



# Shift and Drift in Hazara Ethnic Consciousness The Impact of Conflict and Migration

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# Shift and Drift in Hazara Ethnic Consciousness

## The Impact of Conflict and Migration<sup>1</sup>

Niamatullah Ibrahim

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## 1. Introduction

In recent years, Hazara ethnic consciousness is believed to have developed sharply. The process is said to have arisen with the start of the 1978 war in Afghanistan and the trend further intensified during the 1990s civil war in Afghanistan. The argument is that as a historically fragmented and politically marginalized group, Hazaras have developed a common historical and political consciousness and demonstrate an internal 'political bond' that 'has not been seen for a century' (Canfield 2004). Political developments under the pro-Soviet regime in Kabul and the emergence of anti-Soviet organizations among rural Hazaras during the 1980s are believed to have contributed to the rise of what has been described as a specific 'Hazara ideology' (ibid).

For the sake of argument, these observations are taken as starting points. The paper argues that ethnicity and ethnic consciousness among the Hazaras is inexorably linked with the emergence of the Afghan state in the end of the nineteenth century and the crisis and instability that it has gone through in recent decades. The paper explores the impact of incorporation of the Hazarajat region into the Afghan state and subsequent political marginalization and mass migration as well as internal responses to these external forces, in particular articulation and expression of a shared memory of persecution and marginalization by literate Hazaras, in particular the *ulema* and intelligentsia, in Afghanistan and certain places in the Pakistan, Iran and Iraq, in shaping and defining Hazara ethnic identity. To account for the different phases in articulation of ethnic identity as well as the dramatic changes in the external environment in which these developments took place, the paper makes a distinction between the periods before and after 1978, when the war began in Afghanistan.

The main purpose of this paper is to demonstrate that the evolution of Hazaras ethnicity and ethnic consciousness is a salient but complex and dynamic process. It is the product of external political, economic and social environment as well as actions and initiatives by members of this particular ethnic group in different locations.

## 2. Scales of Identity among the Hazaras

Delineating what precisely constitutes ethnicity in general and an ethnic identity of the Hazaras in particular is a delicate challenge. Before I attempt to present shared features that distinguish Hazaras from other neighbouring ethnic groups, it is important to note that Hazaras like members of other ethnic groups can potentially identify with several layers of identity. This can range from small scale social units based on kinship, clan and village to broader regional, political and religious affiliations. As in Afghanistan in general, the Hazaras usually use the word *qawm* to refer to various scales of geographical, tribal and ethnic identity. Thus, one can identify with a *qawm* which is at the same time be defined as a clan and as an ethnic group.

However, during the last two decades the Hazaras have experienced a dramatic shift in their self-consciousness from localized identities to a large scale identity defined as an ethnic group. This means that while smaller scale identities continue to exist, the word *qawm* increasingly refers to a trans-local ethnic identity. During the 1990s, this shift was most plainly manifested in the establishment of the *Hizb-e Wahdat Islami Afghanistan* (Party of Islamic Unity of Afghanistan) that after its establishment in

1989 unified the Hazarajat region under its political and military control and was 'capable of formulating demands for concessions at national level' (Harpviken 1998: 177). More recently, this shared sense of unity can be observed in the spontaneous organization of protests by the Hazara diaspora in dozens of cities around the world against targeted killings of Hazaras in Quetta, Pakistan. After a series of targeted attacks in the city in August-September 2011 and April-May 2012 during which dozens of Hazaras were killed, a chain of demonstrations were organized around the world to protest against what the protestors have often described as a 'genocide'<sup>2</sup> of the Hazaras in the city by radical Sunni militant organizations.<sup>3</sup>

To make sense of the shift from localized to a trans-local identity, it would be helpful to sketch out what an overarching Hazara identity would entail. Harpviken (1995:21) asserts that five central features mark the ethnic boundary of Hazara identity. These features are phenotype, religion, territory, social status and dialect. The Central Asian physiognomy of most Hazaras have most often been generalized and stereotyped to include relatively flat nose, broader face and narrower eyes. Most of them practice Shia Islam in a predominantly Sunni country. However, there are also significant Hazara communities who are Sunnis or follow the Ismaili school of Islam. The Central Highlands of Afghanistan, known as Hazarajat or Hazaristan is almost entirely inhabited by Shia Hazaras. Unlike other major ethnic groups like the Pashtuns, Tajiks, Uzbeks and Turkmens whose settlement areas are divided by Afghanistan's borders with its neighbouring countries, this remote Central Highland region is located fully within Afghanistan's territory but is surrounded by other ethnic groups in Afghanistan. This has meant that at times of wars and conflicts, religious, ethnic and geographical boundaries were coterminous for the Hazaras often resulting into grave political suppression. However, the Hazara settlement area is not limited to the Hazarajat. They are also scattered in the main urban centres of the country like Kabul, Mazar-e Sharif and Herat where they usually inhabit their own settlements. The Sunni Hazaras live in the western province of Badghis and a number of districts in northeast of the country and Ismaili Hazaras form significant communities in Kabul, Baghlan and Bamyan provinces (cf. Temirkhanov 1993:19-42 and 57-62).

As will be shown in the sections below, a low social status as a marker of Hazara identity resulted from political marginalization and economic deprivation that came with extension of state control over the Hazarajat in the end of the nineteenth century. A crucial aspect of this was the enslavement and trade of Hazara slaves the only significant example of its kind in contemporary Afghanistan. After slavery was outlawed in the 1920s, perception of Hazara social status manifested itself in a stereotypical association of their image with poverty and hard and menial occupations in the cities of the country. The Hazaras also speak a particular dialect of Farsi, known as *Hazaragi*, which contains significant Turko-Mongolic vocabulary.

However, the degree to which any of these features or a combination of them gains prominence in defining Hazara identity and distinguish them from others are contested internally and shaped by

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<sup>2</sup> Protestors have used the term 'genocide' in their statements, placards and banners to describe the targeted killings of Hazaras in Quetta Pakistan.

<sup>3</sup> Since 2001, the Hazara community in Quetta has been the target of a wave of violence by militant organizations. According to a list compiled by a Hazara non-governmental organization, the violence has so far claimed the lives of more than 700 Hazaras. The most brutal of these attacks occurred near the town of Mastung in Baluchistan province when militants massacred 26 Hazara passengers en route on a bus to the Iranian border. Like many similar attacks, Lashkare Jhangvi (LeJ), a radical militant anti-Shiite organization, claimed responsibility for the massacre.

particular social and political environments. For example, internally an emphasis on the role of religious denomination splits the community into three different sects. The boundary of a shared Hazara identity can both expand and shrink when Shia Islam is activated as an overarching element of identity. It expands because it connects them to the broader Shia world extending to Iran, Iraq and Syria. It shrinks because the Sunni Hazaras will be excluded or recognized to a lesser degree as part of this broader identity.

A helpful way of understanding this would be to look at different elites contending for the leadership of the Hazaras. Multiple groups at different levels of Hazara social organization may exercise varying degrees of social and political influence. This can range from influential elders in villages to power brokers who in recent decades have contended for leadership of all Hazaras. . Harpviken (1998:180-2) examines four potential political leadership groups of the Hazaras to explore the dynamics of the political shift away from localized identities. These are first, the traditional leaders of rural Hazarajat who were variously called *mir* and *beg*. They were leaders of tribes and sub-tribes and their influence was based on vast land ownership as well as social and political connections. Second, there were the traditional religious leaders, who were often *sayyed*, and like the *mir* constituted a privileged social class. The *sayyeds* claim descent from Prophet Muhammad and his family and as such were not part of Hazara kinship networks. They were spread all over the Hazarajat region and as such, in contrast to the *mirs* that led vertical social organizations, formed an horizontal network across the valleys of the region (cf. Temirkhanov 1993:100-134). The last two groups are more recent phenomenon and only begin to make tangible impacts in the middle of the twentieth century. These are broadly the literate class who were trained in religious institutions or state schools and universities. Graduates of religious *madrassas* often known as *ulema* or *Shaikh* have become an influential social and political force since the 1960s. They were trained in the Shia educational centres in the Iranian city of Qom and the Iraqi city of Najaf. The Shia clergy is a hierarchical institution at the top of which are the *mujtaheds*, individuals with highest knowledge of Islam. The *mujtahed* and its followers constitute a hierarchical trans-national network which is based on *ummah*, a supra-national conception of a global Muslim society. The rise of the *ulema* was coupled with emergence of an embryonic intellectual class that was essentially the product of modern schools and universities. As will be shown further below, many of these secular intellectuals were attracted to Marxist ideologies. The emergence of the *ulema* and the secular intelligentsia and the internationalist ideologies they represented marked a key shift among Hazaras from localized identities (cf. Edwards 1986:201-229).

In the following sections, I will explore how these features as markers of a broad trans-local ethnic identity as opposed to internal and localized identities such as those based on kinship and place of residence gained prominence. I will begin with the subjugation of the Hazara to the Afghan state.

### **3. Incorporation into the Afghan State, Marginalization and Migration**

The incorporation of the Hazarajat region into the Afghan State by Amir Abdur Rahman Khan, the Pashtun Sunni ruler of Afghanistan (r. 1880-1901), had the most profound impact on the Hazaras as an ethnic group and their relations with the other groups that constitute the country. The three-year war of 1890-93 and the manner in which it was launched and fought by Amir Abdur Rahman Khan on the one hand brought the region under the administrative and political control of a unified Afghanistan and on the other hand it created deep divisions along ethnic and sectarian lines (Mousavi 1998:111-138).

The history of this war is today a central theme of the Hazaras' collective memory and self-consciousness. For the argument of this paper, Amir Abdur Rahman Khan's conquest of the Hazarajat had three important dimensions.

**First**, the process and methods of subjugation of the Hazaras resulted into extensive political and military mobilization along ethnic and sectarian lines. At its peak, the war had resulted into the largest mobilization of soldiers and militias at the time of the Amir. This massive mobilization of force was made possible by extensive state propaganda declaring a *jihad* or holy war against the Shia Hazaras and a share of Hazara land and slaves were offered as material rewards for its participants. The following quote from one of numerous declarations of the Amir, issued during the most intense period of the war in the summer of 1892, plainly demonstrate extreme ethnic and sectarian dimensions of the war:

“In order to extirpate these irreligious people so that not a trace of them remains in those places and throughout the mountains and their properties be distributed among the Ghiljai and Durrani tribes, the royal court has approved as policy that a triumphant army made up of regular and tribal forces from every part of the kingdom of the God given government should descend upon the soil of the rebel tribes of the Hazarahjat so that not a soul of those wayward tribes be safe nor escape and that the boys and girls be taken captive (and made slaves) by every member of the tribes of the *mujahidin* of Afghanistan” (cited in: Fayz Muhammad 1915: 693-4).

Such proclamations issued before and during the war aroused extreme anti-Hazara feelings mobilizing tens of thousands of religiously inspired tribesmen from across the country. The level of mobilization was particularly high among the Pashtuns in general and the nomads in particular who were for centuries eyeing for the fertile valleys and summer pasturelands of the Central Highlands (Temirkhanov 1980:208). It is estimated that as many as one hundred thousand forces participated in the war against Hazarajat, including some sixty-thousand irregular tribal militias, forty thousand regular infantry and cavalry regiments, and 100 pieces of artillery (Kakar 2006:135).

It is, however, important to highlight that the war was initially launched against Hazaras of southwest Hazarajat consisting at that time of the current Uruzgan province and districts in Zabul, Kandahar, Helmand and Ghazni provinces. The region inhabited by some forty-five Hazara tribes had become known as *Yaghistan*, or rebels land, for its fierce resistance to outside control (Fayz Muhammad 1915: 603). In the early phases of the war, a number of Hazara leaders from other parts of the region joined the army of the Amir in their efforts to force the “rebel tribes” into submission. However, as the war intensified and all members of the ethnic group without distinctions became the target of abuses at the hand of Amir's army and declarations of war, like the one cited above, perhaps for the first time in history, the Hazaras mobilized against an external enemy and declared a *jihad* of their own against the Amir (Temirkhanov 1993:201-203).

Once the Hazara uprising was defeated by the end of 1893, Amir Abdur Rahman Khan depopulated extensive Hazara territories in *Yaghistan* and redistributed them among Pashtun tribes as reward for their participation in the war. In Uruzgan, “the centre of Hazarajat at that time” (Farhang 1988: 404), 12,000 Durani and 4,000 Ghilzai households were ordered to settle in the formerly Hazara lands. Many of the forty-five tribes that participated in the rebellion were wiped off the region and entire valleys were fully deserted and emptied of their original inhabitants.

**Second**, the conquest of Hazarajat resulted into the largest displacement and mass migration of the Hazaras from Afghanistan to date. Between 1893 when the Hazara rebellion was defeated by Amir Abdur Rahman's forces and 1904, some four hundred thousand Hazaras were expelled from their lands (Fayz Muhammad Kateb 2011: 301-2). Mousavi estimates that "more than half of Hazara population was destroyed or forced out" (Mousavi 1998: 136). This enormous dispersion of population occurred mainly in two forms. Many managed to flee either to areas of Tsarist Russia, British India or Qajar Iran. Many, however, were captured and turned into slaves. While slavery was not a new phenomenon in the country and the Hazaras were historically victims of a slave trade by Turkman and Uzbek traders for markets in Central Asia, the notable distinction was in the scale and nature of trade of Hazara slaves under Abdur Rahman Khan backed and sanctioned by state institutions. The government imposed capital tax of one-fifth tax on what became a burgeoning trade in Hazara slaves. In Kandahar alone some 7,200 Hazara slaves were traded annually (Temirkhanov 1980:265) and between July 1892 and June 1894 the government raised seventy thousand rupees as tax on the sale of Hazara slaves in Kandahar (Fayz Muhammad 1915:740).

We do not know the fate of those Hazaras who were sold into slavery or fled in smaller numbers during the war and the famine and repression that followed it. However, two major groups of these refugees are known today. These are the Hazaras around Mashhad and other regions of Khurasan province of Iran on the one side and Quetta and other cities in Pakistan on the other side. In Iran, some 15,000 families (168,000 people) from the northwest parts of the Hazarajat settled in Torbat-e Jam in the east of Mashhad (Mousavi 1998:149-50). Another significant group of these early Hazara refugees mainly from the Uruzgan region and southern fringes of the Hazarajat fled towards British India. While descendants of these refugees can be found in many cities in Pakistan, the largest and most visible contingent of Hazara refugees settled in the city of Quetta, which is presently located in Pakistan's Baluchistan Province.

These were, however, not the first Hazara migrations beyond the borders of what is today Afghanistan. The first significant Hazara migration from western Afghanistan to Iran occurred at the time of Nader Shah Afshar (r. 1736-1747). A second group followed after Naseruddin Shah Qajar occupied Herat in 1856; he moved 2,000-5,000 Hazara households from Herat and Badghis to Jam and the Bakharz region of Iran (Khavari 2003: 165-7). Similarly, while most of the Hazaras in Pakistan today are the descendants of the refugees who fled Afghanistan in the 1890s, Hazara migration towards the Indian sub-continent has a longer history. For centuries, the Hazaras migrated as part of armies of different conquerors, to find work or to visit holy shrines. For example, some 12,000 Hazaras fought in the army of Nader Shah Afshar (1746-1748) in his military expeditions towards the Indian sub-continent. In 1880 Bellew noted that during winter many thousands of Hazaras used to migrate to find jobs in the Punjab (Bellew 1880: 116).

**Third**, once subdued to the authority of the Afghan state the Hazaras who remained in Afghanistan were reduced to the lowest socio-economic status and strata in Afghan society. The Afghan state and the monarchies that preceded it since 1747 were dominated by the Pashtuns. The consolidation and centralization of Afghan state under Amir Abdur Rahman Khan and its association with the Pashtuns have variously been described as "internal imperialism" (Dupree 1980: xix) and a "form of internal colonialism by a Pashtun ruling class over the country's many ethnic minorities: Tajiks, Uzbeks, Hazaras, Tur-comen, Aimaqs, Nuristanis, Baluchis, and others" (Hyman 2002:299). For the Hazaras, while the Hazarajat was subjected to political and administrative control by the Afghan state and its attendant

obligations, the ethnic and sectarian nature of the war of conquest and the ensuing economic deprivation and political discrimination added new dimensions to the existing differences between the Hazaras and other ethnic groups. For the next three quarters of the century until 1978, the Hazaras were exposed to discrimination and marginalization “grounded in sectarian antagonism and social closure” (Maley 2001:357). As a result of political and economic marginalization and the extensive ethno-sectarian propagandas that subdued the Hazaras to the Afghan state, a low social status became another marker of Hazara identity. According to Canfield after incorporation of the Hazaras into the Afghan state,

“... there was the thoroughly effective subjugation of one ethnic group by another, and of one religious sect by another – a situation which, I suggest, progressively appears more like the social distinction between groups in a caste hierarchy” (Canfield 1972:6).

An important part of this oppressive policy was state-run activities of de-Shiitization of Hazaras that followed the conquest of the region and aimed to forcefully convert the Shias, including non-Hazaras, to Sunni Islam. The government appointed Sunni judges and scholars in all Hazara districts to administer legal affairs according to Hanafi jurisprudence. Hanafi mosques were built in several parts of the region where Sunni mullahs were officially designated to convert and educate the locals to Sunni Islam. But most of the Hazaras persisted to remain Shias and practiced *taqiyyah* or dissimulation, a Shia principle that allows its followers to conceal their religious beliefs in order to avoid persecution (Temirkhanov 1980:258).

Although Amir Abdur Rahman officially banned the sale of Hazara slaves in 1897, many Hazaras remained *de facto* slaves until the 1920s when the reformist King Amanullah (r. 1919-1929), a grandson of Amir Abdur Rahman Khan, outlawed it first by a decree in 1921 and then in the first constitution of the country adopted in 1923 (Adamec 2003:74; Mousavi 1998:157). Henceforth, although slavery was officially banned, the general conditions for the Hazaras did not improve in any significant level.

#### **4. New and Old Identities in New Societies**

The repression and political marginalization and its resulting low social status that came with the incorporation of the Hazaras into the Afghan state had far-reaching impacts in shaping and defining the identity of the Hazaras. To avoid discrimination and social humiliation in public spaces like schools and universities, many Hazaras during this period also concealed their ethnic identity and registered as Tajiks or members of other ethnic groups. This appears to have been a stronger trend among the Sunni Hazaras who could stress on their common religious denomination with the Tajiks. During the course of my own research in recent years, I have encountered numerous Shia Hazaras who before 1978 had hidden their identities at the schools or bitterly complained of the social humiliation and rejection they were exposed to in their classrooms. Schurmann (1962:140), who visited Afghanistan in the late 1950s, observed that “Hazaras practiced *Taqiya* when the situation required them to do so”.

Among the Hazara communities who fled the country, there is little known of those who crossed the Amur River in the North. However, the Hazaras who fled towards Iran and British India offers two different interesting examples of ethnic identities of migrant communities being strongly influenced by

the particular social and political environments of their host societies. The Hazaras of Iranian Khurasan appear to have been the least enthusiastic about maintaining their ethnic identity. Initially, they became known as *Barbari*, a Farsi form of barbarian referring to foreign and uncivilized peoples apparently used by other Iranians to describe them when they first arrived. In 1936, a Hazara officer in the Iranian army presented a petition to Reza Shah that the name Barbari be changed into Khavari or Hazara as tribal name. The following year, Reza Shah promulgated a decree declaring the Hazaras as Khavaris (Khavari 2003:169-70; Owtadolajam 1976:203). This important shift on the one hand indicates an attempt by these communities to overcome the burden of a persecuted and marginalized ethnic identity and on the other also shows the influence of the social and political environments of the Iranian society. Like most Iranians, the Hazaras of Khurasan spoke Farsi and practiced Shia Islam which made it easier for them to integrate into the host society. Furthermore, most of them settled in the rural countryside where they engaged in farming and animal husbandry and unlike Hazaras in cities elsewhere had little contacts with other Hazara communities.

By contrast, the Hazaras who went towards the Indian Subcontinent followed a different trajectory. Upon their arrival they found an open and welcoming environment in the vast British Empire with extensive opportunities. Most settled in the city of Quetta, the capital of Baluchistan. However, smaller numbers also spread to other towns in Baluchistan and Sindh. In 1904, Lord Kitchener, the Commander-in-Chief of the Indian Army, ordered a battalion to be raised from among the Hazara refugees in Quetta. The outcome was the 106<sup>th</sup> Hazara Pioneers which consisted of eight companies and participated in major military expeditions around the globe during the First World War (Mousavi 1998:142-143). In 1933, the Hazara Pioneers were disbanded after the British Empire experienced severe financial strains resulting from the war and the economic depression of the early 1930s. However, the regiment established a strong military tradition and reputation for the Hazaras in Pakistan. Subsequently, members and officers of the regiment joined the Pakistani army after its independence in 1947. The most outstanding example of these was General Muhammad Musa whose career progressed from a non-commissioned officer of the Hazara Pioneers to the Commander-in-Chief of the Pakistani Armed Forces (1957-1966).

It appears that until the middle of the twentieth century, although the Hazaras of British India had emerged as a confident minority, they held a strong feeling of bitterness towards the experience of repression and forced migration from Afghanistan in their collective memory which manifested itself in feelings of aversion towards Hazarajat. In 1963, they were accorded the official status of 'local tribes of Quetta Division' (Mousavi 1998: 145). Hazara activists of the 1960s and -70s recall a common saying of the older generation of Pakistani Hazaras of that time that if Afghanistan was to become a *qiblah*, direction towards Mecca, they would not pray towards it.<sup>4</sup>

The successive governments of Afghanistan also viewed the influence of this small minority in its neighbourhood with concerns. For the first few decades of the century, it banned the Hazara refugees from crossing the border from Afghanistan into the neighbouring countries. Kateb reports several cases of Hazara refugees who were captured en route to the Indian sub-continent and transferred into government prisons in Kandahar and Kabul (Fayz Muhamamd Kateb 2011:44).

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<sup>4</sup> Authors interviews with Hazara leaders, Quetta Pakistan, November 2005

## 5. *Ulema*, Secular Intelligentsia and the Articulation of a Shared History

So far, we have explored how the extension of the Afghan state system into the Hazarajat and subsequent repression and political marginalization of the Hazaras impacted them and shaped their identity as a distinctive ethnic group. We will now turn to the question of how the Hazara society responded to these external developments and attempted to come to grips with the tragedies of conflict and mass migration. We will focus on the role of the *ulema* and intelligentsia both of which, despite predominance of internationalist Islamist and Marxist ideologies among their members, contributed to articulation of a shared Hazara history of persecution and marginalization.

Historically, the Shia Hazaras have migrated to acquire religious knowledge in the centres of Shia learning in Iran and Iraq. The *madrassas* of the holy city of Najaf in Iraq before the 1979 Islamic Revolution in Iran and the Iranian city of Qom after it have been the two main centres of Shia Islamic learning. Before the spread of modern education systems, these religious institutions were the dominant centres of learning and literacy and as a consequence the central source of ideas and knowledge of the Hazaras. Two of the first three published works on the history of the Hazaras were written by authors educated at these *madrassas*. The three authors were among the first generation of Hazaras who fled the Hazarajat in the 1890s. The first book, *Hazaristan*, published in Russian language in Tashkent in 1898 was authored by Muhamamd Azim Beg, one of the Hazara traditional leaders who were among the refugees that crossed the Amur River (Temirkhanov 1980:11). Second was *Mokhtasar-al-Manqul Fi Tari-khe Hazara Moghul* (Short History of the Moghul Hazaras) written by Mullah Afzal Uruzgani. Uruzgani was one of the refugees who fled from Uruzgan in the 1890s and attended Shia *madrassas* in Iraq. It appears that he wrote the book in Iraq and printed it in Quetta in 1914. Similarly, Shah Ibrahim, one of the emigrants of Amir Abdur Rahman Khan's war, published the book *Tarikh-e Halat-e Ill-e Barbari* (History of the Situations of Barbari Tribe) in 1929 when he also graduated from a *madrassa* in Qom, Iran (Mousavi 1998:154).

These works represent the first serious attempts to construct a historical and spatial identity of the Hazaras. They tell the stories of persecution, dispossession and mass migration of Hazaras in the 1890s and their subsequent political marginalization and as such were first crucial steps in articulating a shared historical memory. The narration of a shared memory went in tandem with articulation of an ethnoscape, a spatial projection of an ethnic identity rooted in a greater Hazarajat as homeland of the Hazaras. The shrinking of the Hazarajat region is a central theme of historical and spatial conception of Hazara history. As might be expected, these authors provided accounts of the historical geography of the region and occupation and redistribution of the *Yaghistan* region to new Pashtun settlers (Temirkhanov 1993:11-12 and Mousavi 1998:150). These efforts would gain greater dimensions in subsequent decades and were strongly linked with similar construction of historical and spatial identities by other ethnic groups and successive Afghan government's policies "to level out the ethnic heterogeneity of Afghanistan's territory" (Schetter 2005:58).

It is difficult to establish precisely when graduates of these *madrassas* grew in number and influence among the Hazaras, but it is clear that from the middle of the twentieth century they began to make their presence felt among Hazaras in Afghanistan as well as in communities outside the country. In the

1960s there were some 1,000-1,500 Hazaras attending the *madrassas* of Najaf (Bindemann 1987). This number significantly increased in the subsequent decades.

In comparison to religious education, modern education as imparted in the state schools and universities is a more recent phenomenon. The first serious attempt to introduce modern education in Afghanistan began during the reign of King Amanullah Khan (r. 1919-1929) when the 1923 constitution declared primary education as compulsory and the first formal ministry of education was formed (Kamgar 2008:26-27). However, the process of expansion beyond Kabul was uneven and slowest in the Hazara areas. By 1952, there were less than five formal schools throughout the region (Dawlatabadi 2006:279). In cities like Kabul, poverty and social humiliation and discrimination meant that only a tiny number of Hazaras could enrol in schools and universities.

However, it is clear that by the 1960s the *ulema* and the graduates of modern schools and universities were becoming influential groups among the Hazaras. During this decade, Afghanistan witnessed an unprecedented mushrooming of ideological groups and media outlets following the adoption of a system of constitutional monarchy in 1964. Communist and Islamist ideologies prevailed among the intellectual circles of Kabul. The emphasis of the Islamist and communist discourses on creating an Islamic republic or socialist state meant that issues related to ethnic inequality and injustices were at best secondary or would naturally be resolved in the forms of societies they advocated.

Among the relatively small Hazara intelligentsia, a significant number were educated in state schools and universities in Kabul became the central ideologues and leaders of the Maoist movement of Afghanistan. Akram Yari, a Hazara who was the most prominent intellectual figure of the movement and a leader of the Maoist Progressive Youth Organization (PYO) rejected ethnic discourse and argued that class struggle was the key to the resolution of all problems in the country, including ethnic conflicts and inequalities (Ibrahimi 2012).

Among the *ulema*, one of the first and probably the most influential was Sayed Ismail Balkhi, a Shia religious scholar, poet and critic of the Afghan government. After acquiring religious education in Mashhad, Balkhi returned to Afghanistan and became known for his political speeches and vocal criticisms of the Afghan government first in the western city of Herat and later in the northern city of Mazar-e Sharif. In 1948 he moved to Kabul where he established the *halq-e jumhurikhwah* or republican circle, a proto-political party that consisted of members in the military and police. In 1950, after a coup plan of the circle was leaked to the government, Balkhi and fourteen other members of the group were detained and kept in prison for nearly fifteen years (Ali Kazemi 2004:200-5; Nuktadan 2004:193-99).

An important consequence of spread of these ideologies among the Hazaras was that the literate class increasingly shifted from localized forms and for some ethnic identities towards universal Islamic or class identities. Although in the short-term this move marked a break from articulation of an ethnic identity, in the longer term it contributed to erosion of localized forms of identities.

However, despite the prevalence of communist and Islamist ideologies, the period of the 1960s also witnessed the emergence of ethnic and nationalist discourses. In 1966, *Afghan Millat* or Afghan Nation, the name of a political group and a magazine founded by Ghulam Muhammad Farhad, promoted "a virulent form of Pashtun nationalism" and "greater Afghanistan" (Hyman 2002:308). Another group was founded by Taher Badakhshi, a leader of a splinter faction of the pro-Soviet People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan that became known as *Setam-e milli* or national oppression. Badakhshi and members of

his group stressed the importance of resolving ethnic and national inequality which they believed were more urgent than class struggle (cf. Kushkaki 199:154-157). Among the Hazaras, although there was no equivalent of *Setam-e Milli* or *Afghan Millat*, a relatively small group of the educated class were primarily concerned with persecution and marginalization of the Hazaras. The more ideological groups variously described them as *mogholists* or *Moghol Parta* (Ibrahimi 2012).

As these intellectual and ideological tendencies progressed in Afghanistan, a quest for exploring and articulating a broader ethnic identity began in earnest among Hazaras outside the country. One of the first such developments appeared during the early 1960s among the Hazara migrants and religious students in the holy cities of Iraq. Hazaras in the Iraqi city of Najaf established *Shabab-ul-Hazara* or Hazara Youth which became perhaps the first Hazara social organization combining assertion of ethnic identity with social activities. It organized football teams as well as processions that participated in religious events such as *Ashura* with Hazara banners. That these activities were occurring in the holy city of Najaf had important implications as Najaf attracted pilgrims and religious students from Hazaras in Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iran. Thus a network of religious scholars and pilgrims contributed to the flow of information between these places. A growing number of scholars like Balkhi returned after attending the *madrassas* in Iran and Iraq (cf. Edwards 1986:201-229).

During the 1960s and -70s, the Hazaras of Quetta took a more explicit approach towards reviving and promoting a secular ethnic identity. A longstanding military tradition that began with the Hazara Pioneers and continued with the Pakistani army after independence in 1947 had earned them recognition as an ethnic group with a strong sense of confidence and self-esteem. Assertion and expression of Hazara identity had long taken the form of establishing many sports clubs and football teams and Hazara, Moghul and Changezi have since become one of the most popular surnames. It is important to note that unlike Kabul where Marxist ideologies predominated among the Hazara intelligentsia, the educated class in Quetta became the leading force in a particular discourse focusing on Hazara politics and history. The emergence of first organized activities was also linked with the rise of an educated class. In 1963, the *Anjuman-e falah wa behbudi Hazara* (Hazara Welfare Organization) was formed, an organization that like the *Shabab-ul-Hazara* combined assertion of an ethnic identity with social activities such as educational courses and sports clubs. One of the most immediate objectives of organization was to overcome what Nazer Hussain, a Hazara intellectual from Quetta, describes as "addiction to lineage" or internal tribal divisions "causing disunity among Hazaras" (Hussain, <http://www.tnnhazara.org>, 2012). It became an important forerunner for the *Tanzeem-e Nasle Naw-e Hazara Moghul* (Organization of the New Generation of the Moghul Hazaras). Established in 1971, *Tanzeem* became emblematic of the particular form of Hazara consciousness that was promoted in Quetta. The organization fervently embraced the theory that Hazaras are the descendants of the Mongolian conqueror Changiz Khan. It published the magazine *Zulfiqar* that reached readers in Kabul and was also distributed among Hazaras in Iran and Iraq. Some of its leaders had also spent time in Iran and Iraq where like the Khorasani Hazaras they were also called Barbari.

For the sake of my argument, the emergence and evolution of the *ulema* had two important consequences. First, the *ulema* formed a trans-local network, extending from small valleys in the Hazarajat region to the holy cities of Iran and Iraq, which re-established and maintained contacts among Hazaras in different locations. The *madrassas* in these cities brought together Hazara students from different parts of the region. Upon their graduation, the *ulema* spread among the Hazara communities in Afghanistan as well as in Iran and Pakistan. Second, they changed religious knowledge and practices

among the Hazaras. They challenged traditional *piri-muridi* relationships between local religious leaders and their followers and instead promoted a trans-national worldview in which religious followers would have to follow a *marja-i taqlid*, the highest learned religious authority to imitate, i.e. the Grand Ayatollahs who before 1979 Iranian Revolution were mostly based in the holy cities of Iraq (Bindemann 1987).

Similarly, the rise of the secular intelligentsia represented a shift away from the localized forms of identities among the Hazaras. This can most clearly be seen in the formation of *Tanzeem* which was essentially established – as the name indicates – by a new generation of educated Hazaras at that time. By contrast, the predominance of ideological discourses in the context of continuing discrimination against Hazaras meant that initially educated Hazaras in Afghanistan refrained from confronting issues of ethnic persecution and marginalization. However, as the following section will show, this will change during the 1980s and 1990s.

## **6. Afghanistan from the War of National Liberation in the 1980s to Ethno-Nationalist Struggle in the 1990s**

The war and violence that followed the April 1978 coup of the pro-Soviet People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) and the subsequent Soviet military invasion of the country in December 1979 produced the largest exodus of refugees since the Second World War. Millions fled the country and Pakistan and Iran became the primary recipient of this massive outflow of refugees. The two countries also hosted and supported the anti-Soviet resistance organizations. With western and Arab support, Pakistan armed and supported seven major Sunni factions. Following the 1979 Iranian Islamic Revolution, a number of Shia Hazara resistance organizations also found support and assistance from various institutions and religious establishments of the Islamic Republic of Iran. To understand how ideological and ethnic discourses among Hazaras evolved during the turbulent years of war in Afghanistan, it is helpful to make a distinction between the 1980s and 1990s.<sup>5</sup>

### *Internal Struggle in the 1980s*

For the Hazaras, the first period was not only marked by anti-Soviet armed resistance but also by intense internal ideological and social struggles. Three dimensions of the broad internal struggle among the Hazaras are worth to be explored here. First, the Soviet occupation of the country and the internal conflicts in the Hazarajat caused the largest outflow of Hazara refugees and migrants since the 1890s. This new wave of refugees overlapped with and expanded a pre-existing pattern of labour migration that had begun from the Hazarajat in the 1970s. In the early 1970s large numbers of mainly male labour migrants had begun regular migration to Iran after the oil boom had created a demand for additional labour in the Iranian economy. Similarly, during this period a significant number of migrant workers mainly from the southern fringes of the Hazarajat had begun seasonal migration during the winter periods to work in the coal mines of the Baluchistan province in Pakistan. A number of these coalmines were contracted by Pakistani Hazaras who mostly relied on the labour of these seasonal migrant

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<sup>5</sup> Most of the information about these two decades is based on author's own research interviews conducted in Kabul and Quetta in recent years.

workers from Afghanistan. While after the war, Iran became both, the main destination of labour migrants as well as the main centre of Hazara political organizations outside the Hazarajat. Quetta maintained its role as a key transit point in a transnational network of hundreds of thousands of migrant workers and refugees that stretched from Hazarajat, Iran and beyond.

In Pakistan, the new Hazara migrants and refugees mainly settled among the Pakistani Hazaras. The Hazara population of Quetta dramatically expanded during the 1980s and new towns developed in the northwest of the city. The period of the 1990s witnessed new waves of migration as a result of the civil war in Kabul in 1992-1996 and the conflict between Hazaras and the Taliban in 1996 and 2001 (cf. Monsutti 2005). The experience of living together in these towns reactivated old kinship and tribal ties between Pakistani and Afghan Hazaras and contributed to the rise of networks of solidarity and feelings of belonging to a broad ethno-national identity.

Second, the liberation of the Hazarajat region from control of the PDPA government in the summer of 1979 and the subsequent mass out-migration resulted into the emergence of trans-local politics involving groups in Hazarajat as well as certain cities in Iran and Pakistan. These internal struggles had important political, social and cultural dimensions and were fought among the Hazaras in Afghanistan as well as in Pakistan and Iran. In the Hazarajat region, it manifested itself in violent armed conflicts for much of the 1980s while in Pakistan and Iran it took the form of intense ideological and cultural competition that had an equally important role in shaping and transforming the Hazara self-consciousness.

At this stage, the *ulema* had formed powerful networks extending from various parts of the Hazarajat to various cities in Iran and Iraq. These networks provided the basis of powerful trans-local political networks and placed the *ulema* in a highly advantageous position vis-à-vis other groups. Furthermore, support from the Iranian government and a general rise in the importance of religion as the ideology of *jihad* against the Soviet occupation contributed to the rise of *ulema* in the leadership of Hazara society. In spite of the rise to importance of political Islamist groups and the dramatic increase in the number of Hazara refugees in Iran, the Hazara community in Quetta also played important roles in the internal struggle among Hazaras. In the first few years after 1978, *Tanzeem* and independent Hazara leaders in Quetta directly engaged in the politics and organization of the anti-Soviet resistance organizations in the Hazarajat region. The office of *Tanzeem* in Quetta was the first point of contact for a number of religious and political elites, including like-minded individuals fleeing arrest and persecution that began soon after the April coup of 1978 in Afghanistan. The organization sent a delegation to the Hazarajat to help organize and unite the Hazara resistance under a single political leadership. The delegation participated in the first region-wide meeting in the Waras district of Bamyan in September 1979 where the Shuray-e Ittefaq-e Enqelab-e Islami Afghanistan (Unity Council of the Islamic Revolution of Afghanistan) the first indigenous Hazara *mujahedin* organization was formed. The *Tanzeem* delegation to the meeting was headed by by Haji Ghulam Rasul, a Hazara businessman who in the 1970s received

*Tanzeem's Zulfiqar* magazine and distributed it among the Hazaras in Kabul.

Table 1: Main political and cultural organizations mentioned in the paper

1	Ittehadiah Islami-e Mujahedin Afghanistan (Islamic Association of the Mujahedin of Afghanistan) Ideology: Secular with strong focus on Hazara politics and history Place and date of formation: Quetta 1980 Main areas of operations: Quetta and Hazarajat
2	Hizb-e Wahdat Islami Afghanistan (Party of Islamic Unity of Afghanistan) Leader: Abdul Ali Mazari Ideology: Political Islam with strong focus on Hazara politics and history Place and date of formation: Bamyan 1989 Main areas of operation: Hazarajat, Kabul and Mazar-e Sharif
3	Sazman-e Jawanan-e Mutaraqqi (Progressive Youth Organization) Leader/s: Akram Yari Ideology: Maoism Place and date of formation: Kabul 1996 Main areas of operations: Kabul and a limited number of other provinces
4	Sazman-e Nasr-e Afghanistan (Victory Organization of Afghanistan) Leaders: A central council of 10 members Ideology: Political Islam with focus on Hazara politics and history Place and date of formation: Iran 1979 Main areas of operations: Iran and Hazarajat
5	Shuray-e Ittefaq-e Enqelab-e Islami Afghanistan (Unity Council of the Islamic Revolution of Afghanistan) Leader: Sayed Ali Behishti Ideology: Traditional Islam Place and date of formation: Bamyan, September 1979 Main areas of operations: Hazarajat
6	Shuray-e Farhangi Islami Afghanistan (Cultural Islamic Council of Afghanistan) Ideology: Secular with strong focus on Hazara politics and history Place and date of formation: Quetta 1983 Main area of operation: Quetta
7	Tanzeem-e Nasle Naw-e Hazara Moghul (Organization of the New Generation of the Moghul Hazaras) Leader: Ghulam Ali Haidari Ideology: Secular with strong focus on Hazara politics and history Place and date of formation: Quetta 1971 Main areas of activities: Quetta and Hazarajat

Source: Source: Dawlatabadi 1992; Ibrahim 2009

However, the *Shura* did not endorse *Tanzeem's* ethnically oriented agendas. It was dominated by the traditional clergy and landlords and led by Ayatollah Beheshti, a religious cleric educated in Iraq. Thus, as an alternative *Tanzeem* helped create the *Ittehadiah Islami-e Mujahedin Afghanistan* (Islamic Association of the Mujahedin of Afghanistan), an organization dominated by Shia Hazaras and led by Abdul Hussain Maqsudi a former parliamentarian from the 1960s from the Nawur district of Ghazni province. With *Tanzeem's* backing, the *Ittehadiah* distributed the first external military assistance provided by the Pakistani authorities in the Hazarajat region. This badly needed assistance, however, turned to become a source of friction between *Ittehadiah* and the *Shura* as the later attempted to gain control of the arms distribution and it became clearer that the two organizations differed with one another on matters of ideology and future direction and the nature of the anti-Soviet resistance. Another important source of tension was the infiltration of *Ittehadiah* by Hazara Maoists who were arriving in Quetta fleeing persecution by the PDPA government as well as the *mujahedin* organizations

in Hazarajat. This greatly reduced the Islamic credentials of *Ittehadiah* in the eyes of its opponents a conflict fought and justified in the name of Islam. In the winter of 1980, the *Shura* leaders issued *fatwa* or religious decree banning and denouncing the organization as a Maoist and Mogholist organization trying to undermine an Islamic revolution. With this *Tanzeem* and *Ittehadiah*'s direct involvement in the politics of resistance in the Hazarajat also came to an end.

In 1983, Pakistani authorities removed both *Ittehadiah* and *Shura* from the list of *mujahedin* organizations entitled for assistance. Future assistance was also made conditional upon approval of one of the major seven Sunni organizations based in the country. This meant that Hazara *mujahedin* could not look for any meaningful aid to come through Pakistan and Iran became the only source of military and political support.

The final aspect of the internal changes within the Hazaras in the 1980s worth to be explored here are efforts aiming at revival and popularization of Hazara culture and history. The works of Afghan writers and poets focusing on the Soviet occupation of the country and the war during the 1980s have become known as *adabiat-e moqawemat* or "resistance literature". The war and armed resistance struggle against the Soviet occupation became the central themes of Afghan cultural and artistic works. Among the Hazaras, in addition to the war against the Soviet occupation, writers and cultural figures also began to debate and articulate issues of historical persecution and marginalization that before the war in Afghanistan were largely suppressed. Two forms of social and cultural activities are worth to be explored here. First, during the decades of war in Afghanistan a series of important works regarding the history and politics of the Hazaras were undertaken by Hazaras outside the country. In Pakistan, one of the most prominent of these was Muhammad Esa Gharjistani, a Hazara writer who migrated from Kabul to Quetta in the months after the April coup in 1978. Initially, Gharjistani became the head of cultural committee of *Ittehadiah*, but later he became known as a prolific writer focusing on the history and politics of the Hazaras in Afghanistan. After *Ittehadiah* began to decline in the face of Islamist opposition and the cut in Pakistani assistance, he devoted his time and energy in the *Shuray-e Farhangi Islami Afghanistan* [Cultural Islamic Council of Afghanistan] where until 1992 - when he disappeared under mysterious circumstances in Kabul - he published more than a dozen books on various aspects of Hazara history.

In his works on the current affairs of that time, Gharjistani prepared reports on the situation of the Hazara *mujahedin* organizations and local inflicts among them including the Ismaili and Sunni Hazaras. In his more historical research, he tried to reconstruct and revive the history of the Hazaras that he believed was obscured in the official historiography of Afghanistan. In his own introduction to the *Tarikh-e Nawin-e Hazarajat* (1988), one of his main works, he stressed that in addition to historical explanations he was seeking to "invalidate historical forgery" and to "lay the foundation of revival of a new history of the Hazarajat" (Gharjistani 1988: VI).

In Iran, despite the predominance of an Islamist ideology stressing universal unity of the *Ummah*, a series of important works on the Hazara history and their political marginalization were undertaken by some of the Hazara *mujahedin* organizations as well as independent persons. Notable Hazara historians who gained prominence in Iran include Haji Kazim Yazdani and Basir Ahmad Dowlatabadi who have produced a series of important works in Farsi that generally attempt to construct a different historical narrative as opposed to the official history promoted by Afghan monarchs and governments. The works

of Pouladi (1989) and Mousavi (1998) offers in English a reflection of much more extensive attempts by Hazara authors to narrate an alternative version of the country's history.

Of the nine Shia organizations based in Iran, members and leaders of *Sazman-e Nasr-e Afghanistan* [Victory Organization of Afghanistan] dedicated greatest attention to cultural and historical activities. The organization published eight magazines in- and outside Afghanistan and combined political Islamism with agendas of social reform within the Hazara society targeting the traditional elites such as the *mirs*. In the Hazarajat, its political and military activities were pursued in conjunction with ideological propaganda and training through mosques, *madrassas* and libraries that it had set up in areas under its control. These agendas strained relations between the organization and Iranian authorities and unleashed reactions among the more conservative and privileged sections of the Hazara society that labeled it as 'leftist' and 'nationalist' organization.

The second aspect of the cultural revival relevant to my argument here is related to popularization of Hazara culture in general and music in particular. The city of Quetta assumed a central role in this. Beginning with the launch of the Radio *Hazaragi* in 1975, initially an half an hour programme on Radio Pakistan broadcast for Afghanistan, Quetta assumed a special role for the promotion and popularization of the Hazara dialect of Dari and of Hazara music, particularly compositions played with *dambura*, a long-neck lute popular in Afghanistan and Central Asia. Presenters at the *Hazaragi* Radio programs spoke in *Hazaragi* dialect as opposed to Dari, commonly used by the educated Hazaras in Afghanistan. This combination of music and cultural programmes made it one of the most popular radio stations in the Hazarajat region.

After the outbreak of the war in Afghanistan, the city of Quetta became a hub of cultural and artistic activities that were disregarded or rejected by the Islamic Republic in Iran and the Islamist groups in the Hazarajat. It welcomed intellectuals and writers with ethnic and leftist tendencies who were persecuted or viewed with contempt by the Islamist groups in Iran and the Hazarajat. Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, a series of musical programs and concerts were organized in Quetta attracting the most prominent Hazara singers and *dambura* players. At this time, perhaps the city became the largest centre of production and distribution of Hazara music cassettes. The music produced in Quetta and the songs were laden with strong political messages and the *dambura* itself acquired a very strong political significance for Hazaras. One of the first and most influential singers and *dambura* players of this time was Sarwar Sarkhosh, a Hazara from the present day Day Kundi province who became known for his folk and political songs in Quetta. Below is my English translation of one of his most popular songs at that time:

Oh Hazara when will you become free from servitude?  
Become possessor of a prosperous house

Become possessor of life and a prosperous house  
When will you become free from servitude?

You are still silent after seeing so much oppression and cruelty  
Or you are still deceived, helpless and senseless

For years you were deprived of human life  
You were a porter, water carrier or in prison  
After this you become free or be annihilated  
When will you become free from servitude?

You have witnessed oppressions but now become a master  
When will you become free from servitude?

Sarkhosh's personal life is also indicative of the intense internal struggle within the Hazara community. After spending few years in Quetta, Sarkhosh returned in 1983 to the Hazarajat where he was killed under unknown circumstances. During this year, the internal armed conflict between *Shura* and other Islamist organizations in the Hazarajat was reaching a crucial stage in which the former lost control of much of the region. Sarkhosh also hailed from a local *mir* family that dominated the *Shura*, and opposition to music by the *ulema* is sometimes cited as the reason for his murder. However, while the exact motive for his killing is unknown, it is clear that he became the pioneer of a music tradition with strong historical and political content. A number of other singers including Sarkhosh's younger brother Daoud Sarkhoskh carried this tradition forward for an expanding audience in the following decades. Henceforth, the *dambura* was transformed from an instrument of local folk music to a symbol and means of expression of a strong ethno-national consciousness. These musical and cultural programmes on the one hand had profound effects in reviving and promoting a shared popular culture among the Hazaras and on the other took the historical and political debates from its limited *ulema* and intellectual circles to a broad audience.

#### *Convergence of Islamist, Leftist and Ethnic Discourses in the 1990s and beyond*

During the 1990s, these intra-Hazara ideological struggles faded and major Hazara groups converged around a discourse focusing on the future role of Hazaras in Afghanistan. The formation of *Hizb-e Wahdat* in 1989 is a pivotal development in the shift from internal ideological and social struggles towards articulating and demanding the role of the Hazaras in the future political arrangements of the country. Like the vast majority of the leadership of the party, Abdul Ali Mazari, the leader of the party until his death 1995 in the hand of the Taliban in, was educated in the religious *madrassas* of Iran and Najaf. Interestingly, he was also one of the key leaders of *Nasr* that among the Islamist factions of the previous decade exhibited greatest concerns towards the history of Hazaras in Afghanistan. Under his leadership during the civil of war in Kabul (1992-1995), the party opened its doors to Hazara groups ranging from the leftists to nationalists and Islamists.

The internal struggle among the *ulema*, the *mir* and the secular intelligentsia had important implications for the transformation of ethnic identity of the Hazaras. An important outcome of these struggles was marginalization of traditional leaders such as *mir* and *sayed* and effective weakening of the localized networks and identities they represented. While the *ulema* successfully took over the leadership of Hazaras, they too underwent important shifts in their ideological orientation. Pursuit of political Islam as a trans-national ideology, encompassing the *ummah* or world Muslim community, lost much of the attraction of the early 1980s. The Islamic Republic of Iran gradually shifted towards more pragmatic and less ideological foreign policies and the fall of the pro-Soviet regime in Kabul in 1992 deprived the *mujahedin* of a foreign and infidel enemy that was so central to popular Islamic mobilization (cf. Wilde 2009).

The coming together of these previously hostile groups into one party also marked the convergence of Islamist, leftist and ethnic discourses of the previous decades. Undercurrent ethnic concerns and conceptions of the educated class of the leftists and Islamists found common grounds with greater ethnic consciousness spread through the cultural and musical programmes. In other words, music tradition took what were previously ideas and conceptions of an educated class to a broader ordinary audience. Thus, works on the history of Hazaras undertaken by authors like Gharjistani and a music laden with historical and political messages coupled with the rise of *ulema*, a non-local political leadership, together contributed towards a strong ethnic consciousness and mobilization among the Hazaras in the 1990s.

However, the rise to prominence of ethnicity among the Hazaras in the 1990s is also part of a general shift towards ethnicization of politics and a decline in the importance of Islamist and Marxist ideologies. With the end of the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan in 1989, the country entered into a “post-Cold War ethno-nationalist struggle” (Saikal 1998:114). What followed the collapse of the PDPA’s government in April 1992, were a series of protracted internal conflicts that only ended with the US-led military intervention in 2001. Islam and Marxism as the dominating ideologies during the war and as a basis of political mobilization lost their relevance as the formerly *mujahedin* organizations fighting the pro-Soviet PDPA turned against one another in a struggle for power. While it is hard to reduce the fighting among the *mujahedin* factions (1992 -1995) and between the *mujahedin* and the Taliban (1996-2001) to ethnic conflicts, ethnicity became increasingly a salient issue in the politics of Afghanistan

## **7. Conclusion: Evolution of Ethnic Consciousness amidst Conflict and Migration**

As this paper demonstrates, the evolution of Hazara self-consciousness as an ethnic group or *qawm* is a dynamic historical process. It is the product of external forces as well as of responses from within the community to external actors. Incorporation of the Hazarajat into the Afghan state in 1890s and subsequent political marginalization, economic dispossession and mass migration of Hazaras did not only politicize the ethnic and sectarian boundaries but also added “low socio-economic status” as a new marker of Hazara identity. Yet, a focus on the impact of state formation on ethnicity and ethnic conflict in a multi-ethnic environment like Afghanistan will only reveal half of the story if internal responses such as the internal debates by intelligentsia and the *ulema* among the Hazaras are not taken into consideration.

Ethnicity and identity of the Hazaras is also defined by the particular social and political environments in Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iran. The shift in identity of the Iranian Khurasan Hazaras to Barbari or Khavari is an interesting example. On the one hand the shift indicates an attempt to overcome a painful memory of persecution and marginalization that came with the Hazara identity and on the other shows the importance of the context of Iranian society and shared language and creed with most of the host society. Similarly, the strong attachment to a particularly strong form of ethnic consciousness among the Hazaras in Pakistan can best be explained through the specific context of Pakistan as lacking an overarching national identity in general and the ethnic and tribal structure of the Baluchistan province in particular. Furthermore, it is important to take account of the overlap between different waves and types of migration. In the case of Hazaras, the network of *ulema* and economic migrants played roles in the flow of ideas and information between otherwise distant communities and had a constitutive influence in construction of Hazara identity.

Lastly, the rise of ethnicity and ethnic consciousness among the Hazaras are both a consequence and indication of the failure and crisis of nation-state system in Afghanistan as well as ideologies such as political Islamism and Marxism in reforming and reconstituting an alternative political system as opposed to the model of Amir Abdur Rahman Khan that transformed ethno-religious boundaries as basis of political mobilization.

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## Information on the competence network *Crossroads Asia*

The competence network *Crossroads Asia* derives its name from the geographical area extending from eastern Iran to western China and from the Aral Sea to northern India. The scholars collaborating in the competence network pursue a novel, 'post-area studies' approach, making thematic figurations and mobility the overarching perspectives of their research in *Crossroads Asia*. The concept of figuration implies that changes, minor or major, within one element of a constellation always affect the constellation as a whole; the network will test the value of this concept for understanding the complex structures framed by the cultural, political and socio-economic contexts in *Crossroads Asia*. Mobility is the other key concept for studying *Crossroads Asia*, which has always been a space of entangled interaction and communication, with human beings, ideas and commodities on the move across and beyond cultural, social and political borders. Figurations and mobility thus form the analytical frame of all three main thematic foci of our research: conflict, migration, and development.

- Five sub-projects in the working group **"Conflict"** will focus upon specific localized conflict-figurations and their relation to structural changes, from the interplay of global politics, the erosion of statehood, and globalization effects from above and below, to local struggles for autonomy, urban-rural dynamics and phenomena of diaspora. To gain a deeper understanding of the rationales and dynamics of conflict in *Crossroads Asia*, the sub-projects aim to analyze the logics of the genesis and transformation of conflictual figurations, and to investigate autochthonous conceptions of, and modes of dealing with conflicts. Particular attention will be given to the interdependence of conflict(s) and mobility.
- Six sub-projects in the working group **"Migration"** aim to map out trans-local figurations (networks and flows) within *Crossroads Asia* as well as figurations extending into both neighboring and distant areas (Arabian Peninsula, Russia, Europe, Australia, America). The main research question addresses how basic organizational and functional networks are structured, and how these structures affect what is on the move (people, commodities, ideas etc.). Conceptualizing empirical methods for mapping mobility and complex connectivities in trans-local spaces is a genuine desideratum. The aim of the working group is to refine the method of qualitative network analysis, which includes flows as well as their structures of operation, and to map mobility and explain mobility patterns.
- In the **"Development"**-working group four sub-projects are focusing on the effects of spatial movements (flows) and interwoven networks at the micro level with regard to processes of long-term social change, and with a special focus on locally perceived livelihood opportunities and their potential for implementation. The four sub-projects focus on two fundamental aspects: first, on structural changes in processes of transformation of patterns of allocation and distribution of resources, which are contested both at the household level and between individual and government agents; secondly, on forms of social mobility, which may create new opportunities, but may also cause the persistence of social inequality.

The competence network understands itself as a mediator between the academic study of *Crossroads Asia* and efforts to meet the high demand for information on this area in politics and the public. Findings of the project will feed back into academic teaching, research outside the limits of the competence network, and public relations efforts. Further information on *Crossroads Asia* is available at [www.crossroads-asia.de](http://www.crossroads-asia.de).

## **Publications in the Crossroads Asia Working Paper Series**

- Marsden, Magnus (2011): Mobile Life on the Frontiers of Crossroads Asia. In: Crossroads Asia Working Paper Series, No. 1.
- Schetter, Conrad (2012): Translocal Lives. Patterns of Migration in Afghanistan. In: Crossroads Asia Working Paper Series, No. 2.
- Hill, Joe (2012): A post-area studies approach to the study of hill irrigation across the Alai – Pamir – Karakoram – Himalaya. In: Crossroads Asia Working Paper Series, No. 3
- Ismailbekova, Aksana (2012): Coping Strategies: Public Avoidance, Migration and Marriage in the Aftermath of the Osh Conflict, Fergana Valley . In: Crossroads Asia Working Paper Series, No. 4.

## **Crossroads Asia Concept Papers**

- Working Group Conflict (2012): Conflict Research on *Crossroads Asia* – A Conceptual Approach. In: *Crossroads Asia* Concept Papers, No. 1.