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SOVIET NATIONALITY POLICY IN  
AFGHANISTAN

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Professor Bhattacharya, who was a National Endowment in Humanities Fellow at Harvard University last summer, presented the following paper to the Sixth Third World Studies Conference held at Omaha, Nebraska on October 28, 1983. He has been Professor of Political Science at Southeastern Oklahoma State University, Durant, Okla., since 1975.

SOVIET ARMED FORCES moved into Afghanistan on December 24, 1979, and have been in occupation of that hapless country ever since. During this period there have been incessant and wide-ranging speculations about the intention of the Soviet Union in relation to Afghanistan. These have ranged from the cynical to the naively optimistic. The cynical ones seem to say that the Soviets have at long last followed Peter the Great, who admonished all Russians to try to extend their rule to warm water ports, and that their present invasion of Afghanistan represents nothing less than their first clear and giant step toward the sea (in this case, the Persian Gulf and Arabian Sea). The naive, on the other hand, seem to suggest that the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan has been in the nature of a reaction to the other Powers' actions since the 1970s that have led to profound unrest in the region contiguous to the Soviet Union of which Afghanistan is a part, and that as soon as the situation in the region improves the Soviet Union will consider it no longer necessary to occupy the country.<sup>1</sup> It seems to me that such speculations about the intention of the Soviets in Afghanistan, certain insights notwithstanding, are futile because they are difficult to substantiate, creating more heat than light since speculations usually spawn counterspeculations. But if we concentrate on actual behaviour and on the policies that the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan, as advised by its mentor the Soviet Union, has enunciated in Afghanistan since 1979, we may be better able to dispose of the question of the Soviet intention in Afghanistan and estimate its prospects for success there.

There are many areas in which the new DRA regime has initiated new policies, since, as a revolutionary regime, it cannot but make radical departures from its feudal, backward past. It is not the purpose of this paper to discuss all these, designed as they are to bring about a radical transformation of society, for they have been the subject of a good many studies already.<sup>2</sup> One area of policymaking, though, which may be usefully explored but has somehow escaped close scrutiny hitherto, is the nationality situation in Afghanistan<sup>3</sup> and what the regime is doing in that regard. In the belief that the clue to the understanding of Soviet intentions in Afghanistan lies in the nationality situation there, I propose in this paper to analyse, first, the nationality situation that the DRA regime inherited from the past; secondly, the policies the regime has initiated to bring about changes in it; and thirdly, the implications of these policies. An attempt will also be made in the last section of the paper to comment

on the nature of the Soviet-crafted nationality policy as it is being played out in Afghanistan.

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Estimates of Afghanistan's population vary, ranging from twelve million to sixteen million. An American-sponsored study gives the former figure. A new one, given by a census conducted under the orders of the new Kabul regime of Taraki-Amin in 1979, is 13.5 million. Even so, the reliability of the statistics given above cannot be guaranteed for a number of reasons: (1) Afghan society is so decentralized; (2) illiteracy is so extensive (some ninety percent of the population are illiterate); (3) the suspicion among serious scholars and specialists on Afghanistan that these figures may have been doctored, in view of the overweening objective of the regime to obtain international assistance.

Afghanistan is a "tribal" society, made up largely of a hierarchy of social groups distinguished by language and culture from others that wield authority over their members. Despite the recent establishment of national languages and other efforts to establish larger loyalties, the closer loyalties – to lineage group, to family, or village – can still be decisive.

Falling under this overall rubric of "tribal society" are the most tribal of all Afghanistan's population: the Pashtuns, the Baluchis, and the Nuristanis. About ten percent of Afghanistan's population – approximately two million – are Koochis,<sup>5</sup> who are pure or semi-sedentary nomadic traders. And between these Koochis and the rest there may be little communication.

Afghanistan is a simplistically religious Moslem country where Islamic precepts are mediated by capricious tribal leaders wedded to tribal customs and practices. However, even the Moslems seem to have difficulty in uniting, insisting as they do on their sectarian affiliations. An overwhelming majority of Moslems call themselves Sunnis and the rest are Shi'ites (Hazaras in the province of Hazarajat, for example). A very small section of Afghanistan's population, found only in urban areas, contains Hindus, Sikhs, and Jews.

Family is the concept that provides the framework for Afghan society. The most desirable marriage for an Afghan (variously referred to as Pathan, Pakhtun, Pashtun, and usually Pashto-speaking) man is with his father's brother's daughter, a first cousin. If this is not possible, his mother's brother's daughter is considered the next best match.

The major ethnic categories making up the population of the country are: (A) the Pashtun tribes; (B) the more egalitarian Baluchis, Nuristanis, and Kirghiz tribes; and (C) the non-tribal ethnic groups which include the Hazaras, the Tajiks, the Uzbeks and the Turkmens.

(A) The dominant Pashtuns inhabit the southwestern parts of Afghanistan bordering on Pakistan. There are six million or so Pashtuns in Afghanistan and an equal number across the border in NWFP of Pakistan. Pashtuns, besides being Pashto-speaking and Sunni by persuasion, are racially caucasoid.

The tribal Pashtuns have a code in *Pashtunwali*,<sup>7</sup> a set of stringent tribal rules that with other similar reinforcing codes of conduct seem to

permeate their behaviour patterns. *Musawat* (equality), *nang* (honour), and *jirgah* (tribal assembly), reinforcing equality inherent in *musawat*, are some of its most stringently applied components. Additionally, *Pashtunwali* enjoins those that call themselves Pashtuns to:

- (1) ruthlessly avenge injury
- (2) offer hospitality that allows even an enemy to be safe for the night
- (3) punish adulterers with death but to spare minstrels in battle
- (4) rid themselves of cowardice, the ultimate disgrace
- (5) possess weapon – gun/sword/knife – as basic tool for every man.

In short, the code teaches all Pashtuns to uphold honour, revenge, glory, and love.<sup>8</sup> Among the tribes holding these tenets are the Gilzai, the Durrani, the Mohammadzai, the Kakar, etc.<sup>9</sup>

(B) Other ethnic groups with tribal features owning a greater degree of egalitarianism (hence classifiable as egalitarian tribal along with Pashtuns) are:

the Baluchis, who, speaking Baluchi, are semi-nomadic people of Afghanistan who spill over into Iranian and Pakistani Baluchistan. Another segment of Baluchi people, called Brahuis, of Dravidian origin, are native only to Afghanistan;

the Nuristanis, formerly known as Kafirs, numbering about 100,000, who live in the eastern part of Afghanistan.

Other notable tribal people of Afghanistan are Kirghiz, not more than several thousand, who live in the Pamirs.<sup>10</sup>

(C) The *non-tribal*<sup>11</sup> ethnic groups in Afghanistan include the following:

the Hazaras,<sup>12</sup> residing in north-central parts of Afghanistan and around Herat, who number from 1 to 1.5 million. Mongoloid in their racial make-up, Hazaras are said to be descended from the soldiers of Ghengis Khan. They speak Hazaragi, a dialect of *Dari* (Farsi), which is itself the Afghan form of Persian. Interestingly also, they tend to take more menial jobs than the other ethnic groups.

Tajiks of the northeast speak *Dari* and tend to be urbanized. They number approximately 3.5 million, not much more than their kinsmen with the same name, Tajiks of the USSR, who number about 3 million.

Uzbeks of the north, speaking the Turkic Uzbek language, comprise 1 to 1.3 million, while their brethren in the USSR number 12.5 million according to the census of 1979.<sup>13</sup>

And, according to Alexandre Bennigsen, a leading scholar specializing in Soviet Central Asia, Turkmens number about one million in Afghanistan, while another two million live in the USSR itself.

The last three ethnic groups, as the above account makes clear, spill over the border into the Soviet Union, three of whose border republics are indeed named after them, viz., Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan.

Study of the geography of this country makes clear the following points: the areas north of the Hindu Kush have little distinction from the Uzbek/Turkmen/Tajik republics of Soviet Central Asia (only a river, the Amu Darya, standing between them), and southwestern parts of the same are hardly distinguishable from Pakistani and Iranian Baluchistan in terms of topography.

On the basis of the above discussion, the main components of the Afghan nationality situation can be summarized in this way:<sup>14</sup>

(1) The boundaries of Afghanistan are not natural but artificial, created by the imperialists. For example the Wakhan corridor in the northeast and the Durand line in the south are Russo-British creations.

(2) No ethnic group in Afghanistan inhabits the country exclusively, and, hence, Afghanistan epitomizes a thoroughly multi-ethnic "mosaic."

(3) No ethnic group claims Afghanistan as its primary or chief area of habitation.

(4) Every ethnic group in Afghanistan has co-ethnics living across the borders of the country, who could therefore be considered trans-nationals.

(5) Turkmens, Uzbeks, Kirghiz – all living in the region north of the Hindu Kush – speak Turkic languages or dialects.

(6) Tajiks, speaking a variant of Farsi language known as Dari-Farsi, also live in the north.

Thus, Turkmens, Uzbeks, Kirghiz, and Tajiks have coethnics living in the Soviet Union. Although the Soviet side of Afghanistan's northern international boundary is inhabited mostly by Tajiks, the fact that the Soviet invasion was staged and is sustained from several points in Soviet Central Asia, other ethnic groups in the Soviet Union relating to those in Afghanistan became a factor of some importance.<sup>15</sup>

(7) An additional interesting feature of the nationality situation is the fact that ethnics in the north have their counterparts in the Soviet Union who are more numerous. Also, many of the Uzbeks, Tajiks, Kirghiz, and Turkmens, who are still referred to by the Soviets as *Basmachis*,<sup>16</sup> are refugees from the USSR.

(8) It is not simply their common ethnicity determined by such factors as race, language, and culture that binds the Afghan ethnics with their counterparts in the USSR. Their common religion, namely Islam, is also an important factor in the overall equation.

The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics is officially atheist, even aggressively so. However, the Soviet Moslems, thanks to very political – therefore at times ambiguous – implementation of the regime's nationality policy, have not only retained their religious faith but occasionally have become active in establishing links with their co-religionists in the rest of the world; and other Moslems, outside Soviet Central Asia, in their turn, have appeared to evince the same interest in Soviet Moslems.

In the Iranian and Afghan revolutions, Islamic fundamentalism has played a crucial part – in the first by providing the motive force that toppled the Shah, and in the other by providing the agents of counter-revolution aiming at the ouster of the Soviet-supported Marxist regime. Certain Islamic regimes, typified by those in Iran and Pakistan, seem eager to harbour refugees from Afghanistan and to aid them in their resistance to the Soviet regime in Afghanistan. The possibility that, if the resistance in Afghanistan succeeds, three volatile peoples – all Moslems and together 130 million of them – might confront the Soviets from the south has caused Moscow to think of the adverse impact such developments might have on the 30 million strong Moslems in the Soviet Central Asian republics alone.

## II

It is interesting that some of the most enthusiastic advocacy for Soviet intervention in Afghanistan when the Taraki-Amin regime was faltering was made by the Soviet Moslems themselves.<sup>17</sup> While the previous Soviet Moslem elite advocacy of such intervention was taken with caution – even suspicion and scepticism as evidenced by Josef Stalin's accusation of "bourgeois nationalism"<sup>18</sup> – this time there are reasons to believe that it is the Soviet Moslems who advocated Soviet intervention in Afghanistan and that the Soviet leadership acted according to it.<sup>19</sup> This makes the decision to invade particularly intriguing because it is a political decision of great importance. No wonder the Soviets, who by common consensus are directing Babrak Karmal's PDP regime in Afghanistan, have shown a strong interest in developing a nationality policy in Afghanistan since the beginning of the Saur Revolution, April 1978.

Initially, the Soviets allowed Central Asian personnel to penetrate Afghanistan before the Soviet troops crossed the border. Soviet agents acted initially as interpreters, technicians, and bureaucrats to work in the government, universities, and institutes where they could deal with key political, social, economic, and cultural issues in Afghanistan society, including the development of a nationality policy. This phase of Soviet involvement in Afghanistan saw the appointment in 1979 of Soviet Tatar Communist leader Fikryat A. Tabeev, not just an official bureaucrat-diplomat, as Soviet Ambassador to Afghanistan.<sup>20</sup>

When, however, there was a need for Soviet military presence in Afghanistan to contain the resistance that followed the revolution, they sent Soviet military contingents to Afghanistan that contained a few troops of Soviet Central Asian origin, who happened to be Moslems.<sup>21</sup>

This might be due to the advocacy of the Soviet Central Asian Moslems that their co-ethnics needed to be liberated and that they themselves should be given the opportunity to do their part in this matter.<sup>22</sup> The Kremlin leaders apparently agreed "that showing the Soviets' 'Asian face' would work to their advantage politically with Afghan population under siege."<sup>23</sup>

It was again the ethnic consideration that the Pashtuns do not want to be subjugated by the Tajiks/Uzbeks/Turkmens that finally led them to withdraw the bulk of the Soviet Central Asian military contingents from Afghanistan.

## III

In so far as the public espousal of the nationality policy in Afghanistan is concerned, the first statements on this were made by the Khalqi Communist regime, led by Taraki and Amin. They drew people's attention to their commitment to the promotion of minority languages and culture in contrast to the treatment of minorities by Iran and Pakistan. On June 14, 1979, Amin told a group of elders from the province of Badakhshan that the oppression of Abdur Rahman (responsible more than any other for the repression of non-Pashtun, non-Sunni minorities) was a thing of the past, and that "no such tyranny can occur here."<sup>25</sup>

With the accession to power of Babrak Karmal, this policy was even more openly and elaborately formulated. Karmal said on March 22, 1981 (which was also the New Year according to the Afghan calendar):

"Over the past year the leadership of the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan has taken measures to enlist the efforts of all the patriotic forces of the country with a view to ensuring a new atmosphere of democratic legality, trust and cooperation between the nationalities of Afghanistan – an atmosphere of peaceful work. . . . We shall not allow anyone to bring the country back to the past – to oppression and injustice."<sup>26</sup>

The inclusion in the Text of the *Fundamental Principles of the DRA* (June 1980)<sup>27</sup> of certain provisions as for example Arts 1, 2 and 3, which deal with nationalities and tribes and emphasized the need for equal treatment and protection for them, lends a modicum of seriousness to this utterance.

Lending further credence to the above was the new regime's declaration that Afghanistan would be more decentralized in the future. Art. 4 of the newly proclaimed *Draft Law on Local Organs*<sup>28</sup> says:

"The Local Organs of the State Power on the basis of the authorities embodied in this law will solve all the problems having local importance keeping in view the interests of the state and citizens residing at their related localities." (My italics)

This is clearly geared to taking powers and responsibilities away from the central government, thus facilitating assumption of new responsibilities by the local units where presumably the nationality/ethnic representatives will prevail.

To coordinate all these above and more, a brand new Ministry of Tribes and Nationalities was established in 1982.<sup>29</sup> This new Ministry apparently has superseded the Ministry of Tribal Affairs and Borderlands of the *ancien régime*. Of the three departments into which the new Ministry is organized, the one dealing with settled ethnic groups in central and northern Afghanistan is said to be directly supervised by the Minister, Suleiman Laeq. Needless to say, the organization of the Ministry underscored the seriousness with which the present regime views its nationality policy vis-a-vis the northern nationalities/ethnics.

#### IV

What are the immediate objectives of the regime's so-called nationality policy?

(1) Revision of "the existing pattern of Pashtun dominance and Pashto-Dari (Farsi)-Two Language Formula which had been established by the 1964 Constitution as the country's official languages."

(2) Creation of a "progressive national cultural system"<sup>30</sup> to ensure conditions essential for evolution of art and literature, education and publication in the mother tongue of tribes and nationalities resident in Afghanistan.

In line with these objectives, the first-ever national census held in the spring of 1979 asked a question *inter alia* regarding the mother tongue of the individual.<sup>31</sup> But a whole-hearted implementation of the nationality policy begun by the Khalq (People) regime of Taraki and Amin had to await the induction of the Parcham (Banner) faction under the leadership of Babrak Karmal on December 27, 1979.

What are the basic ingredients of this nationality policy?

A. Most of the substantive policy decisions taken by the new regime under this rubric have to do with language, and they are:

(1) Each child is to be taught in its own mother tongue by the creation of ethnic language schools. This is critical for non-Pashtun and Dari-Farsi speaking groups. Indeed, the DRA has recognized the following languages in Afghanistan: Pashto, Dari-Farsi, Uzbek, Turkmen, Baluchi, and Nuristani. Turkmen are weak, and they are kept separate from Uzbeks, whereas Baluchis (Non-Brahui) and Nuristanis are now given their language right because they have trans-national possibilities (particularly the former whose irredentist propensities can be useful in carving out a separate state of Baluchistan). It may also be mentioned that Nuristanis, who until now have not had any script, have been given one.<sup>35</sup>

(2) There is now the making of a new school system. This is geared to removing illiteracy in the indigenous languages of the natives of Afghanistan. The system started operating in September 1979 with first graders getting the opportunity to attend classes in any one of the following languages: Pashto, Dari-Farsi, Uzbek, Turkmen, and Baluchi. There is one problem, though: Baluchis in the south and Turkic people in the north cannot avail themselves of all the choices. The fact is that only four language classes are held in towns like Mazar-i-Sharif and Kunduz – Pashto, Dari-Farsi, Uzbek, and Turkmen.<sup>36</sup>

(3) The DRA has now authorized the publication of weekly newspapers in Uzbek (*Yulduz* – Star), Turkmen (*Ghourash* – Struggle), and Baluch (*Soub* – Struggle). All these weeklies include quotations from Turkic Uzbek poets of Soviet Central Asia, although, unlike the Soviet Uzbek papers, these language papers are printed in the Arabic alphabet.<sup>37</sup>

(4) The DRA now encourages inclusion of articles in Uzbek in the national Pashto and Dari-Farsi dailies. The propagation of Uzbek culture – song, dance, and theatre (indeed, some Uzbek ensembles have already been formed) which appeal to the youth of the country – is getting a lot of emphasis.<sup>38</sup>

(5) Declaration of Pashtun and Baluch National Days and issuance of stamps (costing 32 Afghans) in their commemoration.

(6) Afghans are trained in the Russian language and in technical and military fields and are sent to the Soviet Union for this purpose. The number of Afghans studying in the USSR is estimated to range from six thousand to ten thousand.<sup>40</sup>

(7) Some twelve hundred Afghan youths were sent to Soviet summer camps in 1982. These camps are for the purposes of political indoctrination of these visitors and for possible use of them as informers.

Be it noted that these training programmes are being supported by the institution of a large number of scholarships for promising students.<sup>41</sup>

B. *Substantive Policy Decisions having to do with their religion and social customs* are:

(1) Changing the flag and designating Afghanistan's revolution as a "national democratic" one.<sup>42</sup>

(2) Taking the name of Allah in all official functions.<sup>43</sup>

(3) Forming a Supreme Council of the Islamic Affairs<sup>44</sup> with Dr. Sayed Afghani as President, who enunciated his organization's policy in this way:

"We will propagate, inculcate the spirit and teachings of Islam, void of superstitions, without deviation and misuse. . . .

We consider the mentality of serving the toiling people and ensuring of social justice compatible with the spirit of Islam."<sup>45</sup>

(4) Showering funds on the reconstitution of mosques, shrines, and Moslem educational institutions.<sup>46</sup>

(5) Co-option of non-Pashtuns in high position - Dr. Sultan Ali Keshtmand, who is the Prime Minister of DRA, is a Hazara.<sup>47</sup>

C. *Social Policies*:<sup>48</sup>

(1) Emancipation of women - even appointing women to the policy-making organs. Dr. Anahita Ratebzad's appointment to the Ministry of Education is a notable example.

(2) Abolishment of bride price.

D. *Economic Policies*:<sup>49</sup>

Integration of the Afghan economy with that of the Soviet Union has been initiated by the development of roads, bridges, and pipelines which are linked with the Soviet Union.

E. *Military Riposte*:

The presence of more than 100,000 Soviet troops in conjunction with KHAD (Khedmat-e Ammaniyate-e Dawleti) troops in Afghanistan underlined the Soviet intention to stay in Afghanistan. On top of this is the fact that the Soviets have already occupied the Wakhan corridor.

F. *Politics of Carrot and Stick*:<sup>50</sup>

The DRA has exempted tribal leaders from tax and draft laws in exchange for their cooperation. The regime has tried to use the nobility to sell their policies in Afghanistan. Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan, the well-known pacifist leader of the Pashtuns of Pakistan, was persuaded to say good things about the regime in its efforts to reach accommodations with the traditional elite.

Additionally, the regime has tried to take advantage of the rivalries/enmities between the various ethnics, particularly between Pashtuns and Tajiks, Pashtuns and Uzbeks, and between Pashtuns and Hazaras. Selig Harrison writes:

"Segments of the Jaji, Mangal, Shinwari and Mohmand tribes have agreed to bar resistance activities on their land in return for cash

payoffs (bribes), and exemption from conscription and taxes, and pledges to keep Soviet forces out of their territory."<sup>51</sup>

The above discussion leaves no doubt that the pro-Soviet, even Soviet-controlled, Karmal regime in Afghanistan has tried to develop a very strong, cogent, bold, and multi-faceted nationality policy, the successful implementation of which is expected to lead to the following consequences:

(1) The Uzbek minority living in the north may be weaned away from the central government led by Pashtuns.

(2) Use of the Uzbek language in all the minority areas in the north may bring about inter-ethnic integration there.

(3) Pashtuns and Pashto are being weakened, and their loss of pre-eminence in the country as a whole is only a matter of time.

(4) Baluchis are being encouraged to seek separate statehood.

(5) Nuristanis, the former so-called Kafirs of Afghanistan who had no written language of their own, now have a separate script, which is expected to help them develop an identity of their own.

(6) The importance given to Russian language competence of the Afghans suggests that it may end up being the inter-ethnic language in the general area known as Afghanistan.

Indeed the nationality policy as outlined above is a sufficient indication of what the DRA wants to do in Afghanistan: negatively, to effectively pre-empt the ethnic cauldron that is the present-day Afghanistan from boiling over into the Soviet state, inhabited by counterpart ethnics; and positively, by catering to the particularities of the main nationalities, large and small, like Pashtun, Uzbek, Tajik, to make them so much more different and/or divergent and/or autonomous than they are now from one another that ultimately it would be impossible for them to remain within the confines/framework of a single state in its existing form.

Paradoxically, the Soviet Union's lack of conspicuous success in militarily containing the Afghan resistance has meant that some parts of the country are virtually autonomous, thus underlining the weakness of the central government. This is *de facto* decentralization of Afghanistan's governmental administration through failure. The success of the nationality policy is also expected to help in bringing that about.

Another interesting consequence of the continued war in the southern parts of the country is a massive refugee outflow. The refugees are moving to Pakistan. The Soviets may be deliberately bringing this about by keeping the Khyber Pass still open. There may be two more consequences from this: (1) a gradual flushing of the guerilla resistance from the area the refugees are deserting - the fewer people, the less guerilla activity, along Ho Chi Minh's principle, "the less water, the less fish swimming in the water"; and (2) the possibility that the refugees, most of whom are Pashtun, in going to Pakistan may increase the incidence of irredentist activity in Pakistan's NWFP, confronting the Pakistani regime with another challenge to their territorial integrity and presenting the Soviets with fresh troubled waters to fish. There may also be the possibility of the unification of the contiguous areas of Afghanistan and Pakistan, where

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Pashtuns are numerous, into a separate Pashtunistan with its potential for membership in the UN as a vassal Soviet state.

A well-known Third World watcher, Gerard Chaliand, already sees Soviet control in Afghanistan looming large, and he gives the following reasons:

- (1) The Wakhan corridor is annexed *de facto* by the USSR.
- (2) The easily controllable northeastern plains, populated by Turkmens and Uzbeks, are in fact under control of the Soviets – the Uzbeks and Turkmens do not seem to participate in the counter-insurgency;
- (3) The southwestern part of the country is semi-desert, and thinly populated by the Baluchis, who, particularly Baluchi Baluchis, have received assurance from the Soviets that their vision of a united Baluchistan is going to have Soviet support.
- (4) Kabul – being the capital of the country with a huge Soviet presence – is more or less successfully pacified, indicated by a modicum of law and order there.<sup>52</sup>

Finally, the effect of Soviet economic policies cannot be ignored. In the last two decades the Soviets have signed a large number of economic agreements to create both medium and large local plants (some say more than one hundred plants have already started functioning), and have indeed control of the gas fields in the north (near Mazar-i-Sharif), which represent huge Soviet investments in the country. These are not going to be lightly jettisoned by the Soviet leadership in the name of some principle of international morality.

#### IV

The above discussion points to administrative decentralization or devolution, encouragement of cultural-linguistic particularism, and various divide and rule policies as essential ingredients of the regime's nationality policy in Afghanistan. None of these ingredients essentially contradicts the Soviet leadership's own nationality policy in dealing with the nationalities in Soviet Central Asia of which the idea of *rastsvet*<sup>53</sup> (roughly translated as flourishing) is the most important. The administrative integrity of the hitherto united/centralized Afghanistan state is thus being systematically assaulted – albeit for apparently democratic reasons. The result is the flourishing of the separate ethnic languages and cultures of the various nationalities of the mosaic that is Afghanistan. While demographic reasons are undoubtedly playing some part in this recasting of the set-up, politics geared to exploiting the transnational characteristics of some of these principal and strategically placed ethnic communities is playing the major role.

If there is the idea of *sblizheniye* (rapprochement), that is not between all the ethnics of Afghanistan but between or among *selected* ethnics – selected on the basis of their demographic-cum-strategic importance or just strategic importance. And, to spell this out, the inter-ethnic cooperation or rapprochement is between Uzbeks and Turkmens, and between Uzbeks and Tajiks, and between Uzbeks and Kirghiz, first through the greater importance given to the language of the Uzbeks generally in the

north, but also through the popularization of the Uzbek culture – their more virile songs and dance and their literary models of Turkic heroes are popularized through the establishment of operas, ensembles, etc., and through publication of the Uzbek literary models even in national newspapers (in Dari-Farsi and Pashto). It seems that the Uzbeks – their language and culture – are being used as the cutting edge of Soviet nationality policy. There is also a not-so-hidden attempt to foster ethnic integration through Russian language in the Soviet Union for young Afghans. And, economic integration of the northern parts of Afghanistan in particular with the Soviet Union is still another facet, a very important one, of emerging *sblizheniye*. However, it is Soviet-Afghan rapprochement, not inter-ethnic integration among the various people of Afghanistan.

The Soviet pioneers of the nationality policy developed a model of nationality policy that is aimed at making the ethnics “nationalist in form, but socialist in content.” At this juncture in Afghanistan what they have in place is the making of a pattern that “may be socialist in form but certainly nationalist in content.”<sup>54</sup> But, the ultimate purpose of that is the unmaking of present-day Afghanistan.

#### NOTES

1. Details of such speculations can be found scattered in the extensive literature on Afghanistan, some of which can be sampled in the following: Anthony Arnold, *Afghanistan: The Soviet Invasion in Perspective* (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1981); Louis Dupree, *The First Russo-Afghan War* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982); John C. Griffiths, *Afghanistan: Key to a Continent* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1981); Selig S. Harrison, *In Afghanistan's Shadow: Baluch Nationalism and Soviet Temptations* (Washington: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1981); Alfred L. Monks, *The Soviet Intervention in Afghanistan, 1979–1980* (Washington: American Enterprise Institute, 1981).

2. In a very perceptive letter to the editor of the *New York Times* on August 10, 1979, the author Ralph S. Clem suggested the motivation of the Soviets in moving into Afghanistan this way:

“Many of the same Moslem ethnic groups involved in the counter revolution in Afghanistan are also found in very large numbers in Soviet Central Asia . . . and Moscow worried about the possible effect of rising Moslem consciousness on its own substantial Islamic population, decided to try to short-circuit such phenomenon by action in Afghanistan.”

Reproduced in *Afghanistan Council Newsletter* VII (September 1979) 4: 53.

3. This is not to leave out of account, though, a very brilliant and incisive article by Eden Naby, “Ethnic Factors in Afghan-Soviet Relations,” *Asian Survey* XX (March 1980) 3: 237–256.

4. See Louis Dupree, *Afghanistan* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), pp. 57–65. Also, Linda Charlton, “Beyond the Khyber Pass: A Look at the Lives and Ways of the Afghan People,” *New York Times*, January 9, 1980.

5. For more on the Koochis, see Wendy Kahn, “The Koochis of Afghanistan,” *World Minorities* II (1978) 61–64.

6. Pashtun or Pukhtun is an acronym and contains the following Pashto letters: pat, khay, tay, waw, and noon, each representing in turn the following ideas – *pat* for comradeship, *khegara* for doing good to others, *tora* for sword/bravery, *wafa* for fidelity to one's word/causes, *nang* for honour. See Akbar S. Ahmed, *Pukhtun Economy and Society* (Boston, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1980), p. 370.

7. For an extended discussion of *Pashtunwali*, see Leon B. Poullada, “The Pushtun Rule in the Afghan National System,” *Occasional Papers* #1, The Afghan Council of the Asia Society, 1970, pp. 1–26. Also, for its implications in the context of the present crisis in Afghanistan, see Ralph H. Magnus, “Tribal Marxism: Soviet Encounter with Afghanistan,” *Conflict* 4: nos. 2/3/4, 1983, pp. 339–342.

8. Poullada, "The Pushtun Role," pp. 1-26; Ahmed, *Pukhtun Economy*, p. 370.
9. *Ibid.*
10. Dupree, *Afghanistan*, p. 61 (Chart 6).
11. See the report by John Fullerton in *Far Eastern Economic Review*, January 29, 1982 as reproduced in *Afghanistan Council Newsletter*, X (March 1982) 2: 10.
12. According to Robert Canfield, Pashtun tribalism has somewhat affected Hazaras also. See his *Occasional Papers #3*, Afghanistan Council of the Asian Society.
13. For some more ideas on Tajiks and Uzbeks, see MacCagg and Silver, *Soviet Asian Ethnic Frontiers*, Pergamon Policy Studies (New York: Pergamon Press, 1979), pp. 147-148, 160-164.
14. In summarising the characteristics of the Afghanistan population the author has depended considerably upon Naby, "Ethnic Factors," pp. 237-256. Also, MacCagg and Silver, *Soviet Asian Ethnic Frontiers*, pp. 147-148, 160-164.
15. Enders Wimbush and Alex Alexiev, "Soviet Central Asian Soldiers in Afghanistan," *Conflict*, IV: 2/3/4, 1983, p. 236.
16. Alexandre Bennigsen, "Soviet Muslims and the World of Islam," *Problems of Communism* V (March-April 1980) 2: 40. That the Soviet Union has its quota of immigrant refugees, such as Baluchis, is pointed out in this source.
17. See "First Public Opinion of Afghanistan Appears in Tajikistan Press," *Radio Free Europe*, Radio Liberty Research, RL 59/80, February 8, 1980. Hereafter cited as *RFE-RL*.
18. Bennigsen, "Soviet Muslims," p. 43.
19. An indirect confirmation is seen in Murmukhsin's novella, *Sharq Yulduzi* (1979) in which the special interests of the Uzbek readers are reflected in a passage about Uzbeks in Afghanistan who are said to number more than four million. See *RFE-RL*, RL 21/80, January 10, 1980, pp. 1-3. Tajiks of Tajikistan also showed concern, but as Bess Brown says, "It may be related to the fact that there are more Tajiks in Afghanistan than there are in Tajikistan." *RFE-RL*, RL 59/80, February 8, 1980, p. 3.
20. "Tatar Party Leaders Transferred to Diplomatic Service," *RFE-RL*, RL 330/79, November 5, 1979, pp. 1-2.
21. Wimbush and Alexiev add: "This is the first use of Soviet minority nationalities as new weapon in the Soviet military arsenal. It is all the more formidable because it is a political weapon." "Soviet Central Asian Soldiers," p. 330.
22. See *RFE-RL*, RL 21/80, January 10, 1980, pp. 1-3.
23. Wimbush and Alexiev, "Soviet Central Asian Soldiers," pp. 332-333.
24. Selig Harrison, "Breakthrough in Afghanistan," *Foreign Policy* (Summer 1982), 3-26.
25. Beverly Male, *Revolution in Afghanistan: A Reappraisal* (London: Canberra: Croom Helm, 1982), pp. 177-187.
26. *Afghanistan Council Newsletter* IX (June 1981) 3: 9.
27. *Ibid.*, VII (June 1980) 3: 48-55.
28. *Ibid.*, X (January 1982) 1: 35.
29. For an account of the organization of the new ministry, see John Fullerton's report in the *Far Eastern Economic Review* as reprinted in *Afghanistan Council Newsletter* X (June 1982) 3: 18. Also refer to Eliza van Hollen, "Afghanistan: 18 Months of Occupation, August 1981," Special Report #86, sequel to Sp. Report #79, pp. 1-3, Department of State, Public Affairs Bureau; and "Afghanistan: Three Years of Occupation," in *Afghanistan Council Newsletter* X (March 1983) 2: 36-40.
30. Naby, "Ethnic Factors," pp. 243-244.
31. *Ibid.*, p. 247.
32. *Ibid.*
33. *Ibid.*, p. 248.
34. *Ibid.*
35. *Ibid.*, p. 249.
36. *Ibid.*
37. *Ibid.*
38. *Afghanistan Forum Newsletter*, XI: 1, p. 31.
39. *Ibid.*
40. Harrison, "Breakthrough," pp. 10-11.
41. *Ibid.*
42. Eden Naby, "A New Flag for the Republic," *Afghanistan Council Newsletter* VII (January 1979) 2: 1-2.

43. *Ibid.*, IX (June 1981) 3: 8-9.
44. *Ibid.*
45. *Ibid.*
46. Bennigsen, "Soviet Union and Muslim Guerilla Wars," *Conflict*, 4: 2/3/4, 1983, p. 301.
47. *Afghanistan Forum Newsletter*, XI: 1, pp. 19-20.
48. Fred Halliday, "War and Revolution in Afghanistan," *New Left Review*, No. 119 (January-February 1980), pp. 20-41.
49. For an analysis of economic links between the USSR and Afghanistan see G. Veko, *New Times*, No. 16 (April 1983), p. 26. Also, Louis Dupree, "Red Flag over the Hindu Kush," Part IV, "Foreign Policy and the Economy," *American Universities Field Staff Report* 3/1980, No. 27/Asia Report, pp. 5-8, (Soviet Aid: For Development or Exploitation); and *Afghanistan Council Newsletter* X (October 1982) 4: 22-23; M. Siddiq Noorzoy, "Alternative Economic Systems for Afghanistan," *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 15 (February 1983) 1: 25-45.
50. Harrison, "Breakthrough," pp. 17-18.
51. *Ibid.*
52. Gerard Chaliand, "Afghanistan Two Years Later," *Washington Quarterly* I (Winter 1982), p. 197.
53. For an understanding of the model of Soviet Nationality Policy, see Michael Rywkin, *Moscow's Muslim Challenge: Soviet Central Asia* (Armonk, NY, London: M. E. Sharpe Inc., 1982), particularly Chapter 10 (The Terminology of Nationality Politics), pp. 138-148. Also see in this connection a Russian interpretation: Yu. V. Bromlei, "Ethnicheskie protsessy v SSSR," *Kommunist*, as cited by Roman Solchanyk in "Ethnic Processes in the USSR and the Merger of Nations," *RFE-RL*, RL 177/83, May 2, 1983. See also Michael Rywkin, "Code Words and Catchwords of Brezhnev's Nationality Policy," *Survey* 24 (Summer 1979), pp. 83-88. See also, Richard I. Kosolapov, *Sotsiologicheskie Issledovaniya*, 1982, No. 4 (October-November-December), pp. 8-21.
54. Which means there is not going to be any loss of identity.

