During the jihād, Mas'ūd argued that Pakistan's Security Service, the ISI, should not interfere in the strategy of war, and that it should be left to the Afghans to decide how to carry it on. But Pakistan was supplying all the US-provided weapons to the Mujāhidīn parties and a major portion went to Gulbuddīn Ḥikmatyār, which created an enmity between the two groups that still exists. Meanwhile, four years of power in Kabul had turned Mas'ūd's army into arrogant masters who harassed civilians, raped women, stole from shops and confiscated people's homes and lands, which is why the residents of Kabul at first welcomed the Ṭālibān when they entered Kabul.[70]

Mas'ūd was a good military commander, but he was not a good politician. According to Aḥmed Rashīd, he was not interested in making peace, and was a very poor negotiator. Nor could he make a sustainable alliance, either with the Pashtuns or with any other ethnic group. [71]

The legacy of the old Pashtun regimes in persecuting of the Hazāra community affected other ethnic groups in the country in such a way that, even when a Tājik government came to power in

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[70] Ibid., p. 21.

1992, it tried to oppress the Hazāras and exclude them from political power. The Hazāras, after a century of oppression and a decade of war against Soviet troops, had expected to be included in the new Mujāhidīn government, and be justly represented. However, on being completely ignored yet again, they distanced themselves from Rabbānī's government and did not allow the latter's troops to be stationed in the west of Kabul, which was under their control. They were as fully autonomous in the Hazārajāt as Dostum (the Uzbeg militia leader) was in the north. Outside analysts, like Rabbānī and many Pashtuns as well, interpreted these developments as signs of an Iranian attempt to break up Afghanistan, but in reality the assertiveness of the Hazāras was a sign of their willingness to integrate for the first time in a century. They were demanding a greater share in government rather than independence. In December 1992 Ma'sūd and Rabbānī, with the help of Wahhabī Sayyāf, launched their first attack against the Hazāras in order to take control of the Shī'a neighborhoods of Kabul. As a result many civilians were killed and many more taken as prisoners, while gross violations of human rights were carried out.

The western part of Kabul, as we pointed out, is populated mainly by Hazāras. During the rule of Rabbānī and Mas'ūd from

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[71] Ibid., p. 52.

1992 to 1995, this area was the scene of the worst fighting between the Hazāras and government troops, making this part of the city the country's main battlefield. The reason for the fighting from the Hazāras' perspective was to defend and stand up for their ethnic and religious identity against the regime in Kabul on the one hand, and to claim their share of power on the other, since the Waḥdat Party, the only truly representative political voice of the Hazāras, had been excluded for a second time from the Mujāhidīn interim government. The government had completely ignored the fate of the Shī'a and Hazāra populations, in effect denying their very existence in Afghanistan. The struggle mounted by Waḥdat Party and its forces in defense of the rights of the Hazāras came to be known as the 'resistance of West Kabul'. This resistance, which continued for some three years and ended in defeat, marked a turning point in the contemporary history of Afghanistan in general, and in the fate of the Hazāra population in particular. The 'resistance of West Kabul', which coincidently began one century after the Hazāra uprisings against Amīr 'Abd al-Raḥmān and which was likewise brutally crushed, was this time directed against a Tājik- dominated regime.[72]

Of all the atrocities committed during this period, the massacre at Afshār stands out. Afshār is an area in the west of

[72] S. 'A. Mousavī, T*he Hazāras of Afghanistan* (Surrey: Curzon Press, 1998), p. 198.

Kabul, populated mainly by ethnic Hazāras and Shī'as of various backgrounds. On 11 February 1993, one of the most horrific moments in the Afghan civil war occurred in this district. According to an Amnesty International report; hundreds of its Hazāra residents were massacred by government forces, at the direct orders of President Rabbānī and his commander–in-chief Mas'ūd. The roles played by Sayyāf, a Wahhābī leader of the Mujāhidīn, and by traitors within the Waḥdat Party, were also crucial. The Hazāras were faced with a huge offensive from every side and had no choice except to retreat from their positions. Following the withdrawal, Mas'ūd's and Sayyāf's forces raided the area. They killed, raped, set houses on fire and took young boys and girls as captives. According to reports some 700 people are estimated to have been killed or to have disappeared.[73] The massacre was condemned by international human rights organizations. Rabbānī also condemned the massacre as one of his government's foremost mistakes, but blamed his soldiers for the massacre. However, he never brought the perpetrators to justice.[74]

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[73] *Amnesty international report* 1994 (London: Amnesty international report,1994), p. 52.

[74] Changīz. Pahlavān, *Afghanistan: 'Aṣr-i Mujāhidīn va Barāmad-i Ṭāilbān* (Tehran: Nashr-I Qatrah, 1999), p. 47. The silence of certain scholarly sources regarding this event is strange. Witness the fact that Changīz Pahlavān, an Iranian scholar who is an expert on Afghanistan and who traveled several times to the country when it was under Mujāhidīn rule, does not strangely enough, mention this tragic event

The fall of West Kabul had a deep effect on Hazāra society, but the latter was able to reorganize itself quickly. This costly experience had made the Hazāras more aware and unified them more than ever before. One result was that they lost their trust in their Sayyids (traditional religious leaders of Shī'a Hazāra society). The Sayyids, for whom the Hazāras once had deep respect and who were regarded as descendents of the Prophet Moḥammad, had, However, considered Hazāras lower than other ethnic groups. They used to marry Hazāra girls, but marying their own daughters to Hazāras was a taboo. In the 1990s, Hazāra intellectuals and the Waḥdat Party membership realized that the Sayyids were compromising their integrity and that they, as a people, should take their destiny into their own hands. From that time on, therefore, they distanced themselves from the Sayyids and their party (Ḥarakat-i Islami). When the Sayyids lost their position, they allied themselves with the government and played a major role in crushing resistance in West Kabul. The result was that religion lost its importance as a unifying factor in Afghan Shī'a society and was replaced by ethnicity. Today, Afghanistan's Shī'as have two political parties, one consisting mainly of Sayyeds

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in his book. On the contrary he praises Rabbānī and Mas'ūd for their openness to all ethnic groups and to some extent blames th Hazāras for demanding too much. It is emblematic of Iranian silence at the excesses of Persian-speaking Tājiks.

and non- Hazāras (Ḥarakat-i Islami), and the other made up exclusively of Hazāras (Waḥdat Party).

The resistance of West Kabul in the 1990s had a number of positive effects as well. In the first place it brought about a real solidarity between Hazāras inside and outside Afghanistan. The cooperation of Hazāras the world over had played a major role in sustaining the Waḥdat Party by extending its roots outside the country. Also, the hatred that had divided the twelver Shī'ites and Ismā'ilīites of Afghanistan for many centuries was gradually disappearing. After the fall of West Kabul, many Shi'a Hazāras were forced to leave their homes and had nowhere to go. The Ismā'ilīites, who had maintained normal relations with the government, assisted these refugees. The leaders of the Waḥdat Party called upon the Shi'a Hazāras in their public speeches to forget the religious differences that had affected their relations with other Hazāras, pointing out that the Hazāras in the past century were persecuted for their ethnicity rather than religion. In an interview with the BBC, in response to the question "has the Waḥdat Party, which [before 1992] had *Jihād* as its main aim, now replaced that aim with its struggle for the attainment of the rights of minority and ethnic groups?", Mazārī replied: "Yes. As long as the presence of the Russians [Soviets] and their puppet regime continued, a *Jihād* was necessary. [We] fought the *Jihād* until the

Russians [Soviet] left and their puppet regime failed. But now that the people rule, in order to form a government it is necessary to take into consideration the rights of different ethnic groups".[75]

The rapid political evolution of the Hazāras during the 1990s has resulted in greater unity (between Sunnī and Shī'a Hazāras) and solidarity—their primary social and political objectives. Inter-ethnic conflict among the Hazāras was replaced by struggle for national recognition and participation, for the first time, in the country's political life. During these years the Hazāras emerged as a national force to be reckoned with. The Hazāra and Shī'a populations effectively abandaned *taqiyyah* (dissimulation) for social protest and activism.[76]

The seizure of power by the Tājiks in 1992 marked their third attempt at governing the country, but this, like earlier attempts, was doomed to fail. This third time (like the first) their failure was largely due to an erroneous political strategy based on the false notion that reliance on a single group in a multi-ethnic society and having modern weaponry would ensure their continued domination. Rabbānī and Mas'ūd, however, did not support broad-based government and this policy forced other ethnic communities, especially the Hazāras, Uzbegs, Turkmen,

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[75] S. 'A. Mousavī, *The Hazāras of Afghanistan* (Surrey: Curzon Press, 1998), p. 220.
[76] Ibid., p. 189.

and the Pashtuns, to oppose the Kabul regime. The ruling group used every means to pit one community against another in order to ensure its own survival. Mas'ūd for instance, as defense minister, instructed the security department to fuel ethnic conflict especially between Hazāras and Pashtuns.

> Considering the progress of your work, you are instructed to authorize every department of the National Security to intensify the war between Hizb-e Wahdat and Hizb-e Harakat on the basis of ethnic cleansing between Hazaras and Pashtuns to the extent that its effects must incite hostilities among inhabitants of central and northern parts of Afghanistan either in the form of Shiite and Sunni differences or as hostilities between Hazaras and Pashtuns which would be a sufficient ground for preoccupation of future military fronts.[77]

The implementation of such a policy paved the way to widespread ethnic cleansing, looting of public property and destruction of the economic, social, and administrative centers of the country. Pro-Rabbānī and Mas'ūd Tājiks in the Panjsher valley have been accused of being the main actors in all these crimes. The brutality of the Rabbānī regime towards the Hazāras in Kabul in March 1995, just before the fall of Kabul to the Ṭālibān, and its subsequent war against that ethnic group, have been characterized by Amnesty International as follows:

> On 12 March President Rabbani's soldiers reportedly rampaged through Kart-e Seh, looting houses, killing and beating unarmed civilians and raping Hazara

[77] H. 'Emādī, "Radical Islam, Jihād and Civil War in Afghanistan," *International Asian Forum*, 4, no. 1-2, (1999), p. 22.

> women...One family interviewed by a foreign journalist...said President Rabbani's soldiers had told them they wanted to 'drink the blood of the Hazaras'. Medical workers in the area confirmed at the time at least six incidents of rape and two attempted rapes, but believed the actual number was much higher. Scores of prisoners from the Hazara ethnic groups have reportedly been beaten for a long period in the Qala-e Haider Khan detention center. The prisoners have included women who had reportedly been abducted by the group's guards in order to be sold into prostitution or to be given as 'gifts' to financial supporters.[78]

Rabbānī and Mas'ūd had tried to gain legitimacy for their government, but they made the same mistake that the Pashtun regimes of Kabul had made in the past, namely, relying on one ethnic group and excluding the rest from power. Not only were they equally unsuccessful, but as a result of their failed policy the country found itself even more ethnically divided than ever before, and the civil war reached its worst level. After four years of struggle the Rabbānī government collapsed and another Pashtun government, known as the Ṭālibān, came to dominate the political scene of Afghanistan.

The Hazāras and the Ṭālibān

The defeat of the Mujāhidīn in Kabul and their retreat before Ṭālibān troops represented a new chapter in the history of Afghanistan and the fortunes of the Hazāras. To understand this

[78] Ibid., p. 23.

development, though, we need to begin by investigating who the Ṭālibān were.

Afghanistan was in a state of virtual disintegration just before the Ṭālibān emerged at the end of 1994. The country was divided into fiefdoms ruled by warlord who fought each other, switched sides, made new allies and betrayed old ones. The predominantly Tājik government of President Burhānuddīn Rabbānī controlled Kabul, its environs and the north-east of the country, while the three provinces in the west were controlled by Ismā'il Khan, a local warlord. The eastern and southern provinces bordering Pakistan were under the control of different Pashtun Mujāhidīn commanders including Ḥikmatyār. In the north the Uzbegs, in alliance with the Ismā'īlites, controlled six provinces. In central Afghanistan the Hazāras controlled the province of Bāmiān and a few other districts. The southern city of Qandahār in particular was divided amongst dozens of ex-Mujāhidīn warlords and bandits who seized homes and farms and abused the population, kidnapping young girls and boys for their sexual pleasure, robbing the merchants and fighting in the streets. For those Mujāhidīn who had fought Najībullāh and the Soviets and had gone home or left to continue their studies in the religious schools of Pakistan or Qandahār, the situation was particularly painful. These students, who had known one another for a long

period and had fought the Soviets together, analyzed the situation and decided to distance themselves from the political parties of the Mujāhidīn. A number of them gathered and chose for themselves the name *Ṭālibān* (religious students) and signaled that they represented a movement aimed at cleansing society rather than a party trying to grab power. According to Mullāh 'Omar, the supreme leader of the Ṭālibān:

> We took up arms to achieve the aims of the Afghan Jihād and save our people from further suffering at the hands of so-called Mujāhidīn. We had complete faith in God Almighty. We never forgot that. He can bless us with victory or plunge us into defeat.[79]

There is an entire library of myths and stories explaining how Mullāh 'Omar was able to mobilize a small group of Ṭālibān and with it successfully challenge the powerful Qandahār warlords. However, the Ṭālibān's closest ties were with Pakistan where many of them had grown up and studied in m*adrasas* (religious schools) run by the Jam'iat al-'Ulamā-e Islam (JUI), a fundamentalist party with considerable support amongst the Pashtuns in Balochistān and the North West Frontier Province. Pakistan also wanted to please its own Pashtun population and from the beginning supported the Ṭālibān movement. So there is some speculation that Pakistan's ISI, might have been involved in the creation of the

[79] Aḥmed Rashīd, *Ṭālibān* (New haven: Yale University Press, 2000), p. 23.

Ṭālibān.[80] Nevertheless the fact remains that the Mujāhidīn government had not fulfilled its obligations. Instead of bringing peace and security to the country, it had caused a further deterioration of the situation. The Afghan Jihād, though based on Islamic values, had been unable to establish a real Islamic state. Even in this situation, with the Mujāhidīn unable to convince their opponents to choose a peaceful solution, the Northern Alliance was still not an option.

The fact was, howevere, that the Pashtuns were already lost to any attempt at compromise. Long excluded from power and unable to produce their own leadership, they were beginning to turn their attention towards radical Islam. This Islam had a Pashtun nationalistic origin: even if it preached anti-communist ideas, in reality it welcomed all the Pashtuns from Najībullāh's regime and made use of them. From the beginning the Pashtuns were not in favor of the Mujāhidīn government, for since it was dominated by Tājiks they felt that it had to be overthrown. Moreover, with Rabbānī and Mas'ūd cool towards Pakistan because of its support for Ḥikmatyār, the Pakistan government – itself disappointed with the Mujāhidīn leaders and Ḥikmatyār's inability to rally the Pashtuns-- turned towards the Ṭālibān.

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[80] Changīz. Pahlavān, *Afghanistan: 'Aṣr-i Mujāhidīn va Barāmad-i Ṭālibān* (Tehran: Nashr-I Qatrah, 1999), p. 23.

Setting aside the many other reasons that motivated Pakistan and some other countries to bring the Ṭālibān into power, this would account well for the political emergence of the latter[81]. According to Aḥmed Rashīd:

> The Pakistani military was convinced that other ethnic groups would not do their bidding and continued to back first Hikmatyar and then Taliban. Some 20% of the Pakistan army was made up of Pakistani Pashtuns and the pro-Pashtun and Islamic fundamentalist lobby within the ISI and the military remained determined to achieve a Pashtun victory in Afghanistan. However, by 1994 Hikmatyar had clearly failed, losing ground militarily, while his extremism divided the Pashtuns, the majority of whom loathed him. Pakistan was getting tired of backing a loser and was looking around other potential Pashtun proxies.[82]

As mentioned earlier, the Ṭālibān did not like the Mujāhidīn parties or their leaders, particularly non–Pashtuns. At the beginning of 1995 they captured Ḥikmatyār's headquarters some 30 kilometres south of Kabul. The Hazāras, who were engaged in fighting against the government forces, found themselves between the Ṭālibān and their opponents in Kabul. In desperation the Hazāras made a deal with the advancing Ṭālibān, yielding their heavy weapons and positions to them. The Ṭālibān, however, either accidentally or intentionally, killed the Hazāra leader 'Abdul 'Ali Mazārī. After this incedent the bloody ethnic hostility between Hazāras and Pashtuns, which had lain dormant for some time, came into the

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[81] Space does not permit here a full account of the rise of the Ṭālibān; this, however, can easily be found in Aḥmed Rashīd's book "Ṭālibān".

open. The ramifications of these events will be seen when we come to discuss the advance of the Ṭālibān in the north.

The Ṭālibān leadership was particularly harsh towards Aḥmad Shāh Mas'ūd, Rabbānī's right hand man and his defense minister and commander- in- chief of his forces, They blamed him for all the killings and destruction in Afghanistan. In this they were not too far wrong; Mas'ūd did believe in solving issues by coercion. His general attitude towards others is known to have been harsh and blunt, and having fought against the Soviets without the support of the United States or that of Pakistan, he had developed a superiority complex.[83]

In September 1996 Ṭālibān forces finally captured Kabul, and shortly afterwards, they imposed the strictest Islamic discipline on the population. All women were banned from work, and girl's schools and colleges were closed down.[84] TV, videos, music and all games were banned, and men were forced to grow beards. The Persian speaking residents of Kabul and other cities were obliged to speak Pashto, for since the Ṭālibān were mostly Pashtuns they wanted every one else to speak their language. After the capture of Kabul the Ṭālibān marched on the north, in order to consolidate their power over the whole country. The

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[82] Aḥmed Rashīd, *Ṭālibān* (New haven: Yale University Press, 2000), p. 26.
[83] Kamāl Matinuddīn,. *The Ṭālibān Phenomenon* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 43.

northern provinces, as we noted earlier, were under the control of the Uzbegs and their allies, the Hazāras and Ismā'īlīites, and their commander was General Dostum. Nevertheless, the second-in-command, General Malik Pahlawān, accused Dostum of having murdered his brother Rasūl Pahlawān. The Ṭālibān, taking advantage of this situation, bribed General Malik and promised him power were he to betray Dostum. General Malik accepted the Ṭālibān offer and in May 1997 allowed heavily armed Ṭālibān troops to enter the city of Mazār. Dostum fled to Uzbekistan and then to Turkey, while the Ṭālibān, the majority of whom had never been in the north before, arrogantly started disarming the fierce Uzbeg and Hazāra forces while at the same time declaring the imposition of Sharī'a law, shutting down the schools and the university and preventing women from working. Mazār was the most liberal city in Afghanistan at that time, with a population of mixed ethnicity and religious faiths. The arrival of the Ṭālibān therefore spelled disaster for the city. The Hazāras of Mazār, who bore resentment against the Ṭālibān for the killing of their leader in Kabul, resisted being disarmed and then the rest of the population rose in revolt. Untrained in street fighting and not knowing the city, the Ṭālibān were easy victims as they retreated

[84] However, they did not close the girl's schools in the eastern Pashtun provinces.

from the city, trying to escape the firing from the walls and roofs of the houses. Hundreds of Ṭālibān were killed and captured.

The catastrophe in the north and the heavy fighting that followed in central Afghanistan and north of Kabul widened the ethnic divide in Afghanistan between Pashtuns and non-Pashtuns. The country was now virtually split along north-south lines and also along Pashtun and non-Pashtun lines. As a result of the Hazāra uprising in the north, the Ṭālibān proceeded to massacre Shī'a Hazāra villagers everywhere. In 1997, the Ṭālibān even managed to close all the roads from the south, west and east that entered Hazārajāt. This and the fact that the mountain passes were closed by winter snow made it impossible for food convoys to travel to Bāmiān and Hazārajāt. Close to one million people suffered from shortages of all kinds. Yet despite the siege and decades of poor treatment and discrimination by the Pashtun rulers of Kabul, the Hazāras were now much more resilient. They had been instrumental in defeating the Ṭālibān in Mazār in May and again in October 1997. They had also repulsed repeated Ṭālibān attacks against Bāmiān. The Hazāras before that had constituted the third and weakest link in the Uzbeg-Tājik-Hazāra alliance confronting the Ṭālibān, but now the Hazāras showed a

new-found confidence and pride in their organization and their fighting capacity.[85]

This sense of pride and self-confidence, however, tempted them to make a grave strategic mistake. They wanted to have more power than the Uzbegs and Tājiks in the city of Mazār, something the Uzbegs -- in the past decade the main force in the north -- could not accept. In February 1998, heavy fighting erupted inside Mazār between the Uzbegs and the Hazāras. As a result of this division between Uzbegs and Hazāras the Ṭālibān launched another major offensive to take the north. Thousands of new Afghan, Pakistani and Arab recruits from refugee camps and *madrasas* arrived to enlist with the Ṭālibān. In August 1998, the Ṭālibān captured Dostum's headquarters at the city of Shiberghān, after which for the second time he fled to Uzbekistan and later to Turkey. Several of his commanders accepted the Ṭālibān's bribes and switched sides and the Hazāra troops outside the city of Mazār faced a surprise Ṭālibān attack. The Hazāra fighters, who were under siege from every direction, resisted until their last bullet, and only around 100 survived to reach Bāmiān (their headquarters). Ṭālibān fighters riding on pickup trucks through many parts of the city opened fire on any moving creature. An operation to exact revenge for the previous year's losses in Mazār

[85]Aḥmed Rashīd, *Ṭālibān* (New haven: Yale University Press, 2000), p. 69.

was launched against the civilian population and specifically non-Pashtun ethnic groups. The Hazāras were thus targeted deliberately.[86]

According to Aḥmed Rashīd, out of 1,500 strong men only 100 survived.[87] Thousands of people (fighters and civilians) were massacred and contrary to Islamic rules, which demands immediate burial, bodies were left to rot on the streets and no one was allowed to bury them. This time the Ṭālibān, in order not to repeat their previous mistake when they entered Mazār without guides, asked local Pashtuns to to lead them to the homes of Hazāras. The reports produced by witnesses who fled to Pakistan and the Central Asian republics and also reports by International human rights investigators indicate that in August 1998, Ṭālibān militiamen and their allies systematically executed between 2,000 and 5,000 civilians in one of the deadliest mass killings of civilians in two decades of warfare in Afghanistan[88]. According to some reports, the Ṭālibān militiamen searched house to house for males of fighting age who belonged to the Hazāra ethnic minority. Those who were capable of speaking Pashto, or whose face lacked the Hazāra characteristics, sporadically escaped, but most were

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[86] William Maley,. *Fundamentalism Reborn?* (New York: New York University Press, 1998), p. 22.

[87] Aḥmed Rashīd, *Ṭālibān* (New haven: Yale University Press, 2000), p. 73.

[88] M.J.Ghohari, *The Ṭālibān Ascent to Power* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 102-103.

betrayed by not being able to pronounce the Sunnī prayers. Discovered Hazāras were usually shot on the spot, preferably in the face or testicles while some had their throats cut. Others, thrown into the city's overcrowded jail, were executed by firing squads or loaded into tractor-trailers, where they sweltered all day in the summer sun, with doors shut, until most perished from suffocation or heat stroke. In the evenings, heavy trucks hauled the bodies to the nearby desert and dumped them in heaps like trash, according to accounts offered by eyewitnesses and reported by world media.[89]

The aim of the Ṭālibān was to cleanse the north of the Shī'a and the Hazāras. What is more, independent observers have stated that although the Ṭālibān fought its way to dominance under the unifying banner of Islam, in ethnic terms its rule represented a return to the pre-communist days of rule by Pashtuns. This theory is confirmed by reports to the effect that in taking over Mazār-e-Sharīf, the Ṭālibān evidently showed a sectarian twist. According to Michael Griffin and many eyewitnesses, Mullāh Manān Niāzī, governor of Mazār, announced from the mosques that "Hazāras are not Muslim, they are Shī'a. They are kāfir (infidel), and, therefore, no better than animals." Seventy men had their throats cut at the tomb of 'Abdul 'Alī Mazārī

[89] Ibid., pp. 102-103.

(former leader of the Hazāra Waḥdat Party, killed by the Ṭālibān in 1995} in the Ḥalāl ritual reserved for sheep. Moreover, Shī'a patients were dragged from their beds in hospital and taken outside and shot. [90]

The ethno-religious motivation behind some of the violations was further evident, according to Human Rights Watch, in public pronouncements by the Ṭālibān installed governor, who threatened that Hazāras who remained would be killed if they did not convert to Sunnī Islam. The Ṭālibān, however, denounced the reports of international media and humanitarian organization as "vast propaganda," maintaining that its forces had killed only combatants, confiscated firearms from civilians and temporarily evacuated some residents. In response to these reports, the Ṭālibān also mentioned the summary execution in May 1997 of an estimated 2,000 to 3,000 Ṭālibān prisoners in the Mazār-e-Sharīf area, implicating Hazāras in these killings. The truth however, is that while Hazāras led the uprising against the Ṭālibān after the earlier offensive in May 1997, it was a militia dominated by ethnic Uzbegs that quickly took control of the situation and rounded up the Ṭālibān prisoners.[91]

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[90] Michael Griffin, *Reaping the Whirlwind: The Ṭalibān Movement in Afghanistan* (,. London: Pluto Press, 2001), p. 191.

[91] M.J.Ghoharī, *The Ṭālibān Ascent to Power* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 102-103.

Bad signals had already been received in Hazārajāt. Three weeks after the fall of Mazār, the Ṭālibān launched another huge offensive against Hazāras in their stronghold of Bāmiyān. The Hazāras capitulated after a very long siege, but when the Ṭālibān column streamed into the city that had once boasted some 40,000 inhabitants, it found only fifty old men --who were promptly killed.[92]

Throughout the Ṭālibān era the Hazāras were officially denied the most basic of human rights. And from being one of the most prosperous communities in the country (especially in the cities), the Hazāras became one of the poorest at the hands of the Ṭālibān. After being forced to leave Kabul in 1996, many Hazāras moved to Mazār and reestablished their businesses, but when the Ṭālibān recaptured Mazār, they lost all their fortunes and in several cases, their lives. Many of those who escaped the massacre fled to neighboring countries.

Five years of Ṭālibān rule and their anti-Hazāra policies created a new social, political, and military solidarity among the Hazāra people. This solidarity was like a new political movement that emphasized sociopolitical survival rather than the political ideology of the Waḥdat Party leadership.[93] In fact, this new

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[92]Aḥmed Rashīd, *Ṭālibān* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), p. 76.
[93] Nojumī, Ne'matullāḥ. *The Rise of the Ṭālibān in Afghanistan* (New York: Palgrave, 2002), p. 168.

movement included many Hazāra intellectuals and community leaders who did not believe in the political ideology of the Waḥdat Party. United by the cause of improving the existing current sociopolitical situation, they felt a solidarity that made them stronger in the face of their opponents. The Hazāras thus survived another genocide a hundred years after 'Abd al- Raḥmān's first attempt, emerging from the experience more powerful than ever before.

The Hazāras after the Ṭālibān

Until the events of 11th September 2001, Afghanistan was a forgotten story as far as the world at large was concerned, or one that hardly mattered with the end of the cold war, but the tragedy, trauma and sufferings of the Afghan people continued without any likelihood of an end. What was once glorified as a "freedom struggle" or "Jihād" had degenerated into a full-fledged "civil war" with all its horrible consequences for the people of Afghanistan in particular and the region in general. The Ṭālibān, who controlled about 85% of the country, were facing fierce resistance from the non-Pashtun population in the northern and central parts of Afghanistan. The Tājiks, Hazāras and Uzbegs who composed the main force of the Northern Alliance, fought alongside the

Americans in order to oust the Ṭālibān and achieved this goal by the end of 2001.

The various components of the Northern Alliance had an agreement to share power after the collapse of the Ṭālibān; however, this did not happen. The Tājiks of the Panjsher valley (north of Kabul) were the first to enter the capital and did not allow any other allied forces (particularly the Hazāras who were already in close proximity to Kabul) to join them, claiming that there would be ethnic clashes again. The Bonn conference, held in December 2001 under the supervision of the United Nations, proved once again that the Tājiks of the Panjsher had not learned from their past failures. The conference, to begin with, did not have any real representation from the Hazāras and Uzbegs. What representation there was consisted mainly of Sayyids picked by the Tājiks of Panjsher from the party of Ḥarakat-i Islami and sent to Bonn as Hazāra representitives. The Bonn conference chose a transitional government for the period of six months until the *Loya Jirga* was called. The government was not, however, supported by the majority of the people, including the Hazāras, since it was largely dominated by the Tājiks of Panjsher. Nevertheless, the *Loya Jirga,* which was held in June 2002 in Kabul, and which attracted some 1800 representitives from across the country and around the world, was attended by more than

200 Hazāras. For the first time a Hazāra became vice-president of the country while a few other Hazāras (including one woman) were appointed as ministers.

The country is still struggling to attain peace, security and stability. Dissatisfaction among all communities still exists. The Pashtuns, who do not have the same power as before, have had to adjust to the new reality. The Tājiks of Panjsher too have had to realize that, alone and without the help of other communities, they cannot rule the country. Finally the Hazāras, Uzbegs and other smaller groups are still obliged to fight for their rights in order to attain political equality in the Afghanistan of the 21st century.

Conclusion

This study began by looking at the origin of the Hazāras, reviewing the different theories offered by scholars to account for their presence in Afghanistan. As we mentioned earlier, most of these theories were developed by foreigners, several of whom were not even scholars; indeed, in many cases these latter represented their colonial government's interests and were thus willing to view the situation through colored lenses. Out of all these travelers, moreover, only a few actuallyvisited Hazārajāt, and it is doubtful whether they even spoke the language of the people. We pointed out the weaknesses of the existing predominant theories, and also the new suggestions proposed by G.T. Vigne, William Moorcraft, Mohan Lal and S. 'A. Mousavī, all of whom had it in common that they based themselves on earlier assumptions, repeating and building upon whatever had been said previously. These theories, we concluded, fall into about five categories. There is no doubt that the origins of the Hazāras can be traced through one or another of these five categories—and of them all we indicated the most likely explanation--but determine which one most accurately explains these origins, requires a very extensive anthropological study.

The next part of the thesis surveyed the events surrounding the Hazāras' uprising against Amīr 'Abd al-Raḥmān in the 1890s and the consequences of their defeat at his hand. Before the arrival of 'Abd al-Raḥmān into power, there had been no major ethnic conflict between the different people in Afghanistan, but from that point onwards the situation changed. Except for King Amānullāh, the grandson of 'Abd al-Raḥmān, every other Pashtun ruler of Afghanistan that held political power during the 20th century tried to promote Pashtun ethnic chauvinism, while continuing a system that subjected the minorities to abuse and humiliation.

We further analyzed the nationalistic policies of the Pashtun rulers from 1929 to 1978, their perpetuation of discrimination against other ethnic and religious groups, and the situation of the Hazāras in this period. Then we described how the events of 1978 changed the political and social aspect of Afghan society and opened up opportunities for the minorities in Afghanistan. The Hazāras took advantage of the situation to achieve substantial political, social and economic success, though not without cost. By the 1990s, the Hazāras, under the umbrella of the Waḥdat Party--a political and military force unifying almost all Hazāras regardless of their tribal and regional differences—began participating in the current political events in Afghanistan. We

also spoke about the negative role that Sayyeds played in Hazāra society and the decline of their influence among the latter. As well, we showed the failure of the Mujāhidīn and Ṭālibān governments in refusing to accept a broad-based government in Afghanistan. Afghanistan's current rulers can talk about nationhood, development and peace, within the context of a democratic, open and pluralistic society where all ethnic groups are involved in the decision-making process, but the absence of other ethnic groups from the process of building a free, democratic and progressive Afghanistan, will have grave consequences as the events of the last twenty three years of civil war have demonstrated.

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