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Who can be called an “Afghan”?

The genesis of a sustainable ideologic strike

Introduction

The question is specific, explicit and transparent, there is no ambivalence or ambiguity in it, and it is addressing a real-world issue for millions of folks in the country with the current name “Afghanistan”, either directly in terms of citizenship polity after 2010 and the government’s activities or indirectly in terms of identity politics for almost a hundred years:

Who is called an “Afghan”. Since when? From what exact date is this the case and who can “be or not to be” called as an “Afghan” or “Afghans” in 2024.

Many research have been carried out in the last years. But, the questions asked were not, and in no way astonishing, had been not specific, never explicit, hardly transparent, persistently ambivalent and essentially ambiguous, ignoring, in almost all cases, the real need of large number of country’s populations, neglecting the in-depth intentions of those who have been asking this one and only question. The system of the last republic (2004-2021) was cultivating its ignorance, negligence, oblivion, and evident denial of the issue (and other related problems) by means of violence¹, hence structural violence² and law-generated violence³. As it was practiced in the 20th century by the ruling family of Mosaheban (1929-1978).

The question asked in this specific context is, thus, not merely an academic, reductive and theoretical issue but a social, political and cultural urgency.

The precise question asked in this focused constellation is, thus, not in need to be generalized, compared generally, and embedded in general theoretical mosaics. It is specific to Afghanistan and its inhabitants and its diaspora containing more than six million people, it is completely and generally ignored by all, with no exception, Western experts and adepts, hence it needs, ultimately, an autochtone intrinsic perspective.

The term “Afghan”, astonishingly fuzzy, inductive, imaginative in its linguistic aspects, and simultaneously, violent and imperative in its social functioning since 1930s Afghanistan,

¹ Heiner Müller, 1998, *Werke, Gedichte, Band 1,, Gespräche Band 10-12*, Suhrkamp Berlin, Heiner Müller, 2023 *Conversation with A. Kluge*, Cornell university, <https://kluge.library.cornell.edu/de/conversations/mueller/> (last access November 2023); Pierre Bourdieu, 1998, ‘Acts of Resistance: Against the New Myths of Our Time’ [translated by Richard Nice], Cambridge, Polity Press; Bourdieu, P., & Wacquant, L. J., 1992, *An Invitation to Reflexive sociology*. Chicago, IL.: University of Chicago Press. Pierre. Bourdieu, 1976, « Les modes de domination », *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales*, p. 126

² Judith Butler, 2020, *The Force of Non-Violence: The Ethical in the Political*. Verso NY; Slavoj Žižek, 2007, *Violence: Six Sideways Reflections*, Picador NY; Mann, Michael. 1986. *The Sources of Social Power*, Cambridge University Press; Girard, René, 2005, *Violence and the Sacred*, Continuum London; Widom, C. S., 1989, *The cycle of violence*. Science, 244, 160–166; Mark Vorobej, 2016, *The Concept of Violence*, Routledge; Coady, C.A.J. *Violence*, Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2023; Robert Fischer, Peter Sloterdijk, Klaus Theweleit, 1994, *Bilder der Gewalt*, Verlag d. Autoren; Peter Sloterdijk, 1994, *Wenn die Gewalt erscheint – Versuch über die Explosivität der Bilder*, TV-show. Peter Sloterdijk, 2006, *Zorn und Zeit*, Suhrkamp, Berlin.

³ Walter Benjamin, 1921, *Kritik der Gewalt*, Online: <https://criticaltheoryconsortium.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/Walter-Benjamin-Zur-Kritik-der-Gewalt-1.pdf> (Last access November 2th, 2023)

is in first instance nothing more than an exogenic ethnonym for the ethnic group of Afghan, or by their own endogenic ethnonym: Pushtun, population living in an outlined geographic area, thus a descriptive terminus technicus of general anthropology. This single inquiry was inevitably followed by the question, what constituted the category "Afghan" as a term in the realm of jurisprudence, power and its institutions, as well in the entanglement of the political and the social in public spheres of Afghanistan since its imperative implementation by an official edict by a despotic one-clan-regime in 1930s. This is the time of "Hashemian despotism", a term that was introduced by Dr. Harun Badakhshi in November 2023 at the Oxford Afghanistan conference for the first time⁴. Hashem Mohammadi (clan) of Barekzai tribe was the absolutist ruler of the country after 1933. And ultimately, a next unavoidable question: which characteristics might this nomen contain, in order to be a valid proposition in terms of formal logic. We refer in this text to who, what and which of the term "Afghan" in the frame of a specific scientific concept (C1), positioning the 3W questions into a precise logical context (C2) and, then one will attempt to capture the very content (C3) of this issue. A challenging exercise, with no doubt, but a possible option to read history driven by critical analytics, societal structural approaches, and genuine power discourse analysis.

The research question identified here, has been the matter of fact that today's status of general popular information within and outside of Afghanistan, as well the current scholar knowledge on the term and category "Afghan" is rudimentary⁵, indeed. Astonishingly, years of debate in Afghan-Stan (in Parsi precisely: the land of Afghan), frequently heated public disputations and even middle range manifestations in Kabul, seems to be not inductive or provocative enough in order to create a primary scientific question and to initiate a genuine scientific process of finding answers in this seemingly complex matter, that is, as you will read in my research results, not at all complex.

What is evident, is that it has been an obvious, solid, and manifest epistemic obstacle or, more likely, a large set of obstacles seem to be positioned in order to inhibit or delay a methodologically certain and secure evidence-based knowledge accumulation on this very issue.

We have conducted a background literature review in October 2023 and refined afterward the research idea and considered new questions emerging on the horizon of contemplations. The consecutive determination of the research methods included the concise identification and precise location of primary and secondary data sources with the mandatory evaluation of the authenticity and accuracy of source materials. A database of plausible and valid sources after the literature review was designed. The result of the endeavor was a thorough and rigorous analysis of the data. Consecutively, was the designing and developing a narrative exposition of the findings at stake.

⁴ Badakhshi, H, 2023, "Oriental despotism revisited, the notion of "Hashemian despotism"", November 5th, 2023, Conference: Bringing Afghanistan into the Scale, Oxford University, UK

⁵ See also references nr. 24-54 for in-depth critical reading

Who is called an “Afghan” would include a large array of academic implications and distinctive methodological criteria that are in need to reveal valid, reproducible, objectively derived and plausible answers for this eminent question people ask themselves.

The background of this scientific endeavor has explicitly been the above-mentioned inquiries of the new educated generation of population and their life-worldly experiences.

Method and Material

Our scientific enquiry, in this context, is merely an immediate consequence of restlessness and irritations of intelligentsia, students, literati and academics and, on the other hand, of political activists in the last decade in Afghanistan. They asked the question about the paradox of naming and labeling a whole multi-ethnic and diverse country after a single ethnic group. They asked and scrutinized the very rationale of imposing a single ethnonym of the “Afghan ethnic group” as the name, label, and nominal attribute for the entirety of a vast and diverse multi-ethnic mosaic of populations of the country. And, of course, the most irritation and disturbing and against any basic human right and valid citizenship rights, was the intentionally act of ignorance of rulers and the violence of the state of imposing a “name” (of a single ethnic group) to all those other non-Afghan and highly diverse inhabitants of the politico-juridical entity called a “country” or a “state” without ever asking them about their perspectives and understandings or acceptance. Nobody was asked, and the maximum of ignorance was that even the folks of the Afghan ethnic group were ignored by the rulers in the 1930s.

It might seem like a facile nominalistic issue that one might reflect on the genesis of this primarily nominalistic problem. It turns out, post hoc to be a pivotal social question mark in recent times. Our questions seem to be easy to be asked. The corpus of scholarly literature reviewed and read, had to undergo a rigorous structural analysis. The analysis, in its next step, had to be formed and structured to become logically firm, thus scientifically valid. For the sake of the logical structure of the paper, I am working with three premises (P1-3) that might be immediate, explicite and transparent, and make the concept (C1), the context (C2) and, first and foremost the content (C3) comprehensible.

The primary logical premise (P1), well-documented and stable, is that we refer to the country as a politico-juridical unit with the name Afghanistan (Afghan-Stan, the land of Afghan in Parsi). This politico-juridical entity of the geographic territory we know today as Afghan-Stan, was formally and by international law emerging in the 1890s as a sole entity with its current geographical demarcations and thus its consecutively political borders.

This formation was given the official name Afghanistan. The legal base for the naming this politico-juridical entity of geographic territory within its determined legal borders, that

last till this day, “Afghan-Stan” was an agreement signed on November 12th of the year 1893 between the ruler of the kingdom of Kabul Abdur Rahman Mohammadzai Barezai and the acting as the Foreign Secretary of British Raj Henry Mortimer Durand in Kabul⁶.

It is important to know that this “name” was not new and has been previously, precisely since 1815, allocated to the lands of Pushtu speaking ethnic tribes of Junubi and Mashreqi on the Northwestern frontiers of British Raj by its colonial official Stuart Elphinstone⁷. He writes *Afghaunistaun* in book 1, made of 6 chapters. In book 2 Elphinstone attempts to construct a pre anthropological account on inhabitants of the region. The author is speculating about the term and about the name “Afghaun” without any knowledge. It is the classical orientalist’s approach: you have no valid information, just speculate. In this case he writes: “The origin...is entirely uncertain; but is, probably modern. It is known to the Afghauns themselves only by the medium of Persian language. Their own name for their nation is Pooshtoon; in the plural, Pooshtauneh. The Berdooraunees pronounce this word Pookhtauneh; whence the name of Pitan, by which the Aufghauns are known in India may probably derived.” (p. 151, Elphinstone 1815). He continues: “they have no general name for their own country; but sometimes apply the Persian in *Afghaunistaun*. Dr Lyder mentioned the name Pooshtoonkhau, as bearing this sense, but I never heard is used.... The name most generally applied to the whole country by its inhabitants is *Khorassaun*...” (p. 151 Elphinstone 1815)⁸. “For, on the one hand, the whole of the Afghaun country is not included in the strict limits of *Khorassaun*; and, on the other, a considerable part of that province is not inhabited by Afghauns.” (p. 152 Elphinstone 1815)⁹. In regard to the language of Aghauns, Elphinstone writes “...it will be well to give some account of their language, wish, as I have already mentioned, is called Pushtoo.” (p. 190, Elphinstone 1815)¹⁰. “The words connected with religion, government, and with science, are mostly introduced from Arabic through the Persian.” (p. 190, Elphinstone 1815). And furthermore “The Afghauns” use the Persian Alphabet, in general to write in Nushk character. As they have some sounds, which are not represented by Persian letters, they express them by adding some points or other marks to the nearest Persian letter.” (p. 191, Elphinstone 1815)¹¹.

As he describes in book 3, chapter 1, on “particular account of Afghaun tribes”, he clearly is referring as to the inhabitants of today’s Pushtun tribes and reflects extensively on the tribal constellation of “*Afghaunistaun*”, that merely is encompassing the Eastern and Southern part of today’s politico-juridical unit we know today as Afghanistan. Specifically, in the page 325 he notes “The tribes which inhabits the north-eastern part of the Afghaun country, enclosed between the range of Hindoo Coosh, the Indus, the Salt Range, and the range of Solimaun,

⁶ November 12th, 1893, the agreement was signed in Kabul. Details see annex.

⁷ Elphinstone, Mountstuart (1815). *An Account of the Kingdom of Caubul, and its Dependencies in Persia, Tartary, and India*. London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, and Brown. Online: <https://www.loc.gov/item/14015132> (Last access in October 2023)

⁸ *ibid*

⁹ *ibid*

¹⁰ *ibid*

¹¹ *ibid*

are comprende in the general name of Berdooraunees, first giving them by Ahmed Shauh.” (p. 325, Elphinstone 1815)¹². It is obvious and comprehensible to anyone that the northern boundary of Afghaunisaun had been Hindoh Kho (or Hindoo Coosh or Hindu Kush) and the North and Central part of the politico-juridical unit with the current name Afghanistan did not belong to it, not in 1815, as the author notes his concepts of Afghaunistaun. Astonishingly to read that the Mohammadzai clan, that determined the fate of the country in 20th century, was containing merely 8000 families at this time, as Elphinstone notes in the page 359 (Elphinstone 1815)¹³. The topographic division Elphinstone undertook in his book was based on tribe structures and tribal ruling region, in all his notes, till the page 461, the fact remains unchanged that the North and the West (inhabited by mostly Tajik, Turk speaking and Hazara and Aimaq populations) and broader Central parts (inhabited predominantly by Hazara population) of the politico-juridical unit with the current name Afghanistan did not belong to “Afghaunistaun”, observed by Elphisntone in 1815. In book 5, he describes the “Royal Government of Caubaul” as such.

The main message of Elphinstone’s book of 1815 regarding our focused and marcant scientific question could be summed up as such: Afghaun has been an exogenic ethnonym for those who call themselves (thus an endogenic ethnonym) Pooshtoon (or Pokhtoon, Pushtun, Pukhtun, Pashtun etc) in 1815 and they do so today. The language of “Afghauns” (Today Afghans) is called by themselves Pooshtoo, Pushtu, Pukhtu, Pakhtu (Today Pashto). The territory of “Afghaunistaun”, as received by Elphinstone in 1815, was explicitly the Eastern and Southern part of the kingdom of Kaubaul or Kabool (Today: Kabul) and the vast lands in the North, Central and West of Hindo Koh and Paropamisus was inhabited by other ethnicities than the Afghauns (Today Afghans). The book of Elphinstone of 1815 remained determinant, decisive and formative for the specific imperial discourse for the rest of the 19th century in different levels of actions such as inner-imperial spheres in the British commonwealth, British Raj’s communication and writings, and the perception of “Afghaunistan” as a region, of the kingdom of Kabul and its dependencies as a country, and as well for the region and globally. This is a matter of facts.

The revival of the word “Afghan-Stan” in 1893 by Mortimer Durand¹⁴ had specific purposes in terms of sustainable imperial politics of the British Raj in Asia. The teleological line from Stuart Elphinstone (came 1809 to Kaubaul, wrote the book in 1815) to Mortimer Durand¹⁵ (1893 in Kabul) contains its imperial connotation. A connotation that was accompanied by a massive quantity of dead bodies, blood and destruction of native cultures in the area, that will have the name “Afghan-Stan” in the 20th century.

¹² ibid

¹³ ibid

¹⁴ Percy Sykes, 1940, A History of Afghanistan, MacMillan & Co, London, online <https://dn790005.ca.archive.org/0/items/historyofafghani031122mbp/historyofafghani031122mbp.pdf> (Last access November 2023)

¹⁵ Percy Sykes, 1926, The Right Honourable Sir Mortimer Durand: A Biography, Cassell and company, London. Online: <https://archive.org/details/dli.csl.8412> (Last access November 2023)

The agreement between the ruler of the kingdom of Kabul Abdur Rahman Mohammadzai Barezai and the acting as the Foreign Secretary of British Raj Henry Mortimer Durand in Kabul between Abdur Rahman and Mortimer Durand was signed on November 12th of 1893. By this agreement the British Raj defined its Northwestern frontiers and its operational radius toward Afghanistan. As expected, the work on border demarcation for the real-world definition and determination took its time.

The Afghan Boundary Commission (ABC) terminated its work on May 29, 1896, with the inscription of a stone pillar in the region of Kohe Malik Siah in the convergence of Persia, British Raj and the new country Afghanistan¹⁶.

In terms of local, regional and international law and jurisdictions, as well in 1896 and as today, the new politico-juridical entity of the geographic territory we know today as Afghan-Stan exists since May 29th, 1896.

A new politico-juridical unit of the geographic territory we know today as Afghan-Stand emerged into existence exactly in this time. Not earlier. Hence, we are obliged to accept the fact that the entity exists merely for a century and two and half decades. Facts matter.

And yet, it took at least two decades that the country was evidently named and labeled itself as Afghanistan. This fact is also well documented that during the first two decades of the 20th century, the country was mentioned, declared, named, labeled as "The Dominion of Kabul"¹⁷ (Dar el Sultanat-e Kabul) by its own state, run by Habib Saraj from the Saraj family of Mohammadzai clan of Barezai tribe, the son of Abdur Rahman.

The primary logical premise (P1), well-documented and stable shown above, is that we refer to the country as a politico-juridical unit with the current name Afghanistan (Afghan-Stan, the land of Afghan in Parsi) as a new historical product created in a process of institutionalization in 1890s under the reign of Abdur Rahman Mohammadzai Barezai (1880-1901), defined for the first time ever its Southern and Eastern boundary in legally in November 12th of 1893 with three page agreement with the British Raj (responsible official was Mortimer Durand) and the last border pillar was pictured in May 29th, 1896. This is the moment of the legal, historical, and geographical emergence of Afghanistan as a new country.

The secondary logical premise (P2), also well-documented and stable, would be that we refer to the evidently despotic rule of two families of the Mohammadzai-clan of the

¹⁶ Mc Mohan 1896, Letters on The Baluch Afghan Boundary Commission Of 1896. Online: <https://ia802502.us.archive.org/1/items/1896-letters-on-the-baluch-afghan-boundary-commission-of-1896-by-mc-mahon-s/1896%20Letters%20on%20the%20Baluch-Afghan%20Boundary%20Commission%20of%201896%20by%20McMahon%20s.pdf>

¹⁷ Books published by the court of Habib Saraj between 1901 and 1919 had been explicitly and implicitly named/labeled the country as "The Dominion of Kabul " (Arabic Parsi: Dar el Sultanata Kabul). hence, the state itself ignored the new status in terms of being named Afghanistan:

1916 الامر اولی کتابچہ حسب فرمان جنب نايب السلطنه 1914, مفتاح الصرف مفتاح الصرف 1915, اطاعت

, از هر دهن سخنی و از هر چمن سمن 1913

Even a book by Mahmoud Tarzi Afghan with the title "Afghanistan" was published 1912 in the "The Dominion of Kabul"

Barekzai tribe in the 20th century, up to April 28th of 1978, this is the final day of this dynasty. The Saraj Mohammadzai family with Habib-ullah Saraj (October 1st in 1901 until his assassination by his sons on February 20th in 1919) and Amanollah Saraj (February 28th in 1919 until his escape on January 14th in 1929) was the royal descendent of Abdur Rahman Mohammadzai Barekzai (May 31st in 1880 until his death October 1st in 1901). After a brief but significant disruption happened by Habib-ullah Kalakani (January 17th in 1929 until his escape in October 12th also in 1929), a Parsi speaking Tajik, the clan of Mohammadzai ruled with the family of Mosaheban for 49 years, namely with Nadir Mohammadzai Barekzai, who called himself Nader Afghan (October 15th in 1929 until his assassination in November 8th in 1933), Hashem Mohammadzai Barekzai (November 9th in 1933 until his death in October 26th in 1953), in this time the son of Nadir, Zaher Mohammadzai Barekzai was nominally and symbolically the king due to the logic of blood genealogy, but with no real power, neither material nor immaterial, in this time period. Since 1946 the function of prime minister underwent a change, Hashem, tired of every day's state business appointed his brother Shah Mahmoud Mohammadzai Barekzai (1946-1953) as a prime minister without power, as he determined in 1933 his nephew Zaher to be factually a Mr. nobody but play the theatric role a king, mostly in uniform or in shorts. As well as in a Shakespearean play, the Mosaheban court was in a way, a large-scale theater.

All first-degree historical evidence demonstrates the real constellations of power within the Mosaheban family' court and state. The structure of power was concentrated around one axis: The family¹⁸, especially the two main grand tyrants, Hashem from November 9th, 1933, till his suicidal death on October 26th of 1953 and Daoud, factually from October 26th in 1953 till his suicidal death on April 28th of 1978. Both starting points I mention are the factual dates of takeover of the despotic scepter, respectively. Hashem had been prime minister since the entrance of the Mosaheban families to Kabul with the aid of "young tribal men"¹⁹ of the Eastern provinces (Mashreqi) and starting to rule on October 17th in 1929 but he merely became "The One and Only", the absolutist hyper regent, after the mysterious assassination of his stepbrother Nader Afghan on November 8th of 1933 at the royal palace. Surprisingly, Hashem was at the day of assassination of his stepbrother absent "because of traveling". He was, astonishingly (or may not) absent in all relevant historical days during his absolutist reign

¹⁸ Formed by Yaya Mohammadzai, a Barekzai elderly, his most relevant historical function was to act as the main negotiator of the Gandomak treaty with the British Raj on 26th May of 1879. His son Yusuf Mohammadzai Barekzai, born in 1855, was living partly in the town of Dehra Dun in India/British Raj, where for instance his oldest son Aziz was born in 1877. This desired "exile" is to an unknown or under researched field in Afghanistan research.

¹⁹ Young tribal men (YTM), an anthropological category Dr. Harun Badakhshi proposed 2022 for a specific, large and well-outlined violent group of tribal militias in Eastern and Southern Afghanistan, being operationable for money, privileges, women slaves and material merits, especially for war-like projects of ethnic supremacy of Afghans toward Kabul and the North. On October 13th of 1929 they were looting, stealing, raping and killing in Kabul for three days. Taleban as such has been a reference group of the YTM group in recent history. In November 2023 a large group of YTM is on the way toward the North of Afghanistan, precisely for the same motifs and reasons and for looting, stealing, raping and killing.

of two decades “because of traveling” or “health issues”. There might be a pattern hereby in his “tactical absences” that is under researched in Afghanistan historical studies.

He stayed four more days after the “spontaneous assassination” in Maimana and Mazar in the North, despite the large-scale crisis that happened again. His older (maternal) brother Mohammad Aziz was assassinated on June 6th of 1933 in Berlin by Said Kamal under paradoxical circumstances.

Michel Foucault noticed in his text “les mots and les choses” of 1966, a function of the “essential void”, in analogy, I would propose for understanding the underlying structures of the Hashemian despotism (Badakhshi 2023), the term essential absence for his eloquent and practice-oriented strategy of action in polity. The real-world functioning of power structure in regard to institutions and processes on the level of military (and police and intelligence), economy (and political economy of deletion and detention other players than the family), administration (raw violence, oppression of non-Afghans within the state apparatus) and education (propaganda, lies, and systematic disinformation in schools and madrasas) was explicitly determined by Hashem²⁰, the first tyrant who became a sort of “prime minister” (rather in an archaic mode than a modern time PM) at the end of October of the year 1929, but enhanced its absolutist power in November 8th of 1933 after the assassination of his step brother Nader Afghan by remaining a “prime minister”²¹ by official labeling, cum the regent of his Nader’s son and successor Zaher, at this time 19 years old, immature. This regency has been, by all available first-degree evidence, published by official publications and published and unpublished archive materials, an absolutist *modus operandi* power exertion of a single person with the complacency of the family. The especial effect in this theatric scenery was the focus of Hashem’s efforts to generate his own “natural” successor Daud, his nephew, son of his older maternal brother Aziz²² and Naiim, younger brother of Daoud. The two newspapers became the favorites of the regent immediately after their arrival in Kabul from France where Daoud lived since 1921 with his cousin Zaher.

All data, information and assumptions are well documented and what serves as the primary source, as we will see later in the text, is the Mosaheban family itself and its official publications.

²⁰ Mohammad Hashem, born at Dehra Dun in British Raj/India in 1884, educated in British India by British teachers until 1900, after 1901: military training at Sar Saros in British Raj 1904-1907, Lt-Gen 1917, governor of Herat 1917-1919, Jalalabad 1919-1920, and of Nangahar 1920-1921, minister for war 1921, governor of Mashreqi (Eastern Province) 1919-1923, envoy to the USSR 1924-1926, prime minister 1929-1933, nominally prime minister 1933-1946, the absolutist regent 1933-1953. Death at Kabul, 26th October 1953.

²¹ The new cabinet was announced on November 27th, 1933. Seven ministers, all of the inner circle of the Mohammadzai clan, especially Mohammad Gul Momand as the new interior minister to whom I would allocate the attribute “The Practitioner” (Badakhshi 2023, paper at Oxford university’s conference) and who executed Hashem’s absolutisms into the practice. News: Eslah Nr 5, November 27, 1933 (the government’s official propaganda medium)

²² Mohammad Aziz, elder maternal brother of Hashem, born also at Dehra Dun in British Raj/India in 1877, educated in British Raj by British teachers until 1900, after 1901: assist. secretary to the ruler of the dominion of Kabul Habibullah Saraj, minister for foreign affairs 1917-1919, exiled to Europe by Ammanhollah Saraj in 1921, “inspector of Afghanistan Scholars” in Europe 1921-1926, envoy to the USSR 1929-1932, and Germany 1932-1933. Killed in Berlin Germany on June 6th of 1933 by a student with the name Said Kamal.

A continuum of an extremely violent ruling of these two-families of Saraj family (October 1st in 1901-October 12th in 1929) and the Mosaheban family (October 15th in 1929 until April 28th in 1978), both Mohammadzai clan from the Afghan Barekzai tribe, is a matter of fact. This continuum determined the fate of a new politico-juridical unit of geographic territory with the name “Afghan-Stan” during the 20th century substantially. Seventy-seven years of violence and lawlessness was accompanied by individual imprisonment of hundred thousand of individuals, normalcy and normativity of torture and unaccountable deaths, this the legacy of Mohammadzai clan ruling in Afghanistan of 20th century.

The third logical premise (P3) will be that certain scientific knowledge about our main research questions, namely: Who is actually an “Afghan”, what makes the category of “Afghan”, and, ultimately, which characteristics might this nomen contain, in order to be a valid proposition; is possible and the best source, for the sake of validity, will be to exploit out of official publications of the governments in the 20th century.

A specific point in the timeline of state power in the country will be to reveal in which the term “Afghan” was applied, out of a sudden, but not surprisingly, to all inhabitants of the politico-juridical unit of geographic territory with the name Afghanistan, while we know securely that in the first three decades of the 20th century, this was not the case.

To sum up our premises (P1-3) before the start of our research work up the history of the word “Afghan-Stan”, back to 1815 and forth to 2023. The rule of Mohammadzai clan in 20th century, and therefore comprehending, analyzing, and concluding real world mechanisms and power structures of the two ruling families from 1901 to 1978, and, of course, focusing on the main research question who actually is an “Afghan” based on all objective scientific evidence we have today?

All those premises (P1-3) help the reader to understand the concept (C1) of the research, to determine the epistemic position in adequate historic context (C2) and to comprehend the content (C3) without prejudices and with full awareness that research must be performed in area where certain scientific knowledge does not exist and must be led by a basic and intensive curiosity for Erkenntnis.

In reference to the rules of standard romanization of Parsi (or Parsi Dari, Farsi, Persian) words into English or any other roman/Latin alphabet in the Western academic disciplines, there might appear a difference in this text. Normally, authors refer to DMG (1969), or ALA-LC (1997), or ALA-LC (1997), BGN/PCGN (1958), and currently more to the UN systematics of 2012. The inherent issues and academic discussions of transliteration and transcription are not the focus of this text. For instance, when I write a name like “Hashem” normally formulated as “Hashim” in the current scholarly literature and press jargon, it is not a complex issue. In Parsi, whatever the Western adepts and academics might guess and think, Hashem will be phonologically pronounced as Ha Sh “e” m, with a mild and weak “e” and not normally formulated with “i” and being sharper and enhanced. This is my decision and all Westerners' rules determining the writing of my language Parsi will be ignored. Consider it as a new step

in the process of necessary decolonization of West's cultural hegemony that had always been ignorant, arrogant and determined. This is the end.

Research results

Who can be called an "Afghan" today?

Any person and any group within Afghanistan or in Afghanistan diaspora somewhere, independent of the status of current citizenship, one or dual, who desires implicitly and wishes explicitly to be called an "Afghan", has got the basic and untouchable right to be called in this manner and with this specific word. It is indisputable and determined by the will of a person or group.

Here is the grounding concept (C1) of the rights of humans at work and in function. The context (C2) is the general human option of self-determination of individuals and peoples. Therefore, is the content (C3) of this theme well-defined, emancipatory, and according to the core of human dignity, valid everywhere on the globe, with no exception and no preconditions.

Who is called an “Afghan” and since when?

We have predefined our research questions: clear-cut, implicit and transparent. We have explained our methodology, according to the basics of research inquiries in social and historical sciences and all disciplines of humanity in the global south and in the West. The extensive work-up in reference to our premises (P1-3) has been necessary for the prevention of senseless disputations, and anti-scientific and meaningless phraseology and, especially, in overall disadvantage of ideologues and demagogues.

Main finding

Research revealed that the allocation and assignment hence the usage of the term “Afghan” افغان for *all inhabitants* of the country, namely the politico-juridical entity with the name Afghanistan, was implemented for the first time ever on March 14th in 1937²³.

This edict was formulated during the absolutist despotic reign of Hashem Mohammadzai Barekzai.

Research revealed further that there were no public discussions, neither disputations within the Hashem government nor any hearings before national counsel prior to the announcement of this edict. We did not find any evidence of a public or intra-governmental survey for the announcement of this decision. The decision was abruptly and without any precautions announced in Eslah Nr. 180, government’s official propaganda medium, and implemented rigorously and violently by the order of one man, the absolutist ruler Hashem.

To the best of our knowledge, our research article is the first ever that publishes this specific evidence-based finding. There has been, to our knowledge, no other scientific paper to date that dealt explicitly and implicitly with this highly focused research question and this pivotal research result.

Interpretation of the main finding

Prior to March 14th of 1937, thus before the political stabilization and solidification of “The Hashemian Despotism”, where Hashem Mohammadzai Barekzai ruled in an absolutist manner, the *inhabitants* of the country had been named and called anything else but not “Afghan”. All available official publications show clearly that the term “Afghan ” was used for the ethnic Pushtuns, the other term “Afghani” افغانی have primarily been utilized expressis verbis for the language of ethnic Afghans, hence for Pushtu. The list of the words in usage for the people of the country before March 1937 is manageable. General terms of belonging to a kingdom or country used centuries ago were: Mardom (مردم people), Melat (ملت Nation), Meliat (ملیت Nationalität).

²³ Eslah Nr 180, November 14th, 1937 (the government’s official propaganda medium)

In a more traditional monarchic way of expression for the people, it was used the following words in Parsi: Atbah (اتباع), Tabah (تبعه), Taabeh (تابع), Matabeh (متابع), Ahal (اهل), Reihat (رعیت), banda (بنده), hambaihat (همبیعت), hamwatan (هموطن), in a neutral expression: Bashendagan (باشندگان) etc.

None of these terms mean citizen or citizenship in the sense of a modern nation-state.

All these terms have been a premodern expression referring to factual belonging of individuals, whose obedience and devotion was expected by the despotic government, without any reservation and in absolutist context.

All terms present a mixture of Parsi words. At the same time, different people and country's inhabitants were traditionally labeled with specific ethnonyms: Afghan for Pushtuns (Pukhtun, Patan, Pashtun, Patana etc), Tajik or Farsiwan for Tajiks, Hazara for Hazara, Turks for Turkic speaking people like Uzbeks and Turkmens, Kafer for the Nuristanis, Hundo for Sikhs and Hindus, Baloch for Balochs etc. The situation of other minorities like Jews or Armenians have hardly been researched. Some ethnonyms were exogenic, like "Afghan" or Awgahns or Aughans, which seems to be a Parsi word allocated to the Pushtun people of Mashreqi and Junubi in the Khorasan area. Some ethnonyms were endogenic, like Turk referring to Turkic speaking people.

To the best of our knowledge, it was, in this geographic and cultural area, the first ever attempt by a centralistic one-man tyrannic regime to pose violently a specific name, the label of his own ethnicity, thus a two-century old exogenic ethnonym, to *all inhabitants* of a country he was ruling, without any societal reservations and political juridical preconditions. The tyrant commanded it was the absolutist despotic Hashem Mohammadzai Barekzai, who ruled from 1933 on till his death in 1953. In 1946 he gave up the very "function of prime minister", simulated it since 1929, then an evidently effectless position, to his brother Shah Mahmoud Mohammadzai Barekzai, to rule in a supra position he created for himself. This government method of supra positioning will be to be observed many times in the history of this area, thinking of the juridical functionality between the role of a "leader" and the prime minister and president in Iran after 1979. Hashem took another path of sustaining the continuum of the one-man of one-clan despotism in Afghanistan, he permanently was resident at the royal palace and nothing, no political act or edict, no economic official initiative or cultural official action, could be decided without his allowance, till his last days in October 1953.

Additional findings

The primary logical premise (P1) was that the country as a politico-juridical unit with the name Afghanistan (Afghan-Stan, the place of Afghans in Parsi) has been created formally, politically, and juridically 1890s as a sole entity with its current geographical demarcations and thus its consecutively political borders.

We added the information that the formation process started in the 1880s and that it was completed exactly in 1896, as the last border marker was pinned into the earth in the new

border between the British Raj and the new formation. This formation was given the name Afghanistan.

The legal base for the naming this politico-juridical entity of geographic territory within its determined legal borders, that last till this day, "Afghan-Stan" was an agreement signed on November 12th of the year 1893 between the ruler of the kingdom of Kabul Abdur Rahman Mohammadzai Barezai and the Foreign Secretary of British Raj Henry Mortimer Durand in Kabul.

Research reveals that the kingdom of Kabul before 1880, since its establishment in 1826 by Dost Mohammad Barezai, was the area under the rule of one family, embedded in a single clan of a single segmentary tribe.

Research shows that a precise demonstration and demarcation of the territory of the so-called kingdom of Kabul in this very period 1826-1879 is barely to determine, to reconstruct and scientifically to reproduce. Reports regarding the exact borders to the East and South of the so-called kingdom of Kabul in these 54 years are lacking. A reconstruction is difficult because the dynamic area was juxtaposed to the Northwest frontier of the British Raj and therefore less valid information is provided by the administration and intelligence of the British Raj. While reviewing valid reports regarding the exact border lines to the North and West of the so-called kingdom of Kabul in these 54 years. They are lacking. Co-relative to this situation, different factors are impactful. First, the court administration of the Kingdom of Kabul from 1843 to 1879 encompassed a small group of coworkers. There are few valid descriptions about their methods and processes of governing. The nature of the information provided by this court administration on official and recognized political juridical borders and exact geographic extensions of the entity is unknown, to our knowledge there is no information available regarding the exact borders at all.

Hence, an adequate scientific reproduction of the borders of the so-called kingdom of Kabul in these 54 years to areas North and West of the town of Kabul and North and West of the Hindu Koh range, thus with highest degree of precision, seems to be difficult.

Research demonstrates that the period 1826-1879, might be classified as the dominance of the Dost Muhammad family with relatively politically stable areas of Southern and Eastern part of the kingdom of Kabul, that had been allocated at this time with the name of Afghanistan.

The rulers of the Mohammadzai clan of Barezai tribe, invaded after 1843 (the second period of the reign of Dost Mohammad, the first was 1826-1838) and after 1867 (the second part of Sher Ali's reign, the first period was 1863 till April 1866) many times the Hazara regions West and South West of Kabul and of Hindu Koh (including Bamyan, Uruzgan, Ghor, as well the North (equal to South Turkestan, mostly inhabited by non-Afghan Turkic speaking Uzbeks and Turkmens, and regionally by Parsi speaking Tajiks), North East (Khataghan and Badakhshan, inhabited mostly by Parsi speaking non-Afghan Tajiks, and regionally by non-Afghan Uzbeks) and the West (mostly by Parsi speaking non-Afghan Tajiks). The repulsive and recurrent invasions were interrupted by short anecdotes of takeover by Muhammad Azam (October 7,

1867, to August 21, 1868), Mohammad Afzal (May 1866 to October 1867), both rival brothers of Amir Sher Ali, all three sons of Dost Mohammad, the founder of Mohammadzai clan of Barekzai tribe.

To sum up the research, the Southern and Eastern part of this kingdom were relatively stable and called traditionally Mashreqi and Junubi and other labels, by the Western colonial officers, for example at some point "Afghanistan" was applied to these areas of the kingdom by Stuart Elphinstone in 1815.

The Mohammadzai clan attempted many times to invade North and West of Hindu Kush and toward the Hazara regions, to include them in the tax paying regimes of the kingdom of Kabul. Beyond the town and region of Kabul, toward South and East (juxtaposed to the North Western Frontiers of British Raj), the invasions of Dost Mohammad and his son Sher Ali were without sustainable success. The kingdom of Kabul remained limited to the Kabul region and the East (Mashreqi) and the South (Junubi) area that bore the name of Afghanistan. This is explicitly evidence based.

End of the 1870s, the conditions changed, and the situation deteriorated in disfavor of the British Raj and its Northern Western Frontiers. After an intermezzo and confrontation between the British Indian army and the local Afghan (Pashtun) tribal forces in Mashreqi and Junubi that resulted in few anecdotes of military strikes. The outcome of this event that had been interpreted by British historiography as the second Anglo-Afghan war in 1879, was an agreement between the representatives of British Raj and the follower of Sher Ali, his son Mohammad Yaqoob. The Treaty of Gandomak contained the agreement of Mohammad Yaqoob Mohammadzai that ceded significant regions in the Northwest frontier as well Kabul's control of its foreign affairs completely to the British empire. It was signed on May 16 in 1879 by Mohammad Yaqoob and Louis Cavagnari of the British Government of India at a British army camp near the village of Gandomak, east of Kabul. The treaty was ratified by Lord Edward Robert Bulwer Lytton, British Viceroy of India, on May 30th in 1879. The so-called Emir agreed, according to the text of the agreement, to conduct his relations with foreign states in accordance with the advice and wishes of the British government. His Highness the Amir will enter no engagements with Foreign States and will not take up arms against any Foreign State, except with the concurrence of the British government. This event was followed by an ultimate invasion of the British army toward Kabul. As a result of the British victory at the Battle of Kandahar in 1880 the Gandomak treaty was reaffirmed and the British appointed Abdur Rahman as the new ruler on July 22nd of 1880.

The intronization of Abdur Rahman Mohammadzai Barekzai in Kabul by the intervention of British Raj with a set of predefined conditions and clear-cut colonial procedures, as posed everywhere in Asia and Africa at these times by the British empire, changed the situation. Abdur Rahman was the son of Mohammad Afzal, a son of Dost Mohammad, who ruled in Kabul from May 1866 to October 1867, and prior to that he acted as governor of Southern Turkestan 1849-1863. Abdur Rahman was resident in Bukhara exile after the death of his father in Kabul in October 1867.

Again, there is no evidence showing that the kingdom of Kabul, where a new ruler Abdur Rahman was appointed by the British Raj on July 22nd of 1880, had any geographic similitude, or any common characteristics regarding formal juridical structure or political construct with the country that was shaped and named as Afghanistan in 20th century.

To sum up the research: A country as a politico-juridical entity with the precise geographic characteristics of 20th century, and a concise political geography of today, with a name “Afghanistan” (Afghan-Stan, the place of Afghans in Parsi) did not exist as such in 1880 and prior. At this very time, vast geographic areas, thus large-scale political entities in the North, Northeast and West of Kabul and of Hindu Koh had no adherent political, binding juridical relation to Kabul’s ruler. The invasions to these regions till 1880 remained anecdotes of bloodshed and barbarism toward the inhabitants of these vast civilizational geographies. Even the town of Kabul itself, more than 2000 years old, seen from a historic perspective of long *durée*, was a foreign terrain to its current ruler till 1880, because it was occupied in 1776 by an Afghan tribal ruler Timor Shah of the Durrani dynasty, 1776 until 1880, it is just hundred and four years.

Data on the peculiarities and specificity of Abdur Rahman’s reign could be, according to our specific premises and concrete questions, could be interpreted in two major determining components. First, he started his reign following predefined conditions the British imperial administration posed on him. He had to accept unconditionally all previous treaties, especially the Gandamak treaty of 1879. The very logic of this contract was the wish of the empire to pacify its Northwestern frontiers. The colonial status also remained unchanged: all issues of foreign politics had to be “in accordance with the advice and wishes of the British Government. For the permanent war against the neighboring juxtaposed regions in the North, Northeast and West of Kabul and of Hindu Koh, tax revenue had been the main driver of the first decade of his reign. The sequence of invasion, colonization, population, remained a relevant pattern in the permanent war of Abdur Rahman against the others. “The other” means all non-Afghan ethnic groups: Hazaras living in regions West and South West of Kabul and of Hindu Koh (including Bamyan, Uruzgan, Ghor, as well the North (equal to South Turkestan, mostly inhabited by non-Afghan Turkic speaking Uzbeks and Turkmens, and regionally by Parsi speaking Tajiks), North East (Khataghan and Badakhshan, inhabited mostly by Parsi speaking non-Afghan Tajiks, and regionally by non-Afghan Uzbeks) and the West (mostly by Parsi speaking non-Afghan Tajiks). Abdur Rahman’s reign left one major legacy: A genocide of Hazara population in central regions after 1890, this genocide²⁴, according to the scholarly²⁵ definitions, and by all evidence²⁶ and despite all denying and ignorance.

²⁴ Hakimi, Mehdi, 2023, The Genocide of Hazaras

²⁵ Hakimi, Mehdi J., 2023, The Afghan State and the Hazara Genocide (July 20, 2023). Available at SSRN: <https://ssrn.com/abstract=4516797>

²⁶ Hakimi, Mehdi, 2023, Relentless Atrocities: The Persecution of Hazaras

Who can not be called an “Afghan” anymore!

Research shows that the determination of calling the entirety of *inhabitants* of a diverse multi-ethnic multi-confessional country by the name of merely one ethnicity, namely the “Afghans”, served to a tyrannic purpose in the frame of despotic power dynamics of Hashem Mohammadzai and his family, a period that contained 49 years (1929-1978). This action was one of a large set of oppressive tyrannic procedures, structures and institutions like building prisons, mass killings, forced dislocations, torture, confiscations etc that served the absolutist dominance of the Mosaheban family. *All inhabitants* of the country suffered this “national oppression”. The raw violence and usage of force targeting non-Afghans (Hazaras, Uzbeks, Tajiks, Aimaqs, Nuristani, Balushs, Pashais etc) during the 20th century has been massive and eminent. Despite some minor differences in scale of violence, poor class rural and urban non-Afghans were targeted massively by forced dislocations, torture, confiscations and it is ongoing under the regime of Taleban today. And the regime called them “Afghans”.

This must stop.

The first act of emancipation of the people might be the delineation of mechanisms of cultural hegemony executed by raw violence of the ethnocentric despotism of Hashem and his family. This text is enlightenment by scientific research.

Everyone everywhere within Afghanistan and in the world, independent of the status of current citizenship, who has no desire and no wish to be called an “Afghan”, may not be called an “Afghan” or group of “Afghans”. Any individual or social group has got the basic and untouchable right to be respected in this wish, with no exception, no social pressure, no cultural hegemony, or any ideological preconditions.

This is an implication of the right to self-determination of individuals and of peoples, being one of the universal values of emancipation and human dignity.

Here is the grounding concept (C1) of the rights of humans at work and in function. The context (C2) is the general human option of self-determination of individuals and people. Therefore, is the content (C3) of this theme well-defined, emancipatory, and according to the core of human dignity, valid everywhere on the globe, with no exception and no conditions.

Conclusion

We attempted to find a precise and concise answer to the primary question, who is called an “Afghan”, a question that was raised in the last decade in the frame of the enlightenment of the new educated generation of population in Afghanistan. We found the answer by a systematic approach in which we perform a systematic literature review, gathering all relevant data and information into a database. The next step was to scrutinize and to analyze the database. During this phase of the study, at least two additional inquiries emerged. Driven by the sheer density of the data and information.

The first question was at what exact moment or time point, to which opportunity and under which political and juridical conditions the allocation and the assignment of the ethnonym “Afghan”, that is the genuine name for ethnic Pushtuns, became to all inhabitants of the country, also to all non-Pushtuns, mandatory.

The second additional question was, based on what rationale and since what date Afghanistan as a politico-juridical unit with the name Afghanistan (Afghan-Stan, the land of Afghan in Parsi) came into a legal, geographical political and historical existence.

To my knowledge, this is the first time in modern Afghanistan historiography, be it from the country or from other authors. be it in this century or in the last century, that the primary scientific question and additionally secondary questions have been answered, as precise and evidence-based as possible. The evidence is unique in its meaning and consequences.

I find that the discussions around this issue and this term, which has been astonishingly fuzzy, inductive, imaginative in its linguistic aspects, and simultaneously, violent and imperative in its social functioning, might ultimately have an end.

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