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THE ENLIGHTENMENT MOVEMENT: ELECTRICITY AND CITIZENSHIP IN AFGHANISTAN

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ABSTRACT

Initially proposed as a tool to unify different groups, electricity was used to silence and further marginalize the Hazara, a Shia minority in Afghanistan. This piece tracks and analyzes this ongoing problem, centering on the “Enlightenment Movement,” Hazara protestation of the state in response to rerouting electricity. Discussing the governmental, ethnic, and geographic features at play in the issue of electricity, this paper argues that the Enlightenment Movement is not just fueled by a desire for electricity, but a demand for a wider discussion of Hazara civil rights.

Keywords enlightenment movement · Afghanistan · TUTAP · Hazara · weak states

Introduction

The Afghan capital, Kabul, was awoken on the morning of May 16, 2016 by thousands of protesters who converged onto Pashunistan Square in front of the entry to the Arg, the presidential palace, where they were met by police and stacks of multi-colored shipping containers meant to protect the palace.¹ The demonstrators—primarily members of the Hazara ethnic minority—were demanding that a 500-kilovolt (kV) power transmission line be routed back through Bamyan, a central province with a majority Hazara population, after the National Unity Government announced that they would be re-routing the line to the majority-Tajik Salang Pass.² Bamyan had been part of the original route of the Turkmenistan-Uzbekistan-Tajikistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan (TUTAP) electricity project which aimed to increase access to power in Afghanistan from 30 percent to 60 percent of the. TUTAP was an initiative funded by the Asian Development Bank intended to connect insular power grids inside the country and link this unified grid to the aforementioned neighboring countries—population.

There was a lack of clarity surrounding how and why the decision was made to switch from Bamyan to Salang. President Ashraf Ghani insisted that the decision to change the route of the project happened under the previous administration of former President Hamid Karzai; Ghani’s second vice president, Sarwar Danish, stated that the route change was decided at a recent cabinet meeting; and all government officials claimed that the change in route was based purely on economic

1. Ali M. Latifi, “An ethnically charged dispute over electricity brings protesters into Kabul’s streets,” *Los Angeles Times*, May 16, 2016.
2. Thomas Ruttig, *Power to the People (2): The TUTAP Protests* (Afghanistan Analysts Network, May 16, 2016).

reasons.³ The Hazara demonstrators, however, saw it as a politically charged act of ethnic discrimination.⁴ The rerouting of the TUTAP power line was not only a denial of a reliable energy source for an area that suffers from chronic electricity shortages, it was seen as a divisive demonstration of President Ghani's systematic discrimination towards non-Pashtun ethnic groups despite his continued promises for an ethnically unified Afghanistan and "balanced development" of all provinces.⁵ TUTAP—or, as some protesters interviewed by the LA Times Reporter Ali M. Latifi (2016) described it, "the key to the electricity"—signified autonomy: the power to control their own power. TUTAP, and both the literal and political power it would afford, would have fulfilled the promise of equal citizenship. Instead, the rerouting of TUTAP revealed fifteen years of discrimination of Hazara by President Ghani and the National Unity Government. Thus, when the 500-kV power line was rerouted and the ethnic fracturing of the state were laid bare, the Enlightenment Movement was ignited.

The Enlightenment Movement mobilized when the wounds of hundreds of years of Hazara oppression were reopened by the TUTAP project, culminating in the May 16th protest in Kabul. Among Afghanistan's four major ethnic groups—Pashtun, Tajik, Uzbek, and Hazara—the Hazara are the only Shia community among Sunni Muslims and the only ethnic community descending from the Mongols, making them a highly racialized group. First facing persecution under Amir Abdul Rahman in the late 19th century,⁶ the Hazaras faced persecution and death during the country's civil war⁷ and systematic execution under the subsequent Taliban rule during the 1990s.⁸ Although the Taliban was overthrown in 2001, extortions and violent killing by groups under the name of the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), or Daesh, continued to persist. Following the May 16th protest, President Ghani stated that they would suspend the TUTAP project for six months. Following review and the decision to keep the new route through Salang, the Enlightenment leaders organized a second protest in Kabul on July 23rd. At the rally, the protestors were hit by which two bomb blasts, at least one of them triggered by a suicide attacker, hit the protestors. Daesh claimed responsibility for the blast in which 80 people were killed and over 300 injured.⁹ Occurring in the capital, the attack was in direct view of the government where it could not be as easily overlooked as the series of attacks that had been taking place against the Hazara minority since 2001 by both Daesh and the Taliban.¹⁰ As such, President Ghani appeared on national television to announce a day of mourning, calling the bombing a "cowardly attack on the freedom of our citizens."¹¹ Many Enlightenment members perceived the president's remarks as a thinly veiled attempt to appeal to the protesters as the government had been complacent government's complacency towards the systematic attacks on Hazara for over a decade by the Taliban and Daesh groups. Beyond accusations of complacency, there were widespread calls for further investigation into the bombings, many Enlightenment Movement protesters accusing the government of direct involvement.¹² Although not an official demand of the movement, these prevalent requests for investigation into the bombings demonstrate the strong distrust of the government by the Hazara of the Enlightenment Movement.

The rerouting of the TUTAP project from Bamyan to Salang Pass and the government's response to the Daesh bombing of the second Enlightenment protest created openings in the fabric of the weak Afghan state apparatus. Weak states, as Roychowdhury defines them, are unable to maintain autonomy or equally enforce laws and "do not command a full monopoly over violence."¹³ Political infighting within the National Unity Government—which was intended to, as the name blatantly attempts to suggest, unify the ethnic factions within the Afghan state—has made unified government action impossible, fostering incomplete hegemony of the state. The divisions within the government itself have fostered the distrust of the Hazara minority and allowed for state violence to be enacted by other groups like Daesh and the Taliban. Roychowdhury also theorizes that these fractures formed in weak states enable alternate voices to emerge and transform, or completely "sideline," popular politics. By centering around the TUTAP project, the Enlightenment Movement intends to reveal that systematic violence can be seen through the uneven development of the country.

3. Latifi, "An ethnically charged dispute over electricity brings protesters into Kabul's streets."

4. Latifi, "An ethnically charged dispute over electricity brings protesters into Kabul's streets"; Catherine Putz, "TUTAP Energy Project Sparks Political Infighting in Afghanistan," *The Diplomat*, May 10, 2016; Ruttig, *Power to the People (2)*; Safiullah Taye, "TUTAP Power Project Reopens Old Wounds in Afghanistan," August 4, 2016, accessed May 23, 2019, <https://thediplomat.com/2016/08/tutap-power-project-reopens-old-wounds-in-afghanistan/>.

5. Jelena Bjelica and Thomas Ruttig, *Power to the People (3): Perspectives from Bamyan* (Afghanistan Analysts Network, June 5, 2016).

6. Devirupa Mitra, "In Search for Power, Afghanistan's Hazara Community Vows to Fight On," *The Wire*, September 2, 2016.

7. Sarah Hucal, "Afghanistan: Who Are the Hazaras?," *Al Jazeera*, June 27, 2016.

8. Human Rights Watch, *The Massacre in Mazar-I Sharif* Vol. 10, No. 7 (Human Rights Watch, November 1998).

9. Mujib Mashal and Zahra Nader, "ISIS Claims Deadly Bombing at Demonstration in Kabul, Afghanistan," *The New York Times: World*, December 21, 2017; Afghanistan Analysts Network, "The Politics of Opposition: A Challenge to the National Unity Government?," *Afghanistan Analysts Network*, October 27, 2016.

10. Taye, "TUTAP Power Project Reopens Old Wounds in Afghanistan."

11. Mashal and Nader, "ISIS Claims Deadly Bombing at Demonstration in Kabul, Afghanistan."

12. Taye, "TUTAP Power Project Reopens Old Wounds in Afghanistan."

13. Poulami Roychowdhury, "Over the Law," *Gender & Society* 30, no. 1 (2015): 84.

The National Unity Government attempted to appease the Enlightenment demonstrators by forming a TUTAP national commission which included six Hazara representatives and later promising to build a 220-kV power line in Bamyan province.¹⁴ Rather than appearing as a kind of victory of the Enlightenment Movement, the government's response was widely seen as a performative gesture¹⁵ that refused to fully integrate the Hazara into the state's wider geopolitical project. By rerouting TUTAP and instead deciding to provide an independent power source to Bamyan, the government spatially and temporally dissociated the Bamyan region and, thus, the Hazara ethnic group from Afghan development and "modernity." In describing the interaction of social movements and weak state politics, Roychowdhury asserts that occasional victories have the potential to induce complacency in the wider public by providing the illusion that minority violence is not systematic or institutional; however, something entirely different has taken shape in the Enlightenment Movement.¹⁶ Attempts by the government to "represent" Hazara interests have only further widened the fractures in the weak state apparatus, allowing the Enlightenment Movement to make further claims for the rights of citizenship and political power. As a statement of opposition to this performative "representation," all but one of the Hazara politicians appointed to the commission refused the position.

By pointing to the performative value of Hazara inclusion on the national commission, the Enlightenment Movement illuminates how the Afghan government is not interested in all citizens as citizens, but as they exist within ethnic populations. As Partha Chatterjee states in his theory of political society, there is a division "between the lofty political imaginary of popular sovereignty and mundane administrative reality of governmentality: it is the antimony between the homogenous national and the heterogeneous social."¹⁷ The creation of the National Unity Government imagined a national unity with sovereignty for all citizens regardless of ethnicity; however, Hazara citizens are citizens only tenuously, dictated by the welfare state but not imagined as political actors. As I will argue, the offer to provide the Bamyan region with an independent electricity source in place of TUTAP was understood as an attempt to maintain the Hazara as political subjects. For the Enlightenment protesters, an independent power line would have provided only electricity while TUTAP would have provided electricity, political power, and a connection to larger transnational development. Using Chatterjee's definition of citizenship, this paper will look at how the Enlightenment Movement made claims to full citizenship through TUTAP by linking citizenship to spatiotemporal development.

The Politicization of Ethnicity

Standing in opposition to the Enlightenment Movement is the Afghan National Unity Government. The National Unity Government was formed by a U.S.-devised power-sharing agreement in the wake of the contentious 2014 presidential election in Afghanistan. Following bitter disputes over who had won the election, the National Unity Government agreement established the position of the internal "leader of the opposition" alongside the chief executive: Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Abdullah Abdullah as the former, and President Ashraf Ghani as the latter. Although the intent of the National Unity Government agreement was to join opposition forces to form a "ethnically unified" state, there has been widely diverging interpretations of the two leaders' powers and authority. As the International Crisis Group stated in an official report:

Even where the [National Unity Government] agreement is being implemented, notably on appointments to senior civil and military posts, both sides are stacking the government and security agencies with allies, mainly on ethnic grounds, with Ghani favoring fellow Pashtuns and Abdullah fellow Tajiks. Even if solely made on merit, Ghani's decision to appoint mainly fellow Pashtuns to positions of power and authority is seen as reflecting bias; all four of the president's closest advisers are Pashtuns, while Abdullah appears to favour fellow Tajiks. The resulting perception of discrimination within excluded communities, particularly Hazaras and Uzbeks, exacerbated by the lack of consultation, including on development programs, is contributing to a widening ethnic and regional divide.

—Group, *Afghanistan: The Future of the National Unity Government*

External to the current government, former President Karzai has been a constant force of opposition and public criticism on issues ranging from foreign policy to governance, exacerbating the cracks in the already fragile National Unity Government. The constant external pressure from Karzai has also manifested in internal government strife, evidenced in the claims by various government officials that the Enlightenment protests were manipulated by the political opposition.¹⁸ Further complicating the government's response to the Enlightenment protests, according to an article in Khaama Press,

14. Bjelica and Ruttig, *Power to the People*.

15. Bjelica and Ruttig, *Power to the People*; Taye, "TUTAP Power Project Reopens Old Wounds in Afghanistan."

16. Roychowdhury, "Over the Law."

17. Partha Chatterjee, "Populations and Political Society," in *The Politics of the Governed: Reflections on Political Society in the Twenty-First Century*, OCLC: 890506807 (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 27–52.

18. Mashal and Nader, "ISIS Claims Deadly Bombing at Demonstration in Kabul, Afghanistan."

CEO of Afghanistan Mohammad Mohaqiq warned that he would stop cooperation with the government if the 500-kV power project was not implemented through Bamyan province, stating that “rejecting the demands to change the route of project from Salang to Bamyan is a clear discrimination and bullying against the people of central provinces”.¹⁹ As made clear through these cases, ethnicity has been central to politicians’ platforms, political appointments, and decisions since the first democratic transition of power in Afghanistan. In order to examine the questions from the beginning of this essay, we must examine how ethnicity has come to be politicized in Afghan politics. Through the process of state reconstruction following the fall of the Taliban, international policy-makers and Afghan elites formed ethnicity into a political tool. In the aftermath of 9/11, the United Nations (UN) and the United States—who argued a personal stake in the maintenance of the Afghan government due to their involvement in the end of Taliban rule and continued military presence in the country²⁰—led the formation of the 2001 Bonn Agreement and the National Unity Government fourteen years later. The Bonn Agreement—an outline for political reconstruction developed through UN peace talks—was created through peace talks that were “dominated by contestations of which ethnic categories should be taken into consideration, and to what extent”.²¹ The international leaders of the Bonn Agreement engaged in ethnic bargaining that eclipsed other criteria such as regional provenance, political identity, or the rural and urban divide, all of which contained similar significance in the Afghan context.²² This reinforcement of ethnic affiliations through the Bonn Agreement has already been skillfully captured by Conrad Schetter, who argues that the peace talks made ethnic considerations the backbone of Afghan politics:

The overall accepted strategy of the international community was that a conflict portrayed as an ‘ethnic’ one can be brought to a solution only if it builds on ethnic identities and a well-balanced representation of the ‘ethnic groups’. The broad consensus amongst international policy-makers was that the ‘multi-ethnic’ composition of the Afghan government had to be given top priority (see UN Security Council Resolution 1378) to bring the fragmented country under one national rule. Schetter, “Playing the Ethnic Card: On the Ethnicization of Afghan Politics,” 465

The Bonn Agreement—and the subsequent years of democracy built on this ‘multi-ethnic’ composition—ignored the complicated nature of ethnic categories in Afghanistan, reducing ethnicity to a few broad categories. Using Chatterjee’s discussion of political society, we can see the ways in which the Bonn Agreement created politicized ethnic categories for governance.²³ These once blurred ethnic categories became ingrained in everyday practice, while minor ethnic categories lost significance. As Schetter goes on to state, “the awareness of belonging to a certain ethnic category has become deeper since the Bonn Agreement [and] the self-ascription to a certain ethnic category became a ‘normal’ practice for Afghans”.²⁴ Although ethnic categories dictate everyday practice and political life in Afghanistan, politicians often refrain from the explicit use of ethnicity in open political debates and campaigns, instead employing nationalist or Islamic rhetoric.²⁵ Broad ethnic categories are used implicitly and strategically by politicians—never overtly discussed in public, but clearly seeping into their political moves.

Due to the persistent internal conflicts of the National Unity Government, spaces have been opened up to reveal the ethnic bias of political leaders. President Ghani has been accused of Pashtun favoritism since he took office, but vehemently denies any discrimination towards non-Pashtuns.²⁶ However, various memos have been released that reveal Ghani’s favoritism of Pashtuns and performative appointment of representatives from other ethnic groups, fracturing Ghani’s rhetoric that he and his government see all Afghans as equal. In September 2017, a memo from the Administrative Office of the President was mistakenly released which showed positions being handed out to give the appearance of diversity while keeping power in the hands of Pashtuns, stating: “Tajiks and Uzbeks, who work completely under us, should be appointed symbolically so that people think every ethnicity is represented.”²⁷ Later that year, another memo was leaked in which Abdul Fattah Frogh, a commander of the Afghan Public Protection Forces (APPF), asks officials for new recruits: “On the basis of an order of the president, a 500-member anti-riot unit has been established under the Kabul 101 commandant; hereby it is directed that within 24 hours the identities of officers belonging to Hazara, Uzbek, Pashtun— except Tajik ethnicity—

19. Khaama Press, “Mohaqiq Warns Government for Ignoring Demands of Political Parties Regarding Elections,” *Khaama Press News Agency*, July 26, 2018.

20. Arif Sahar, “Ethnicizing Masses in Post-Bonn Afghanistan: The Case of the 2004 and 2009 Presidential Elections,” *Asian Journal of Political Science* 22, no. 3 (2014): 289–314.

21. Conrad Schetter, “Playing the Ethnic Card: On the Ethnicization of Afghan Politics,” *Studies in Ethnicity and Nationalism* 16, no. 3 (2016): 466.

22. Thomas Barfield, “Afghanistan’s Ethnic Puzzle: Decentralizing Power before the U.S. Withdrawal,” *Foreign Affairs* 90, no. 5 (2011): 54–65; Schetter, “Playing the Ethnic Card: On the Ethnicization of Afghan Politics.”

23. Chatterjee, “Populations and Political Society.”

24. Schetter, “Playing the Ethnic Card: On the Ethnicization of Afghan Politics,” 473.

25. *Ibid.*, 472.

26. *Ibid.*

27. Frud Bezhan, “Leaked Memo Fuels New Allegations Of Ethnic Bias In Afghan Government,” *Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty*, November 20, 2017.

must be sent”.²⁸ Occurring over a year following the TUTAP decision, these leaked memos reveal the widening fractures in the National Unity Government’s rhetoric of unity and legitimate representation. Many underlying issues to which the Enlightenment Movement pointed—intentional bias for Pashtuns, denial of true political power to other ethnic groups, and performative representation for the appearance of diversity—have continued to be exposed and criticized even though TUTAP—the material representation of these larger issues that have formed in the politicization of ethnicity— was never rerouted to the Bamyan province.

Unbalanced Development on Ethicized Space

Within the rhetoric of the National Unity Government, equal citizenship is linked to equal development. Beginning with President Ghani’s inaugural speech in 2014, the government has repeatedly emphasized that it favors a “balanced development”²⁹ of the country. He specifically stated that he would work to address the plight of the Central and South-Western provinces, meeting with Members of Parliament (MPs) from five of the eight provinces to discuss their regions’ needs. Since his inauguration, however, these regions have frequently demanded more consideration from the government regarding their development needs,³⁰ including “improving security, construction of roads, increase in number of security forces, health services, education, fight against corruption, and completion of infrastructural projects, mainly water dams”.³¹ The Hazara, comprising roughly 12% of the population, are primarily spread out across the highlands of the Hazarjat region of central Afghanistan where Taliban violence has been a constant threat.³² According to a 2012 UN report, the Taliban effectively control the north and eastern Bamyan districts of Khmard and Shibard, because outgunned police stopped patrolling under the persistent Taliban threat. In addition to having low security force presence, central Bamyan has been threatened by roadside bombs for years.³³ For the Hazara in particular, their ethnicity is tied directly to religion, making religious violence by the Taliban a form of ethnic violence. This enduring violence is tied to the Bamyan geography: the roadside bombs determine how people can move and the landscape is often understood by which areas are most susceptible to violence. According to a spice shop owner from Bamyan in an interview by Jessica Donati of Reuters, their region is “surrounded by different ethnicities, on this side and this side,” with Pashtuns to their south and east and Tajiks to their north. In his imaginings of Bamyan, it exists within a larger ethnic geography of Afghanistan, itself understood in relation to the neighboring regions and the ethnic groups that inhabit them.³⁴

Not only facing the threat of Taliban violence, many districts in Bamyan have little or no access to reliable power sources.³⁵ In Bamyan, civil society networks began to protest in 2009 because the province still had no reliable electricity supply, nearly a decade into what was intended to be a “reconstruction-oriented international intervention”³⁶ called the Bamyan Provincial Reconstruction Project. Five years later, an off-grid solar power grid financed by New Zealand was developed in the province, but only provided a basic power supply to the provincial center. The power projects, as well as much of the other infrastructural development, in Bamyan was delayed or incomplete despite continued pressure on the central government. As a result, the region has remained reliant on animal dung, straw and shrubs, and liquefied petroleum for sources of energy (Afghan Central Statistics Organisation 2011). In addition to kerosene lamps, many families in Bamyan city light their homes with solar panels; however, these panels are too costly for many. While citizens in Kabul pay two Afghanis for one kV of energy, Bamyan citizens pay 16 Afghanis for each kV of solar energy,³⁷ making it an inaccessible means of energy for many. These strong disparities between regions— regions inscribed by ethnic lines— are what President Ghani was addressing when he called for “balanced development.” By routing through the Bamyan province, TUTAP would have provided reliable energy to the Hazara both in Bamyan city and through much of the Hazarjat region. A region that, as we have seen, has been pleading for stable energy and central government support for nearly two decades.

Using the language of the state, the Enlightenment movement has inscribed politicized ethnicity onto geographic space such that “balanced” infrastructural development signifies unbiased treatment of all ethnic groups. By doing so, the movement revealed fractures in the National Unity Government’s attempts at hegemony through a unified-ethnic ideal. In the first protest, many of the protesters called for “justice and balanced development”,³⁸ using the exact words that President Ghani repeated throughout his inaugural speech and linking them to ethnic minority justice. After two years of promis-

28. Bezhan, “Leaked Memo Fuels New Allegations Of Ethnic Bias In Afghan Government.”

29. Office of the President: Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, *President of Afghanistan President Ghani: Afghanistan Can Not Continue with Unbalanced Development* (Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, November 10, 2014).

30. Bjelica and Ruttig, *Power to the People*.

31. President: Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, *Afghanistan Can Not Continue with Unbalanced Development*.

32. Jessica Donati, “Afghanistan’s Safest Province Falling Prey to Taliban,” *Reuters*, October 16, 2012.

33. *Ibid.*

34. *Ibid.*

35. Latifi, “An ethnically charged dispute over electricity brings protesters into Kabul’s streets.”

36. Bjelica and Ruttig, *Power to the People*.

37. *Ibid.*

38. Ruttig, *Power to the People (2)*.

ing development projects to a region plagued by Taliban violence and unreliable infrastructure, the TUTAP project was not just another promise unfulfilled. For the Enlightenment Movement members, TUTAP was proof that their region's uneven development was a product of greater divisions within the Afghan state.

Spatiotemporal Development as Citizenship

For the National Unity Government, TUTAP was not just an infrastructure project. After years of civil war and Taliban rule, the international power project was a method for both expanding Afghanistan's relationship with neighboring countries and moving the country along a forward-moving teleology of development and global integration. In the Center for Strategic and International Studies Conference, TUTAP was described as a concept under which multiple projects work “to open up new markets by building transmission lines to supply power at lower costs, increase energy security and energy efficiency within the region, and provide for competition in the Central and South Asian regional electricity market.”³⁹ The power line, regardless of where it runs, will end up in Kabul, providing direct electricity to the capital and global political power to the Afghan state in its claims for legitimacy in the international community. Through public protests and strong social media presence, the Enlightenment Movement was able to draw international attention, possibly showing international investors and development banks that the National Unity Government was susceptible to domestic ethno-politics. Just as TUTAP is not simply an infrastructural project for the National Unity Government, it is clear that the demonstrators do not just want electricity in their houses and businesses; rather, the protesters want to have the power that comes with involvement in an international project like TUTAP. The connection of Bamyan to the capital would not only provide symbolic power, it could have also strengthened the Hazara's bargaining power over the capital as they would have a very tangible control over Kabul and the eastern provinces' electricity line.⁴⁰ Noorjahan Akbar, a member of the Enlightenment, wrote on Twitter: “when people ask for #enlightenment, they don't just want electricity— they want a more just system, wiser leaders, a nation-wide dialogue.”⁴¹

As previously mentioned, when TUTAP was rerouted, the National Unity Government attempted to appease the Enlightenment demonstrators by promising to build a 220-kV power line in Bamyan province.⁴² This kind of solution, however, could only provide the physical power that Bamyan needed. Not to mention, this offered power line would only provide energy to central Bamyan while TUTAP would have provided electricity to the whole region. Rather than integrating the Hazara of Bamyan into the larger geopolitical project of TUTAP, President Ghani segmented out the Hazara population as an entity to be controlled and cared for under the welfare state. If we understand the politicized ethnic categories of Afghanistan as the populations that Chatterjee (2004) describes, then the 220-kV power line can be described as a form of welfare offered to the Bamyan region— a source of electricity that would allow the region to subsist without offering any rights to citizenship or larger political power. By only offering this power line, Ghani was attempting to reassert the Bamyan Hazaras' position as political subjects rather than citizens. The government's performative representation of ethnic groups, which was revealed as such by both the Enlightenment Movement and leaked memos, only further shows the divide between civil citizens, with rights and a political voice, and communitariancommunitarian subjects. In keeping the Bamyan region outside of the TUTAP project, the National Unity Government effectively drew a boundary around the Hazara as a group outside of the political sphere of influence in an attempt to reinforce their status as outsiders. This was done while simultaneously creating themselves as a unified, representative governing body.

Light as Citizenship

Enlightenment Movement organizers—who refer to themselves as the *Shura-ye Ali-ye Mardomi* (People's High Council)—made a statement in which they voiced the movements broader political aims: “Our dream is disgust of darkness and getting to the light. By ‘light’ we do not only mean it in its literal meaning.”⁴³ By ‘light,’ the people of the Enlightenment mean justice, balanced development, “a more just system, wiser leaders, a nation-wide dialogue”⁴⁴, and rights. What all of these demands amount to are citizenship, if it is to be which is understood as a political position with the ability to influence government. Another Enlightenment member, Sahar Beyk, posted on Twitter: “Light is our right, the right of our children and our posterity.”⁴⁵ This particular message shows ‘light’ as something enduring that will ensure the voices of future Hazara are heard as Afghan citizens. The overall social media presence of the Enlightenment Movement makes it clear that the demands of the movement extend far beyond the call for infrastructure development in Bamyan. According

39. Rune Stroem and Ranjit Lamech, “The TUTAP Interconnection Concept and CASA-1000,” in collab. with Fatema Z. Sumar and Andrew Kuchins (Washington, DC, June 6, 2014).

40. Taye, “TUTAP Power Project Reopens Old Wounds in Afghanistan.”

41. See figure 1.

42. Bjelica and Ruttig, *Power to the People*.

43. Ruttig, *Power to the People* (2).

44. See figure 1.

45. See figure 2.

to a report by BBC News, the hashtag #enlightenment was used in more than 380,000 tweets. The Afghanistan Analysts Network reported on the wide-ranging initiatives the Enlightenment Movement has taken part in, focusing on how their social media presence has been central to these projects:

The movement's methods of communicating are distinct. All gatherings, held in the *Baqir ul-Ulum* mosque close to the Darulaman Palace, are open to the public. Decisions and the call for [protests] are communicated through social media. One of the major channels of communication is the Facebook group *Jumhuri-ye Sukut* (The Republic of Silence). It has been reporting and discussing Hazara issues and promoting 'humanist' education and human rights beyond the ethnic group for a number of years already. Decisions of the council and the announcements for the protests have also used these channels but have also been publicly disseminated through public loudspeakers in some parts of Kabul.

—Ruttig, *Power to the People* (2)

Beyond the TUTAP project, the Enlightenment Movement intends to create its own unified Hazara political voice that can seep into the gaps of the weak National Unity Government. Rather than resisting the rhetoric of the National Unity Government, the Enlightenment leaders have appropriated the concepts of "balanced development" and justice to construct themselves as national citizens. The movement rejected the alternate power line because it would have reinforced the Hazara as a governmental population rather than individual citizens with political aspirations. In almost unanimously rejecting the offer to be on the national commission for the TUTAP, the Enlightenment Hazara were rejecting the offer to only negotiate on the government's terms. Instead, they have created a transparent social media presence and educational platform that present their own conditions for negotiation with the government, full inclusion as citizens, and the right to 'light.'

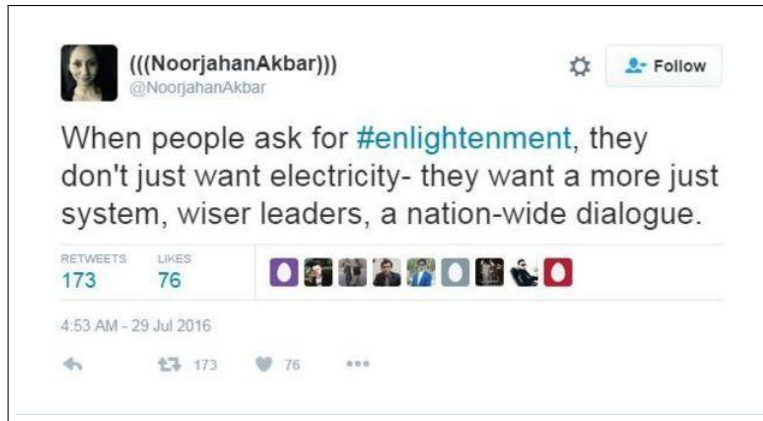


Figure 1: Source: Noorjahan Akbar, “When people ask for #enlightenment, they don’t just want electricity- they want a more just system, wiser leaders, a nation-wide dialogue.,” @NoorjahanAkbar, July 29, 2016, accessed May 27, 2019, <https://twitter.com/NoorjahanAkbar/status/758993858248138753>



Figure 2: “Light is our right, the right of our children and our posterity.”
 Source: Sahar Beyk, “Light Is Our Right...#enlightenment,” @saharbeyk, July 29, 2016, accessed May 27, 2019, <https://twitter.com/saharbeyk/status/758989865883045888>

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