The Hazaras and their role in the process of political transformation in Afghanistan

HAFIZULLAH EMADI

Introduction

Afghanistan is homeland to various ethnic communities which equally have participated in the country’s political history and economic development; this description is in stark contrast to the word ‘Afghanistan’, which refers only to the Pashtun (Afghan) ethnic community. Afghanistan’s turbulent history is in great part due to the machinations of the politically dominant class in the Afghan polity, which pitted one ethnic community against the other in order to maintain its rule and safeguard its class interests. This policy has undermined national unity and hampered sound economic development since the country gained its independence from the British empire in 1919.

Sectarian differences were one of the major issues that divided the country. Although the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan (December 1979–February 1989) relegated the question of ethnicity to a secondary position to that of Islam, with the establishment of an Islamic state in 1992 Islamists of various hues have fought each other trying to establish its domination. Since then the character of the war has been transformed from Islamic radicalism to that of ethnic nationalism, with all sides enticing ethnic communities to rally behind their own chiefs. The focus of this article is to study the political transformation of the Hazara community of Afghanistan and examine how Hazaras began to shift from religious radicalism to Hazara nationalism, questioning the role of Hazaras’ traditional leaders, the Sadats, and supporting the leadership of those who have risen from within the ranks of their community.

The Hazaras

Hazaras are one of the oppressed and dispossessed national minority communities of the country. They reside for the most part in Hazaristan or Hazarajat, which includes several provinces in the central part of Afghanistan. Scholars...
differ on theories concerning the ethnic origin of the Hazaras. Proponent of Autochthonicity Paradigm J. P. Ferrier maintains that Hazaras have been living in the region from time immemorial. According to him, Hazaras lived in that area even in the time of Alexander the Great. Based on Hazara tradition and physiognomy, H. W. Bellew postulates that Hazaras are direct descendants of the Mongolian soldiers who came to Afghanistan with Genghis Khan’s expeditionist army. The Mongol Descendant Theory has been further supported by scholars such as Burns, Fraser-Tytler, E. E. Bacon, K. Duling, Macmunn, and others. Adherent of a Mixed Race Theory, H. F. Schurmann argues that Hazaras are a mixture of Mongolians and Turks but who settled in the area during the later half of the 13th century and had gradually been assimilated into the local population.

In a similar vein L. Temirkhanov maintains that

the Hazaras are the descendants of the intermarriage of Mongol soldiers and the dominant native groups, the Tajiks, the Turks who had inhabited Afghanistan before the Mongol invasion and to some extent, the Pushtuns or Afghans and possibly Indo-Iranians, though not to the extent of Mongols and Tajiks.

The aforementioned theories suffer conceptual limitations—one-dimensionality. Autochthonicity bases its study on the relationship between sound and words in explaining the subject matter whose conclusion could be misleading. Mongolian Origins Theory has its own Achilles heel as it bases its assumption on the grounds that the history of the Hazaras does not predate that of the Mongols. A Mixed Race Theory seems to provide a reasonable understanding of the historical background of the Hazaras, albeit its conceptual ambiguity and generalization.

The name ‘Hazara’ has been interpreted differently by different people. The prevailing interpretation is that the word owes its origin to the Persian word, ‘Hazar’, meaning ‘one thousand’. ‘Hazar’ also signifies the one-time existence of one thousand rivers, creeks and mountains in the Hazarajat. It has also been said to originate from the fact that Hazaras provided one thousand soldiers to central governments of the time instead of paying taxes. Leading Islamic tradition maintains that, prior to the emergence of Islam, there were one thousand statues in the Hazarajat which had been replaced by one thousand mosques after the introduction of Islam and the spread of Islamic precepts in the region.

The overwhelming majority of Hazaras are Shiites who pledge allegiance to Ali, son-in-law of Prophet Mohammad, and Ali’s descendants. The Shiites split after the death of Imam Jafar Sadiq in 765. Those who followed Jafar’s oldest son, Ismail, are known as Ismailis, and adherents of Jafar’s other son, Musa al-Kazim, whose line started the 12 Shiite Imam genealogy, are known as Athish Ashari (their last Imam Mahdi disappeared in about 873 and the Shiites entertain the messianic ideal that he will return to rule the earth). As an oppressed minority within the Islamic world the Shiites upheld the belief that justice would prevail if descendants of Prophet Mohammad led the Islamic world. Ismailis
THE HAZARAS IN AFGHANISTAN

maintain that the line of the Imamat continues until the present. Karim Aga Khan, a staunch advocate and practitioner of Third World development, is the present 49th Imam of this sect. Since Ismailis advocated radical transformation of the status quo and practised a form of Islam which differed from existing Islamic orthodoxy and orthopraxy they have been regarded as heretics by both the Sunnis and the Shiites. A number of scholars in the Occident characterized Ismailis as assassins and portrayed Hasan Sabah, the founder of the Ismaili state in Iran, as an astute politician who had erected pavilions where runnels flowed with wine, milk, honey and water and a number of beautiful maidens performed dances to seduce their inmates. According to them, in the pavilions and palaces, Hasan used drugs to intoxicate the inmates in order to convince them that they are in Paradise. After drugging them again and taking them out of the palaces the inmates would find themselves back in the real world. Hasan’s men would then tell them that if they wish to return to the Paradise they must assassinate enemies of their faith.6 Such characterizations distort reality, as they are not convincing arguments to explain how a sect would be victorious and rule for so many years purely on the basis of such a methodology of governance. Ismailis adhered to the principle or foundation [assas, a Persian word] of their faith and for this reason, they are duly called ‘assassiyuns’, or ‘followers of the assas’. This mistaken etymology may have led novice scholars to portray Ismailis as assassins. Well-known scholar of Ismailism, Farhad Daftary, who has written two voluminous works on Ismaili history, has also failed to comprehend the very basis of such a mistaken etymology. The failure of Ismaili theorists to counter the barrage of public assault on their faith and the existing Ismaili literature surrounded by layers of myth, hagiography and legend on their leadership have largely contributed to such vagaries of distortion and interpolation of the Ismaili doctrines. A small segment of the Hazara population practises the Sunni doctrine of Islam. Some of these Hazaras had been coerced to convert to Sunnism while others may have willfully or unwillingly accepted it, believing that by their conversion into the dominant faith they would enjoy more security and stability and escape religio-political persecution.

Hazaras have enjoyed independent status since their formation as an ethnic community. They were surrounded by hostile nations trying to subjugate them and incorporate their land into their kingdoms. A number of rulers of the neighbouring countries had succeeded in occupying several villages in the periphery of the Hazarajat and compelled the Hazaras to pay taxes. For the most part Hazarajat remained independent until the early 19th century. The total Hazara population is estimated to be between 4 and 5 million, but Hazaras maintain that their number is between 6 and 7 million. Considering the population figure for 1990 in seven provinces of Afghanistan, the Hazara population is estimated at 2,060,014. Hazaras constitute 20 per cent of the population in Kabul, 18 per cent in Parwan, 40 per cent in Wardak and 80 per cent of the population in the Bamiyan, Ghor, Uruzgan, and Ghazni provinces. Table 1 shows Hazara populations in seven provinces in Afghanistan in 1990. Table 1 excludes Hazaras who have settled in Herat, Qandahar, Bakh, Andarab,
Table 1. Hazaras populations, 1990

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Province</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Percentage of Hazaras</th>
<th>Hazara population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kabul</td>
<td>2,052,781</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>410,556</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parwan</td>
<td>488,748</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>87,975</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ghor</td>
<td>302,497</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>241,997</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bamiyan</td>
<td>301,530</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>241,224</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ghazni</td>
<td>700,794</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>560,635</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urugan</td>
<td>460,932</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>368,746</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wardak</td>
<td>372,202</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>148,881</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>2,060,014</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Khenjan, Taliqan, Nemakab, Nahrin, Tugai, Chashma, Chal Ishkamish, Derain, Teshkan, Shahr-e-Buzurg and Rustag. The total population of the Hazaras may reach between 4 and 5 million.

Social stratification

In the 19th century the Hazara community was made up of landed (feudal) nobility, peasants and artisans. Feudal landowners of various strata were situated at the top of the Hazaras’ social ladder. The Hazara ruling classes were known by their own titles, such as Mir, Khan and Sultan, who at the same time were chiefs of their tribes. Hazaras’ lower social classes comprised peasants, artisans, herders and nomads belonging to various tribes and communities. Relationships between the ruling and the ruled social classes were based on ownership of the means of production (animals, land and water).

The Hazara ruling class maintained their titles, which either had been chosen by them or had been granted them by chiefs of neighbouring communities. The title ‘Mir’, which means chief or leader, was bestowed upon the most important and influential Hazara chiefs of Daizangi, Daikundi and Behsud. Mirs often married several women in order to have more children and consequently gain more social status. A Mir’s wife was known by the title, ‘Agha’ and if she belonged to the same social class as her husband she could play a major role in the sociopolitical affairs of the community. In public she often sat next to her husband, wore men’s clothes and carried arms. Tribal affiliation among Hazaras of lower social classes seldom constituted the basis of their social relations because socioeconomic and political changes in the 19th and 20th centuries had greatly affected Hazaras’ social relations. The Hazaras subsequent migration within and without the country also contributed, to some extent, to the detribalization process of this segment of the community.

Political and military power remained an exclusive monopoly of the Hazara nobility. In 1830 Hazara chiefs had their own regular armed men. Mir Yazdan Bakhsh of Behsud had 2,000 armed men, Mohammad Mir Daizanjat 1,000, and Mir Sadiq Beg of Sarjangala 900 regular armed men and 800 foot-soldiers.
Hazara chiefs in Jaghori could mobilize 5,000 armed men, and those of Sangi Takht and Miran, each having 400 armed men in their service, were able to mobilize 1,000 men. The chiefs collected taxes from the peasantry with the aid of their paramilitary followers. The supremacy of the chiefs had been legitimized by clerics who issued religious edicts in their favour. Most clerics were on the payroll of Hazara chiefs and later become owners of endowed land and received religious taxes. Clerics also occupied important administrative posts or presided over judicial and legal matters. Relations between the Hazara ruling class and Afghan monarchies were based on the principle of mutual cooperation. The Mir was expected to pay annual taxes to the king and to ensure the security of trade routes within his territory. He was also required to send a member of his family to lead a group of armed men to serve the king in times of war and social crises. The king reciprocated by granting Hazara chiefs the right to exercise political power in their respective regions.

Hazaras lost their autonomy when the British-backed King Abd al-Rahman (1880–1901) defeated the Hazara tribes one by one, occupied the whole Hazarajat and incorporated it into the Afghan state in 1893. To protect its interests in the Indian sub-continent the British worked to establish a strong central government in Kabul. For this reason they supported Abd al-Rahman in the subjugation of national communities throughout the country. To mobilize public opinion in support of his war on Hazaras Abd al-Rahman encouraged religious leaders to travel to villages and entice people into a jihad (religious war) against Hazaras. Abd al-Rahman justified his brutal war on Hazaras on the grounds that:

The Hazara people had been for centuries past the terror of the rulers of Kabul, even the great Nadir who conquered Afghanistan, India, and Persia being unable to subdue the turbulent Hazaras. The Hazaras were always molesting travelers in the south, north and western provinces of Afghanistan.... They were always ready to join the first foreign aggressor who attacked Afghanistan.

Hazaras did not want to become an easy prey for Abd al-Rahman’s mercenary army. However, like other national communities, they were willing to help enemies of the Kabul rulers. Since their defeat in 1893 Hazaras have been enslaved and subjected to much discrimination and oppression.

Abd al-Rahman partitioned Hazarajat into three provinces: Kabul, Bamiyan and Qandahar. In so doing, his main objective was to eliminate once and for all the Hazara’s sense of unity and independence and to create divisions within the Hazara community. By suppressing Hazaras Abd al-Rahman intended to teach a lesson to other ethnic communities that they will experience a similar fate if they attempt to rebel against his rule, and to pave the road for the succession of his son after his death as well as to provide state officials a better means of maintaining state vigilance on Hazaras and to collect taxes from far regions of Hazarajat. For this, Abd al-Rahman reminded his subjects to be thankful to him for enslaving Hazaras otherwise they ‘would have had to work like donkeys if it were not that the slaving donkeys of Hazaras do all the work for them’.
By sending Sunni clerics to every village in Hazarajat Abd al-Rahman forced
the Shiite Hazaras to attend Sunni mosques and abandon Shiism. He imposed
tougher regulations on Hazaras by forcing them to pay heavy taxes. For instance,
from 500 families in Ajristan each well-to-do family was forced to pay 40 Sir
(6.7 kg) wheat while the poor ones paid three Afs. each. In Daya Fulad, Zawuli
and Sepai districts the state collected Afs. 80,000 and forced the Hazara girls
into marriage. In the Shikhali district an estimated 7,000 head of cattle were
taken away from Hazaras and 350 men and women of the Jaghori district had
been sold at Kabul markets each at the price of 20–120 Afs.\textsuperscript{11} Abd al-Rahman’s
brutal suppression compelled a large number of Hazaras to seek refuge in Iran,
Pakistan and Russia. Abd al-Rahman could only succeed in subjugating Hazaras
and conquering their land when he effectively utilized internal differences within
the Hazara community, co-opting sold-out Hazara chiefs into his bureaucratic
state machinery. Although Abd al-Rahman abolished slavery and taxes from the
sales of the enslaved Hazara men, women and children in 1897, the Hazaras
remained \textit{de facto} slaves until King Amanullah declared Afghanistan’s independen-
dence in 1919.\textsuperscript{12}

\textbf{Hazaras in the post-independence era}

Amanullah was a protagonist of bourgeois development and tried to modernize
Afghanistan based on a European model of development. In 1923 he introduced
a new constitution which abolished slavery and granted equality to every citizen
of the country. When Amanullah was overthrown by pro-British King Habibullah
in 1929, Hazaras supported him and fought to restore him to the throne. After
nine months of rule Habibullah was captured by General Mohammad Nadir Shah
and executed. Although Nadir promised that he would restore Amanullah to the
throne, later he declared himself the new king.\textsuperscript{13}

Nadir’s government appointed Pashtun administrators to Hazarajat and tried to
build Pashtun nationalism by promoting the Pashto language and popularizing
its culture in Hazarajat while simultaneously condemning Hazara culture and
history. It was forbidden to extol the history of the Hazaras. Policies were
designed to expunge historical names from state archives which had been
associated with Hazaras. Nadir murdered, imprisoned and harassed Hazara
intellectuals who were articulating Hazara culture and history. Although Hazaras
were conscripted into the army and employed in civil service departments, they
were not promoted beyond the rank of colonels in the army and directors in
public offices. In so doing, Nadir effectively debilitated Hazaras authority. He
also worked to deprive them of their fundamental rights, allowing Pashtun
nomads to gradually occupy Hazaras land.

Hazaras had always looked to Hazara intellectuals in the Indian sub-continent
as a source of inspiration. To deprive Hazaras of their leadership and prevent
their solidarity in the international arena, Nadir attempted to lure Hazara
intellectuals into Afghanistan, promising lucrative employment, and then re-
stricting their social and political activities. For this reason alone Nadir invited
a well-known Hazara army officer, Ali Dost Khan of India, to visit Afghanistan and appointed him an army colonel in the Afghan armed forces. Although Ali Dost was dismayed with Nadir’s policy, he could not return to India and so resigned himself to a life in Kabul where he was kept under state surveillance. Nadir’s anti-Hazara policy compelled a Hazara intellectual, Abdul Khaliq, to seek an end to Hazaras’ oppression by assassinating Nadir in 1939. Nadir’s successor, Mohammad Zahir Shah, retaliated by torturing Abdul Khaliq to death. His cruel and inhuman method of torture has been described as follows:

[He] used the most brutal method of torturing this young boy, first by cutting off his fingers, pulling off his tongue and eyeballs, cutting off his ears and nose. After this brutal treatment he was executed.

The Kabul government pursued policies aimed at further Pushunization of every aspect of life in the country, causing Hazaras to seek rebellion against the state. The ruling class within the state bureaucracy ordered the standing army to crush the rebellion which led to the arrest and execution of well-known Hazara leaders. Those who lost their lives included Najaf Beg Shiro, Eshaq Doli, Jafar Ali Khan Kajab, Qurban Zawar, and Mullah Khuddad Luru. In the late 1950s Hazaras again organized an armed insurrection in opposition to the imposition of heavy taxes. The state pacified the resistance by repealing taxes levied on the Hazaras and imprisoned the leaders of the rebellion, including Mohammad Ebrahim Beg, known as Bacha-e-Gaw Sawar, Khawja Naeem and Sayed Mohammed Esmail Balkhi. Ebrahim, who compromised his principles, was later released from jail, while Balkhi remained there until 1964.

To eliminate Hazaras’ ethnic identity and consolidate Pushun domination, the ruling circle in the Afghan polity, influenced by the Nazi ideology and the rise of Germany as a major world power, continued the Pushunization of every aspect of non-Pushun ethnic communities. They initiated the financing for publication of fictitious historical literature and documents to substantiate the superiority and historicity of the Pushul language and culture. Hazara scholars maintain that publication of *Puta Khazana (The Hidden Treasure)* in 1960 by a pro-establishment scholar, Abdul Hay Habibi, is a reflection of this policy. Habibi claims that in 1142/1763 King Hussain Shah Hotaki ordered Mohammad Hotak to compile a profile of Pushun heroes and examples of their literary works. *Puta Khazana* chronicles the life story of Pushun heroes and their literary works dated a hundred years after the death of Prophet Mohammad.

This trend of development led pro-establishment scholars to postulate that many cities with Hazara names have had their origin in the Pushul language. For example, Ler Wand, a village in Ghor, originated from the Pushul words Lar (road) and Wand (block). Similarly, Aspi Buz district in Ghor owes its origin to the Pushul word, Spin (white) and Buz (goat), and Surkh Ghar (Red Cave) is a transformation of the Pushul words Ghar (mountain). The process of Pushunization was vigorously pursued in regions where Hazaras had been settled among other tribes because of the community’s greater religious tolerance toward Hazaras. Most Hazaras were wealthy and wielded a certain degree of
social power and authority, which made their assimilation much easier. This situation was conducive for Hazara chiefs to marry non-Hazara women, in addition to his one or several Hazara women. Pushtunization policies deprived the diaspora Hazaras of their true ethnicity by registering and associating them with the dominant ethnic group in that community. State coercive policies forced many Hazaras to conceal their identity when they were trying to obtain state identification cards. They believed that their security depended on their silence and concealment of their ethnic identity. It is due to this factor that the younger generations of Hazaras, especially those of mixed background, are not aware of their historical and ethnic identity, believing instead in the false notion that they are not Hazaras. State policies of registering Hazaras of mixed background as non-Hazaras were intended to further decimate Hazaras social and ethnic identity. A Hazara man trying to obtain an identification card for his son stated that:

A state official at the census bureau inquired about my ethnicity. When I replied that I am a Hazara the official looked at me and said, ‘You don’t look like a Hazara and you must be a Tajik’. I replied that I am a Hazara. The official replied, ‘I am doing you a favor and you are not aware of it. It’s up to you. I will write whatever you wish but one day you will regret it.’

To marginalize the Hazaras role in politics the ruling circle partitioned Hazarajat into the following provinces: Bamiyan, Ghazni, Ghor, Uruzgan and Wardak. In so doing the state intended to eliminate the collective bargaining power of the community and to emasculate their political strength. By partitioning Hazarajat the state also intended to deprive the region from international aid allocated for its development and also to minimize the number of Hazaras’ political representation (on the basis of majority of votes) in the Wulusi Jirga (the House of Parliament). For instance Daikundi, with a population of 240,000 was recognized as a Wuluswali (sub-province). Other Hazara regions in the north, such as Charkent, Kushenda, Sangcharak and Balkhab, each with an estimated 100,000 population, were designated as Alaquadari (district). Suppression of Hazaras went hand-in-hand with the state policy of building Pushtun political domination. To this end the state elevated the Pushtun settled regions in the Shahr-e-Safa district, Qandahar with a population of 3,000, to the status of a sub-province, legally qualifying it to send elected representatives to the House of Parliament. Other Pushtun settled areas, such as Alaqa Mizan in Qalat with a population of 3,500, and Haji Maidan and Shajoy each with a population of 3,000, had been named sub-provinces so that the Pushtuns in those regions would not be bereft of political representation and would receive financial support from the central government.

With the consolidation of state hegemony the status of Hazara chiefs had been reduced to that of a middle-man mediating between state functionaries and the Hazara peasantry. Hazara chiefs used their position to build a system based on economic coercion and made a large segment of the rural population dependent through rental tenancy arrangements, lending and investing money in the local
market, and manipulating the rental system and market interests. They also used a good portion of state revenues for consolidating their position and maintaining a new system of clientele. Repression by the Hazaras ruling class and steady economic competition by the Pushtun merchants and traders forced a large number of Hazaras to migrate to major cities inside and outside the country. The underdevelopment of the Hazarajat, its geographical isolation, and government biased development programmes claimed the lives of many Hazaras:

When drought struck the remote and mountainous central Afghanistan of Hazarajat in the early 1970s, 50,000–100,000 people are thought to have starved to death because emergency supplies were never sent or were unable to get through. The situations of Hazaras in the post-independent era were characteristic of a pariah position, underprivileged politically, socially, economically and culturally. They were subjected to all kinds of public humiliation and taunted by derogatory terms such as Hazara-e-mushkur (mice-eating Hazaras), bini puchuq (flat-nose), khar-e-barkash (load-carrying donkey), etc.

Resurgence of Hazara nationalism

Modernization and capitalist development, which began in the immediate post World War II period, neither put an end to the country’s economic underdevelopment in general, nor did it benefit the Hazarajat. Hazaras continued to take subservient jobs as porters, labourers, butlers, etc. When modern educational institutions were established in the post-independent period the state recruited the sons of tribal chiefs to acquire a modern education with the view to training them as loyal civil administrators. Although a limited number of Hazaras were enrolled in schools, they were not promoted to high positions in the state bureaucracy. Hazaras were not admitted to two secondary boarding schools in Kabul, Rahman Baba and Khushhal Khan (named after two Pushtun poets) and they could not pursue their further studies at the University of Nangarhar where the medium of instruction was Pashtu. Table 2 shows the percentage of Shiite enrolment in Afghanistan’s prestigious high schools.

Institutions of higher education were expanded in the 1950s and 1960s. The majority of students who attended these institutions were mainly from upper class families of the dominant Sunnis. Although a limited number of Shiites were admitted to colleges for their further education, after graduation they were not able to secure employment within the state bureaucracy, except a few Hazaras who were hired as professors and staff at the Kabul University. They included Abdul Wahid Sorabi, Mohammad Ismail Muballigh, Mohammad Yaqub Lali, Amir Shah Hasanyar, Shah Aliakbar Shahristani, Dr Zamen Ali and Natiqi. A number of Hazara elite completed their higher studies in Madrasas—religious schools in Qum, Iran and Najaf, Iraq. Prominent Hazara religious theologians with the title of Ayatollah were Mohammad Ali Modarassy, Sarwar
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Table 2. Estimated percentage of Shiite enrolment in schools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institutions</th>
<th>Percentage of Shiites</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Habibiya High School</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Estiqlal High School</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gazi High School</td>
<td>5.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nejat High School</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Military School</td>
<td>0.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other state schools</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private</td>
<td>3.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>13.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: Interviews with prominent Hazara intellectuals, Afghanistan.

Waeiz, Qurban Ali Muhaqqiq and Mir Hussain Sadiqi. Table 3 shows the percentage of college attendance by the Shiite communities.

In the early 1960s progressive movements for the restoration of democracy and a constitutional monarchy compelled the ruling class to liberalize state polices. A few individual Hazara elite of upper and middle class families were appointed to cabinet post. However, they did not commit themselves to promote the cause of the Hazaras; instead they used their position to submit the Hazaras to the ruling class. By appointing them to such positions the ruling class intended to portray the state as an institution that reconciles class conflicts, and represents and safeguards the interest of the community as a whole.21 Hazaras also sent their elected representatives to the House of Parliament and the Senate. Influential Hazara delegates to the House of Parliament included Haji Nadir Allahdad, Haji Abdul Razaq, Mohammad Ismail Muballigh, Sheikh Suleiman, Abdul Hussein Maqsudi, and Qurban Ali Razawi. Two prominent Hazara senators were Ali Akbar Nargis and Nadir Ali. Table 4 shows the number of Hazaras in the cabinet positions.

Table 3. Estimated percentage of Shiites in college

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>College</th>
<th>Sadats</th>
<th>Shiites</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Law &amp; Politics</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medicine</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economics</td>
<td>6.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sciences</td>
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<td>Humanities</td>
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<td>Islamic Law</td>
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<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Military Academy</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>0.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: Interviews with prominent Hazara intellectuals in exile.
Table 4. Hazaras in state cabinet, 1967–92

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Position</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yaqub Lali</td>
<td>1969–71</td>
<td>Public Works</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1971–72</td>
<td>Mines &amp; Industries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abdul Wahid Sorabi</td>
<td>1967; 1985</td>
<td>Minister without portfolio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1969–73</td>
<td>Planning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1982</td>
<td>Irrigation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1987</td>
<td>Higher Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1988; 1991</td>
<td>Vice-president</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1990</td>
<td>Deputy Premier</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abdul Karim Mesaq</td>
<td>1978–79</td>
<td>Finance</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1989</td>
<td>Mayor of Kabul</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1988</td>
<td>Chair, Council of Ministers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1990–91</td>
<td>First Vice-president</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eiwaz Nabizada</td>
<td>1980</td>
<td>Deputy Minister of Tribes &amp; Nationality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hayatullah Belaghi</td>
<td>1993–94</td>
<td>Commerce, Deputy Minister</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khalil Zahad</td>
<td>1992–94</td>
<td>Transportation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suleiman Yari</td>
<td>1992–93</td>
<td>Light Industry &amp; Food</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sadiq Mudabir</td>
<td>1992</td>
<td>Deputy Minister of Social Works</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mohammad Karim Khalili</td>
<td>1993–94</td>
<td>Finance</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Interviews with prominent Hazara intellectuals in exile.

The liberal policies pursued by the state led to the emergence of various political movements. The Hazara movement was divided into three ideological groups: Islamist, Hazara nationalist and Socialist. The first group was composed of social forces who agitated for the establishment of an Islamic state. A number of Hazara intellectuals who advocated radical politics supported the Islamic movement in the 1980s and 1990s and rallied behind the leadership of the Hazara political party of Hizb-e-Wahdat. General Hussein Ali of Kalu district, Bamiyan province; General Khudaidad Hazara; General Akbar Qasimi and General Mohammad Asif are professional Hazara army officers associated with Hizb-e-Wahdat.

The second group included conservative and liberal democratic individuals espousing ethnic equality for the Hazaras. Prominent ideologues of this group were Abdul Raouf Turkmani, editor and publisher of a Persian newspaper, Payam-e-Wijdan (Message of Awareness), Ibrahim Alam Shahi Nuqta, editor of Burhan (Reason), Muhammad Ismail Muballigh, a deputy in the parliament in 1964–73, Haji Nadir Ali Allahdad and a number of other intellectuals. All had been executed between April 1978 and December 1979 except Allahdad, who was kidnapped and executed by supporters of Sazman-e-Nasr (Victory Organization) in the early 1980s.\textsuperscript{22}

The third group was made up of intelligentsia espousing either pro-Soviet or pro-Beijing ideologies. Leading Hazara intellectuals of this group included Abdul Karim Mesar, member of the pro-Soviet Hizbi Demokrati Khalqi Afghanistan (People’s Democratic Party of Afghanistan, or PDPA) and
HAFIZULLAH EMADI

Minister of Finance in 1978–79 and Sultan Ali Keshtmand, member of the Parcham (Banner) faction of the PDPA. He also served as Minister of Planning (1978–79), and premier (1981–88). They were active in political movements in the 1960s and recruited Hazara youths into their respective parties which supported the Kabul regime and the Soviet occupation. Leading Hazara intellectuals who advocated revolutionary armed struggle and supported the people’s revolution included Akram Yari and Sadiq Yari. Akram was one of the founding members of the pro-Beijing organization of Sazmani Demokratiki Navin-e-Afghanistan or the Neo-Democratic Organization known as Shula-e-Jawid. After the establishment of the pro-Soviet regime in April 1978, Yari and his associates were arrested and executed. Other Hazara elites of the same group included Aziz Tughyan, members of Sazman-e-Azadi Bakhshi Mardum-e-Afghanistan (People’s Liberation Organization of Afghanistan), known as SAMA, who was shot to death during a battle with security forces in Kabul, and Nadir Ali Poya, sentenced to death by the Kabul regime in 1982.

In the 1970s the younger generation of Hazaras of Jafari and Ismaili sects espousing anti-establishment political discourse became active in politics in the most underdeveloped region of Hazarajat, Shibar-Shunbul district, Bamiyan province. Prominent among them were Rajab Ali who died in Kabul in the early 1990s, and Abdul Qayum, who was arrested by state security officers while he was a cadet in the military school studying medicine. He was tortured and summarily executed in 1978. General Ghulam Sakhi Azimi, who survived the onslaught of the Kabul regime in the 1980s, serves as a general in the Hizb-e-Wahdat military base in Bamiyan.

As a Hazara of the Ismaili community of Shibar district, Bamiyan, the author had the opportunity to become acquainted with leading Hazara elites of the Ismaili sect who played a significant role in the community’s politics. Commander Noor Mohammad was one of the leading Ismailis who got involved in politics in the early 1970s while he was a cadet in a military school. After graduating from the military academy he served as an army officer for several years until he was imprisoned during the reign of President Noor Mohammad Taraki. State security officers tortured him for several weeks in prison in order to extract information about his political affiliation and its activities. Having failed to obtain any information they released him but kept him under strict state surveillance. Noor Mohammad seized this opportunity and escaped to Shibar, where he established his base and organized people to fight the Soviet-backed government. He liberated the region and was in charge of sociopolitical affairs of the region until he was assassinated by a rival Ismaili group in the mid-1980s. Other professional Hazara elites of the Ismaili sect who rose to prominent positions include General Nawroz Shikhmiri of Shibar district. After graduating from the military academy in the 1970s Nawroz served in the army in a different capacity. In the mid-1980s he was appointed provincial commander of the army and governor of Bamiyan until he was killed during an anti-government armed insurrection in the late 1980s. General Faramurz was killed during a military operation in Kabul in the early 1990s.
The emergence of Hazara political parties

The establishment of a pro-Soviet government in Afghanistan in April 1978 and its Soviet-style modernization programmes antagonized people throughout the country and caused them to oppose the regime. In March 1979 when weather conditions improved in the Hazarajat, people rallied behind their tribal chiefs and launched a major offensive against government installations. They were armed with sickles, knives and clubs and quickly overpowered the state’s military and civilian installations. A quick victory in one village served as a motive for other villages to follow suit, and most areas fell into the hands of the local people within a few days.26

On 1 May 1979 approximately 4,000 people organized a rebellion in Bamiyan. Although they were defeated by the state military they soon reorganized themselves and laid siege to the Bamiyan city and cut all communications with it.27 By the summer of 1979 almost all parts of the Hazarajat had been liberated. In Kabul the Hazaras’ armed struggle started on 23 June 1979. Hazaras of Chindawul ghetto planned an organized protest in condemnation of the bombing of areas in Ghazni province by the Afghan air force. The Hazaras armed struggle began with an attack on a police station in Jade-e-Maiwand Street and immolation of government vehicles. The Kabul regime dispatched armoured cars and light tanks to the scene to crush the uprising. It is estimated that 100 persons died and 300 men were arrested and sent to Pol-e-Charkhi prison, where they were summarily executed. Hazaras claim that 10,000 people lost their lives during that incident. The next day, government forces began to patrol areas in Kabul inhabited by the Hazaras and arrested numerous people. In order to prevent similar armed uprisings in other areas inhabited by the Hazaras, the Kabul regime began to arrest their community leaders, intellectuals and clerics. The arrest included 360 people in Bamiyan, 570 in Behsud, 1,200 in Jaghuri, 160 in Nawoor, 700 in Turkman and Shikhali regions, and 150 in Shahristan.28

Kabul accused Iran of instigating the uprising and warned its residents to beware of Iranian saboteurs who might be hiding in Kabul. Hazaras remained defiant of the Kabul regime but were lacking both the organization and strategic planning needed to coordinate and sustain their armed struggle. The spontaneity of the movement convinced those in leadership positions to develop strategies to unite the Hazara movement. In September 1979 a grand assembly of an estimated 1,200 dignitaries was convened in Panjwai district, Bamiyan. Their objective was to reach a consensus on how Hazarajat should be administered after government forces and state officials were forced to depart the region. The meeting resulted in the creation of Shura-e-Itifaq (Council of the Union); Sayed Ali Behishti was elected to lead the council. Table 5 shows the influential participants in the 1979 assembly.

Landowners and intelligentsia were dominant in the assembly. They had been assisted by the clerics, whose mandate was to issue religious edicts for a popular uprising against the Kabul regime. Although the edicts appealed to Islamic
Table 5. Influential participants of the grand assembly, 1979

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>District</th>
<th>Class</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mohammad Husain Shahi</td>
<td>Panjow</td>
<td>Landlord</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senator Mohammad Ali</td>
<td>Panjow</td>
<td>Landlord</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ghulam Husain Yusufbeg</td>
<td>Shahristan</td>
<td>Landlord</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mohammad Husain</td>
<td>Lal-e-Sarjangal</td>
<td>Landlord</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sayed Ali Behishti</td>
<td>Waras</td>
<td>Cleric</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shaikh Samadi</td>
<td>Jargori</td>
<td>Cleric</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shaikh Naseri</td>
<td>Nwoord</td>
<td>Cleric</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S. Hussain Anwari</td>
<td>Shikhali</td>
<td>Intellectual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hayatullah Belaghi</td>
<td>Jargato</td>
<td>Intellectual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mohammad Hussain Sadiq Neeli</td>
<td>Neeli</td>
<td>Cleric</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S. M. Ali Jawid</td>
<td>Charfent</td>
<td>Cleric</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abdul Ali</td>
<td>Dara-e-Suf</td>
<td>Intellectual</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


conscience and unity against the regime, in essence it legitimized peasant rebellion under the prevailing patron—client organization. The Shura ruled over the entire Hazarat by establishing its own administrative apparatus, recruiting conscripts, collecting taxes, issuing identification cards and passports, and establishing offices in Quetta, Pakistan and Tehran, Iran, in an attempt to solicit foreign aid. Hazarat was divided into 36 civilian and eight military administrative units where civilian and military units were independent of each other. One year compulsory military service was enforced throughout the region and those unable to serve due to health or family reasons were obliged to pay a fine. In addition to regular armed forces, a volunteer militia unit was formed and Hazaras were obliged to support it by paying 20 per cent of their harvest yield.29

Hazaras during the National Liberation War

After the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan in December 1979 Hazaras intensified their struggle against the Soviet army and its puppet regime. A large number of Hazara clerics who studied theology in Iran’s religious centres in the 1960s and 1970s and had become acquainted with Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini’s radical Islamic ideology, joined the resistance. After consolidating their power base the Islamists began to oppose landowners with nationalist proclivities and the intellectuals, many of whom were members of various splinter groups of Shula-e-Jawid. Some clerics succeeded in excluding most landowners from the movement and executed members of the secular upper classes and Hazara clerics espousing the Sunni faith of Islam.30 This situation forced many landowners and secularly oriented intellectuals to flee to Pakistan.
Execution of revolutionary Hazara elites by the government and the inability of the surviving revolutionaries to organize themselves and provide leadership to the Hazara movement enabled the Islamists to seize leadership of the movement.

Hazaras in Kabul defied the Kabul regime and demonstrated their opposition by organizing an uprising in February 1980, known as the insurrection of Seh-e-Hoot (the third day of the 12th month of Hoot in the Arabic calendar). The uprising originated in several districts, including Qala-e-Shada, Dasht-e-Barchi, and Afshar. Demonstrators marched toward the Soviet embassy and attacked the house of former president Hafizullah Amin (killed by Soviet forces in December 1979) and several police stations, seizing arms and ammunition.

The Shura’s influence on the resistance movement began to decline as new political organizations espousing radical ideologies effloresced in the Hazarajat. Ideological differences coupled with clashes of personality among their leadership effectively prevented the formation of a single party which could articulate a consistent political line to guide the Hazaras’ armed struggle. In 1983 Sazman-e-Nasr and Sepah-e-Pasdaran came into existence and succeeded in driving Sayed Ali Behishti out of his capital at Waras in Ghur province, thereby consolidating their positions within the Hazarajat by 1984. The Sepah was patterned after Iran’s Revolutionary Guard and were more ideologically aligned to the Iranian leadership. These parties supported the establishment of an Islamic state and of a moral economy which rejected any demarcation on the basis of race, nation or state. Table 6 shows the Shiite organizations active in the resistance movement during and after the Soviet troop withdrawal from Afghanistan.

Since the Soviet occupation there were approximately two million Afghan refugees in Iran working at various construction sites. The majority of the refugees are Shiite. Iran used its influence to encourage Shiite Hazaras to defend Iran in its war with Iraq, claiming that they would gain experience in the art of warfare which would enable them to effectively fight the Soviets and the Kabul regime upon their return home. Prior to sending them to the war fronts the Iranian government pledged to provide them with six months’ military training in Taibad, Gilan, Qum, Sabzwar, Zahidan, Tehran, Zabul, Birjand, Turbat-e-Jam, Sirjan and other military centres in Iran. During the first three months the trainees were paid a stipend of 6,000 Rials (Iranian currency) and 20,000 Rials during the remainder of the training period. The Iranian government pledged paying each of those trainees 30,000 Rials. The trainees complained that the Iranian leadership did not pay in full the stipends they were entitled to receive after returning from the Iran–Iraq front. A facsimile of a letter by the organization of the Islamic Revolutionary Party of Afghanistan to the Guards of the Islamic Revolutionary of West Ilam, Iran, states that:

We should like to inform you that the members of the organization ... who have fought against the troops of Saddam Hussein, the infidel, have received their salaries (15,000 Rials per person monthly) although their previous salary per person was estimated at 25,000
Table 6. Afghanistan’s major Shiite organizations, 1979–96

1. **Shura-e-Itifaq (Council of the Union)**  
   Place & Date of Formation: Bamiyan, Afghanistan, 1979  
   Head: Sayed Ali Behishti  
   Ideology: Traditional Islam  
   Composition: 1,000 staff; 2,000 partisans  
   Main Front Commander: Muhammad Hasan, known as Sayed Jaglan.  
   Bases of operation: Bamiyan, Ghazni, and Balkh

2. **Harakat-e-Islami (Islamic Movement)**  
   Place & Date of Formation: Qum, Iran, 1979  
   Head: Mohammad Asif Mohsini  
   Ideology: Traditional Islam  
   Composition: 200 staff; 3,000 partisans  
   Main Front Commander: Muhammad Anwari  
   Bases of operation: Wardak, Qandahar, Bamiyan, Parwan, Kabul and Samangan provinces

3. **Sazman-e-Mujahidin-e-Mustazafin (Organization of Warriors of the Dispossessed)**  
   Place & Date of Formation: Bamiyan, Afghanistan, 1979  
   Head: Joint Council  
   Ideology: Militant & Political  
   Bases of operation: Bamiyan.

4. **Sazman-e-Nasr (Victory Organization)**  
   Place & Date of Formation: Qum, Iran, 1979  
   Head: (Council of ‘four’ persons)  
   Ideology: Islamic Fundamentalism  
   Composition: 1,500 staff; 4,000 partisans  

5. **Sepah-e-Pasdaran (Revolutionary Guard Corps)**  
   Place & Date of Formation: Qum, Iran, 1981  
   Head: Mohammad Akbari  
   Ideology: Islamic Fundamentalism  
   Composition: 1,500 staff; 2,000 partisans  
   Bases of operation: Ghor, Helmand, Bamiyan, Ghazni, and Parwan provinces

6. **Hizbullah (Party of God)**  
   Place & Date of Formation: Qum, Iran, 1981  
   Head: Shaikh Wusqi  
   Main Commander: Qari Ali Ahmad Darwazi known as Qari Yakdasta  
   Ideology: Islamic Fundamentalism  
   Composition: 1,000 staff; 2,000 partisans  
   Bases of operation: Ghor, Herat and Helmand provinces

   Head: Karim Khalili succeeded Abdul Ali Mazari  
   Ideology: Moderate Islam & Hazara Nationalism  

*Sources: Compiled from literature published by Hazaras political parties, and interviews with Hazara intellectuals in exile.*

Rials ... most of those brothers have received money only enough for buying cigarettes and pocket expenses. Some of these brothers have spent most of the payments they received
THE HAZARAS IN AFGHANISTAN

Table 7. Publications by Shiite–Hazara political parties

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Publication</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Organization</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Payam-e-Muqawimat</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>Nasr/Ghazni Group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Payam-e-Nasr</td>
<td>1364/1986</td>
<td>Nasr/Northern Group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sangar</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>Jabha-e-Mutahid-e-Enqilab</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Payam-e-Dawat</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>Islamic Invitation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nahzat</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>Islamic Renaissance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Payam-e-Khun</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>Nasr/Northern Group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bulletin-e-Khabari</td>
<td>1364/1986</td>
<td>Nasr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Besharat (Weekly)</td>
<td>1370/1992</td>
<td>Hizb-e-Wahdat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tulu-e-Wahdat (Biweekly)</td>
<td>1370/1992</td>
<td>Hizb-e-Wahdat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haftanama-e-Wahdat</td>
<td>1369/1991</td>
<td>Hizb-e-Wahdat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khabarnama-e-Paik (Daily)</td>
<td>1369/1991</td>
<td>Hizb-e-Wahdat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khabarnama-e-Subh (Daily)</td>
<td>1369/1991</td>
<td>Hizb-e-Wahdat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Payam-e-Mustazafin</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>Dispossessed Warriors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tawhid</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>Shura-e-Itifaq</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neday-e-Haq</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>Islam Maktabi Tawhid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hijrat</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>Ruhaniyat-e-Jawan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Habulullah</td>
<td>1980</td>
<td>Nasr</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


from you to support their families, while our organization has paid their traveling expenses... We request our [Iranian] brothers to pay due attention to the matter ...32

The Iranian leadership exploited the Soviet occupation to advance its interests in Afghanistan. Instead of supporting the Hazaras to fight for their liberation, Iran subjugated them and used them to defend Iran’s political objectives in the region. Iran also dispatched a number of Iranian nationals to Afghanistan to propagate Khomeini’s politics and ideology. Rasheed Achak of Zahidan province was detained by the Afghanistan security forces and confessed that after receiving military training in the Guardsmen’s Corps the Iranian regime sent him to fight in Afghanistan.33

Iran’s close ties with the Hazara political parties led Harakat-e-Islami leader Mohammad Asif Mohsini, a Shiite Pushtun from Qandahar, to request Pakistani authorities to recognize his party and provide him financial aid. Pakistani authorities did not take his demands seriously because of their distrust of new parties, lack of information about political parties within the Hazarajat, and fear of antagonizing the Iranian leadership, who treated the Shiites as their constituency ‘as well as problems faced by Zia ul Haq [then President of Pakistan] from Shia opposition to his Islamization program’.34 Other Shiite organizations, despite their different strategy and tactics, maintained cordial relations with the Iranian leadership. The Hazara political parties published various periodicals and newspapers (see Table 7).
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In the 1980s the Hazara movement was fragmented and divided on questions concerning the future of the Hazarajat. These parties often clashed with one another each trying to establish its domination over the Hazarajat. Dismayed by the development in Hazarajat a number of Hazara leaders convened a grand meeting in Punjab, Bamiyan in 1988 to discuss the prospects for uniting the resistance movement. The meeting resulted in the establishment of Hizb-e-Wahdat (Party of Unity). 35 In 1989 Hizb-e-Wahdat sent a delegation to Tehran where they were warmly greeted by Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Ebrahim Brojardi. During the meeting Abdul Ali Mazari, head of Hizb-e-Wahdat, expressed his gratitude for Iran’s efforts in helping forge a unity among the Hazaras. He stated that:

With the blessing of this great leader [Khomeini] Hizb-e-Wahdat was established in Hazarajat. The day that people gathered on the anniversary of the great leader [Khomeini] commanders and leaders had not yet resolved their differences.... What made this unity possible was the great spirit of the Imam. 36

Although Iran’s policies underwent a slight moderation in the 1980s, the Shiite Hazaras continued to look to Iran for ideological leadership. After the Soviet troop withdrawal on 15 February 1989 the Pakistan-based Islamic parties convened a Shura in order to lay the foundation for an interim government in opposition to the national reconciliation policies of the Soviet-backed government of Najibullah. The Iranian leadership encouraged the Shiites to participate in the Shura. The Shiites stipulated that they will participate only if they are given 20 per cent of the seats in the Shura. The Pakistan-based Islamic parties convening the Shura excluded the Shiite Hazaras and formed Afghan Interim Government (AIG) which was recognized by Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Bahrain and Malaysia. 37

In 1992 the United Nations-sponsored negotiation for a political settlement led to the resignation of Najibullah and the transfer of power to the AIG’s president Sebghatullah Mojaddadi, and his successor Burhanuddin Rabbani of Jamiat-e-Islami. Hizb-e-Wahdat introduced two Hazara intellectuals to assume designated posts in the cabinet. They were former Minister of Mines and Industries, Engineer Yaqub Lali, who was appointed Minister of Mines and Industries, and former Minister of Planning, Abdul Wahid Sorabi, appointed Minister of Planning, and Amir Shah Hasanyar, appointed rector of Kabul University. To eliminate his potential adversaries on 7 June 1992 Rabbani and his ally, Itihad-e-Islami of Abd al-Rasul Sayaf launched a military offensive on Hizb-e-Wahdat’s military bases and Hazaras residential areas resulting in the deaths of 100 people. Supporters of Itihad-e-Islami rounded up Hazaras from their homes and places of employment, tortured them and then summarily executed them.

Prior to his re-election, Rabbani convened a grand assembly to choose the next president. On 2 January 1993 Rabbani was chosen for a second term as president. Five parties out of nine boycotted the assembly, accusing Rabbani of vote-fixing and bribery. They opposed and intermittently fought with the Rabbani government. Besieged by forces loyal to Rabbani and that of Sayaf
in Paghman, Mazari had no option but to forge an alliance with Gulbuddin Hekmatyar’s Hizb-e-Islami, believing that Hekmatyar would be able to help Hizb-e-Wahdat against the onslaught by the Kabul government. The Iranian leadership supported Kabul and provided it with 1,425 tons of goods and $100,000 worth of radio and television equipment\textsuperscript{38} and tried its best to persuade Mazari to support the Kabul government. Iran maintained that by supporting Rabbani its strategic interests in Central Asian republics would be protected by a Tajik-dominated government in Kabul.

**Political transformation of the Shiite movement, 1990s**

To consolidate its power base the nominal government of Rabbani resorted to colonial politics, pitting one ethnic community against the other. This policy is evident in a letter which Defence Minister Ahmad Shah Masood issued to Ahmad Fahim, chief of the state intelligence department, authorizing him to fuel the flames of racial hatred among the Hazaras and Pushtruns. A facsimile of the letter reads:

> Considering the progress of your work, you are instructed to authorize every department of the National Security to intensify the war between Hizb-e-Wahdat and Hizb-e-Harakat on the basis of ethnic cleansing between Hazaras and Pushtruns to the extent that its effects must incite hostilities among inhabitants of central and northern parts of Afghanistan either in the form of Shiite and Sunni differences or as hostilities between the Hazaras and Pushtruns which would be a sufficient ground for preoccupation for future military fronts.\textsuperscript{39}

Since seizing power the Kabul government intended to eliminate the military might of Hizb-e-Wahdat and force it to abandon its well-entrenched military bases in and around Kabul city. Rabbani could not accomplish this objective alone, so he tried to divide the Shiites, gain the loyalty of a number of their military commanders by paying them a huge amount of cash money, and then forge alliances with them. To this end the Kabul government launched a blitzkrieg attack on the Hazara community in the summer of 1994 and sought to justify it by exploiting the spread of cholera in the Kabul city, and accusing supporters of Hizb-e-Wahdat of injecting poison into fruits and vegetables in the Kabul markets. By extracting coerced confessions from a number of Hazara men, women and children the state publicly condemned Hazaras as saboteurs.\textsuperscript{40} In March 1995 the Kabul government and its allies launched another military assault on the Hazaras in areas in Kart-e-Seh, Kabul. According to Amnesty International:

This was apparently in retaliation for bomb attacks on Kabul allegedly by the forces of Hizb-e-Wahdat and the Taliban. Hizb-e-Wahdat defenses had broken, their positions had been abandoned and according to all reports, there were no signs of military resistance. Nevertheless, the troops opened fire on the defenseless population. On 12 March President Rabbani’s soldiers reportedly rampaged through Kart-e-Seh, looting houses, killing and beating unarmed civilians and raping Hazara women ... One family interviewed by a foreign journalist... said President Rabbani’s soldiers had told them they wanted to ‘drink
the blood of the Hazaras’. Medical workers in the area confirmed at the time at least six incidents of rape and two attempted rapes, but believed the actual number was much higher.41 ... Scores of prisoners from the Hazara ethnic group have reportedly been beaten for a long periods in the Qala-e-Haider Khan detention center in Paghman province, which is run by Ittehad-e-Islami. The prisoners have included women who had reportedly been abducted by the group’s guards in order to be sold into prostitution or to be given as ‘gifts’ to financial supporters.42

Hizb-e-Wahdat suffered a major setback as a number of its commanders clandestinely sided with the Kabul government when the government forces attacked Hizb-e-Wahdat’s military positions in and around the Kabul city. Hizb-e-Wahdat condemned the war on the Hazaras and accused pro-government Shiite leaders of betraying the cause of the Hazaras by calling them Shiite ‘Royalists’—a terminology used to characterize them as compromised leaders. Hizb-e-Wahdat contends that by having a common religion with the Shiite Hazaras, the pro-government Shites main objective has been to derail the Hazaras’ struggle for political rights and subjugate them to their own vested interests.

Hizb-e-Wahdat engaged in a systematic campaign exposing pro-government Shites as Hazaras traditional enemy, distancing itself from Shiite radicalism, and advocating Hazara nationalism which regards Hazaras as one ethnic community no matter what religious denomination they profess. Mazari defended Hazaras interests and articulated ways and means of achieving their political rights and equality. His vocal opposition to those who put religion ahead of politics and Hazaras national interest earned him the appellation of ‘Baba’, meaning ‘grandfather’, by his loyal supporters. Iran’s support of the Kabul government and pro-government Shiite leaders compelled Mazari to sever his ties with Tehran, accusing its leadership of derailing Hazaras’ struggle in order to advance Iran’s interests in Afghanistan.

Hizb-e-Wahdat characterized the strategies of the pro-government Shites as having three dimensions: (1) compromise with the enemy of the Hazaras—the rulers of Kabul; (2) sympathizing with the cause of the Hazaras; and (3) pursuing strategies intended to advance their own vested interests.43 In Who is Enemy supporters of Hizb-e-Wahdat questioned Mohsini’s leadership in guiding the Hazaras by stating that:

Mohsini, a leader of the Shiite community whose followers are also Hazaras, had never advocated the cause of Hazaras as an oppressed ethnic community because Mohsini’s social and historical background has nothing in common with those of Hazaras.44

Mazari supporters contend that one of the major factors that a small segment of Hazaras regard non-Hazara personalities as their religious leader is due to Hazaras’ historical and psychological inferiority complex who see their political and social superiors in personalities alien to Hazara community. Thus Hazaras’ naïveté and sincere belief in brotherhood and equality served as an instrument of their own oppression.45

Mohsini’s alliance with the Kabul government and his silence toward the
carnage of the Hazaras in the suburbs of western Kabul led Dr Sadiq Mudabir to leave Mohsini after 14 years of work with him. Mudabir retained the same organizational name to his party. By publishing a weekly, Payam-e-Naw [New Message] Mudabir articulated his party’s position as one of supporting the cause of the Hazaras. In its first issue the paper articulated the organization’s political strategies to be as follows:

Afghanistan is homeland to all its ethnic community (nation). This country shall not be homeland for politics and governments, where for the elimination of the rights of nations, the most treacherous personalitites would represent the political rights of a strata with whom they not only have no social and historical roots but also have no common perceptions of racial unity. Policies of the former leadership.... not only contradicted our Jihad and religious identity but also diverted the political line of [the Party] which is based on the defense of the rights of the oppressed Hazara community.

A three-year war with the Kabul government exhausted Hizb-e-Wahdat’s military strength and its resources. In Kabul Hizb-e-Wahdat forces were besieged by government forces and the triumphant student militias known as Taliban who conquered all of southern and western Afghanistan and were advancing toward Kabul. The Taliban, which emerged as a strong contendng military force in the Afghan polity, has not offered any alternative policy programmes regarding the future course of developments in the country. Its ideology,

[A]n amalgam of rigid conservatism from rural backwaters, obscurantist Islam picked up in the madrasas of the Jamiat-e-Ulama Islam in Baluchistan, sectarian bias against Shias and an untutored Pushtun nationalism, is utterly confused.

Hizb-e-Wahdat’s ally Hekmatyar abandoned his military base in Charasyab, Kabul, to the advancing Taliban and did not provide logistic and military support to Mazari. This situation forced Mazari to agree on a peace formula presented by the Taliban to mediate between Hizb-e-Wahdat and the Kabul government. As a result, Hizb-e-Wahdat allowed members of the Taliban armed militias to take positions in several front lines controlled by Hizb-e-Wahdat. After consolidating their position, the Taliban forced Hizb-e-Wahdat militias to surrender their arms and relinquish their posts to members of the Taliban militias. Taliban did not heed Hizb-e-Wahdat’s concern regarding vulnerability of its front in the western suburbs of Kabul and the inability of its supporters to defend themselves against any military assault by the Kabul government.

During a military confrontation with the Kabul government the Taliban retreated and evacuated their bases leaving Hizb-e-Wahdat fighters and the Hazaras vulnerable to any attack by the Kabul government. Continuous bombardment of Hazara bases in the western suburbs of Kabul by the government compelled Mazari to send his envoy, Abdul Hussein Masudi to deliver a message to Taliban’s leader, Mullah Borjan. In the letter Mazari requested that Taliban must return Wahdat’s heavy arms and munitions to enable its members to defend themselves against the Kabul government. Mullah Borjan requested a direct talk with Mazari on the topic and arranged time and place for him and his
cohorts to attend the meeting. When Mazari and several members of Wahdat’s Central Council entered the Taliban’s turf in the vicinity of Gulbagh they were taken hostage and then transferred to bases in Charasyab district, Kabul, where they were murdered on 12 March 1995.

Mazari was born in 1325/1946 in a peasant family in Nanwayi Charkent district, Balkh province. He studied theology in Afghanistan’s private schools and resumed his further studies in religious centres in Qum, Iran and Najaf city, Iraq. He was imprisoned several times during ex-King Mohammad Zahir’s reign (1939–73) and joined the resistance movement during the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan. Most of Mazari’s immediate family members had been killed during the war of national liberation, including his father Khudadad and his brother Mohammad Nabi. Mazari relentlessly defended Hazaras’ political rights. In a speech Mazari told his supporters that:

I have no interests other than those of yours and have not entertained the idea of going somewhere to save my life and leave you alone on the battle field.... I wish to remain with you and let my blood be shed here and die amongst you because without you life has no meaning for me.49

After Mazari’s murder the rank and file of Hizb-e-Wahdat was in disarray until Mohammad Karim Khalili was elected Secretary General of the party. Khalili was born in 1950 in Quli Kheish, Wardak province and studied religious philosophy in private religious institutions in Afghanistan. After the establishment of a democratic state in April 1978 he organized anti-government movement and established partisan bases in Fronjal district, Parwan and Quli Kheish, Wardak and went to Tehran where he served as the First Secretary of Sazman-e-Nasr overseeing the organization’s foreign relations.50 Khalili was appointed Minister of Finance for a short period in Rabbani’s government when Hekmatyar was appointed Premier. Khalili adhered to the teachings of his preceptor and expressed his determination to establish Hazara’s total unity and liberation. In a statement Khalili stated that:

the Party would never permit that political leadership would rest in the hands of those who have no and would not have any commitment to the aspiration of our late leader, on justice and equality.51

Khalili succeeded in reorganizing Hizb-e-Wahdat and engaged in a massive military offensive to expel government troops from Hazarajat. In mid-1995 they liberated Hazarajat and even drove government troops out of Shikhali district, Parwan province and seized a large cache of light and heavy artillery from the fleeing government troops. They also captured an Iranian technician who later confessed that he had been sent by the Iranian leadership to assist the Kabul government and its Shiite ally vis-à-vis the Hazaras.52 With the liberation of Hazarajat Hizb-e-Wahdat established its command centre in Bamiyan and strove to rebuild the regime’s civil and administrative structures. Hizb-e-Wahdat also established a university in Bamiyan for Hazara students to continue their higher education, and increased the membership of women into the Central Council of
the party. These women are Sara Mazari, Fakhriya Rahmani, Durdana Fazaeli, Aqila Farzad Fatimi, Dr Sima Samar, Fayiza Malah, and Amina Shiva.\textsuperscript{53} Iran’s support of the Kabul government and its Shiite ally strained Hizb-e-Wahdat’s relations with Tehran. The Iranian leadership has since been trying to mend its relations with the Hazaras by sending its envoy to meet Hazara leaders in Bamiyan. Khalili did not meet Iranian envoy Ebrahim on the grounds that his flight to Bamiyan via Kabul and the use of Kabul government facilities by him is a direct moral offence to the Hazaras.\textsuperscript{54} When another Iranian envoy, Alauddin Brojardi, flew to Bamiyan via Mazar-e-Sharif, a city in the northern part of Afghanistan, he was warmly received by Khalili. During a meeting Khalili expressed his appreciation of Iran’s efforts in working to find a peace formula for war-torn Afghanistan.\textsuperscript{55}

**Conclusion**

Hazaras are one of the oppressed national minorities of the country. In the past they had been discriminated against on the basis of their faith, language and ethnicity. By partitioning the Hazarajat into several administrative units and replacing the word ‘Hazarajat’ by ‘Manatiq-e-Markazi’ (central regions) the ruling class intended to eliminate Hazara’s political, legal, national and historical identities through the articulation of a cultural policy aimed at assimilating Hazaras into the dominant culture. State coercive policies and practices forced Hazaras not to identify themselves as such. Although the ruling class succeeded in incorporating Hazarajat into the Afghan state, falsifying their history and culture either directly or indirectly, Hazara nationalism remained a strong force to be reckoned with. By co-opting a number of traditional Hazara chiefs the ruling class further divided the Hazaras by exploiting their religious differences (Jafaris versus Ismailis and Sunnis) to advance their own interest.

One of the main objectives of the state in replacing the word ‘Hazara’ by ‘Shiia’ is to transfer the political rights of the Hazaras to Shiites who lack a common background with the Hazaras. The process of Shiiaization of the socio political and cultural sphere and the history of Hazaras eliminates the rights of Hazaras to identify themselves as a nation. When a community’s national identity is defined by its religion, national identity is certainly replaced by religious identity. Identifying Hazaras as Shiites poses a major threat to Hazaras’ social unity as there are Hazaras professing Sunni and Ismaili doctrines of Islam.

Hazaras’ struggle for liberation and their fight to assert their rights in the future could only be accomplished if the objective of their struggle is based on: (a) empowerment of the dispossessed Hazaras within their own community and gaining equal political status in Afghanistan’s political arena in the post-Soviet era; (b) de-education of the Hazaras from their present cultural mores, which resulted in their bondage, in order to enable them to fight back social forces bent on enslaving them once again; (c) installation of the essence of an emancipatory perspective which defies the Shiiaization of Hazaras’ cultural, social, historical and political identity; and (d) provision of opportunities to enable the younger
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generation to acquire a modern education so that they may compete with non-Hazara elites in developing the future of Afghanistan’s politics and development. Otherwise they will continue to lag behind and the power of the gun alone won’t help them gain their rightful position in the country.

Notes and References

10. Ibid, p 277.
THE HAZARAS IN AFGHANISTAN

32. Ibid, pp 48–49.
33. Ibid, p 12.
42. Ibid, p 66.
43. Paz Az Sad Sal Sukut, op cit, p 32.
44. Dushman Kist [Who is Enemy] (Islamabad: Cultural Center of the Martyred Leader, 1374), p 56.
45. Ibid, p 61.
47. Ibid, p 2.