

Rethinking Governance in Afghanistan

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Any future government in Afghanistan will have to resolve the problem of representation in a government based on population, and most importantly, on territorial representation that will accommodate most major ethnic groups and regional alignments.

One year after the beginning of Operation Enduring Freedom, Afghanistan is, relatively speaking, a peaceful place. For a country in the throes of civil wars since the early 1970s, there is a sense that placidity reigns. The central government is weak, and frankly, this is welcome. For decades, external donors promoted an ineffective Pashtun hegemony in Kabul while they disregarded outlying areas. Yet the question remains: Can Afghanistan's regional powers, now backed by individual or multilateral external reconstruction agencies and security forces, sustain this relative peace?

Answering this question requires delving into a matter often overlooked in the literature on Afghanistan: the strong link between ethnicity and territory. An investigation into the ethnic territorial situation in Afghanistan suggests a potential path towards successful governance in the country.

The overwhelming issue facing a new Afghanistan is not security per se, nor is it, as others have claimed, the creation of a central government with a standing army. The challenge is balancing regional powers—the new *khans*, or warlords, as they are pejoratively described in the Western press—with their assumed right to govern their supporters and territory in a manner that minimizes human conflict. This article argues that this action can be accomplished only by devolving centralized nation-state power out of Kabul, the perennial seat of conflict.

A HISTORY OF INSTABILITY

Afghanistan exists at the moment in a state of suspense. An informal ceasefire after decades of conflict has pervaded the country. Peace, as such, does not prevail so much as an autarchic equilibrium rules. For the first time since the 19th century, no party is dominant,

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and the Pashtun hegemony has been broken. The Kohestani General Fahim, from the Panjshir valley in the Hindukush, has the envious task of maintaining control of Kabul while regional *khans* consolidate power. In the run-up to the 2004 elections there will be a jockeying for power that was not forecast in the 2001 Bonn Agreement, but that is hardly a new phenomenon in Afghanistan.

Kabul goes into convulsions every 40 to 50 years. The most recent episode began in 1973 when King Mohammad Zahir Shah, an ethnic Pashtun from the Durrani confederation, was ousted by his cousin in a bloodless coup. Prior to 1973, a rebellion had broken out in 1929 after the British status of protectorate lapsed and local insurgents from Kabul Kohestan exiled the Pashtun king, Amunullah.

Tracing the history of Afghanistan reveals similar outcomes of minimal leadership successes and many catastrophes. Throughout these skirmishes, battles and wars, one feature is clear: The Pashtun claims on an Afghan empire were never realized.

The lessons to be learned from this litany of failed Pashtun rulers are many, but this article focuses on one: For an Afghan state to survive, it must both include representatives of the different ethnic groups and simultaneously account for the complexities of its geographic space and distinctive ties that its residents have to it.¹ Simply put, space, or rather territory, must have representation in any future solution to this perennial problem of conflict. Up until this point, this has not been the case.

ETHNIC IDENTITY IN AFGHANISTAN

Fredrik Barth's book, *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organization of Culture Differences*, made a substantial contribution to the anthropological debate over ethnic identity when it was published three decades ago. Barth suggested that ethnic identities are not determined by groups assigning them to one another; people invent their own ethnic identities based on how they perceive themselves in relation to other people. By introducing this idea, he shifted the focus of defining ethnic identity from an objectivist structuralist perspective to a subjectivist social interactionist perspective. Ethnic boundary in the Barthian sense does not refer to physical boundaries, but rather to social boundaries among groups.²

In examining ethnic identity in Afghanistan, Barth's approach discounts one crucial aspect: ethnic groups often define themselves in relation to the land from which they hail. Pashtuns, for example, and now the media, assign the ethnonym Tajik to people who speak Dari, the local dialect of Persian. The Tajiks themselves, however, never use that ethnonym, preferring to use the name of the valleys they come from to identify themselves, such as Panjshiri, Munjani and Andarabi. They identify with a place, not a tribe, nor its mythical ori-

¹ Ethnic conflict is rampant elsewhere in South Asia. David Zurick et al., "Ethnic Fragmentation in South Asia," *Arab World Geographer* 5 (2002), 53-70.

² Fredrik Barth, *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organization of Cultural Differences* (Boston: Little Brown, 1969).

gins, like the Pashtuns do. By using the aspatial ethnonym "Tajik," the Pashtuns are, in a sense, denying Tajiks a territorial basis in Afghanistan and therefore are discrediting their right to spatial representation in any government in Kabul. The Western perception of Afghanistan's ethnic groups is also in line with the Barthian mode of ethnicity. By viewing regional dominance and authority as a hindrance to a uniform, aspatial multicultural government dominated from Kabul, they are ignoring the essential link between ethnicity and territory in Afghanistan.

Afghanistan has 55 ethnic groups who speak 45 languages.³ For millennia, people have streamed southward out of Central Asia across the Hindukush passes into Kabul Kohistan and down into the fertile Indo-Gangetic plains in the Indian subcontinent. They have intermixed with local people, and many have settled along the way. Over the last 500 years, in addition, members of the Pashtun tribes—Durrani and Ghilzai—have migrated out of the Quetta-Kandahar region and into the Kabul region.

The word "Afghanistan" itself is a British construction, first used in the Anglo-Persian Treaty of 1801. It includes more than those known colloquially as Afghans, that is, Pashtuns. Each major region sharing a contiguous border with Afghanistan has ethnic groups now residing in Afghanistan. Turkmen, Uzbeks, Tajiks and smaller ethnic groups have cultural ties across the borders of Afghanistan. Indeed, there are more Pashtuns in Pakistan than in Afghanistan. Since 1880, when the British created the state of Afghanistan, there have been massive internal population movements at the instigation of the Pashtun royalty as part of their plan to Pashtunize the country. Pashtuns were moved from their stronghold in southern Afghanistan to land confiscated from other ethnic groups. The Hazara in central Afghanistan had their pastures given to Pashtun pastoralists by a royal edict.⁴

Even though the Pashtun royal ruler was ousted in 1973 the quest to Pashtunize the country continued with the Taliban government, which seized power in 1996. Taliban is a Pashto word with a Pashto suffix attached to the Arabic word "talib." Contrary to popular belief, the Taliban was an ethnic movement, not a religious group. Twenty-six out of twenty-seven members of the Taliban government's leadership were Pashtuns; many of them were determined to bring the various ethnic groups of Afghanistan under traditional Pashtun conservative rural culture.

Major and minor ethnic groups have been shut out of representation in the government, largely because they lived in remote regions of Afghanistan, far from Kabul. This spatial inequality enabled the Pashtun monarchy, backed by their kinfolk, to exert hegemonic control over the military, clergy, judiciary, commercial and civil authorities in Kabul throughout the 20th century.

³ Nigel J. R. Allan, "Defining Place and People in Afghanistan," *Post-Soviet Geography and Economics* 42, no. 8 (2002): 545-560.

⁴ Hasan Kakar, "The Pacification of the Hazaras of Afghanistan," Occasional Paper no. 4, New York Afghanistan Council, Asia Society, 1973.

ETHNICITY AND TERRITORY

In the literature on ethnic groups in Afghanistan, there are many disputes over the link between ethnicity and territory. Failing to grasp the depth of the connection in Afghanistan, foreigners often denigrate the association.⁵ This article points to two crucial factors in this debate: the notion of *manteqa* and the migration patterns of people in and out of Afghanistan.

Throughout much of the Muslim world, *manteqa* designates an idea of shared space in which its inhabitants maintain a great degree of cultural uniformity. The notion, however, is not unique to the Middle Eastern world. We find similar South Asian terms of *bahal* in Nepal, *mohalla* in Pakistan, *nukkad* in India, *para* in Bangladesh and *syver-kade* in Sri Lanka. The word *manteqa* conjures up an image of neighborhood and landscape.

In their essay on *manteqa*, Frederic Roussel and Marie-Pierre Caley recognize the importance of the term and its various interpretations in rural Afghanistan.⁶ They use *manteqa* as a spatial administrative planning unit for the delivery of relief and reconstruction aid in Afghanistan through their Paris-based nongovernmental organization (NGO) Agency for Technical Cooperation and Development. As the people identify with this space, it is easier to energize the local population into a cohesive body to collaborate in reconstruction projects that have to manage disjointed segments of the local community.

No evidence of *manteqa* appears in Pashtun society. Knowing that foreigners are familiar with the term, Pashtuns may use the word when conversing with foreigners, but when questioned closely, they cannot identify their *manteqa*. This is not surprising, as Pashtuns are an intrusive ethnic group in Afghanistan. They conquered other ethnic groups, appropriating their land and water. Their migration patterns over the past 500 years from the Quetta-Kandahar region to Ghazni, Kabul and Peshawar, when they either displaced or integrated other groups in the process, are well known.

Instead of *manteqa*, Pashtuns use the word *watan*, which for them denotes a notion of a home place, but it can even mean all of Afghanistan. *Watan* operates at a much larger scale than *manteqa*, which is bounded space. Although the boundaries are invisible, they are well known. A journey by motor vehicle in the non-Pashtun rural areas, for example, is now punctuated by frequent halts where drivers exchange pleasantries with roadside sentries. Reports from expatriates traveling in rural Afghanistan contain frequent complaints of having to pay tolls at stoppages. They see these extractions as highway robbery, though they are, of course, merely fees for right of passage from one *manteqa* to another. Roussel has remarked

⁵ The significance of the ethnic, highly regional composition of the Taliban appears neglected by writers on the Taliban period. See for example, William Maley, ed., *Fundamentalism Reborn? Afghanistan and the Taliban*. (London: Zed Books, 2002); Ahmed Rashid, *Taliban: Islam, Oil and the New Great Game in Central Asia* (London: I. B. Taurus, 2001).

⁶ Frederic Roussel and Marie-Pierre Caley, "Les 'Manteqas': Le Puzzle Souterrain de l'Afghanistan," unpublished paper (Peshawar: Agency for Technical Cooperation and Development, 1993).

that foreigners traveling on foot during the *jihad* were often handed over from one guide or bodyguard to another at remote locations in the countryside. This exchange did not occur in areas occupied by Pashtuns.

Non-Pashtuns will defend their *manteqa* with force; as a rule, Pashtuns are oblivious to this. The carnage wrought by the Pashtun Taliban in the Kuh Daman valley, the orchards and breadbasket that sustained the Kabul area for millennia, were pulverized by the Taliban in 1999. The Taliban used a scorched-earth policy to destroy the Kohestani ("Tajik") *manteqas*, for they knew each *manteqa* had a commander who could marshal support from his collateral neighbors to oppose them.

Another characteristic of ethnicity and territory in Afghanistan is the shifting allegiances to the land, often the result of forcible removals of non-Pashtuns by Pashtuns, that have marked the area for centuries. Under royal and military authority, the Pashtuns expropriated cultivatable land, pastures and water rights from other ethnic groups. In early 2003, Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International both reported instances of a substantial forced exodus of Pashtun refugees out of the northern areas where their ancestors were settled a century before by the Pashtun king.⁷ By spending their winters in present-day Pakistan on the plains and tributaries of the Indus River and their summers on the newly conquered pastures in Afghanistan, these Pashtun nomads instituted debt-credit relationships with the Hazara. This resulted in penury and the forfeiture of their land.⁸ Now that this area of northern Afghanistan is under control of a local indigenous ethnic commander, local residents are expelling the Pashtuns who took their land and water a century ago under royalist decrees.

A large population of seasonal migrants also affects the territorial makeup of the land. The problem with a highly mobile population of seasonal migrants and long-term permanent migration is not well understood. For millennia residents have streamed out of the Hindukush-Himalaya down to the Indo-Gangetic plains, part of a long, historic process in which Afghans (*rohilla*, hill people)—predominantly Pakhtun/Pashtun—migrate down the Gangetic valley, depositing and creating their culture and landscapes of Rohilkhand and Oudh in northern India, altering the ethnic makeup of the land.⁹

Ignorance of *manteqa* and migration could breed problems for the nascent government in Kabul. In 2002 The United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) and NGOs enticed two million émigrés, exiles and refugees back to Afghanistan with inducements of

⁷ *All Our Hopes Are Crushed*, Human Rights Watch Reports 14, no. 7 (2002).

⁸ Daniel Balland, "Nomadic Pastoralists and Sedentary Hosts in the Central and Western Hindukush Mountains," in *Human Impact on Mountains*, eds. Nigel J.R. Allan, Gregory W. Knapp, and Christoph Stadel (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 1987), 265-276.

⁹ Jos Gommans, *The Rise of the Indo-Afghan Empire, 1710-1780* (New York: E. J. Brill, 1997); David E. Sopher, "Rohilkhand and Oudh: An Exploration of Social Gradients Across a Political Frontier," in Richard G. Fox, *Realm and Region in Traditional India* (Durham: Duke University Program in Comparative Studies in Southern Asia, 1977).

food and domestic supplies.¹⁰ Only a fraction of these people can reclaim their former livelihoods. After being laid waste for decades, the land is ruined, and its ancient and modern irrigation systems have been destroyed. During the civil wars over the last 30 years, new claimants supplanted former absentee landowners, and clashes with returnees have been all too common. The refugees, who have lived in refugee camps for two decades, do not have the skills or fitness to rehabilitate their former homeland. For most refugees, return simply means trading one refugee camp for another. The World Food Program (WFP) and other relief agencies keep them functioning in an elementary way by providing a modicum of food, and if they are lucky, some shelter. Meanwhile, more than one million Afghan refugees have resettled all over Pakistan. Many live profitable lives engaged in pursuits that contribute to their own welfare and that of their adopted country. Pashtun refugees tend to remain in Pakistan where many Pashtuns reside, while members of other ethnic groups journey to Kabul to live in camps and occasionally go back to their home areas.

The repatriation of millions of former Afghan residents back to Afghanistan is a risky, never mind foolish, enterprise on the part of Westerners. The reason is obvious: throngs of people living in reduced living space, with limited resources, is a recipe for disaster. Urban turmoil appears a likely consequence of this international policy.

FUTURE GOVERNANCE: A COIMPERIUM REGIME AND REGIONAL SUBSIDIARITY?

Foremost among plans to redress spatial inequality among ethnic groups in Afghanistan must be the desire to create regional parity among major ethnic groups. Regionally diverse groups must be given a representative voice, even if they vary substantially from a majority group like the Pashtuns. The genius of the U.S. system of government is that the Senate represents the territorial states in an equal manner. Small populations have their voices heard and their needs met, thereby creating cohesion for the nation-state. Afghanistan lacks this spatial cohesion.

Furthermore, under the 2001 Bonn agreement, the UN agencies in Kabul are in charge of what has become a feeding frenzy, as international ambulance chasers and carpetbaggers seek to devour the substantial funding for relief and reconstruction. The alienation of the Afghan population in this scramble for funds is worrisome. The lack of coordination in aid activities in Kabul currently poses a major threat to the stability and security of the country. One year after the cessation of Operation Enduring Freedom, major temporary road and bridge repair

¹⁰ A recent critique of the conduct of UNHCR is David Turton and Peter Marsden, *Taking Refugees for a Ride? The Politics of Refugee Return to Afghanistan* (Kabul: Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit, 2002). The inducements included wheat flour for a family for a three months, vegetable oil, sugar, personal sanitary supplies, polyethylene sheeting and hand tools. "Recyclers," that is, refugees entering Afghanistan only for material benefits and promises, often return to Pakistan, and occasionally Iran, only to re-enter to obtain the benefits. According to Turton and Marsden, there is pressure put on Pashtun refugees to repatriate to Afghanistan to boost the potential Pashtun voting bloc in the forthcoming voting on the constitution.

has yet to begin. Despite massive infusions of international aid, the principal north-south road from the Shomali plains to Kabul, as of November 2002, still has its two major bridges lying in the riverbeds with no temporary bridges functioning. To the east of Kabul on the road to Jalalabad, a road journey that once took two hours now takes eight. No temporary measures to alleviate these conditions have been made.

The building of an Afghan nation with strong central control, put forth in 2001 in Bonn and the 2002 follow-up meeting, is a fantasy of social democratic European governments.¹¹ The solution for Afghanistan may instead lie in considering and implementing the features of a coimperium form of governance. According to Alain Coret's definition, "a coimperium is a regime in which a partial international community exercises certain competencies over a portion of the territory of a third state."¹² The frequently cited example is that of Sudan, established by Egypt and Britain as a condominium in 1899. Both countries later assumed coimperium supervision after 1922.¹³ Third-party jurisdiction of a condominium-coimperium nature also prevailed over physical features, such as rivers in the case of Luxembourg under the Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle in 1816, gulfs and bays in the cases of El Salvador and Nicaragua in 1914 and islands in the case of the Caribbean in 1917.

Under a coimperium regime, the state still holds sovereign rights over the territory but competences by the coimperium community can be exercised. At the same time, any government in Kabul must be grounded in the history and tradition of the people currently living in what we call Afghanistan. All regions of the country must be able to participate in decisions that affect them. This involves maintaining indigenous suzerainty by creating regions dominated by particular ethnic groups that have a powerful presence both at the local and national levels. These features of a coimperium are already taking place in Afghanistan.

THE REGIONALIZATION OF FOREIGN AID

Following the model of a coimperium, a pattern of regionalizing donor aid is already becoming apparent. America is now letting the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) contract for reconstruction in the Kandahar region, which has been the principal beneficiary of American largesse since the 1950s.¹⁴ Germany, the biggest donor

¹¹ For early proponents of a division of Afghanistan into internal entities compatible with the contextual conditions existing there include, see Nigel J. R. Allan, "Cut Afghanistan in Two," *Sacramento Bee*, 14 October 2001, L4; Philip Bowring, "Why Not Redraw Afghanistan's Borders-Or Even Break it Up?" *International Herald Tribune*, 8 December 2001; Marina Ottaway and Anatol Lieven, "Rebuilding Afghanistan: Fantasy versus Reality," Carnegie Endowment for International Peace Policy Brief, no. 12, (January 2002); S. Frederick Starr, "A Federated Afghanistan?" *Central Asia Caucasus Institute Biweekly Briefing*, 7 November 2001.

¹² Vincent P. Bantz, "The International Legal Status of Condominia," *Florida Journal of International Law* 12 (1998): 102.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 77-151.

¹⁴ Nick Cullather, "Damming Afghanistan: Modernization in a Buffer State," *Journal of American History* 89 (September 2002): 512-537.

so far, is sending field personnel to the Paktia-Paktika region, which has long been a focus of German interest. Since 1973, France has kept its links open through refugee and reconstruction projects to Kohestanis (Tajiks) in Kabul Kohestan, the central Hindukush and the Badakshanis in the northeast. Both Daud in Kunduz/Khanabad and Dostum in the Mazar area received support from the Soviet Union and now from Russia. Ismail Khan in the Herat region receives subsidies from Iran. The Pashtuns, Gul Agha in Kandahar and Bacha Khan Zadran in Khost are powerful forces in the south and east. Italy is allotted quasi-jurisdiction over the Jalalabad region in the east. Undoubtedly another neighbor, Pakistan, will reestablish its presence with former Pashtun clients in the east. Afghanistan is thus receiving financial subsidies from foreign donors, as it has done in the past.¹⁵ The crucial distinction is that not all the money is staying in Kabul, as it did during the Muhammadzai royalist period. Rather, it is the profligate UN agencies in Kabul that are earning the ire of the general population as they squander substantial resources on the presumption of creating a strong central government served by legions of expatriates.

Under the leadership of the Agency Coordinating Body for Afghan Relief (ACBAR), NGOs are now upset by the American military decision to send Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs), composed of members of the U.S. National Guard and reservists, out to different regions of the country. The NGOs regard these forces, dressed in civilian clothes but bearing arms, as an infringement on territory they successfully occupied with refugees in Pakistan for over two decades.¹⁶ They feel having these Americans in close proximity will taint them, even though PRTs bring skills that many NGOs lack in rural reconstruction, such as medical and health care, communications, engineering and mechanical skills for repairing machinery in local use and construction skills in rebuilding roads and buildings. Few NGOs have personnel with this vital expertise. As the PRTs span out over the country, they too settle in regions. By linking the regionalization of the foreign donors with the PRTs, a stronger externally driven regionalization of Afghanistan is developing.

¹⁵ Many press reports from the region, Southwest Asia, Central Asia, and South Asia mention that Afghanistan's neighbors are "interfering" with the country. In fact, neighbors are merely representing their state's interests in the future of Afghanistan, which has exhibited great instability since the 1973 coup d'etat took place. See, for example, Ahmed Rashid, "Afghanistan Torn as its Neighbours Resume Their Battle for Influence," *Daily Telegraph*, 10 February 2003; Rashid, "New Battles for Afghanistan Begin," *Daily Times* (Pakistan), 21 January 2003; "Jockeying for Influence, Neighbors Undermine Afghan Pact," EurasiaNet Eurasia Insight, 17 January 2003, at www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/eavoll503_pr.shtml; Ron Synovitz "Analysts Saying Neighbors Interfering in Kabul's Internal Affairs," Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, 7 February 2003.

¹⁶ Protecting their very existence in Afghanistan, the charities involved in relief operations ordered a special critical inquiry into the status of the PRTs (originally termed Joint Reconstruction Teams by U.S. Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense Joseph Collins). Barbara J. Stapleton, "A British Agencies Afghanistan Group Briefing Paper on the Development of Joint Regional Teams in Afghanistan," at www.reliefweb.int/library/documents/2003/baag-afg-08jan.pdf.

CONCLUSION

Any future government in Afghanistan will have to resolve the problem of representation in a government based on population, and most importantly, on territorial representation that will accommodate most major ethnic groups and regional alignments.¹⁷ At present, the Constitutional Drafting Commission, created by the 2001 Bonn Agreement, is due to submit its final draft constitution in October 2003. Difficulties in resolving contentious issues will arise. The commission contains three members of the fascist Afghan Millat party, which seeks total Pashtun autonomy over Afghanistan.

A bicameral government that gives political representation to territorial units as well as population is a necessity for the elimination of spatial inequality among regions and ethnic groups. A return to the pre-1964 provincial boundaries where government was broken down into the large regions of Kabul, Mushraqi, Kandahar, Herat, Turkestan, Kataghan and Hazarajat could possibly take place again.

Nonetheless, there are difficult tasks ahead. In examining the situation that has developed since the 2001 Bonn Agreement, it is quite clear that the aims of some of the arbiters and negotiators in Bonn have not been met. Despite efforts to create a strong central government, Afghanistan has gone the other direction by moving towards strong regional identities through the formation of territories dominated by powerful leaders, though not all are based on ethnic affiliation. International aid organizations and coalition partners have had to deal with these regional powers, denigrated as "warlords" in the Western media, while attempting to get aid out to the provinces. These *khans*, or powerful leaders, are often closely tied to particular ethnic groups and their territory and intimately know the inner workings of indigenous spatial organization.

In Afghanistan, all politics have become local, to paraphrase a familiar American saying. In the past, a central government elite in Kabul absorbed the subsidies of the British, and then the subsidies from America and the Soviet Union/Russia, while neglecting non-Kabul

¹⁷ In January 2003, Afghanistan's Vice-President and Chairman of the Constitutional Drafting Commission, Nematullah Shahrani, discussed a federal system for Afghanistan. Shahrani, an Uzbek, wrote a 2003 article entitled "The Future Political Order of Afghanistan" in the journal *Omaid Weekly*, no. 557. A pro-Taliban paper from Pakistan's Dharb-I Mu'min published a highly critical article of Shahrani's proposition that Afghanistan be federalized. According to the publication, Afghanistan would be divided into seven regions containing the following current provinces, Pashtunistan-Laghman, Konar, Paktia, Paktika, Khost, Kandahar-Zabul, Kandahar, Urozgan, Helmand, Aryana-Nimroz, Farah, Herat, Ghor, Badghis, Turkistan-Faryab, Saripul, Balkh, Samangan, Kunduz, Khurasan-Badashshan, Takhar, Baghlan, Pamir-Kapisa, Kabul and Logar. Excluded from this garbled list are current provinces like Nuristan, as well as a mislocated region, Khorasan, known for centuries for containing the Herat region in northwestern Afghanistan. Nevertheless, the scheme compares favorably with the pre-1964 constitution provinces, which were deliberately destroyed by Kabul Pashtun hegemony in the new 1964 constitution, designed to break up macro provincial autonomy. Perhaps reflecting the U.S. government's position, one report notes that "under the current conditions, federalism is tantamount to partition of Afghanistan." See Amin Tarzi, "Afghanistan's New Constitution: Towards Consolidation or Fragmentation?" Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Afghanistan Report 2, no. 3 (5 February 2003), at www.rferl.org/afghan-report/2003/01/3-160103.asp.

Afghanistan. Returning elites who perceive themselves as modern, supported by UN personnel, seek to graft on to Afghanistan an alien structure of government that has never worked. The continual convulsions in Kabul every 40 to 50 years for at least two centuries have underscored the foolishness of having one ethnic group, the Pashtuns, backed by a royalist presence, ruling from Kabul.

Critics might see this pattern of regional subsidiarity as impossible to maintain in the future because of the risk of local warfare. A *coimperium*, with the strong regional presence of major donor nations, would provide a balance throughout the regions of the country. The International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), if extended throughout the country, could act as a spatial security force much like the American military force did in the Sinai Desert. Major nation-states, acting as a *coimperium*, could have their forces and civilian personnel placed strategically around the country. Sovereignty could still be centered in a greatly reduced government in Kabul. Early calls for administering Afghanistan in a regional manner, however, have been ignored. 