



University of Pennsylvania  
**ScholarlyCommons**

---

Senior Seminar Papers

Urban Studies Program

---

11-2009

# Ethnicity, Space, and Politics in Afghanistan

Benjamin Dubow  
*University of Pennsylvania*

Follow this and additional works at: [http://repository.upenn.edu/senior\\_seminar](http://repository.upenn.edu/senior_seminar)

---

Dubow, Benjamin, "Ethnicity, Space, and Politics in Afghanistan" (2009). *Senior Seminar Papers*. 13.  
[http://repository.upenn.edu/senior\\_seminar/13](http://repository.upenn.edu/senior_seminar/13)

Suggested Citation: Benjamin Dubow. "Ethnicity, Space, and Politics in Afghanistan." University of Pennsylvania, Urban Studies Program. 2009.

This paper is posted at ScholarlyCommons. [http://repository.upenn.edu/senior\\_seminar/13](http://repository.upenn.edu/senior_seminar/13)  
For more information, please contact [libraryrepository@pobox.upenn.edu](mailto:libraryrepository@pobox.upenn.edu).

---

# Ethnicity, Space, and Politics in Afghanistan

## **Abstract**

The 2004 election was a disaster. For all the unity that could have come from 2001, the election results shattered any hope that the country had overcome its fractures. The winner needed to find a way to unite a country that could not be more divided. In Afghanistan's Panjshir Province, runner-up Yunis Qanooni received 95.0% of the vote. In Paktia Province, incumbent Hamid Karzai received 95.9%. Those were only two of the seven provinces where more than 90% or more of the vote went to a single candidate. Two minor candidates who received less than a tenth of the total won 83% and 78% of the vote in their home provinces. For comparison, the most lopsided state in the 2004 United States was Wyoming, with 69% of the vote going to Bush. This means Wyoming voters were 1.8 times as likely to vote for Bush as were Massachusetts voters. Paktia voters were 120 times as likely to vote for Karzai as were Panjshir voters. While Wyoming composes .2% of the American population, those 7 provinces represent a full sixth of Afghanistan. . .

## **Comments**

Suggested Citation: Benjamin Dubow. "Ethnicity, Space, and Politics in Afghanistan." University of Pennsylvania, Urban Studies Program. 2009.

Ethnicity, Space, and Politics in Afghanistan

Benjamin Dubow

URBS-400

## **Preface**

The 2004 election was a disaster. For all the unity that could have come from 2001, the election results shattered any hope that the country had overcome its fractures. The winner needed to find a way to unite a country that could not be more divided. In Afghanistan's Panjshir Province, runner-up Yunis Qanooni received 95.0% of the vote. In Paktia Province, incumbent Hamid Karzai received 95.9%. Those were only two of the seven provinces where more than 90% or more of the vote went to a single candidate. Two minor candidates who received less than a tenth of the total won 83% and 78% of the vote in their home provinces. For comparison, the most lopsided state in the 2004 United States was Wyoming, with 69% of the vote going to Bush. This means Wyoming voters were 1.8 times as likely to vote for Bush as were Massachusetts voters. Paktia voters were 120 times as likely to vote for Karzai as were Panjshir voters. While Wyoming composes .2% of the American population, those 7 provinces represent a full sixth of Afghanistan.

The crisis which presents itself when a population is so divided that 90% of one region will vote against 90% of another is staggering. But it reflects Afghanistan's history. The electoral partition fell along ethnic lines. Every province that voted 90% or more for one candidate was 90% or more one ethnicity. The country's ethnicities, which this paper will discuss in far greater detail later, are a cacophony of dissimilar peoples left just outside the great empires of the world. Four of the largest five ethnic groups, who together compose 90% of the population, have independent homelands on the other side of Afghanistan's borders. The country is the antithesis of a melting pot. It's a dissonance of peoples whose circumstances left them out of their independent nation-states. Afghanistan is an empire without an emperor.

The country's historical leaders have served only their own people, without exception at the expense of the country's other peoples. This history has turned the opinions of the various peoples from disinterest in one other to disdain and distrust. But from the discord, a semblance of unity must emerge. The search for what possible element these peoples share beyond location and circumstance is not an easy one, but it is crucial for the country's stability. Afghans will find what they share in neither language, nor ethnicity, nor race, nor history, nor religion. Rather all of these traditional bonds of nations have served only to further decay Afghanistan.

For the past decade, American policy has centered on the belief that the spread of democracy brings with it the spread of peace. The policy is based on the America's fundamental conviction that democracy can unite a country's factions, be they regional, religious, or ethnic. A government which offers a spot for all members of society, whose rulers appeal to all elements, inherently reflects that society. When all members have a stake in the government, they find something they share. A democratic Afghanistan would mean a transformation of the historic Afghanistan. Instead of one people succeeding at the expense of another, in a democratic Afghanistan one people can succeed only with another. Though the people still would not share a language, a religion, or a history, their shared democracy would make them a nation.



www.mapsofworld.com

## Introduction

The strength of democracy as a form of government can find no better place to test its power than Afghanistan. The country of 28 million is exceedingly impoverished and has yet to develop a strong national identity. Tribal, local, and ethnic allegiances still dominate the country. The country is among the most ethnically diverse in the world. It has with no majority. Each of the four largest ethnic groups represents at least 9% of the population. The remaining ethnicities make up 10% of the population. The role of space is perhaps more crucial in Afghanistan than anywhere else in the world. Whereas most of the developing world has a rural-urban dichotomy, Afghanistan adds a third element, the nomad, representing up to 30% of the total population, while city dwellers represent only 25%. Change in space is occurring rapidly in the country,

however, and over the past five years, Afghanistan has seen a 5% increase in urbanization, the 4<sup>th</sup> highest in the world.<sup>1</sup>

Afghanistan therefore offers the perfect opportunity to test the ability of democracy to overcome factions, and the role of space in developing that national identity. The result is essential to the future of Afghanistan and a test on the viability of American foreign policy. The Taliban, discussed in much greater detail later, are an ethnic and spatial movement, born in opposition to the growing power of rival ethnicities from opposite ends of the country. Their support comes from those who value their ethnicity and locality over their nation. The civil war which ripped apart the country for three decades and whose legacy continues to haunt the people finds its roots in Afghanistan's ethnic fractures and the competition for space those fractures engender. The stability of the country, allegiance to the Kabul Government, and the popular demise of the Taliban rely on the people's commitment to a nation.

To test the improvements or lack thereof in national identity, this paper will look to the Afghan elections as a reflection of the nation-building process. A vote for a candidate of another ethnicity represents the will to put that ethnicity in power, despite knowledge of the history. An increase in the number of Afghans voting outside their ethnicity, therefore, is an indicator of greater trust in other ethnicities, and a belief that other subnational groups can contribute to the nation and will represent their interests. The paper will relate the election results to the ethnicity of candidates using spatial analysis, controlling for a candidate's home province, religion, and the issues on which he campaigned. The paper will compare the 2004 results with the 2009 election results. The central claim made from the results is that a stronger sense of nation is present in Afghanistan now than it was five years ago, and that voters are less likely to vote based on ethnicity or space in 2009 than they were in 2005.

## **Literature Review**

### *Nationalism*

Perhaps no force has more powerfully shaped the world over the past two centuries than that of the nation. The conviction in a union transcending class and time has bound peoples and ripped them apart. The embodiment of the nation in the government has lent tremendous weight to government's power. Governments which can implement national identities with dexterity run the world—the United States, France, and Russia among them—those that cannot run case studies in chaos—the Democratic Republic of Congo, the Balkans, and, of course, Afghanistan. Political unity has been the strength of the nation and made it a mainstay of modern society. Soldiers before the rise of nationalism fought only for money, and citizens pledged loyalty only at the whim of the empowered. Nationalism gave the people a personal reason to pledge loyalty and a desire to fight. Nationalism has been the end goal of any government seeking a harmonious land, lending the people a sense of commonality and shared interests.

The study of how to attain a national consciousness, and how they have developed in the past, has become of crucial importance, particularly in the third world. A quick look at a map of Europe, Central, or East Asia reveals what is the most powerful force in developing national consciousness. Delicately carved borders sought to contain colinguists. The reasoning goes that people with a shared language must have a shared ancestry (the proto-tribe who disseminated the language and its speakers), and thus a shared culture, history, often religion, and finally, a shared homeland. It only follows that those with a shared language and heritage should share a ruler, share in battle, share in success, and share in failure. The notion of nationalism began in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, often attributed to the French Revolution. The decades long war ended provincial identities, as soldiers representing provinces throughout the country fought together. It



diminished the role of the church. Government now worked in French and not Latin. The aristocracy began to speak the language of the people, rather than that of the aristocracy of Austria and Spain.<sup>2</sup>

But perhaps more important than the fall of church power was the change in pedagogy and control over media.<sup>3</sup> What little education was to be had before the 19<sup>th</sup> century came from the church, from Catholic day schools and seminaries. What little information about the outside world was received by townsfolk was offered by priests. The rise of government-mandated universal public education forever altered these crucial factors in nation-building. By providing public education, the state now gained the ability to tell its own version of history. Whereas the church told a Christian-view of history, the new public schools told a nationalist view of history. The Catholic hero-kings of Spain became villains in English and Portuguese history, as did German kings in French history. A shared sense of history brought the valuable idea of ‘the other’ into the minds of all members of the nation. The family across the border had committed unspeakable atrocities, while the family across the country had shared in the homeland’s noble defense.<sup>4</sup>

Education’s influence on the nation extended far beyond its crafting a history. Education’s most important role was its proliferation of literacy and standardization of the language to the capital’s dialect. With all students learning that the speech of the capital was the benchmark against which their own language would measure, the words of the capital carried even greater weight. With the standardization of language, Czech was no longer a prism bleeding into Polish and Slovak at its frontiers, rather it was distinct and separate. As mass media began to take hold, literate populaces had their views crafted by media unique to their own country. The

advent of public education had given control of the world view of a people to their government and made that view distinct and separate from any other nation.<sup>5</sup>

*Ethnicities of Afghanistan*



www.mapsofworld.com

Diversity has undermined Afghanistan's attempts at nation-building. Within its borders there is no ethnic majority, there are two ethnicities composing at least a quarter of the population, and as many as five composing at least five percent. The diversity is a result of

Afghanistan's location at the peripheries of the world's great empires. Proto-Aryans, Persians, Turks, Mongols, and Indians have all conquered Afghanistan and their descendants fill the land. Thus, it is common to find Afghans who look Northern European, South Asian, East Asian, and Southern European all in the same province. The four major ethnicities of the country are Pushtuns, Tajiks, Hazaras, and Uzbeks. The lines between ethnicities are distinct, based either on language, religion, or race.

The Tajiks are alternately described as Persians, Bactrians, and Persianized Uzbeks. The Tajik Samanid Empire, and their capital of Bukhara, once represented the highest level of human achievement. But the Turkic Ghaznavid Empire ravaged the empire, in the 10<sup>th</sup> century pushing its wealth, knowledge, and power west. The Tajiks' flirtation with the Persianate won them Persian language and urbanity.<sup>6</sup> Their space reveals their history; they connect Persian Iran in the east to independent (formerly Soviet) Tajikistan in the north. They are the most urban ethnicity in Afghanistan, with 14 of the 20 largest cities overwhelmingly Tajik, including 4 of the largest 5.<sup>7</sup> The ones discussed in this essay will be Kabul, Mazar-e Sharif, and Kunduz. With the urbanization of the Tajiks ended the strength of their tribal allegiances.<sup>8</sup> Loyalties related to space remain, though; the Tajiks of the Panjshir Valley north of Kabul are especially cohesive, even after migrating to the cities.<sup>9</sup> The urbanization of the Tajiks has also given them education, leading to their filling of what little bureaucratic positions were available, including military offices, but generally precluded them from army ranks.<sup>10</sup>

Perhaps no country has two more complimentary major ethnicities than does Afghanistan. If the Tajiks are the country's ying, then the Pushtuns are its yang. The parallels are as clear as north and south, as subtle as attire. The illiteracy accompanying tribal life has left history little details of the Pushtuns' origins. The first mention of Pushtuns comes from the Arab

traveler Ibn Battuta in the 14<sup>th</sup> Century, though he refers to them as a ‘type of Persian,’ reflecting the people who dominated their land for millennia.<sup>11</sup> But whereas the Tajiks had adopted the Persians as their own (if they themselves are not Persians), the Pushtuns remained fiercely independent. They showed little interest in joining Persian hierarchy or culture, remaining to their mountainous homeland in the Hindu Kush. Rather, they paid tribute to the armies of Persia and continued their traditional nomadic lifestyle, traversing the trade routes between Herat, Kabul, and Kandahar – the only major Pushtun city. Their rugged lifestyle necessitated strict tribal loyalty, which in time has led to 60 major tribes and 300 clans.<sup>12</sup> The most major of these are Ghilzai, who reside between Kandahar and Peshawar, the Abdalis or Durranis who reside near Herat, and the Mohammedzais also of the west.

Though easily the plurality of Afghanistan, they do not come especially close to a majority, representing between 36%-42% of the population.<sup>13</sup> The Pushtuns, nonetheless, are the eponymous ethnic group of Afghanistan. The archaic term for Pushtuns, ‘Afghan’ does not become conflated with Pushtun until the past century. Distinctions between the two are unclear, but usually fell on tribal lines and were exaggerated by Britons hoping to emphasize the difference between Pashto-speakers living in their territory and across the border. But as notions of linguistic-based nationalism entered Afghanistan and Pakistan, the similarity of Pushtuns on both sides of the border was reasserted, and a Pushtun-nationalist movement, called the Pakhtunistan movement, began to emerge.<sup>14</sup> The Taliban are arguably the heirs of this movement.

The dichotomy of Pushtuns and Tajiks would seem to leave little room for others, but the two represent only two-thirds<sup>15</sup> of the country. Perhaps the only commonality of the remaining third is that logic finds little reason for them to be there. The Turkmen, Uzbeks, and Farsiwans<sup>16</sup>

all have neighboring independent and eponymous nations like the Tajiks and Pushtuns, and the nationalist movements of those nations have worked to undercut any nationalism in Afghanistan. The Uzbeks and Turkmens, like the Tajiks, were left on the other side of Russian expansion into Central Asia. Both groups are Turks who came to the formerly Persian region during the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> centuries. The national hero of the Uzbeks is the scorn of the Tajiks, Timurlane who brutalized the Persian-speaking empires of the region. Despite the differing interpretations of history, the Uzbeks have historically had a good relationship with the Tajiks. Soviet Uzbekistan originally included Tajikistan, and Uzbek history books claimed the Tajiks were simply Persian-speaking Uzbeks. The Uzbeks of Afghanistan are the only ethnicity without a significant population in the capital and have traditionally been left out of the bureaucracy, military, and national politics in general, with Pushtun king caring only enough that the Uzbeks pay their mandatory tribute and keep to themselves.

Afghanistan's only two ethnicities of import without populations in adjacent countries are the Hazaras and Aimaks. The Hazaras are the descendants of the Mongols who came with Genghis Khan. Their name means one-thousand, the number in their regimental divisions. The Hazaras since settling in Afghanistan have adopted Persian language, but have retained their East Asian culture, attire, and features. Under the Safavid Empire, the Hazaras converted to Shiite Islam, and today compose half of the country's Shiite population, though they are the only ethnicity that is homogenously that sect.

#### *An Ethnic History of Afghanistan until 1979*

For most of its history, the north half of Afghanistan was firmly part of Persia. Zarathustra, the originator of religion of the Achaemenid and Sassanid Empires, was born in Afghanistan. The western half of the country is Khorasan, one of the most important provinces in

Persian Empires. Its capital, Heart, is the home of three of the Persian Empire's greatest rulers, and the tombs of Persian poets and mystics dominate the cityscape. Afghanistan has hosted the countless peoples who have invaded the Persian Empire, only to adopt Persian culture as their own, most notably the Turks and the Mongols. From the Persian territories now considered Afghanistan, these peoples continued to conquer the remainder of the Iranian Plateau. When Western Iranian Empires arose, among their first missions was to solidify their control over Afghanistan, the furthest reach of their homeland.<sup>17</sup>

So in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the Safavid Persian Empire controlled Afghanistan like they did all of the Iranian Plateau. The Safavids were different than their predecessors, though. Originating in a Sufi sect of the Caucasus, they intricately wove Shiism into their government, enforcing conversion among their subjects. But the Persians of Khorasan would not oblige, and for the first time there was a rift between Afghanistan and Iran outside the pronunciation of 'v'.<sup>18</sup> Jumping on the dissent were the Pushtuns of the south. The nomads had formerly kept to themselves, paying the obligatory tribute to the Persian kings, but not doing much else. But under the lead of Ahmad Shah Durrani, the Pushtuns united. The Safavid's heirs the Asfarhids were disintegrating and could barely hold onto to interior provinces, let alone the frontiers. Durrani attacked Kabul, and all its environs soon fell. Before the tribesman could gain a full understanding of what had happened, he was in control of a vast empire of Persians, Turks, Mongols, Hindus, and Sikhs. The Pushtuns relied on the entrenched urban Persian bureaucracy to run the country, as they had little experience beyond running tribes, and kept Persian as the language of administration. The Pushtun leaders had learned from their tribal days not to trust others with arms and filled the army with their own ranks.<sup>19</sup>

Soon after Durrani's death, the ascendant Qajar Dynasty in Iran attempted to reclaim the territory, but failed without the support of the Sunni Persians, who were quickly developing a separate identity as Tajiks. The Shiite and Persian-speaking Hazaras backed the invasions, earning them the contempt of the Pushtun rulers and bringing to the forefront of the minds of the Durrani kings the difficulties of ruling such a diverse empire. The Durranis began installing Pushtun military garrisons throughout the country. Their emphasis was in Hazarajat, the traditional homeland of the Hazaras, but the incursions led only to further tensions, and Hazara insurrections became constant.<sup>20</sup> The Pushtun answer was to dispossess the Hazaras of their land and give it to members of their own tribes. The Pushtuns pursued the same efforts across the country, ensuring every corner would have elements loyal to the central Kabuli and Pushtun government.

But the dominance of the 'uncivilized' nomads did not bode well among the Tajiks who considered themselves among the progenitors of civilization. When the aims of Britain and Russia focused on Afghanistan, the nation's factions quickly pledged their loyalty outside their borders. The Russians had conquered half of the traditional homeland of the Tajiks, Uzbeks, and Turkmen. The British had conquered half of the homeland of the Pushtuns. Who would finish their conquests first dominated the foreign politics of both countries and would soon do the same to Afghanistan. In 1844, fearing Kabuli loyalty to Russia, Britain invaded through their Pushtun-territory in India. The Durranis in power mobilized the tribes of Pakhtunistan. The strength of tribal loyalty bore itself, and the British believed the entire country—women, children, and all—were out to end the invasion. The British noted that both the Hazaras and Tajiks were quick to lend the invaders support, but with Pushtun military hegemony, the support of the Persian-speakers was little aid to the British.<sup>21</sup>

Rather, it would only offend the Pushtun leaders. By the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Western-based notions of the nation-state had begun to enter Afghanistan. Seeing the disloyalty of their client ethnicities, the process of Pushtunization expanded. Kabul was once a Tajik trading post in the middle of Hazarjat. But the Pushtun kings feared their enveloping by their greatest foe. They again confiscated the lands of Hazaras, employed members of their own tribes in their cabinets, and settled their people as far north as Jawzjan. Pushtuns now compose at least 10% of the population in all but 4 provinces. The kings sought no diversification of their homelands, however, and the only non-Pushtuns in the south of the country are the indigenous and isolated Baloch.<sup>22</sup>

The placement of Pushtuns throughout the country had little effect on loyalty, however. When the British invaded on similar pretexts in 1892, they found the Tajiks and Hazaras again willing to help. This time, fractures within the tribal structure meant Kabul could not muster the same fight it had fifty years before. The British installed their own client on the throne, again a Pushtun, and took control over Afghanistan's foreign affairs. The leader, Abd ar-Rahman, took out the frustration of the impotence the British imposed upon him on the hapless Hazaras, just as his predecessors had. When they rebelled in 1898, he massacred the townspeople of Hazarajat. He took to Pushtunization with greater drive than any of his predecessors. With British aid, he brought in Western military standards and equipment. The military's control over the ethnic minorities was now absolute.

Abd ar-Rahman's son and grandson continued down the same path. They opened public schools which taught only in Pushtun, brought in Western standards of civility, and Abd ar-Rahman's grandson Aminullah even outlawed the hijab. For all of Aminullah's progressiveness, he was still an enemy of Tajiks and Hazaras, and treated them with the same cruelty as did his



grandfather. Unlike his grandfather, however, Aminullah's cruelty would catch up with him. In 1928, Habibullah Kalakani, a Kabuli and a Tajik, revolted against Aminullah and took control of the throne. He capitalized on the dissent among Pushtuns with Aminullah's secularization, enlisting several tribes. The Tajiks heralded the event, as they continue to do. It was the first time in three centuries they had gained home rule.

The same year, the Tajik Soviet Socialist Republic gained independence from the administration of the Uzbek SSR. But the leadership of the two now Tajik countries was disparate. The Tajiks gained rule of their SSR through a top down decision in Moscow in an effort to modernize the country and imbue it with communist ethics. The Russians mandated that Tajik be written in the Cyrillic alphabet rather than the Arabic one and reserved the highest positions of government for Muscovites. The revolution in Afghanistan was from the bottom-up. It began in the cities with a strong religious fervor and only gained military strength by enlisting religious tribal Pushtuns.

The ethnicity of both revolutions' support would decide their fates. With powerful Russia behind the SSR, Russian politics dominated Soviet Tajikistan. With Pushtun militants behind Kalakani, tribal whims would bring his reign to a close. The man he had joined with to overthrow Aminullah, Mohammed Nadir Shah, wanted his dues. His powerful Pushtun army overthrew Kalakani in ten months. The ensuing ethnic revolts, a result of the despondency from so quickly losing self-determination, would define Nadir Shah's policies throughout his reign. He pursued Pushtunization far beyond any of his predecessors.<sup>23</sup> He was the first Afghan to ruler to use Pashto as the language of administration. Before the change, Persian had been the administrative language of Afghanistan since 300 BC, when it was Greek. He censored the media which was overwhelmingly urban and Persian. He exiled the intellectuals in the Persian-

speaking universities his predecessors had founded. Urban Tajiks and Uzbeks fled to their independent Soviet neighbors. The migration resulted in strong transnational relations and pan-Tajik and pan-Uzbek movements.<sup>24</sup>

Britain fretted over the power this gave the Soviet Union. With Britain controlling half of Pushtun territory, the country's leaders believed a strongly Pushtun Afghanistan would strongly ally itself with Britain. Nadir filled his cabinet with his family; his ministries with Mohammedzi tribesmen. Constant rebellions led to an expanded Pushtun military and the destruction of a full valley of Tajik and Hazara farms. Nadir would soon pay for his brutality, though. In 1933 while attending a high school ceremony, a Hazara student assassinated Nadir. The government killed the student, his father, his uncle, and exiled his family.<sup>25</sup>

Nadir's successor and son, Zahir, was unready for the throne, and let the country revert to its earlier state. The role of Kabul relapsed to tribute collector, and all attempts at a nation-state vanished within Afghanistan's border. But to the north, Moscow began encouraging nationalism in its Central Asian possessions. The Soviets wished to lend legitimacy to their claim of self-determined nations and began filling ministries with eponymous ethnicities. Public education nearly eliminated illiteracy, and state-ran Tajik and Uzbek newspapers created strong and focused national identities. The atheist Soviets began crafting a Tajik national identity absent Islam, of a people loyal to their state and to the Soviet Union. Vast industrialization programs, including the tallest dam in the world, brought thousands of Tajiks to the cities, with the population of the capital, Dushanbe, increasing 40 times in the first thirty years of Soviet rule, and 100 times by the end of the century.<sup>26</sup>

Across the Hindu Kush, the nationalist movement couldn't have been more different. In British India, Mohammed Iqbal and the concept of an independent Muslim India had begun their

rise to power. The new nation would take the name Pakistan, an acronym of Punjab, Afghanistan (Pakhtunistan), Kashmir, and Indus Valley, the largest Muslim regions in British India. But whereas the Tajiks and Uzbeks were gaining the basics of nation building and pledging loyalties increasingly separate from their brethren in Afghanistan, the Pushtuns remained isolated from the modernization to the south. An identity in contrast to Hindus a thousand miles away offered no charm to the Pushtuns. They continued to pledge allegiances to tribe first and foremost, regardless of what side of the border they may have been on.

While these nation-building efforts had been taking place to the north and south, Zahir had little interest in such matters until the waning years of his life. At that point, seeing the meagerness of the legacy he would leave behind, Zahir began attempts to modernize his country. But it would take nearly a decade of political infighting until Zahir had a constitution. The document turned Afghanistan into a democracy with universal suffrage, fundamental rights, and a parliament. But his political battles had won him no friends. In 1964, his cousin Mohammed Daoud Khan, a fiercely nationalistic Pushtun who had briefly taken forces into Pakistan's Northwest Frontier Province, overthrew Zahir and established a dictatorship under the auspices of a republic.<sup>27</sup>

#### *Afghan History from 1979 until the Civil War*

Zahir found a patron in the Kremlin, and won modern Soviet arms for his loyalty. But his Soviet alliance was forcing his hand. The munitions they provided allowed for his ruthless ruling style, however, his style earned new support for Afghanistan's communist party, the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA). Zahir had no illusions that the Soviets would prefer an old ally to a communist, and he began courting friends in Muslim and non-Aligned nations.

Support from India, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Pakistan allowed Zahir to continue to strengthen his grip on power, but with his harsher rule came evermore backing for the PDPA.

By 1978, the party had reached its zenith. It had begun 15 years before, founded by a Tajik and a Pushtun. Its offering of supranational identity had especial appeal to Tajiks, Uzbeks, and Hazaras. Zahir's brief courtship with the Soviet Union had allowed Persian and Uzbek language literature on communism to flood intellectual circles in Afghanistan. The group gained its strongest support in the cities where economic inequality was most visible. They set up a politburo in the fashion of the Soviet Union, gaining popularity among the literate, who were almost entirely urban. In 1978, on the eve of its defining moment, three quarters of its ministers were Tajik.<sup>28</sup>

That moment would come when the party's Pushtun founder, Mir Akbar Khyber, met his death at the hands of Zahir. Viewing the death of their leader as a harbinger of troubles to come, the PDPA acted upon their fears. On April 28, 1978, the PDPA organized a coup. The coup was successful, but the PDPA was unprepared to rule. They were deeply divided between the Tajik Parcham faction and the Pushtun Khalq faction. The Khalq, many of its members with Pushtun nationalist leanings, came to dominate the new government and isolate their Tajik constituents. When Harvard-educated President Nur Muhammad Taraki met his end at the hands of the bloodthirsty Hafizullah Amin, Tajik support for the revolution went with it. Amin began pursuing a policy of extreme Pushtunization, using the military with far less discretion than any of his predecessors, isolating all non-Pushtun factions in the country. Fearing the undermining of the communist coup, the Soviet Union searched for an excuse to rid itself of Amin.

In 1979, Amin handed them the opportunity on a golden platter. Amin pleaded with the Soviets for support in their fight against the Islamic militants. Moscow provided soldiers and

armor which quickly turned on Amin. On December 23, 1979, the Russians killed Amin and installed the Tajik Babrak Karmal as president of Afghanistan.<sup>29</sup> But the Parcham was scattered across the world; Karmal was coming in from Moscow. He struggled to find support or unite the fractured factions of the Communist Party, especially among the army still loyal to Amin.<sup>30</sup> The soldiers saw no reason to remain loyal to the puppet leader, so the Soviet Union gave them one.

The Soviets invaded in December of 1979 to lend their support to Karmal. The tanks, bombers, and artillery which had crushed Eastern Europe and Central Asia into submission could do no such thing in Afghanistan. Seeing their pious country become a pawn of the world's largest atheist country, the religious of Afghanistan took to arms. Tribes, towns, and cities fought against the Soviet Invasion in a guerilla war for which Moscow had made little preparations. The communists, with the support of the Russians, could maintain control over the major cities and communications lines. But the countryside remained strongly in the hands of local leaders. These leaders could find myriad calls to fight. Some fought for their ethnicity, some fought for their religion, for their region, and for their tribe. Increasingly, Tajiks fought for lapis lazuli and emerald mines, while Pushtuns fought for poppy fields.<sup>31 32</sup> The disparate interests and disorganized structure of the insurgents emaciated Soviet and government attempts to squash the rebellion. The capture or killing of a mujihadeen commander would only affect a few dozen fighters, and have no impact on the others.

The dearth of hierarchy allowed every faction to gain power and arms. The strongest faction was led by a Panjshiri Tajik, Ahmad Massoud.<sup>33</sup> He won support throughout his home region and gained funds and armor from raids on the Soviet convoys travelling through Panjshir from Kunduz to Kabul. Massoud imbued religion with Tajik nationalism to expand his power throughout Afghan Tajikistan. One estimate put Massoud's troops at 13,000.<sup>34</sup> In 1983, he

established a council for the mujihadeen of Afghan Tajikistan to lend direction to their operations. By 1985, the Soviet Union refused to continue fighting in Panjshir.<sup>35</sup> Massoud's success led him further astray from his original party, the Jamiat-e Islam.

The group, orchestrated from Peshawar, Pakistan by Tajik Burhanuddin Rabbani, had been unsuccessfully trying to unite the fighters of the south. The Pushtun fighters, many already armed, had earned the sympathies of Muslims across the world, as well as the United States under the Reagan Doctrine. The tribes increased in power as the United States donated more and more weapons to the mujahideen there, including Gatling guns, rocket powered grenades, and anti-tank guns.<sup>36</sup> They increased in numbers as Arabs, Pakistanis, Caucasians, and Turks sympathetic to the cause of Islam joined with them.

#### *The Afghan Civil War*

After 8 years without progress, the Soviets withdrew, preferring only to supplement the government with armor and funds. The new model seemed to work for four years, but as the Soviet Union crumbled, so did its client in Kabul. Without a mutual enemy, the victorious mujihadeen instantly cannibalized each other. In 1992, Massoud's Tajik forces, the Uzbek forces of former Soviet ally Abd al-Rashid Dostum, and the Hazara forces of Hezb-e Wahdat entered the capital. Rabbani became president of the new coalition government, but had little control over the country, particularly the south. Even in the capital, he failed to unite the disparate interests. The Tajiks, Uzbeks, and Hazaras who had entered Kabul would spend the next 2 years bloodying each other and the city.<sup>37</sup>

To the south of Rabbani's control, a new Pushtun movement, the Taliban, was rising. The Taliban began in 1994, with a strong ethnic and spatial nationalist leaning. The movement began to end the civil war, now dominated by the fight in Kabul. The Taliban blamed the ongoing

conflict on the non-Pushtun ethnic groups, and proposed that Taliban domination of the whole of Afghanistan could bring an end to the war. Their nationalist sentiment allowed them to operate unfettered in Pakistan and gave them the strength to take the lucrative poppy fields of Kandahar and Helmand, which provides their revenue to this day.<sup>38</sup> In 1996, the Taliban routed the fractious Jamiat-e Islam. They filled their ministries with members of their Durrani tribe, and dismantled the Tajik bureaucracy, grinding all government functions to a halt.<sup>39</sup> They soon turned their attention to the destruction of Persian culture, outlawing music, television, films, and newspapers. They eliminated the Hezb-e Wahdat and subjected the Shiite civilians who the Hezb represented to their fury. In 1997, the Taliban reached Mazar-e Sherif and proceeded to massacre 8,000 Hazaras and Uzbeks.<sup>40 41</sup> They pushed Rabbani's forces back to Panjshir, and Dostum's back to Jawzjan.

But the Tajiks had just defeated one of the strongest armies in the world, and they were not ready to submit to Pushtun rule once again. The Jamiat-e Islam was reinvented as the United Islamic Front for the Salvation of Afghanistan, or the Northern Alliance. Though still under Rabbani's rule, the Northern Alliance now focused on military operation and Massoud's experience brought him to the top of the hierarchy. The Northern Alliance began operating a shadow government in the northern half of the country and resisting Taliban incursions into the area. The Alliance maintained control of 30% of Afghanistan's population,<sup>42</sup> and won the allegiances of Hazaras, though they were mostly under Taliban control, the Tajiks, centered in Panjshir, and the Uzbeks, owing to the loyalty of Abd al-Rashid Dostum. Ethnic support in the civil war crossed national borders, and Uzbekistan and Tajikistan quickly backed the Northern Alliance, with Tajikistan providing not only funding, but also a base to the rebels.<sup>43</sup> Pakistan lent their support to the Taliban, viewing the Muslim Pushtuns as a natural ally.<sup>44</sup> Fighting between

the two groups continued for half a decade, until the Taliban's support of terrorism caught up with them. In 2001, the United States ousted the Taliban from Kabul and established a provisional government which would hold democratic elections in only three years.

### *2004 Election*

The trouble of governing such a country is immense. After almost twenty years of ethnic war, on the heels of centuries of latent ethnic tension, the ability to form a cohesive government is suffocated. But the new government had hoped that democracy would provide the answer. In a country with no ethnic majority, logic reasoned, votes from across ethnic lines would be required to win a majority. So at the Bonn Conference in 2002, when the leaders of the Northern Alliance and other opposition movements formed a new government, they chose a democratic model. With US-backing, they installed a Pushtun who had opposed the Taliban, Hamid Karzai as president, a move to disavow Pushtuns of fears that the Northern Alliance alone would rule the country. The vice-president would be Mohammed Fahim, a Panjshiri Tajik who was vice-president of defense in the Northern Alliance.

After two years of priming, Afghanistan was ready for its first election. The election presented unique challenges outside of the ethnic divisions of the voters. The Afghan media had only reemerged thirty months earlier, the only well-established agency being the Northern Alliance's Persian-language Badakhshan TV.<sup>45</sup> The state media, Bakhtar News Agency, broadcasts only in Pashto and Persian,<sup>46</sup> but an exceptionally low number of Afghans have televisions because the Taliban had outlawed televisions under punishment of flagellation. Each candidate set up a website, but it's estimated that only 1.5% of Afghans have access to the internet.<sup>47</sup> Newspapers of all languages flourished following the fall of the Taliban, but low literacy rates kept them from becoming the standard media form, and the urban concentration of



the literate made the papers disproportionately Persian. Despite the preponderance of new media in the 2000's, it was radio, the only Taliban-permitted medium, which was the source of information of choice of Afghans during the election. There were 26 stations operating in Persian, Pashto, Uzbek, and English before the election, providing service to 37% of the country.<sup>48</sup> But no agency provided service in all three major languages, reflecting the immense difficulty of appealing to people who don't speak the same language.

Karzai was the front-runner throughout the election. The bureaucracy was in his control, and the selection of one of Massoud's brothers as his running mate was expected to win him anti-Taliban votes. Karzai, like other candidates, limited his campaigning because of fears of violence. Karzai relied mostly on allegiances, rather than issues, as did most candidates. The biggest rival to Karzai was Mohammed Qanooni, a former Northern Alliance vice president, to whom Fahim had lent his support. Hajji Mohammed Mohaqiq was of equal challenge to Karzai. The Hazara was a member of Hezb-e Wahdat. Abd al-Rashid Dostum was originally predicted to be the main challenger, but found no favor outside of Uzbek and Turkmen provinces. He could also find no sympathies for his Soviet alliance. Karzai won handedly. Though he received only 55% of the vote, this was 5 times as large a percent as the number two candidate, Qanooni.

### *2009 Election*

Five years with little progress in security or stability had brought greater legitimacy to the anti-Karzai movement, and in the new election, there were serious contenders for the presidency. Foremost among them was the Northern Alliance's former Foreign Minister Dr. Abdullah Abdullah. Though the son of a Pushtun father and Tajik mother, the Tajiks quickly adopted the former Northern Alliance officer as entirely their own. Abdullah ran on a campaign of anti-corruption and ending the drug trade. The third candidate was the Hazara Ramazan Bashardost.

Though in exile for most the war, his down-to-earth campaigning style (his headquarters was a tent) and ability to push the needs of the people through the bureaucracy earned him support. He ran on a campaign of unity and removing foreign troops from Afghanistan. Dostum considered running again, but agreed not to when Karzai appointed him head of the military. To gain more Tajik votes, Karzai selected Fahim as his secondary vice president.

Afghanistan's history shows the immense task facing the development of an Afghan national identity. History has bred the ethnicities of Afghanistan to distrust one another. It has led to the development of strict spatial identities and caused outrage at the incursion of those identities. The history of the Pushtuns has led to a belief that they are the rightful rulers of the country and dissuaded them from any power sharing scheme. The Tajiks' role as bureaucrats and the importance of their language has given them their own claim to rule as well as a deep-seeded resentment of the conquering and, in their view, incompetent and racist Pushtuns. The Hazaras' constant oppression obstructs the development of trust between them and the Pushtuns, and their near arrival at power at the end of the communist party's rule only strengthens their discontent. The isolation of the Uzbeks hindered any sense of inclusion in the nation as a whole. With the problems affecting each ethnicity, and their opinion towards the nation as a whole, the causes of electoral patterns become clearer as does the extent of the hindrances to nationhood.

## **Methods**

To effectively analyze the growing strength of nationhood in Afghanistan, this paper will look at the past two elections. The election results are available from the UN for the 2004 election and from the Independent Elections Committee of Afghanistan from 2009. The paper will analyze the results spatially. This presents obvious problems, because the test will not always be able to definitively declare that people of one ethnicity are or are not voting for their

same ethnicity. However, if the test, for instance, finds that a candidate received 60% of the vote in a province where his ethnicity represents only 50% of the population, the test will conclude that people outside the candidate's ethnicity are voting for him. Likewise, if he receives 50% in a province where his ethnicity represents 60% of the population, it's safe to conclude that people of his ethnicity are voting for candidates from other ethnicities. A clear complication is that Karzai chose a Tajik as his running mate in 2009. However, this means that when a Tajik voted for Karzai, he or she either preferred a Tajik vice-president and Pushtun president to a Tajik president, or ethnicity was not an important enough factor to determine their vote.

Because Afghanistan's ethnicities, excluding Pushtuns, are segregated and live in their own homelands, the relation of space and ethnicity is particularly strong. Using a spatial study for Afghanistan is analogous to doing a spatial study of an American city's election in search of a link between race of a neighborhood and percent of votes there going to candidates of the same race. A candidate's appeal to a certain space reflects their appeal to that ethnicity, and a space's vote for a candidate reflects its people willingness or unwillingness to reject identities of space and ethnicity.

For each province, the study will show several pieces of data. The total vote and the percent of the province vote will be given. The paper will normalize each candidate's percent of the vote in the province to their percent of the vote in the election at the national level to give an understanding of the candidate's strength in the province. The percent of the vote they receive will also be normalized by the percent of the population of the candidate's ethnicity in province. This is an attempt to show the loyalty of voters to their ethnicity. The closer to one, the more closely people of the province voted on ethnic lines. If the ratio is less than one, then more people of that ethnicity are voting outside their ethnic lines. Afghanistan Information

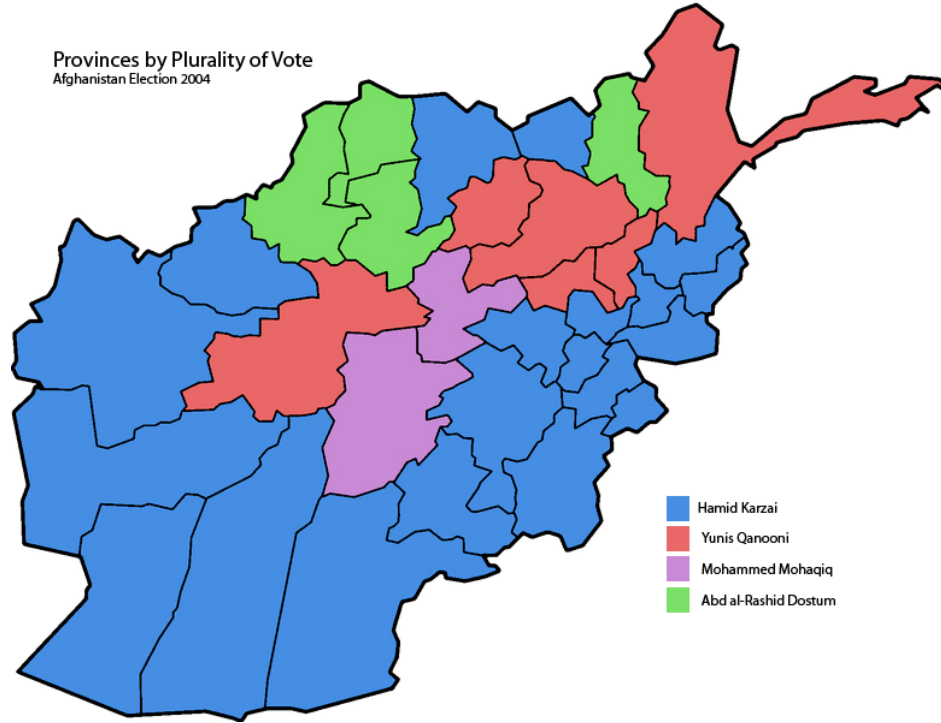
Management Services, a Pakistani NGO which works closely with the UN provided the ethnic data for each province, while the CIA provided information for the national level.

Six provinces will be investigated. The first three are the homelands of the three major candidates in 2009. Abdullah's Kabul is diverse. Bashardost's Ghazni is Hazara and Pushtun. Karzai's Kandahar is entirely Pushtun. The other provinces studied encompass the diversity of Afghanistan. Jawzjun is a mix of Uzbek and Turkmen and the home of 2004's third runner-up Abd al-Rashid Dostum. Kunduz is diverse. Panjshir is overwhelmingly Tajik and is the home of 2004's runner-up Yunis Qanooni.

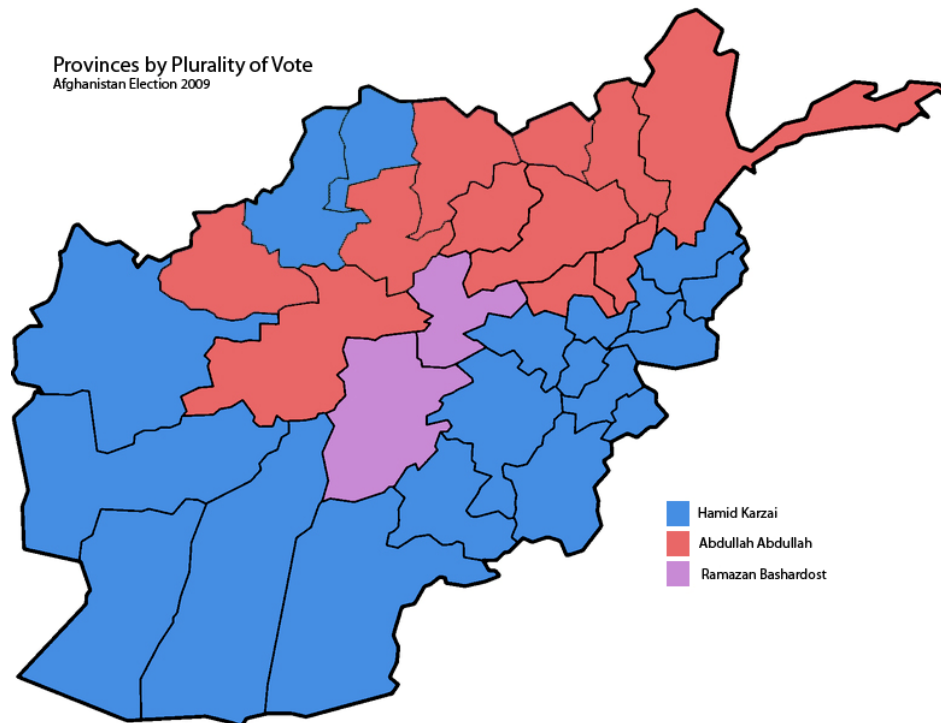
There are clear issues with the test. Afghanistan's civil war has prevented any conclusive study of population, and ethnic data is shady at best. Because there was no question on voters' ethnicity, this test assumes that voter turnout was proportional to ethnic makeup, that is, every ethnicity was as likely to vote as every other in every province. Afghanistan's elections have both been marred by allegations of fraud, but after the dismissal of almost a third of the votes by the UN in the last election, the vote's legitimacy carried much greater weight.

## **Data & Analysis**

## 2004 Results



## 2009 Results



### *Nationwide*

After the allegations of corruption had been cleared, and almost a quarter of Karzai's votes thrown out, the final results showed the incumbent a hair short of the majority. Karzai received 49.67% of the total vote, Abdullah 30.59%, and Bashardost 10.46%. The total tally of votes for all Pushtun candidates was 55.69%, and 34.61% for Tajik candidates (Bashardost was the only Hazara candidate). Adding the Uzbek population to the Pushtun shows a nearly perfect mirror of the country's ethnic makeup. The percent of votes for candidates of each ethnicity is well within the range of estimates for each ethnicity's share of the population.

But a closer look at the election, however, casts away the possibility that Afghans voted solely on ethnic lines. Though the map shows a clear correlation, the role of ethnicity is neither total nor complete.

### *Kabul*

The capital of a country is often the home of its nationalist movements. The center of the nation, the culture and language which the rest of the nation aspired to is autochthonous in the capital. Home to the government, the capital's economy often finds its base in the greatest supporter of the nation, the government. Universities, museums, and all things of the nation, and all thought which originates in those institutions, come from the capital. The draw of the capital brings migrants from throughout the country, and capitals are often microcosms of the country. Kabul is no exception. Though once only Tajik and Hazara territory, the choice of the town as a capital for the Pushtun Empires has brought great demographic change, though often through means of land dispossession and ethnic cleansing.

Kabul province is now 60% Pushtun, 25% Tajik, and 10% Hazara out of a population of 3 million, or about a tenth of Afghanistan's total population. Pushtuns come mostly from Abdur-

Rahman's Ghilzai tribe and live on the farms once occupied by Hazaras before Rahman evicted them. The Pushtuns compose the majority of the province outside Kabul proper, but only a quarter of the city. The plurality of the city, 45%, is Tajik, vestiges of the old trade routes with Kunduz and Mazar-e-Sherif. Hazaras represent a quarter of the population, while the remaining 5% are Uzbek, Baloch, and Turkmen.

The preponderance of Persian-speakers has led to Persian administration and bureaucracy in the capital for centuries, despite Pushtun rule. Coupled with Tajik merchants, this has made Kabul's middle class decidedly Tajik, though splintered. Half of the class relies on the Pushtun government for employment, while the other only relates to Pushtuns in the tribute they must pay to the government to conduct their business.<sup>49</sup> The Pushtun rule of the territory has put that ethnicity both at the top and bottom of its social structure. The royal consort and top ministers, their families and subtribes, occupy the highest strata of Kabuli society, while the tens of thousands of Pushtun soldiers filled the class just above the lowest. That was reserved for the Hazaras, the object of Pushtun kings' scorn, and occupiers of the most menial work in the city.

Most importantly for the election, though, is that the city is home to Abdullah Abdullah. It seemed to be his ideal bastion: the most educated part of the country, a high Tajik population, and the home of the reformist movement. But Kabul is also the home of Karzai's employees, and home of the corrupt politicians and their beneficiaries who Abdullah sought to oust. Both candidates campaigned vigorously in the capital, aiming to win over its massive population, while Bashardost tended to stay in closer to his home. Kabul is also the home of minor candidates, like the Tajik Frozan Fana, one of only two female candidates running.

In the last election Kabul province reflected national patterns. Karzai won 53% of the vote compared to 55% nationally in a province that's 50% Pushtun. Yunis Mohaqiq had hoped

for a good show from the capital province because of its Tajik population and because his home province of Panjshir borders Kabul and most of the powerful Tajiks in Kabul are ancestrally from the Panjshir Valley. But Qanooni could not gather the support need, winning only 19.9% of the vote, meaning most Tajiks voted for other candidates. Mohaqiq, with his urban campaign, did exceptionally well, with 17.9% of the vote, 50% than his national average, and a number three times as high as the percent of the province which is Hazara. Dostum made little effort outside Uzbek territories. Despite winning 83% in Jawzjan, he won one hundredth of that in Kabul, receiving 0.8% of the vote.

Kabul again served as a microcosm of the country as a whole in 2009. Karzai won 48%, a decrease of almost 10% (5 percentage points), while Abdullah, winning 31%, did twice as well as Qanooni did, and Bashardost won 13%. The percent voting for Pushtun candidates was close to the percent of Pushtuns in the province, a ratio of 10:11. The extra ten percent perhaps came from the Tajik bureaucrats, as Tajik candidates received a low percent of the votes compared to their population in the province. For every 4 Tajiks in Kabul, only 3 votes went to Tajik candidates. Bashardost did well in the capital, receiving 30% more than his national average (though just 3 percentage points), perhaps a slight to the ubiquity of corruption in the city, and desire for an outsider. Bashardost, even if every Hazara had voted for him, received a third of his votes in the province from Afghans outside his ethnicity.

### *Ghazni*

Ghazni, more than any other province, casts aside the notion that Afghans voted on ethnicity alone and emphasizes the importance of space. Ghazni, like Kabul, Kunduz, and Jawzjan (but almost nowhere else) displays remarkable diversity. Though in the heart of Hazarajat, the Pushtinization attempts of earlier leaders has made the population almost even



between Pushtuns and Persian-speakers. Tajiks, who account for about a third of the Persian-speakers, are concentrated in Ghazni city, where they form an absolute majority. Hazaras are scattered throughout the countryside, concentrated in the north and south next to the contiguous provinces of Hazarajat. But the Pushtunization efforts of the Shah brought Mohammedzai farmers to the province, and only border districts are fully Hazara. The province lies on the road between Kabul and Kandahar, providing the wealth of the Mohammedzai tribes through the tribute they exerted on merchants passing through.

Ghazni is the home province of Ramazan Bashardost. He was born and raised in the diverse and rural Qarabagh province in the heart of the province. Despite Bashardost's long absence from the region, when he left Kabul, his fellow Ghaznawis welcomed him with open arms. Bashardost ran his campaign from his home province. His grassroots effort saw a strong focus in his home region, as Bashardost was reluctant to travel, a reflection of the general difficulty of carrying out an election in a war-torn country. Bashardost solidified his support in the country, and other candidates tended to stay away. Abdullah campaigned lightly in Ghazni city among his fellow Tajiks, while Karzai's tribal origin won him the official support of the Pushtun tribes in the region.

The allegiance of the Pushtun tribes served Karzai well in 2004. He won 52% of the vote in a province which is half Pushtun. The province's location in Hazarajat did Mohaqiq well, who won 38% of the vote, his third best showing, and a percent almost proportional to the province Hazara population. Qanooni offered little appeal to the people of Ghazni, despite the presence of Tajiks in Ghazni city, and won only 4.2% of the vote, his worst performance in a province with a significant Tajik population. Dostum made the same effort in Ghazni he had in Kabul, and the results bear witness to this. He won ten votes.

Just as he did in Kabul, Bashardost managed to overcome the demographics of Ghazni. He did better in Ghazni than in any other province, garnering 61.1% of the vote, despite Hazaras representing only 30% of the population. This means Hazara candidates receive nearly twice the percentage of votes as the percentage of the population they compose. This is the highest rate for any diverse province in Afghansitan. Abdullah's campaigning in Ghazni city seemed to be of little value, as did any loyalty to Tajik identity, as he received on 10% of the vote, a third of his national value. The percent of the vote he received was only half of the percent of the population which was Tajik. Karzai received similar numbers, taking in only half of the vote he did nationally with 28%, slightly more than half when normalized for the percent which is Pushtun.

Bashardost's success in his home province proves that political capital can extend beyond ethnicity. Like in Kabul, even if every Hazara had voted for Bashardost, the majority, almost 60%, of his votes would have needed to come from other ethnicities. Bashardost was able to take away Pushtun and Mohammedzai votes from Karzai, Tajik votes from Abdullah. Unlike Kabul, where the Abdullah's town of origin had little impact, Ghazni shows a clear relationship between space and political capital. Bashardost's decidedly localized campaign undoubtedly played a large role in his Ghazni success. He was able to focus on his area and tear away votes from ethnic and tribal allegiances. Bashardost's performance in Ghazni proves that place can be a stronger form of political capital, and identity, than ethnicity or tribe. It proves that those forms of identity are not all inclusive, and that through vigorous campaigning, Afghans are willing to break with their tribal allegiances and their ethnicity.

### *Jawzjan*

Jawzjan is ethnically unique in the regions studied. Unlike the Pushtun-Persian-speaking Manichaeism in the majority of Afghanistan, Jawzjan, on the absolute northern frontier of the

country, is overwhelming Uzbek and Turkmen. At the ends of the ethnic homelands of both, the mountainous province is 40% Uzbek and 30% Turkmen. Tajiks arrived as merchants along the trade route between Mazar-e-Sherif and Herat, settling in the provincial capital, Shebeghan. Tajiks compose only 15% of the province as a whole, but make up roughly half of the city. The Mohammedzai conquests of the 19<sup>th</sup> century brought Pushtun garrisons to the province, and their descendants now form a full tenth of the population. There is a significant number self-described Arabs who speak Persian and whose ancestry remains unclear.

Jawzjan is the heart of Afghan Uzbekistan. While other ethnicities have many major cities, Shebeghan is the definitive capital of the Uzbeks of Afghanistan. It is also the home of Abd al-Rashid Dostum. From his hometown, he wielded immense control over the political capital of the province and the Uzbeks, as well as the Turkmen. He won 78% of the vote there in the 2004 election, and 73% of the vote in neighboring Faryab, both percents greater than that of the Turkmen and Uzbeks in the provinces, though only slightly. Dostum's appointment to Chief of the Afghan Army by Karzai was an explicit appeal by Karzai to win over the region in which he won only 15% of the vote five years earlier. Karzai relied on Dostum to campaign on his behalf, and Dostum's obliging made Karzai one of the only candidates with a strong campaign in the region. Neither Bashardost nor Abdullah had Uzbek or Turkmen versions of their website, and the two rarely made trips to the outskirts province.

But the people of Jawzjan dismissed the skepticism of Bashardost and Abdullah, the hopes of Karzai, and the hegemony of Dostum. Dostum's strength was unmistakable; Karzai received 58.0% of the vote, the highest percentage any candidate received in a province in which his ethnicity did not compose the majority. But Dostum failed to show off the power he had in 2004. The 58.0% which he won for Karzai is only three quarters of the votes he garnered for himself

five years earlier. Moreover, Dostum failed to garner great support across the province, as the ratio of votes for Karzai to the sum of the Uzbek and Pushtun populations was very close to one. Meanwhile, Abdullah secured 27% of the vote, about 7 times as high as the percent received by the major Tajik candidate in the last election. The percent of the vote going to Abdullah was twice the percent of the population which is Tajik. Bashardost performed extremely poorly in the region, winning only 4% of the vote.

With the exception of Bashardost, the results of Jawzjan closely reflected the national results. Karzai's percent of the vote was only 3 percentage points higher than his national average, and Abdullah's was only 4 percentage points lower. There exists a sense of dislocation among the Turkmens and Uzbeks of Afghanistan. Not only did neither Abdullah nor Bashardost's websites have Turkmen or Uzbek versions, but neither do government websites. Jawzjan, therefore, represents a valuable test. Jawzjanis could vote neither on ethnicity nor space. They voted as outsiders. They could vote only on issues and political deals, and the results were almost the same as they were for the country as a whole. The similarity between the Jawzjan distribution of votes and the nation distribution of votes means that even without an ethnic or spatial interest in the election, the national results are still possible.

### *Kandahar*

Kandahar has gained more infamy than any other province in Afghanistan. Home to the Taliban, poppy fields, and Hamid Karzai, Kandahar's importance has grown exponentially as those three elements have come to dominate Afghanistan. Unlike the provinces of the north which have gained nominal diversity through the conquests of the Durrani Dynasty, the makeup of Kandahar remains much the same as it was before the unification of Afghanistan. Resting in the heart of Pakhtunistan in the Hindu Kush, Kandahar has attracted few of Afghanistan's other

minorities. It is nearly entirely Pushtun. The main tribes are the Ghilzai and Mohammedzai, the Mohammedzai composing the majority of the region. There are 913,000 living in Kandahar, of which a third live in the eponymous capital city.

As the home of Hamid Karzai, the incumbent could feel assured of his success in the province. He garnered 91% of the vote there in 2004, while Qanooni garnered a meager 3%, Mohaqiq 0.9%, and Dostum 0.1%. Karzai's concern, therefore, was with the Taliban who have made the province into a stronghold. Their threats against voters kept away other candidates and threatened Karzai's strongest base of support. Despite military efforts, the results were dismally low, with less than 10% of the population voting. Those who did vote risked life and limb, and must have truly believed in their candidate or in the cause of democracy.

Of those few who came out to vote in 2009, they did so overwhelmingly for Karzai again, but not nearly in the monolithic manner they had five years earlier. Karzai won 73.8% of the vote, a little more than three quarters the vote he had received in the last election. The low turnout means only 7% of the population came out to vote for Karzai. Despite a negligible Tajik population, 10.3% of voters supported Abdullah, but again, that's only 1% of the total population. Ashraf Ghani, who finished fourth in the election, won 7.6% of the vote, perhaps stealing some of Karzai's Pushtun votes, and explaining why the ratio of Karzai's percent of votes to the percent of the population which is Pushtun was only .71, one of his lowest showings in that category.

### *Kunduz*

Kunduz is arguably the most diverse province in Afghanistan. Kunduz is the tenth largest province in country with a population of 820,000. The province borders independent Tajikistan to the north and independent Uzbekistan to the west, making its borders split the traditional

homelands of those ethnic groups. Once among the most important Tajik cities in Afghanistan, Kunduz resisted Pushtun control with greater fervor than most, leading the Pushtun emperors to send more troops there. The end result is one of the largest Pushtun populations in the north of the country, scattered across the countryside. Its location on the path between the former Soviet Union and Kabul embroiled Kunduz in some of the worst violence in Afghanistan during the 1980's. It also forced soldiers from various factions across the country to settle there, giving it the largest Hazara populations for any province that far east or north, though Hazaras still only compose about 5% of the population. The province is also home to several large Turkmen enclaves, and the Persian-speaking Arabs who were also present in Jawzjan.

In the last election, Kunduz saw the biggest rivalry between Karzai and Dostum. The former won 45% of the vote, but Dostum took away a full 24.6% of the vote, about the percentage of the population which is Uzbek or Turkmen. Qanooni again failed to capitalize on a significant Tajik population and won only 18.4% of the vote, about half of the province's Tajik population, but still slightly better than Qanooni fare nationwide. Mohaqiq generally stayed out of Kunduz, a province in which his ethnicity is the only missing, and he won only 2.3% of the vote there.

The most recent election saw a radical shift, again questioning the strength of Dostum's authority over the Uzbeks and Turkmen of Afghanistan. Dostum's endorsement of Karzai made little difference to the people of the Kunduz, and Abdullah walked away with 54.6% of the vote, 1.8 times his national average and 1.9 times the percentage Tajiks compose of the province. Karzai's percent decreased significantly, by 29%, or 15 percentage points, to only 31% of the total, meaning a significant number of Pushtuns did not vote for him. While the ratio of Pushtun votes to Pushtun candidates was 0.9 in 2004, it fell to 0.6 in 2009, while the ratio of Tajik votes

to Tajiks jumped to 1.8. Even if every Tajik had voted for Abdullah, 40% of his votes needed to come from other ethnicities. In the last election, only a few Tajiks would have needed to have voted for Dostum or Karzai for the vote not to line up perfectly with the ethnic distribution of the province. Abdullah's success is the result of several factors. Taliban have infiltrated the once peaceful province, fermenting scorn among the people both towards Karzai who has failed to curtail the Taliban invasion. As Kunduz lies between NATO bases in independent Tajikistan and Kabul, local officials have gladly sold out the safety of routes in their districts, and thus the safety of their people to the Taliban, making the rampant corruption hurt worse in Kunduz than perhaps anywhere else. Abdullah's message of reform, therefore, rang especially true in the ears of the people of Kunduz, true enough to overcome ethnic lines.

### *Panjshir*

As a reward for their continuous fight against the Taliban, the Northern Alliance members of Panjshir received their own province in 2004. With only 300,000 residents, it's one of the smallest provinces in Afghanistan, but it has historic importance as the home of Afghan Tajikistan's most important provinces, as well as the home of many of the elite Kabuli Tajiks.<sup>50</sup> Panjshir is one of the most homogeneously Tajik provinces in all of Afghanistan, with estimates placing it in the high nineties. As the historic home of Persian-backed powerful Tajik bureaucracy, the Tajiks have been spared the dislocation at Pushtun hands that has caused neighboring Parvan and Baghlan to be almost a quarter Pushtun. Panjshir is mostly rural, but densely populated along its eponymous Panjshir River Valley. The strength of the Tajik candidate in 2004 led the Abdullah camp to believe their victory was assured, so campaigning was weak. Meanwhile, Karzai attempted to emphasize his employment of members of Panjshiris' social networks in the bureaucracy of Kabul.

The Panjshir aristocracy had won a native son and fighter in the Northern Alliance as their candidate in 2004, and they would come out in full support of him, along with their people. Panjshir showed the impotence of Pushtun pushes into the Tajik homeland over the past two centuries. Despite bordering the province of Laghman in which Karzai found 85% of the support, the people of Panjshir cast 95% of their vote for Qanooni, and only 0.8% of their vote for Karzai. This makes a difference of 106 fold in two bordering provinces. In the US election of the same year, the largest difference between two bordering states was 1.5 fold. With 95% of the vote going to one candidate, there was little room for others. Dostum received a negligible percent, under .01%. The lack of unity among the Persian-speaking communities again manifested itself, perhaps showing the power of spatial identification. Like in other Tajik provinces, Mohaqiq received almost no votes, garnering only 0.3% of the vote.

In 2009, the Panjshiris had no native son, but they had another Northern Alliance fighter, and this time a more nationally viable Tajik candidate. Karzai made remarkable head way into the region. He improved upon his last by a rate of 36 fold, scoring 30.3% of the vote, while Abdullah could win only 68.7%. Across the provincial boundary in Laghman, the story was very much the same. Abdullah had now won 13.8%, and Karzai only 74.8%. Still both were clobberings by American standards, but a remarkable change. Especially remarkable, the Tajiks which had so utterly dismissed Karzai only 5 years earlier, necessarily lent a good percent of their votes to him this year, as the population is almost entirely Tajik. The Hazara-Tajik divide was still present, however, and Bashardost won only 0.5% of though, better than Mohaqiq, but still close to negligible. The change reflects the new national tone of reaching out to other ethnicities.

## **Conclusion**



One is hard pressed to find improvements in Afghanistan over the past 5 years. Heroine production has skyrocketed, the Taliban, until very recently, were on the rebound, government authority was collapsing, and violence had exploded across the country. But in the midst of the chaos, the Afghans showed their commitment to their new form of government. The Taliban had forbidden voting under punishment of death, and no one doubted they would make good on their threats. But the people of Afghanistan risked their lives for democracy, and 4.5 million Afghans turned out to vote in the last election.

At first, it appeared that their faith had won them little reward. Violence and intimidation plagued Election Day, and the following weeks revealed that corruption was as present in the electoral process as was in every other facet of Afghan life. But after the vote was cast, after the invalid votes were dismissed, the Afghans could see the reward of their conviction in democracy. After 5 years under the new system, which had offered services and positions to every people, the old ethnic fractures have begun to decay.

In 2004, coming off three centuries of ethnic conflict and struggle, the Afghan people voted solely on ethnic lines. Seven provinces saw more than 90% of their vote going to one candidate. Most staggering in this pattern was two contiguous provinces, Panjshir and Laghman, in which the difference between support for candidates was 100 fold.

The 2009 election showed true improvement, however. Though the spatial link between ethnicity and vote distribution was still unmistakable, its strength had languished over the five years. In Kabul, the strength of the subnational division of province loyalty was shown to be weak, as the native Abdullah received the same percentage of votes there as on a national level. In Ghazni, it was shown that the strength of ethnicity and religion can be overcome, when the Shiite Hazara Bashardost received the majority of his votes from Sunnis and non-Hazaras. In

Kandahar, it was shown that the power of ethnicity is weakening even in the most homogenous provinces, a fact recapitulated in Panjshir. Finally, in Jawzjan, a province without an ethnic interest in the race, it was shown that even without ethnicity, Afghans can still arrive at the same voter distribution.

- 
- <sup>1</sup> Central Intelligence Agency. CIA World Factbook – Afghanistan.
- <sup>2</sup> Anderson, Benedict. Imagined Communities. (London: Verso, 1983)
- <sup>3</sup> Ibid, p 34.
- <sup>4</sup> Hobsbawm, Eric. The Invention of Tradition. (New York: Cambridge UP , 1986)
- <sup>5</sup> Anderson. Imagined Communities.
- <sup>6</sup> Rakowska-Harmstone, Teresa. Russia and Nationalism in Central Asia, the Case of Tadzhikistan. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1970)
- <sup>7</sup> Central Intelligence Agency. CIA World Factbook - Afghanistan. (2008)
- <sup>8</sup> Bellew, H.W. The Races of Afghanistan: Being a Brief Account of the Principal Nations Inhabiting that Country. (Lahore: Sang-e-Meel Publications, 1999), 118.
- <sup>9</sup> Riphenburg, Carol. Ethnicity and Civil Society in Contemporary Afghanistan. *Middle East Journal*, Vol. 59, No. 1 (Winter, 2005)
- <sup>10</sup> Dorronsoro, Gilles. *Kabul at War (1992-1996): State, Ethnicity, and Social Classes*. *South Asia Multidisciplinary Academic Journal*. (October 2009).
- <sup>11</sup> Bellew. The Races of Afghanistan. 33
- <sup>12</sup> Ibid., 35
- <sup>13</sup> Central Intelligence Agency. CIA World Factbook – Afghanistan.
- <sup>14</sup> Ayoob, Mohammed. *Pakhtunistan: A Ghost Resurrected*. *Economic and Political Weekly*. Vol. 8, No. 1 (Mar., 1986)
- <sup>15</sup> Central Intelligence Agency. CIA World Factbook – Afghanistan.
- <sup>16</sup> Farsiwans, meaning Persian-speakers, are Iranian Shiite Persians who arrive in Afghanistan due to land grants from the Asfarhids.
- <sup>17</sup> Sykes, Percy. A History of Afghanistan. (New York: AMS Press, 1975)
- <sup>18</sup> Afghan and Tajikistani Persian-Speakers pronounce v's as w's
- <sup>19</sup> Batra, Manohar Singh. *The Abdalis – A Study of the Dynasty*. Afghanistan, Vol. 19, No. 2 (1964), 32
- <sup>20</sup> Panni, Sher. History of the Hazaras. (Peshawar UP, Peshawar, Pakistan: 1969)
- <sup>21</sup> Batra. *The Abdalis – A Study of the Dynasty*. Afghanistan, 87
- <sup>22</sup> Ibid., 89
- <sup>23</sup> Ibid., 92
- <sup>24</sup> Atkin, Muriel. *Tajik National Identity*. *Iranian Studies*. Vol. 26, No. ½ (Winter – Spring, 1993)
- <sup>25</sup> Batra. *The Abdalis – A Study of the Dynasty*. Afghanistan, 39
- <sup>26</sup> Rakowska-Harmstone. Russia and Nationalism in Central Asia, the Case of Tadzhikistan.
- <sup>27</sup> Taizi, Sher Zaman. The Saur Revolution. (Peshawar: Frontier Post Publications, 1991), 42
- <sup>28</sup> Ibid, 56-70
- <sup>29</sup> Arnold, Anthony. Afghanistan, the Soviet Invasion in Perspective. (Stanford, Calif.: Hoover Institution Press, 1981)
- <sup>30</sup> Ibid., 54
- <sup>31</sup> Ibid., 92
- <sup>32</sup> Schmitt, Eric. *Many Sources Feed Taliban's War Chest*. New York Times. 18 October 2009.
- <sup>33</sup> Tarzi, Shah. *Politics of the Afghan Resistance Movement: Cleavages, Disunity, and Fragmentation*. Asian Survey, Vol. 31, No. 6 (Jun., 1991), 479-495
- <sup>34</sup> Ibid., 488
- <sup>35</sup> Ibid., 488
- <sup>36</sup> Ibid., 490
- <sup>37</sup> Khalilzad, Zalmay. *Afghanistan in 1994: Civil War and Disintegration*. Asian Survey, Vol. 35, No. 2, (Feb., 1995) 147-152.
- <sup>38</sup> Magnus, Ralph. *Afghanistan in 1996: Year of the Taliban*. Asian Survey. Vol. 37, No. 2, (Feb., 1997)

- 
- <sup>39</sup> Rashid, Ahmen. Taliban: Militant Islam, Oil and Fundamentalism in Central Asia. (New Haven, Ct.: Yale UP, 2000), 98
- <sup>40</sup> Human Rights Watch. *UN Urged to Prevent More Killings as Taliban Offensive Continues*. 14 September 1998.
- <sup>41</sup> Goodson, Larry. *Afghanistan's Endless War*. (Olympia, WA: University of Washington P, 2001)
- <sup>42</sup> Shahrani, Nazif. *War, Factionalism, and the State in Afghanistan*. American Anthropologist, Vol. 104, No. 3 (Sep., 2002), 715-722.
- <sup>43</sup> Sreedhar, T. Ministry of External Affairs of India. *India's Afghan Policy*. 7 March 2003.
- <sup>44</sup> Rashid. Taliban. (2000). 13-30
- <sup>45</sup> British Broadcasting Channel. *Afghanistan Country Profile: Media*. [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south\\_asia/country\\_profiles/1162668.stm#media](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/country_profiles/1162668.stm#media)
- <sup>46</sup> Bakhtar News Agency. <http://www.bakhtarnews.co.af>
- <sup>47</sup> International Telecommunications Union. *Country Profile: Afghanistan*. (2004)
- <sup>48</sup> Central Intelligence Agency. CIA World Factbook – Afghanistan.
- <sup>49</sup> Dorronsoro, Gilles. *Kabul at War (1992-1996): State, Ethnicity, and Social Classes*. South Asia Multidisciplinary Academic Journal. (October 2009).
- <sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 245