**Afghan internationalism and the question of Afghanistan's political legitimacy[1]**

**Abstract**

This article uses Afghan engagement with twentieth-century international politics to reflect on the fluctuating nature of Afghan statehood and citizenship, with a particular focus on Afghanistan's political 'revolutions' in 1973 and 1978. By considering the ways in which Afghan leaders asserted their politics in the international sphere, some of the key concerns of the Afghan state become clear. In order to assert their authority and gain credence among international observers, Afghan leaders both drew on and rejected their state's political history, ultimately leading to a top-down reconceptualization of Afghan statehood and the citizen which relied on a territorially defined state, rather than ethnicity. Two issues especially shaped Afghan foreign engagement: a longstanding tradition of political neutrality, or bi-tarafi, and demands for international recognition of an autonomous Pashtun state in the Afghan-Pakistan borderlands. These interests frequently conflicted, but both played critical roles in prolonging regional instability. Afghan leadership ultimately latched onto, publicized, and justified contradictory definitions of Afghan statehood and citizenship that could not be reconciled.

Afghanistan is often portrayed as a space apart, an area that only uncomfortably, tenuously conforms to the norms of the states system defining and guiding international relations. This is not merely a result of twenty-first century developments in Central/South Asia. Particularly from the 1919 Third Anglo-Afghan War, Afghan statehood was alternately recognized, questioned, ignored, even undermined, by foreign (British, American, Soviet) actors. In effect, foreign action encouraged weakness and fragmentation within Afghanistan, as did local developments and resistance to the Kabul-based regime. A number of scholars have consequently argued that persistent instability in Afghanistan has resulted from the inapplicability of the Westphalian nation-state system: the international states system simply does not fit Afghanistan's lived realities.[2]

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[2] Rubin 1995: introduction; Omrani 2009; Shahrani 2002.

Studies of Afghanistan have gradually complicated traditional understandings of Afghan politics and society, particularly its twentieth-century trajectory. Many scholars have increasingly interrogated the 'tribal' nature of Afghan political and social organization, the dynamics of ethnic tensions within Afghanistan, and the state's political and institutional shortcomings, highlighting both links and ruptures with Afghanistan's earlier (eighteenth/nineteenth century) and later (twenty-first century) structures. Nevertheless, Afghanistan continues to be described, in both popular and academic terms, as 'fragmented', 'fractured', and 'factional'.[3] Such terms thus bring into question the nature, legitimacy, and viability of the Afghan nation-state.

But while scholars argue about Afghan 'nation-stateness', Afghan political leaders, themselves, have not. What remains notable is that, regardless of matters on the ground, twentieth- and twenty-first century Afghan leaders have remained intent on representing Afghanistan as a cohesive political unit, with a single government embodying sovereign power. Presenting this image to the international community has been equally as important as exerting governance within the country. The international sphere, as embodied by the United Nations, the rise of global anti-colonialism, multi/bilateral diplomacy, or new conceptions of citizen-state relations, created an opportunity for Afghan leaders to exert their parity with, or even superiority to, any other state in the world.

This article uses Afghan leaders' engagement with international politics to reflect on the fluctuating nature of Afghan statehood and citizenship. By considering the ways in which Afghan leaders asserted their politics in the international sphere, some of the key concerns of the Afghan state become clear. Two issues, in particular, shaped Afghan foreign relations: a longstanding tradition of political neutrality, or bi-tarafi, and demands for international recognition of an autonomous Pashtun state in the Afghan-Pakistan borderlands, couched in universal terms of self-determination and later human rights. Both issues rooted Afghanistan firmly in a postcolonial milieu, alongside other emerging states in the Global South that rejected (at least in rhetoric) Cold War binaries and forms of neo-colonialism. These interests frequently conflicted, but both played critical roles, as Afghan leaders attempted to assert their, and their state's, legitimacy. Both issues provided an opportunity for leaders to perform their state's sovereignty for international audiences.

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[3] See Rubin 1995; Shahrani 2002; Sidky 2007.

This article focuses on official Afghan engagement with international politics during the twentieth century, with a particular focus on the mid-1970s and early 1980s. This was a period of major flux for Afghanistan, between the coup that returned former prime minister Mohammad Daoud Khan to power in 1973, his subsequent overthrow in 1978 and replacement with a series of Marxist regimes. But this article deliberately rejects the idea that 1978 represented a clear rupture in Afghan history. Indeed, a number of continuities existed and are illuminated by the regimes' use and manipulation of Afghanistan's international and national history and their continued discussions of citizenship and statehood. Both Daoud's and the subsequent People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) regimes turned to international forums to prove their legitimacy. In order to assert their authority and gain credence among international observers, Afghan leaders both drew on and rejected their state's political history, ultimately leading to a top-down reconceptualization of Afghan statehood and the citizen which relied on a territorially defined state, rather than ethnicity. Afghan interactions with foreign states thus reveal a key reason for ongoing regional instability. Leaders latched onto, publicized, and justified contradictory definitions of Afghan statehood and citizenship that ultimately could not be reconciled. The tensions between Afghanistan as a territory and Afghanistan as an identity thus have led to division and uncertainty rather than coherence.

**Afghan internationalism in the twentieth century**

Afghanistan's twentieth-century trajectory presents a paradox. On one hand, its leaders have struggled to assert their authority and have used various (frequently coercive) practices to preserve their rule. On the other, they have engaged actively with the international community and thus have managed to maintain legitimacy, in many foreign observers' eyes, as part of the international states system. Scholars have focused overwhelmingly on the domestic aspects of Afghan statehood. The ambiguities of the Afghan state have been detailed by scholars in numerous ways. Thomas Barfield points to the 'changing relationship between war and political legitimacy, a change that grew out of reformulation of the conception of society and government itself', as one reason for persistent instability, while Pierre Centlivres and Micheline Centlivres-Demont have noted the question of citizenship and belonging. 'The ideal of national unity in which all the citizens are to be considered as Afghan is, as one knows, built on an ambiguity, since "Afghan" means every inhabitant of

Afghanistan as well as a member of the dominant group, the Pashtuns or Afghans'. Barnett Rubin has argued, 'The "traditionalism" and "localism" of Afghanistan are not survivals of ancient traditions but rather the results of the country's forced integration into the contemporary state system'.[4] These scholars have comprehensively identified weaknesses within Afghanistan's political trajectory in terms of institutional limitations, internal strife, de facto sovereignty (or lack thereof), and identity politics. Nevertheless, this focus on developments within Afghanistan, while critical for highlighting matters on the ground, ignores how, until 1978/9, Afghan leaders were accepted internationally as representing a nation-state, however fragile.[5] In fact, recognition of the right to govern by other world powers could, to an extent, keep leaders in power despite local realities.

The Afghan state, by no means, has been isolated, nor can its place in international politics be solely ascribed to Anglo-Russian competition or Cold War manipulation.[6] British and Russian interference undoubtedly played a critical role in delineating Afghanistan's territorial boundaries, thanks to a series of border agreements in the late nineteenth century. But the 'Great Game' and two nineteenth-century Anglo-Afghan wars, alone, did not shape Afghanistan's trajectory. Abdur Rahman, unsurprisingly, played a critical role in later narratives of Afghan state building and state security. Seen by many as the father of the modern Afghan nation-state, he set a number of precedents, ranging from oversight and restrictions on the movement of his subjects to nascent state institutions and a foreign policy focused on securing Afghanistan's territorial borders and avoiding entanglement with his stronger neighbours, imperial Russia and Britain.[7] From the Third Anglo-Afghan War, Afghan leaders (particularly those from the Musahiban dynasty) expanded Afghanistan's foreign affairs, engaging with other state, non-state, and supra-state actors on numerous occasions. Looking at Afghan foreign policy provides a particular lens for considering state

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[4] Barfield 2004: 263; Centlivres et. al 2000: 422; Rubin 1995: 15.

[5] Of course, one can question the extent to which Afghan leaders or leadership were synonymous with the state, especially for people living within Afghanistan who would be more likely to experience the state (if at all) through institutions, practices, or middle- and lower-level representatives (for an Indian comparison, see Mathur 2016). But on an international scale, leadership had both practical and symbolic significance for state representation.

[6] On various ways in which Afghans have been international or transnational, especially in terms of economic, political, or social mobility, see, for example, Green 2011; Hanifi 2011; Nichols 2008; Monsutti 2005.

[7] See Dupree 1980: chapter 18; Ghani 1978; Omrani 2009; Tapper 1973.

leaders' assertions of political legitimacy and for identifying some of the key drivers of Afghan internationalism.

Twentieth-century Afghanistan, like many countries emerging from the two disastrous world wars and the debris of colonial empires, actively engaged in the 'era of internationalism' and 'forms of experience and thinking that transcend the assumption that the political borders of nations determine the nature of experiences, ideas, or politics'.[8] Afghanistan's leaders wrestled with concepts of social and political modernity and actively participated in newly formed international institutions and mobilizations. This form of Afghan internationalism was driven from the top, rather than the mobility of local populations, and explicitly involved re-conceptualizing the role of the state. While a relative late-comer to the doomed League of Nations, Afghanistan was admitted to the United Nations in November 1946 and soon found allies within the decolonizing world and among the emerging nonaligned movement.

Mid-century Afghan internationalism focused on the primacy of the state as a political unit, in line with early UN focus on state agency and responsibility.[9] Afghan internationalism relied on a specific reading of Afghan history and 'Afghan-ness'. Afghan internationalism drew on the concept of bi-tarafi (Dari for 'without sides'), as Afghanistan remained neutral during the First and Second World Wars and (ostensibly) the early Cold War.[10] Bi-tarafi, as a concept, has received little scholarly attention, though it has been linked to foreign policies in Afghanistan, Iran, and the Ottoman Empire. It is typically defined as nonalignment, neutrality, or maneuvering between two great powers, and little has been done to root the term in non-Western conceptions of foreign engagement or to chart changes in the term's meaning.[11]

Nevertheless, bi-tarafi can be understood as more than negotiating between great powers. In effect, it allowed Afghan leaders to re-interpret, and to an extent subvert, historical narratives that prioritized foreign agency in shaping the twentieth-century Afghan state. In line with

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[8] Amrith and Sluga 2008: 252; also Sluga 2013.
[9] See Mazower 2009; Moyn 2010: 85.
[10] See Dupree 1988: 145; Andisha 2015; Roberts 2003: viii.
[11] Adamec 1974; Deringil 2007: 715; Payind 1989; Ramazani 1989: 204; Rubinstein 1982. Louis Dupree has briefly outlined Afghan leaders' engagement with foreign powers from the time of Abdur Rahman (1880-1901), highlighting how successive Afghan leaders tried to present their regimes as unaligned, though he questions whether nonalignment was, in fact, the reality. See Dupree 1988.

Shah Mahmoud Hanifi's discussion of Afghanistan as a 'colonial construct [… that] by no means denied agency to local actors', embracing and promoting the idea of a unique Afghan mode of neutrality returned initiative to Afghan leaders and subtly rejected the idea that British or Russian activities had overwhelmingly shaped Afghanistan's political trajectories.[12] Bi-tarafi provided Afghan leaders in the early twentieth century the opportunity to negotiate with Germany as a foil to Britain and Russia, as shown by Ludwig Adamec, and it created occasions later in the twentieth century for Afghan leaders to reject global bipolar conflicts and align themselves with the decolonizing world.[13] In this respect, bi-tarafi was both critical to Afghan foreign affairs and a fairly unique concept in the early to mid-twentieth century when much of the non-Western world was still subject to colonial rule, whether formal or informal.

With this careful navigation of great power politics in mind, bi-tarafi seems an appropriate descriptor of Afghan neutrality, not only in the time of Abdur Rahman but throughout the twentieth century. Afghan bi-tarafi largely progressed alongside, coincided with, and paralleled a broader rejection of bipolar conflict and imperial oversight by countries in the non-Western world.[14] The emergence of a global Cold War and the advent of decolonization created an opportunity for Afghan leaders to assert themselves as leaders in the non-Western world. Afghanistan under King Mohammed Zahir Shah participated in the 1955 Bandung Conference, at which Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru famously pronounced the need to reject Cold War superpower competition, and Afghanistan was a subsequent signatory of the Non-Aligned Movement's official formation in 1961. Daoud, then serving as Prime Minister, stated in 1961:

> Although the term 'non-alignment' has been used to describe the policy of each member of this conference, it must be noted that Afghanistan's policy of neutrality far antedates the events which have given rise to the term 'non-alignment'. Afghanistan has traditionally followed a policy of impartial judgment through many years, and has never deviated from this course, even during the world wars.[15]

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[12] Hanifi 2011: xv.

[13] Adamec 1974.

[14] See Lee 2010.

[15] Cited in Vaidik 1981: 239. Daoud was not alone in pointing to Afghanistan's unique relationship with neutrality. As Secretary of State Henry Kissinger reflected in 1976, 'This is a fascinating country and a stalwart people whose geographic location has made them

As such, drawing on Afghanistan's history of bi-tarafi allowed leaders like Daoud to place the Afghan state at the forefront of one strand of international politics. It clearly allied Afghanistan with countries emerging from imperial rule, and Daoud's pronouncement further placed Afghanistan at the head of the movement, due to its historical neutralism. As one Indian Charge d'Affaires in Kabul, G.L. Puri, approvingly noted, 'Afghanistan is perhaps as keen as India [a key leader of nonalignment] to remain neutral between the two power blocs and not to enter into any military alliance which may disturb the delicate balance of power in this region'.[16] The Non-Aligned Movement most clearly came to represent a rejection of bipolar politics in twentieth-century internationalism, even if its successes were largely rhetorical. As such, parallels between Afghan bi-tarafi and nonalignment are clear, and the idea of Afghan neutrality inspired much of the rhetoric presented by Afghan leaders to foreign powers.[17]

The other key internationalist issue driving Afghan political rhetoric (if not practice) at home and abroad was that of self-determination. Specifically, Afghan leaders from 1947 focused on the future of ethnic Pashtuns living in former colonial India, what was becoming Pakistan. As Erez Manela has shown, in the global South, self-determination from the end of the First World War was frequently conflated with the end of imperial rule and political independence.[18] This reading of self-determination closely aligned with Afghan approaches to South Asia's decolonization and partition. Afghan leaders used this moment to demand Pashtun 'free[dom] to choose their future status'.[19] Afghan leaders ultimately called for the establishment of an autonomous 'Pashtunistan' encompassing people and space carved from northwest Pakistan.

The Pashtunistan dispute, like bi-tarafi, internationalized Afghan political activities. It spoke to some of the developing themes of international relations at the time, in particular the rights of individuals and groups.[20] By couching Pashtunistan in terms of self-determination, Afghan

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probably the world's oldest and most successful practitioners of non-alignment' (Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1974, vol. E-8 (1974)).

[16] NAI 1954.

[17] In practice, twentieth-century Afghan foreign engagement cannot be purely defined as neutral, as seen by Afghanistan's engagement with both the United States and Soviet Union duraing the Cold War. See Cullather 2007; Nunan 2016.

[18] Manela 2006.

[19] Ali (ed) 1990: 111.

[20] See Bradley 2016; Mazower 2009.

representatives brought international attention to the conflict by equating the movement (real or imagined) with the creation of other new states at the moment of decolonization. Given the universalist tenor of this argument, Pashtunistan unsurprisingly became a key focus of Afghan activity at the United Nations, which itself had become the 'simultaneous arbiter of the universal and defender of the particularism of the nation-state'.[21] The Afghan government initially attempted to block Pakistan's membership, due to the lack of choice provided to its Pashtun population. Abdul Hosayan Aziz, the Afghan representative to the UN, argued that 'This unhappy circumstances is due to the fact that we cannot recognise the North-West Frontier Province as part of Pakistan so long as the people of the Frontier shall not have been given the opportunity, free from any kind of influence, to determine for themselves whether they wish to be independent or become part of Pakistan'.[22] While Pakistan was still given UN membership, Afghan representatives continued to pose the same arguments, both in bilateral relations with Pakistan and in the UN general assembly.

The ongoing dispute with Pakistan over the fate of its ethnic Pashtun population became a key aspect of Afghanistan's foreign policies in the twentieth century. This regional dispute threatened to break into armed conflict several times throughout the mid-twentieth century, and persisted as a source of tension until (and after) the 1979 Soviet invasion of Afghanistan.[23] Daoud particularly pursued first US, then Soviet, political support, as he and his followers demanded an autonomous Pashtunistan in Pakistan's Pashtun- and Baluch-inhabited borderlands.[24] As with espoused adherence to bi-tarafi, the Afghan state's promotion of Pashtunistan involved a very specific reading of Afghan history, one that rejected the territorial boundaries established (however ambiguously) by Abdur Rahman and which forced new discussions about 'Afghan' identity, as indicated by Centlivres and

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[21] Amrith and Sluga 2008: 260

[22] Times of India 1947.

[23] I have written at length about the Pashtunistan dispute in Afghan-Pakistan relations elsewhere. See Leake 2017; also Omrani 2009; Saikal 2004.

[24] Whether 'Pashtunistan' would form part of Afghanistan or be truly independent was never fully established, and rhetoric on this point wavered throughout the twentieth century. Similarly, the declared size and shape of Pashtunistan varied over time. While it almost always included Pakistan's North-West Frontier Province and tribal area (now Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and the Federally Administered Tribal Areas), it usually included parts of northern Baluchistan, and at times extended to include the entirety of that province. Given that parts of Baluchistan had been ceded to British rule by the Afghan emir following the second Anglo-Afghan war (1878-80), similar rationales could be used to justify Afghan interest in Pakistan's Baluch and Pashtun populations – that both historically had been attached to Afghanistan.

Centlivres-Demont. Demands for closer ties between Pakistan's Pashtun population and the Afghan state focused on both territory and identity. The land between Peshawar and the Jhelum River was cited by the Afghan Foreign Minister as 'form[ing] the original and permanent abode of the Afghan race', and during partition negotiations, 'The Afghan Government considered that the population of the former Afghan territories annexed by Great Britain to India during the last century should have the opportunity of deciding whether they wished to rejoin Afghanistan or to form a separate State enjoying complete independence'.[25] Both during and after partition, the Afghan Government frequently presented the disputed Pashtuns and Pashto-speaking Baluch as 'Afghans', conflating national and ethnic identities and specifically linking the transborder community to the Afghan state.

Promotion of self-determination proved a double-edged sword. The Pashtunistan issue brought into question who was Afghan and the trajectory of Afghanistan as a state, while undermining the state's espoused neutralism.[26] The Afghan state's pursuit of Pashtunistan, perhaps more than any other issue, highlighted the ambiguities of Afghan statehood and belonging. As Paul Brass has argued, 'there is nothing inevitable about the rise of ethnic identity and its transformation into nationalism among the diverse peoples of the contemporary world. Rather, the conversion of cultural differences into bases for political differentiation between peoples arises only under specific circumstances which need to be identified clearly'.[27] The choice of Afghan leaders like Daoud to equate 'Pashtuns', and Pashto speakers, with 'Afghans' epitomized this tension – and a specific political choice – as well as the potential artificiality of nationalism and nationality. Not only did this association disregard the numerous other ethnic communities inhabiting the Afghan territorial space: it brought into question their relationship with the nation-state and cast uncertainty on Afghanistan as a national space. By laying claim to represent 'Afghans' beyond Afghanistan's territorial boundaries (even if this involved a demand for self-determination), leaders brought into question the limits of their sovereignty. Until 1978, this served the Afghan state's interests, as, by refusing to recognize the Durand Line as the international boundary between Afghanistan and Pakistan, leaders like Daoud could justify their continued interest in – and interference with – Pakistan's 'Afghan' population. However, this would

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[25] Ali (ed) 1990: 102; Mansergh et al. (1982): no. 212, Secretary of State to H.M. Minister at Kabul, 16 June 1947, L/P&S/12/1811, IOR.

[26] A similar process occurred with attempts to define 'Aryana' in Afghan nationalist historiography, as shown by Nawid 2015.

[27] Brass 1991: 13.

backfire for the PDPA and force a re-definition of 'Afghanness' that moved away from ethnic Pashtun identity and towards a territorial space.[28]

The Pashtunistan question thus served multiple purposes for the Afghan government. It provided Afghan leaders with a rationale to question the territorial perimeters forced upon the state by nineteenth-century Anglo-Russian activities. Instead, officials like Daoud turned to the rationale of ethnicity to define an alternative national (Pashtun) space. Moreover, the Pashtunistan dispute provided Afghan leadership with a platform for engaging with the international states community. The conflict occurred in parallel with key global debates about nationalism and statehood resulting from the end of European empires. States across the non-Western world wrestled with national identities and colonial-era borders. While some anti-colonial leaders accepted independent states whose territories resembled the colonies before, others rejected such boundaries and sought reconfigured states based not on imperial border-making but new definitions of identity and citizenship.[29] The Afghan demand for Pashtunistan aligned with such concerns, and by speaking for this supposedly oppressed ethnic group, Afghan regimes from 1947 on used the issue as a platform to engage with peer governments and thereby demonstrate international legitimacy.

By relying on these two key tropes – bi-tarafi and Pashtun self-determination – mid-twentieth century Afghan governments were able to assert their legitimacy (and potential leadership) in international politics. Both issues drew on a specific, anti-colonial reading of Afghan history, a history that rejected notions of Afghan subservience in great power politics. By, on one hand, promoting Afghan neutralism and, on the other, rejecting imposed nineteenth-century territorial boundaries through the twentieth-century rhetoric of self-determination, Afghan leaders spoke to key themes of anti-colonial internationalism – rejection of imperial rule and 'great games' (whether British vs. Russian or US vs. Soviet), reconceptualization of nationhood and statehood. Thus, according to Afghan leaders, the Afghan state was both legitimate, as demonstrated by its interactions with other states, but also in flux, as initial regimes prioritized 'Afghan' identity's rootedness in ethnicity rather than a specific territorial space. These issues would continue to shape and perplex Afghan international politics in the series of 'revolutions' that shook the state.

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[28] Pashtunistan also shaped Afghan approaches to the Cold War conflict. See Leake 2017.
[29] See Cooper 2014.

**The first 'revolution': Daoud and the Afghan republic**

When Daoud overthrew his cousin, the king, in 1973, he immediately proclaimed the revolutionary nature of his regime. Nevertheless, while Daoud described his actions as a 'revolution solely for the prosperity and happiness of our people', the regime was less than radical.[30] Neither Daoud's domestic nor internationalist policies proved wildly different from their predecessors. As such, considering Afghan internationalism from 1973, several themes persisted. In terms of foreign affairs, bi-tarafi and the Pashtunistan dispute continued to shape Afghan internationalism.

Whilst re-forming Afghanistan as a republic, Daoud pursued neutrality abroad. His brother, Sardar Mohammad Nadir Naim, assured the US Ambassador of the 'commitment of Afghanistan to [the] non-aligned principles of [the] previous government'.[31] Daoud also pursued political and institutional reforms that differed little from what Dupree has called the 'constitutional period' under Zahir Shah, for example encouraging land reform and economic development initiatives much as the king had done.[32] R.C. Shukla, a Counsellor in the Indian Embassy in Kabul, noted in 1975 'a certain sense of disillusionment with the regime' for not living up to its revolutionary promises.[33] Daoud's regime remained largely autocratic and self-serving. Moreover, he remained fixated on Afghanistan as a Pashtun state. This could be seen in both his domestic politics, where he limited multi-linguicism and promoted Pashto and Pashtun culture, and in his foreign policy.[34]

As in earlier decades, regional relations continued to shape Afghan approaches to international politics. Belying scholars' overwhelming emphasis on Soviet-Afghan relations, Pakistan, not the Soviet Union, remained Afghanistan's predominant focus during the early to mid-1970s. Pashtun self-determination (in Pakistan) continued to dominate Daoud's internationalist thought, and changes in the international arena provided Daoud with ready opportunities to claim the right to speak for Pakistan's Pashtuns. As Samuel Moyn has noted, the 1970s represented a moment where decolonization and anti-colonialism 'really broke

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[30] Kabul Times 1973.
[31] Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1974, vol. E-8 1973.
[32] Dupree 1980: chapter 24.
[33] NAI 1976.
[34] Centlivres et. al 2000: 421.

international lawyers' long-term apologia for the state and its projects'.[35] The language of human rights provided Daoud with a ready critique of Pakistani state policy and the opportunity instead to represent Pakistan's Pashtuns and Baluch as individuals whose rights were being ignored.

At the time of his coup, he noted, 'The Pashtunistan question is a reality which cannot be denied [...] in accordance with the hopes and aspirations of the Pashtuns and Baluch people and their leaders'.[36] Moreover, as alluded to in Daoud's comments, the moment was nigh for reinvigorated demands for a Pashtunistan involving both Pakistan's Pashtuns and Baluch. The Pakistani state faced resistance from both borderland communities (whose leaders coordinated in the National Awami Party), as Zulfikar Ali Bhutto attempted to strengthen the central government to the detriment of provincial autonomy. Given the fraught history of the dispute, and Pakistani intransigence, Daoud was unlikely to have more success in his pursuit of Pashtunistan than in earlier decades. Instead, the arguable importance of his promotion of Pashtun and Baluch self-determination was that the conflict allowed him to perform Afghan sovereignty to an international audience.

The recrudescence of Afghan-Pakistan tensions arguably emerged at an opportune moment in the international sphere. The UN General Assembly of the mid-1970s looked drastically different from the mid-1950s, with a proliferation of postcolonial member states.[37] Decolonization had made self-determination a fundamental right, and Daoud utilized this tautology.[38] As the Afghan government welcomed and supported Pashtuns and Baluch from the Pakistan borderlands resisting Bhutto's regional policies, the two countries engaged in a war of words at the United Nations rather than confronting each other directly.[39] Daoud emphasized the threat posed by Pakistani military intervention to the health and safety of individuals within Baluch and Pashtun communities, decrying 'suppression of human rights and individual freedom where the democratic institutions exist only by name'.[40] He couched his support for Pakistan's neighbouring minorities in terms of 'legitimate political demands and their rightful aspirations' and accused Pakistan of 'the flagrant violation of the principles

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[35] Moyn 2010: 195; see also Sluga 2013: 122-3.
[36] Kabul Times 1973.
[37] By December 1971, the UN had grown from 51 to 132 member states (Sluga 2013: 122).
[38] Moyn 2010: 197.
[39] For more on this, see Leake 2016.
[40] UN ARMS 1974.

of the United Nations Charter, The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and the United Nations Convention on Human Rights'.[41] His representatives similarly lobbied other Muslim countries for support, initially trying to draw parallels between Pakistani treatment of Bangladesh with that of Pashtunistan (though this distinctly failed at the 1974 summit of the Organization of Islamic Conference in Lahore, where Bhutto announced his recognition of Bangladeshi statehood before the Afghan representative could make direct comparisons between Bengali and Pashtun self-determination).[42] Self-determination and human rights went hand in hand, as Daoud lobbied state and UN leaders for support against Pakistan.

Thus, despite his claim to revolutionary change, Daoud's regime in fact coalesced many of the trends that had shaped Afghan foreign affairs. His internationalism continued to highlight the importance of bi-tarafi as conceptually driving Afghan relations with the rest of the world, while in reality, tensions with Pakistan over Pashtunistan motivated Afghan decision-making. The Pashtunistan question involved Afghan employment of internationally recognized issues like self-determination and human rights to gain foreign support. And while Daoud made public pronouncements about the fate of Pakistan's Pashtuns and Baluch, at home, he prioritized Afghanistan's Pashtuns, recruiting ethnic (particularly urban, Western-educated) Pashtuns into 'elite' (state) positions and pursuing the Pashtunization of the army.[43] Questions thus lingered as to how Daoud conceptualized the future of 'Pashtunistan', and his refusal to recognize the Durand Line kept Afghanistan's territorial perimeters ambiguous. As a consequence, these issues would be of huge significance following the 1978 Saur (April) Revolution and overthrow of Daoud, and the creation of the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan.

**The second 'revolution': The PDPA, internationalism, and political legitimacy**

The emergence of an Afghan Marxist regime, the Soviet invasion, and the consequent resistance obviously complicated Afghan foreign affairs. But these events did not mark an immediate, total rupture in Afghan representations to the international community, nor did they lead to a complete fissure in Afghan history. Many of the same reference points – bi-tarafi and ethno-nationalism – remained key foci, but as various Afghan leaders sought ways

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[41] UN ARMS 1974; Ali (ed) 1990: 337.
[42] UKNA 1974.
[43] See Barnett 1991.

to assert their political legitimacy to international audiences, shifts began to occur. Afghan history proved a key link between regimes past and present, and took on renewed importance as a means of rooting PDPA leaders within Afghan politics. In contrast, support for self-determination and human rights inevitably had to change in the face of the monumental refugee crisis sparked by the revolution and subsequent civil war. The dominant consequence of the shift away from the internationalism of self-determination was renewed official focus on the territoriality of the Afghan state – with major repercussions for conceptions of Afghan citizenship.

The number of groups who could be said to represent 'Afghanistan' multiplied. Not only was there the Afghan Marxist regime – which nominally governed – but also the mujahidin, or resistance – itself divided ethnically, politically, and religiously – and the huge Afghan refugee population in Pakistan and Iran.[44] While the persistence of divisions between these groups affirmed the notion of Afghanistan as a fragmented society, the idea of an Afghan nation-state remained critical. Many groups competed to capture it and establish dominion throughout the country. This was obvious in the case of the leaders of the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan (and became increasingly clear within the mujahidin, as a number of leaders emerged). Thus as an idea, if not in practice, the Afghan nation-state remained a critical concept. International politics provided one arena in which the Afghan state continued to be contested.

In studying Afghanistan from 1978, Rubin makes an important argument about the inherent internationalism of war-torn Afghanistan. 'Just as the PDPA belonged to both its society and the international communist movement', he notes, 'so the Islamists belonged to both their own society and the international Islamist movement'.[45] Barfield also argues, 'both sides in the anti-Soviet war were to a large extent creations of their funders rather than mass indigenous political movements'.[46] Internationalist politics in Afghanistan – and the numerous networks that linked both Afghan state apparatuses and local communities to the outside world – took on additional importance during a time of conflict. The war

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[44] While a critical body, the mujahidin will not be a key focus of this article.
[45] Rubin 1995: 86.
[46] Barfield 2004: 282.

internationalized Afghan politics in new ways, particularly along bipolar Cold War lines, but it also complicated longer-standing practices.[47]

As indicated by Barfield and others, the PDPA-led state has largely been studied as a series of puppet regimes controlled by Soviet forces, or in terms of its domestic policies. While undoubtedly the PDPA was extremely reliant on Soviet aid to remain in power, focusing on the rulers of the DRA as passive recipients of Soviet directions ignores the very real steps PDPA leaders took to enforce their governance. While many PDPA initiatives failed on the ground, this did not stop Afghanistan's rulers from attempting to represent and reinforce the legitimacy of the state's new regime as one member of the international political system.

In considering the series of PDPA regimes that governed Afghanistan from 1978, what becomes clear is that its leaders paradoxically embraced and rejected aspects of earlier Afghan internationalism, depending on specific contexts. Unsurprisingly as well, the government's message for domestic and international audiences frequently differed. The PDPA's ostensibly Marxist thought obviously linked the party to a socialist international, despite the limitations of and divisions within the party's political philosophy. As David Edwards has shown, Nur Mohammad Taraki, leader of the Saur Revolution, tried to draw a clear link between the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution and events in Afghanistan in 1978. The PDPA (both the Khalq and Parcham factions) attempted to explain and justify the revolutionary nature of the new regime abroad as well as domestically at the same time they relied on Afghanistan's past as a source of authority.[48]

PDPA leaders sought to assert their political legitimacy to international audiences. This can be seen by the chosen language of many of the PDPA's earliest publicized documents and speeches. Widely cited, 'The Biography of the Great Leader' and its predecessor, a 'Short Biography of Noor Mohammad Taraki', were both published in English and disseminated via the Kabul Times and the Afghanistan Council Newsletter, English-language publications. I have found no evidence that they were disseminated in local languages (though this cannot be certain), but given that in 1985, the UN Development Programme placed average Afghan

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[47] See Coll 2005; Devji 2008; Dorronsoro 2005.
[48] Edwards 2002: 30.

literacy at twenty-one percent, such pamphlets still would have had little bearing.[49] Similarly, the UN archives indicate that only a handful of speeches given in Kabul and transcribed and sent to the UN were translated from local languages. As such, PDPA leaders clearly targeted international, alongside domestic, audiences.

Abroad, Afghan leaders' pronouncements were intended to reinforce the new regimes' legitimacy, and acted as a performance of state sovereignty. The terminology and ideas driving these pieces make this clear. Persistent reference to Afghan neutrality and the pursuit of different justifications for each leader to govern demonstrate that skeptical foreign powers were perceived to need as much (if not more) persuasion than locals. Given widespread rejection of the Soviet-supported regime, led by the US and Western Europe, this is hardly surprising. While earlier coups in Afghanistan had been largely accepted, however skeptically, by foreign observers, the Cold War context – the demise of détente and resurgence in US-Soviet tensions – meant foreign (anti-Marxist) observers balked at recognizing what had the appearance of being a puppet regime. Thus, the PDPA had to demonstrate their independence from the Soviets and their political legitimacy in order to be recognized as the true leaders of Afghanistan.

Like Afghan leaders before him, Taraki assured foreign observers that bi-tarafi would persist, and reasserted Afghanistan's alignment with broader anti-colonial movements. In one of his first communications with Kurt Waldheim, General-Secretary of the United Nations, Taraki pledged:

> The Democratic Republic of Afghanistan, as an active member of the non-aligned movement, loyally abides by the lofty principles of the United Nations Charter; adopts as its slogan the combat against all kinds of discrimination, <u>apartheid</u>, old and neo-colonialism; confirms the right of self-determination of nations and peoples based on their free will and devoid of foreign intervention; continues its relentless efforts for the establishment and consolidation of a real and lasting peace, realization of general and complete disarmament and the further strengthening of the United Nations.[50]

A New York Times article that appeared shortly after the April coup similarly quoted Taraki as declaring a 'new "policy of active positive neutrality"' and criticizing 'The agitative

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[49] Samady 2001: 17. This is not to say that PDPA leaders did not seek to spread their message to local Afghans by other means, notably via radio broadcasts (see Skuse 2002).
[50] UN ARMS 1978. 'Apartheid' underlined in original.

propagandists of international reaction [for] spreading poison as if Afghanistan has been changed into a satellite of this or that country and has given up her own independence'.[51] 'Active neutrality' was not new, despite the Times' description. Instead, it reaffirmed Afghanistan's pursuit of bi-tarafi in world affairs and indicated continuity with the earlier regimes. Espoused nonalignment (however questionable in practice) indicated a persistent reliance on the same ideas and practices in defining Afghanistan's foreign affairs: alliance with other non-Western countries and active engagement with anti-colonialism and international institutions like the United Nations. As such, while pursuing domestic policies intended as a rupture from the past, Afghan officials continued to portray themselves as active leaders within a broader sphere of anti-colonial and anti-neocolonial internationalism.

In this context, the PDPA's claims to be revolutionary as a means of political legitimacy were complicated. Undoubtedly, Taraki's domestic policies did represent huge ruptures with the past, with corresponding local resistance.[52] But some of Taraki's pronouncements sounded not dissimilar to those made by Daoud five years earlier, who called Zahir Shah's constitutional reforms 'a false democracy which from the beginning was founded on private and class interests, and on intrigues, plots, falsehood, and hypocrisy'.[53] And like Daoud, Taraki's policies met with little success. Taraki explained to the UN, 'The main aim of this revolution [was] fundamental change of the economic, social and political structure, and the successful utilization of its natural and human resources for the social prosperity and the betterment of the standard of living of the people of Afghanistan'.[54] But many of the PDPA's envisioned domestic changes failed to take hold, as they were questioned, rejected, and subverted within Afghanistan. Thus, much like Daoud before, praxis and practice, to some extent diverged. Taraki sought legitimacy in claims about earlier leaders' shortcomings – an idea that had driven regime change in Afghanistan throughout the twentieth century – but the fact that many of his policies faced resistance and were unsuccessful meant that Afghan leadership had to seek legitimacy in factors other than revolutionary practices.

After Taraki's likely murder by Hafizullah Amin, and Amin's subsequent replacement by Babrak Karmal, rhetoric fluctuated. DRA officials under Karmal (and later Mohammad

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[51] Borders 1978.
[52] See Edwards 2002: ch. 2.
[53] Cited in Saikal 2004: 176.

Najibullah) continued to promote the ideas first stated by Taraki. Upon coming to power, Karmal again stressed the Saur Revolution had 'dealt the feudal reaction, regional reaction and world imperialism a great blow'.[55] But while Karmal's close relationship with the Soviets should have indicated further convergence between PDPA and Soviet revolutionary political thought, instead, Karmal went to great pains to assure the international community that his focus remained Afghanistan and its political legitimacy. He described his goals as: 'National sovereignty, national independence, territorial integrity, real democracy, creation of a democratic government and administrative system, strengthening the foundation of revolutionary democratic legality in the life of society and the state and the expansion of mass organizations'.[56]

These concerns spoke to internationally recognized norms regarding state sovereignty and self-determination and, barring the emphasis on mass organizations, differed little from those of his predecessors. Issues of sovereignty and territoriality had shaped Afghan approaches to international politics for decades. Moreover, Karmal went on to qualify that 'under the circumstances it is not our direct duty to practice socialism', thereby stressing his ostensible independence from his Soviet backers. Instead, irrespective of matters on the ground, or in Afghan state offices, he emphasized that Afghan, not Soviet decision-making, had led him to pursue socialist reforms, proclaiming his 'historic national duty to expand and consolidate the progressive social and political pillars of DRA'. Notably, as well, he persisted in focusing on nonalignment and peaceful co-existence as the key tenets of Afghan foreign policy.[57]

The irony of the PDPA's regimes was that in some ways, the authority provided by drawing on Afghan history mattered far more for the series of PDPA leaders than it had for the Musahiban dynasty before it. The very nature of being 'revolutionary' emphasized the supposed novelty of the regime but also opened it up to accusations of inexperience. Drawing on Afghanistan's pre-1978 past both contextualized and justified the state's new leadership. Thus while both the Parcham and Khalq factions of the PDPA promoted themselves as a radical departure from the earlier regimes of the Musahiban family, their leaders simultaneously relied on historical links to explain their governance. For example, Edwards has shown how Taraki's official biography placed him at the heart of Afghan political

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[55] UN ARMS 1980a.
[56] UN ARMS 1980a.
[57] Ibid.

struggles from the Second World War on, and that the PDPA tried to argue that the overthrow of Daoud had reverted Afghanistan to the 'right' path of history. As the Kabul Times put it, 'Now the Naderi dynasty and its last hangman representative is no more, history is on the path of wishes and will of the noble nation of Afghanistan'.[58] As such, Taraki's legitimacy paradoxically came from his active engagement in twentieth-century Afghan politics but also in how he had broken its patterns via the Saur Revolution.

Subsequent leaders drew even clearer links with Afghanistan's past. In the months following the Soviets' December 1979 intervention, the Afghan government under Karmal emphasized party members' longstanding role within Afghan politics. Afghan representatives noted Karmal's participation in Afghanistan's short-lived Parliament (under Zahir Shah) as well as his longstanding role within the PDPA. As such, his representatives argued, 'no malicious lie or slander will be able to cast any shade of doubt on his revolutionary and patriotic personality'.[59] In this way, Karmal's leadership was justified to outside observers not only because of his position within the PDPA but because of his earlier involvement in pre-revolution Afghanistan's popular politics. His legitimacy arose from the duration of his participation in Afghan politics as much as his revolutionary philosophies.

In a further step to illustrate connections between earlier periods in Afghanistan and life under the DRA, Karmal's regime, after establishing a 'National Fatherland Front' to unite Afghan society, tried to portray the first meeting of Front members as a new version of the Loya Jirga, an assembly convened at various points during the twentieth century to provide limited representative government.[60] Indian observers identified this as a clear pursuit (domestically and internationally) of 'the political goal of establishing legitimacy', though also concluding, 'the Karmal regime has not yet succeeded in gaining popular acceptability'.[61] (Notably, following Karmal's own overthrow, his successor, Najibullah, revived the Loya Jirga as a means of ensuring representative government. He even claimed that he would welcome resistance members to participate in this. This demonstrated further

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[58] Edwards 2002: 35-9; Kabul Times cited in ibid: 30.
[59] UN ARMS 1983.
[60] The historicity of the Loya Jirga has been questioned; see Hanifi 2004.
[61] NAI 1982.

reliance on longstanding political institutions to shore up the regime's declining legitimacy.)[62]

Leaders of the DRA, addressing audiences abroad, thus had the particularly uncomfortable task of both drawing on and repudiating Afghan history to justify their rule. One sphere of Afghanistan's political past that proved increasingly difficult to integrate into PDPA narratives was Afghanistan's history of active internationalism. Certainly, PDPA leaders could continue to emphasize Afghanistan's role in the vanguard of global anti-imperialism, but the country's adherence to bi-tarafi, given the prevalence of Soviet advisers and funding, inevitably came into question. The Soviet invasion coincided with fractures within the Non-Aligned Movement. While some NAM countries sympathized with and supported the PDPA, others decried it as a tool of Soviet expansion.[63] At the same time, Pakistani leaders at a special meeting of the Organization of Islamic Conferences carried a resolution describing the Soviet intervention and support for Karmal as 'a flagrant violation of international law, covenants and norms' and the 'right to sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence' (which incidentally mirrored the same language used by Daoud regarding Pashtun self-determination).[64] PDPA leaders continued to employ the language of anti-colonialism and bi-tarafi in pronouncements for foreign audiences, but these pronouncements were questioned in international circles. In particular, the issue of Pashtun self-determination that had defined earlier Afghan regimes' internationalism became a stumbling block.

PDPA leaders, like their successors, initially kept alive Pashtun nationalism and the Pashtunistan dispute with Pakistan, and continued to point to the issue of self-determination. Ranging from Taraki to Karmal, Afghan state leaders demanded 'the solution of the national issue of the Pashtun and Baluch people, based on their own will and historical background' and 'the right and will of the Pashtun and Baluchi brethren to determine their own destiny and happiness'.[65] Continued support for Pashtunistan, however, was heavily compromised by the growing refugee crisis, as millions fled the Afghan state and sought refuge in neighbouring Pakistan and Iran, as well as further abroad. Unsurprisingly, the presence of large numbers of (predominantly Pashtun) Afghans across the border in Pakistan proved a

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[62] See UN ARMS 1988a; UN ARMS 1988b.
[63] Kaufman 1981.
[64] UN ARMS 1980b.
[65] UN ARMS 1978; UN ARMS 1980a.

particular sore point. Preceding official elisions of 'Afghan' and 'Pashtun' identities, including Pashtuns and Pashto-speaking Baluch from the Pakistani side of the Durand Line, became especially challenging.

Unsurprisingly, DRA representatives refused to acknowledge a refugee crisis, despite the huge amounts of international press afforded to Afghan refugees, as well as the deep involvement of NGOs – and the United Nations – in alleviating their hardships. Recognizing that millions of Afghans were fleeing the new regime was awkward. The refugee crisis highlighted the DRA's limitations, the fact that numerous Afghans had rejected the government's oversight and thus had fled. And while employing rhetorics of self-determination and human rights was problematic for PDPA leaders reliant on violent suppression to remain in power, claiming to speak for Pakistan's Pashtuns also threw Afghanistan's territorial boundaries into question. As such, the Afghan refugee crisis created a crisis of Afghan statehood and political legitimacy.

Looking to historical precedent, the DRA could try to lay claim to the 'Afghans' (Pashtuns) on Pakistani soil, and reject the Durand Line as previous regimes had done. However, this would continue to blur the boundary between Afghanistan and Pakistan and bring into question Afghan territoriality. At a time when international critics, particularly those in the United States, claimed that Afghanistan had been subsumed by the Soviet Union, a territorially concrete Afghanistan was crucial for DRA leaders in order to assert their legitimacy. As one memorandum to the US deputy secretary of state argued, 'for all practical purposes Afghanistan has been annexed to the Soviet Union'.[66] This was precisely what DRA leaders had to prove false. Afghanistan was not part of the Soviet Union, but an independent state. As such, a shift began through which Afghan state representatives increasingly turned to citizenship defined by state space rather than ethnicity. Conflation of Afghan and Pashtun identities was no longer feasible, and earlier state efforts to interfere in and internationalize Pakistan's internal affairs in the name of human rights and self-determination created opportunities for critics to do the same in Afghanistan in the 1980s.

Karmal's regime therefore maintained that 'a clear distinction [existed] between the real refugees and those who are engaged in provocations, subversive activities and armed

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[66] Reagan 1982.

aggressions'.[67] The Foreign Minister, Dr. Shah Wali, admitted there might be some 'bona fide refugees who were the victims of interference in the internal affairs of Afghanistan', but he and others claimed that most of the 'refugees' in Pakistan were migratory populations who historically had moved seasonally between Afghanistan and Pakistan (and to an extent Iran). According to this argument, such groups had never been properly Afghan citizens due to their transient lifestyles. Instead, the Afghan representative to the UN accused Pakistan of disrupting these groups' circulation patterns.[68] Critically, Dr. Shah Wali referred to these migratory groups as 'nomads' and to those Afghans who had fled as 'feudals'.[69] In this way, these two segments were clearly disassociated from Afghanistan, its new regime, and its increasingly territorially defined citizenry. Nomads implicitly (in this case, fairly obviously) had no state affiliation or specific territorial location, and thus could not be considered 'Afghan', in terms of state belonging. Similarly, 'feudalism' clashed with the very modern vision the DRA proclaimed for itself, so again a distinction was made about who was, and was not, 'Afghan', in terms of who the DRA accepted and rejected.

These two identifiers clearly indicated that the DRA's leaders refused to accept refugees in Pakistan as being 'Afghan'. This differed from earlier ambiguities in Afghan and Pashtun identities, which had blurred the lines between Pakistan and Afghanistan. Moreover, statements by the DRA's representative at the United Nations clearly demonstrated that the Afghan state no longer saw being Pashtun as synonymous with being Afghan. The Afghan representative explained away high refugee numbers by pointing to 'Powindas [sic], most of whom are nomadic Pathans, [… whose] migratory pattern has been upset, and many thousands of them swell the ranks of the refugees'.[70] This clearly demonstrated that while Afghan representatives were willing to recognize populations across the Durand Line as Pashtun (or 'Pathan', in colonial parlance), they no longer saw this as also meaning they were Afghans.[71]

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[67] UN ARMS 1980c.
[68] UN ARMS 1981c.
[69] UN ARMS 1979.
[70] UN ARMS 1983.
[71] This is a particularly notable point, as previously Powindahs had been referred to as 'Afghans', including by Indian officials sympathetic to Afghan demands for Pashtunistan. See NAI 1975.

The DRA played similar rhetorical games in order to de-nationalize Afghan resistance members. These were frequently referred to as 'counter-revolutionaries', 'rebels', or 'mercenaries'. As the Foreign Minister told Waldheim, he 'rejected the Pakistani definition that all Afghans in Pakistani territory were refugees. In his view many were nomads, a few were <u>bona fide</u> refugees and the others were rebels and counter-revolutionaries'.[72] He and other DRA representatives accused 'mercenaries' (reluctantly recognized as being 'Afghan' but quickly described as 'anti-Afghan') of representing other states' interests to the detriment of 'the Afghan people' (located within the Afghan state).[73] Such statements placed Afghan resisters clearly outside of and against the Afghan state. Moreover, the few refugees who the DRA regime was willing to recognize with that term, according to Afghanistan's Minister for Foreign Affairs, 'were completely manipulated by the counter-revolutionaries and represented the reserve for the terrorist activities of the gang leaders'.[74] By making counter-revolutionaries responsible for some refugee elements, this further allowed the government to question their place of belonging and detach them from the Afghan state. The Afghan state thus asserted the ability to determine who were Afghans and how they related to the nation, as represented by the DRA's state apparatus.

Previous Afghan leaders' focus on self-determination and human rights in engaging with regional relations now had the potential to backfire for the DRA. Continued conflation of Afghan and Pashtun identities could throw the PDPA's leadership into question. Afghan refugees could, and did, assert that they represented 'true' Afghan interests and could turn the rhetoric of self-determination against the DRA. The fragmentation of Afghan political leadership, the fact that Afghan resistance fighters and religious figures equally could claim that the PDPA oppressed Afghan self-determination and human rights, threw into question the PDPA's legitimacy. Unlike in times past, relying on anti-colonial internationalism no longer sufficed as a means of proving political power.

As a consequence, the civil war that followed the Saur Revolution forced the regime to reject earlier Afghan internationalism and reconceptualize 'Afghanness' and decouple it from issues of ethnicity. Given the fact that Karmal, and later Najibullah, stridently maintained that 'only Afghans' could 'determine the destiny of their own country', the assertion that refugees

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[72] UN ARMS 1981b.
[73] See UN ARMS 1981a; UN ARMS 1981d.
[74] JPC 1983.

and resistance members did not constitute Afghan citizens was a critical ploy.[75] Only Afghans residing within the state's putative borders qualified as nationals. 'Afghan' identity thus became linked to a specific territorial space and its accompanying national imaginary, rather than to historic ethnic distinctions. The DRA could not continue to blur 'Afghan' and 'Pashtun' identities, like past regimes, as this would have forced the DRA to acknowledge that the number of 'Afghans' in Pakistan had exploded into the millions. How could the PDPA assert that it spoke for all Afghans if they recognized so many living outside of Afghanistan's borders? Linking Afghan identity and citizenship to territory placed state sovereignty squarely in the hands of the DRA.

Thus, the fact that territorial disputes accompanied DRA wrestling with the refugee conundrum is hardly surprising. If Afghan identity was now tied to a particular space, rather than a specific ethnicity, that space needed to be reified and protected. Alongside drawing on Afghanistan's political history, its affirmed adherence to neutrality in foreign policy, and its manipulation of identity politics to justify the continued existence of the DRA, what became most critical for officials was manifesting their state's territoriality.[76] Within the international community, this frequently revolved around the maintenance of Afghanistan's borders – demarcating a secure sovereign territorial space (and, ironically, acceptance of Afghanistan's colonial-era borders after decades of questioning them). Thus, another departure from the past emerged, as a major focus of Afghan internationalism became perceived (and frequently real) transgressions of Afghanistan's southern border. Afghanistan's Ministry for Foreign

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[75] UN ARMS 1988a.

[76] PDPA leaders, especially Karmal, also tried (unsuccessfully) to draw on Islam to reinforce Afghanistan as a specific space. Perceptions of the revolution as being anti-religious had been one of the key sparks for the resistance. As a consequence, Karmal and his government, as well as his successor, Najibullah, made extended efforts to define Afghanistan as a revolutionary yet deeply religious state. As such, Karmal described Amin after his death as 'that treacherous foe of God and Honesty, the rogue who savagely fought in the name of God, Islam, humanity and nationality against the khalq and the khalqis, that enemy of the homeland'. The revolutionary government under Karmal, in contrast, would be 'based on a profound respect and observation of national, historical, cultural and religious traditions of the people with decisive observance of the principles of Islam as the sacred religion and with freedom of religious rites guaranteed for Moslems by law'. In this regard, Karmal linked Afghan Islamic practices, or 'religious traditions', to the territory of Afghanistan – a 'homeland'. This territorialized the Karmal regime's claims and practices to a particular envisioned space, one in which the state's authority over politics and geography was entrenched but where social practices supposedly would receive less oversight. As such, in practice, Karmal tried to appease skeptics while also justifying continued governance over a territorially defined Afghan space (UN ARMS 1980a; UN ARMS 1980d).

Affairs accused Pakistani representatives of ignoring the legality of the border in attacks and bombings of border towns on the Afghan side of the Durand Line.[77] Unlike earlier regimes, which could afford to dispute the Durand Line as part of a strategy to lay some claim to Pakistan's Pashtuns, the PDPA regimes sought instead to reinforce the line as a clear, non-transgressable boundary.

Thus, in the international sphere, DRA leaders turned away from concepts like self-determination and human rights to those of territorial integrity and border maintenance. This logic still relied on internationalism and international law, but it revolved around older Westphalian notions of statehood where control of a specific territory was paramount.[78] It moved away from the primacy of self-determination, which, to a large extent, located statehood in people, their right to choose their future, rather than land. Twentieth-century anti-colonial internationalism focusing on state and individual rights and self-determination no longer suited Afghan leaders, who instead sought sovereignty in a specific territorial space.

The difficulties confronting PDPA leaders in defining Afghanistan and Afghans resulted from the ambiguous policies pursued by preceding Afghan regimes, where Afghan identity and belonging had been defined in terms of ethnicity rather than location and debated in international arenas. The civil war brought to the fore an issue that had bedeviled Afghan domestic and foreign policy for decades, one that was given new significance by Pakistan's active support for Afghan refugees and resistance fighters alike and one that was complicated by earlier iterations of Afghan internationalism. The DRA could not afford uncertainty in terms of borders or citizenship, as it faced widespread resistance and skepticism from the international community.

**Conclusion**

Despite the 1978 revolution, PDPA regimes wrestled with many of the same issues as the governments that had preceded them. Throughout, state leaders turned to international audiences to explain and assert their rule. Afghan leaders continued to try to reconcile declared support for foreign policy neutrality and nonalignment with more local interests that

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[77] See UN ARMS 1980e; UN ARMS 1984.

[78] For more on sovereignty and territoriality, see Agnew 2005.

demanded continued engagement with Pakistan's Pashtun population. What further complicated matters for leaders of the DRA was a stronger need to assert and prove political legitimacy, particularly in the international sphere. This meant a reliance on the non-revolutionary past and a revised understanding of Afghan identity that moved away from the politics of self-determination and towards a territorially defined nationalism.[79] Internationalist politics had historically provided a key means for Afghan leaders to assert their political legitimacy and their leadership domestically and abroad. But key tropes of anti-colonial internationalism – nonalignment, self-determination, rights – proved increasingly difficult to claim by a regime seen both at home and abroad to have little real authority.

Throughout the twentieth century, Afghanistan's regimes remained intent on shoring up their sovereignty, and engaging with international politics provided a particularly appealing arena for proving their legitimacy. By 1978, Afghan leaders had positioned themselves within the coterie of newly emerging anti-colonial states that sought autonomy and citizens' and states' rights. DRA leaders tried to capitalize on this Afghan internationalism, and the United Nations provided a space in which DRA leaders attempted to disassociate themselves from their Soviet supporters and prove their independent authority.[80] But this forced a delicate negotiation of claiming political legitimacy, on one hand, but avoiding languages of self-determination, on the other. Instead, PDPA leaders focused on more clearly identifying who did and did not belong in the revolutionary Afghan state, while also drawing on Afghan political history to prove leaders' experience and understanding of local dynamics.

Rhetoric inevitably changed with the instalment of Najibullah, the progression of the Geneva talks, and the Soviet decision to withdraw troops. Critically under Najibullah, support for Pashtunistan was negligible, as the government focused on internal instability and ending the civil war. As mentioned previously, Najibullah expressed willingness for resistance fighters to take part in the Loya Jirga, and his regime refrained from referring to the mujahidin and the political parties based in Peshawar as counter-revolutionaries or enemies of the state. The ongoing war had weakened the regime's commitment to its earlier definitions of Afghan

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[79] A continuation of a similar argument involving the collapse of the DRA can be seen in Schetter 2005.

[80] Notably the Afghan resistance also engaged with UN officials in attempts to undercut the PDPA and prove that the PDPA, in fact, did not represent Afghan interests. This reinforces the importance of the UN as an arena for disputing Afghan sovereignty. See UN ARMS undated.

identity. Statements from Najibullah's regime instead increasingly included contradictions and signs of weakness. While his representatives asserted that 'there is only one legal government in Afghanistan', Najibullah also told the UN Secretary-General that 'Afghanistan would extend its hands to its old foes any time and any place. It was tired of the war. Afghanistan would sit down and negotiate with the opposition'.[81] The desire for peace had overcome the question for legitimacy and the definitions of Afghan statehood and citizenship that had driven the earlier PDPA regimes.

In considering the various conceptualizations of Afghan statehood and citizenship, arguably fragmentation in Afghanistan has occurred despite, rather than because of, Afghan leaders' attempts to assert the viability and legitimacy of the state. This argument is by no means intended to underplay the experience of everyday Afghans, especially during the civil war. Afghan government representations to the international community obviously diverged from lived realities. But reflecting on the nature of the Afghan revolutionary regime, its intentions, and the ways in which it attempted to prove its legitimacy, in light of twentieth-century developments, is critical for understanding not only the war in Afghanistan but also to reflect on why so much disagreement persists about the nature of the Afghan nation-state.

In the long term, the contradictions and ambiguities created by earlier Afghan regimes – neutrality versus demands for Pashtun self-determination, national territory versus ethnic identity – were unsustainable. The emergence of civil war required Afghan leaders to achieve clearer definitions that relied less on ethnicity and more on control over a specific space. Thus, more than the other issues discussed in this article, the question of Afghan territoriality and citizenship has persisted as a source of controversy and an unintended consequence of Afghan internationalism. Arguably, the tensions of Afghan statehood can be located in continued questions about who and what the state represents: many ethnicities or one? Certain identities or a particular territorial space? By taking a twentieth-century internationalist view, what becomes clear is that top-down attempts to wrestle with Afghan state- and subject-hood have only complicated how 'Afghanistan' and being 'Afghan' are understood. Continued ambiguity in the conceptualization of both thus has led questions into the nature of the Afghan nation-state, and whether it will become a stable construct in the future.

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[81] UN ARMS 1988b.

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