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# Everyone Has Ethnic-oriented Objectives in Afghanistan: A Study of Ethnic Identity in Pashtun and non-Pashtun Afghan Fulbright Students

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“Everyone Has Ethnic-oriented Objectives in Afghanistan.” A Study of Ethnic Identity in  
Pashtun and non-Pashtun Afghan Fulbright Students

by

Sayed Hamid Akbary

A Thesis

Presented to the Graduate and Research Committee

of Lehigh University

in Candidacy for the Degree of

Master of Arts

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Sayed Hamid Akbary

Thesis is accepted and approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master of Arts in Sociology.

“Everyone Has Ethnic-oriented Objectives in Afghanistan:” A Study of Ethnic Identity in Pashtun and non-Pashtun Afghan Fulbright Students

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## Abstract

Pashtuns have been politically dominant in Afghanistan for over 300 years, and this has led non-Pashtun ethnic groups to develop grievances and share a common identity, *non-Pashtun*. The present study analyzes the relationship between ethnic identity and nationalism in Pashtun and non-Pashtun Afghan Fulbright students in the United States and Afghanistan. No empirical research on ethnicity and nationalism in Afghanistan was found in the review of literature. This is the first study to answer how the notion *non-Pashtun* is constructed in Afghanistan by applying a mixed-method research methodology. The findings suggested that “non-Pashtun” is a pan-ethnic identity, which allows members of non-Pashtun ethnic groups to distinguish themselves from Pashtuns. Non-Pashtuns negotiate their individual ethnic identity by adding the “non-Pashtun” pan-ethnic layer to remove the fear of continuous domination and exclusion by the Pashtuns. Last, the research adds information regarding the role of modernization in construction of the “non-Pashtun” pan-ethnic layer.

## 1. Introduction

In Afghanistan, meaning land of Afghans, live more than fifty ethnic groups that have continually been engaged in conflicts against each other for at least the past few decades. Situated between Iran and Pakistan, it is an area about the size of Texas, larger than France, rather smaller than Turkey (Ewans 2002, 1-2). Its total population is 30 million people, and the major ethnic groups are Pashtuns, Tajiks, Hazaras, and Uzbeks who together make up 87% of the population. Pashtuns constitute 42% of the population and speak Pashtu. Tajiks with population of 27% are the second largest ethnic group in Afghanistan. Hazaras and Uzbeks each make 9% of the Afghan population (Adeney 2008, 538).

**Table 1:**

<b>Ethnic Groups</b>	<b>Population</b>	<b>Percentage</b>	<b>Language</b>
Pashtun	12,600,000	42%	Pashtu
Tajik	7,200,000	27%	Persian
Hazara	2,700,000	9%	Persian
Uzbek	2,700,000	9%	Uzbeki

Although it is debated that there is no valid and unbiased data on the Afghan population due to the absence of an up-to-date census and large flows of refugees throughout three decades of war, it is largely accepted that Pashtuns are the largest group, Tajiks make the second largest, and Hazaras and Uzbeks come third and fourth respectively.

Throughout the past two and a half centuries, almost every Afghan king and president has been a member of the Pashtun ethnic group. Pashtuns have been politically a dominant ethnic group and their dominance remains secure still today. Despite the ethnic tensions among non-Pashtun ethnic groups, they have established a collective ‘non-Pashtun’ ethnic identity to challenge Pashtuns’ dominance in the state level. The borderline between Pashtuns and non-Pashtuns is not historically very old, but it certainly is a product of history and predates the

current young generation. Similar to the role the previous generation played in shaping the ethnic identities and relations in the past, the Afghan young generation will have a key role to play in determining the fate of this boundary for the next generations to come. Whether the ethnic line between Pashtuns and non-Pashtuns will diminish will significantly depend on the youth's role. Given the youth's important future role, this research is going to investigate the worrying ethnic division and tensions between Pashtuns and non-Pashtun ethnic groups over state power. This research has been designed to study the notion of *non-Pashtun* as an ethnic identity and border, and the way it is constructed within a particular group of Afghan students known as *Fulbright scholars*.

## **2. Research Purpose**

According to UNFPA, Afghanistan is one of the world's youngest and fastest growing populations at an annual rate of population growth of 3.1 percent (2012; 112). Its youth make up a vast proportion of the literate population of 38.2%. The Afghan youth have made significant progress in terms of education since the start of the post-Taliban era. The schools closed or turned into dust during the war and the Taliban era were reopened and reconstructed after the collapse of their regime, and many more schools were newly constructed to increase the literacy rate among Afghans. At the same time, girls were freed to pursue education. These factors have certainly provided the post-Taliban young generation of Afghanistan with better access to education than those who spent their youth during the years of war and immigration from one part of the world to another without being able to pursue proper and uninterrupted education.

That is primarily the reason why the majority of youth fortunate to be able to learn to read and write and access educational institutions are seen as a great source of hope for the development of the country. Since youth make up a large portion of the literate population, the

fate of the country is going to be greatly shaped by their visions as well as contributions. What role the educated youth will play to deal particularly with ethnic tensions, and whether their decisions and actions will contribute to the disunity of ethnic groups are two important questions to ask.

The youth's role is going to be significant in the long term for Afghanistan. Their thirst for higher education and learning since the fall of the Taliban demonstrates their sense of responsibility for the country's future. Almost every Afghan put an end to learning in order to protect themselves and their families during the war, and there were only a few universities open during the Taliban era in the entire country. In contrast, there are 135 universities (101 private and 34 public) registered and fully functional according to the Ministry of Higher Education. As they have already occupied key positions in the governmental and private sectors, the need for their contribution will grow more and more as the country moves towards development. Afghanistan's peace-process, state building, and development will depend on whether the youth will use their education as a weapon to strengthen their ethnic solidarities, or as a tool to resolve the ethnic disputes and promote nationalism.

Among the educated youth, there are over 450 Afghan Fulbright scholars who serve their country. These individuals make up a great portion of Afghan youth privileged with higher education degrees at the master's and PhD levels. Every year around 50 young Afghans receive fully funded scholarships to pursue their graduate studies in the United States. Two great examples to represent the Afghan Fulbright scholars are the current Afghan President Ashraf Ghani and the Afghan Minister of Agriculture and Irrigation, Assadullah Zamir. However, one cannot rely on education to predict the future of the country, because education cannot be the determinant by itself. The individuals who sparked and intensified the war against the Soviet

Union and the civil war held higher education degrees. They held degrees from distinguished institutions in Afghanistan and foreign countries. Some of them are no longer alive, but some are still influential characters in the social and political affairs of Afghanistan. Are the youth going to support their ethno-political agendas, or will they rather work towards building nationalism?

Given the youth's important position in the future of Afghanistan, particularly that of Fulbright scholars who make the vast majority of master's/PhD degree holders in the entire country, this research's target population is the Afghan Fulbright scholars.

### **3. Background Information and Overview**

Despite the beautiful landscape and high mountains that cover the country, Afghanistan is mostly known now as the land of war and terrorism in the world. As a matter of fact, terrorism flourished in Afghanistan because of the internal ethnic wars that paved the way for insurgency, radicalism, and terrorism. The country enjoyed progress, modernization, and peace until the mid-1970s. Later, fighting organizations known as *the mujahideen* mobilized and started the war against the Soviet occupation. The war was known as *jihad* (holy war). Mujahideen fought the Soviets in Afghanistan tirelessly until 1989 when the Soviets decided to withdraw, but mujahideen did not decide to drop their weapons and put an end to their holy war. They changed their agenda from religious to ethnic, and the war against the Afghan state continued. The various leaders of local groups engaged in the civil war used group identity in the pursuit of power and resources by reinterpreting history around symbol of ethnic or religious differences (Rippenburg 2005; 36).

Upon the withdrawal of the Soviets, Najibullah remained as the Afghan President. Mujahideen continued their resistance and fight against him. They succeeded in removing him

from power and taking over the state in 1992. From 1992 to 1996, the leaders of all the mujahideen leaders, who remained united against the Soviet occupation, were ethnically divided and fought each other over the power.

Before delving further into the history, it is necessary to pause and ask why the mujahideen still fought the Afghan President for three more years if the purpose of their holy war was only to fight the non-Muslim occupants. Was it the Islamic teaching of *jihad* that had motivated them to take up arms and turn Afghanistan into a battlefield, or was it ethnic antagonism that led the war to assume an ethnic character after the Soviet withdrawal?

Since a Pashtun king Ahmad Shah Durrani established the Afghan state in 1747, Pashtuns have enjoyed massive political dominance. Among the many kings and presidents, only two non-Pashtuns have managed to possess the state power. However, their success was short-lived and Pashtuns were able to reverse their political decline. Habibullah Kalakani was the first non-Pashtun to inhabit the state for one year after removing a Pashtun king in 1929. Burhanuddin Rabbani—one of the prominent leaders of the mujahideen—was the second non-Pashtun to rule from 1992 to 1996 in the state. After 1996, Pashtuns regained power and resumed their dominance until today. The Taliban—predominantly a Pashtun group—ruled from 1996 to 2001. From immediately after the U.S. invasion until mid-2014, Hamed Karzai (Pashtun) inhabited the Presidential Palace. After Hamed Karzai, Ashraf Ghani (Pashtun) took over the leadership until the present.

For over three hundred years, non-Pashtuns have not ruled the country even for a decade. Before the war, 57.9% of Afghan political elites were Pashtuns, while Tajiks (the second largest ethnic group) made up only 29.2% and other non-Pashtun groups made up far less (Ahady 1995;

633). Pashtuns believe that they constitute the majority in Afghanistan, that the Afghan state was formed by the Pashtuns and that Afghanistan is the only Pashtun state in the world, the minorities should accept the Pashtun character of the state (Ahady 1995; 634).

This ethnic division has intensified since the Presidential elections in 2014 when the election results were disputed. Abdullah Abdullah, a candidate supported by the vast majority of non-Pashtuns won the first round of elections with 45% of votes, while Ashraf Ghani, supported by Pashtuns, won 31% of votes. Because no candidate was able to secure over 50% of the total votes, a runoff round was held later in the year between the two leading candidates. Ethnic Pashtun Ashraf Ghani won the runoff round, leading by 13%. Hoping to reduce the Pashtun dominance in the state, Abdullah Abdullah and his non-Pashtun supporters rejected the results and claimed that the elections process was biased and fraudulent. After ethnic tensions sparked between the candidates and their supporters, U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry made multiple visits to Afghanistan to resolve the disputes between the candidates and bring both to an agreement. After talks, arguments, and warnings exchanged by the two candidates, the Pashtun candidate was announced the new President and his rival was named the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the new *unity* government. Despite the difference in their positions, the President agreed to share 50% of power with the CEO. As a consequence, after votes were cast along ethnic lines and the candidates reinforced ethnic borders to attract votes from various ethnic groups, the division between Pashtuns and non-Pashtuns intensified massively.

The long-standing dominance of Pashtuns and the recent ethnic tensions can potentially lead to violence once again. The power sharing agreement can increase the risk of ethnic violence too. The fact that the President, unlike all other Pashtun leaders, has to share 50% of power with the CEO can lead both the President and the CEO to compete for more power.

Pashtuns might strive to reverse the decline of their dominance, and non-Pashtuns might strive to increase the possibility of Pashtuns' decline in dominance. Whether the ethnic politics and ethnic hostilities are going to turn into ethnic war or not depends on how patiently and intelligently the two leaders will lead and abide by their agreements. Ethnic conciseness is a serious issue in Afghanistan. One of the participants pointed out to this issue by stating that "*everyone has ethnic-oriented objectives in Afghanistan,*" and these words, I believe, call for the seriousness of this issue and the urgency for investigating and eliminating it.

#### **4. Literature Review**

Studying ethnic conflicts has been a major focus of scholars of social sciences. The literature on ethnic conflicts is massive, but Afghanistan is one of the societies least studied. Despite years of ethnic conflicts and billions of dollars of aid, there is a dearth of scholarship on the study of ethnic relations in Afghanistan. After reviewing the literature, I discovered that no sociologist has ever conducted an empirical study of ethnic identity, ethnic conflict, and ethnic relations in Afghanistan. Therefore, I reviewed the literature on other countries of the world such as Sri Lanka, Malaysia, Sudan, Nigeria, Yugoslavia, India, United States, etc.

##### **4.1 Definitions**

There is no consensus on any single definition of 'ethnicity' and 'ethnic group' among scholars. The terms *ethnicity*, *ethnic group*, *race*, and *nationhood*, and *nationalism* have often been confused and used as synonyms. According to Robin Williams Jr., problems of definition are difficult to be resolved and the disagreements will continue regarding how best to characterize such terms as ethnicity, ethnic group, mobilization, nation, and nationalism (1994; 52). Werner Sollors (1978), referring to Andrew M. Greeley, explains the difficulties of the term *ethnicity* in



the United States. Like in other countries, in the United States ethnicity in the wider sense has been referred to any distinction based on nationality, race, religion, or language. As the problem in the American context is that some groups that Americans think of as ‘ethnic’ are constituted by religion (Jews), some by nationality (Poles), some by religion and nationality (Irish Catholics), some by race (blacks) some by language, and some by region, similar confusions are present among the scholars of other countries.

Some scholars have suggested that common race, language, culture, appearance, ancestry, and regional origin are the notions that form an ethnic identity (Kearney 1978; Milton 1985; Sanders 2002; Kastoryano and Schader 2014; Horowitz 1985). A number of scholars have emphasized only the *descent-based* attribute of ethnic groups, arguing that common descent is a necessary belief for ethnic groups (Chandra 2012; Weber 1978). Joane Nagel (1994) has defined ethnicity as a boundary that determines who is a member of an ethnic group and who is not and designates which ethnic categories are available for identification at a particular time and place. Far from other explanations, Fredrick Barth (1969) explains the notion of ethnicity as a mutable concept that comes to existence by a labeling process by oneself and others. According to his definition, ethnic identity is the outcome of dialectical process of what one thinks his/her ethnicity is vs. what others think his/her ethnicity is.

However, Williams.’s explanation of the two different conceptions of “nationalism” is helpful with understanding ethnic identity’s role in a national identity. According to him (1994; 53), the term “nationalism” is used to refer to two quite different conceptions: (i) identification with and loyalty to the state structure, regardless of ethnic composition of the population (such as American, Argentinian, etc.); (ii) identification with and loyalty to an ethnic/religious “nationality” that may or may coincide with a state’s jurisdiction (Scottish, Tamil). Thomas

Barfield has defined ethnic group in Afghanistan in his book *Afghanistan: A Political and Cultural History* as social groups that meet four criteria. First, they are physically replicating. Second, they share fundamental cultural values. Third, ethnic groups in Afghanistan constitute a field of communication and interaction. The last criterion is that “they are defined through self-definition and through definition by others” (2010, 20-21).

To explain how ethnic boundaries change and are flexible for negotiation, Nagel, using Fredrick Barth’s definition, has argued that people’s conceptions of themselves along ethnic lines, especially their ethnic identity, are situational and changeable. “As the individual (or group) moves through daily life, ethnicity can change according to variations in the situations and audiences encountered” (1994; 154). Then he concludes, “ethnic identity is the result of a dialectical process involving internal and external opinions and processes, as well as the individual’s self-identification and outsider’s ethnic designations – what *you* think your ethnicity is, versus what *they* think your ethnicity is” (Nagel 1994; 154). Mary Waters’s research with the 63<sup>rd</sup> and 64<sup>th</sup> generation of white ethnics in California and Pennsylvania, United States backs Nagel’s argument. Mary Waters concluded in her book *Choosing Identities in America* that ethnic identity is reconcilable depending on values of choice, individuality, and community (1990).

To observe reconciliation or negotiation of ethnic identity, McBeth (1989) came up with a new term “*layering*”. McBeth has argued that as audiences of individuals change, the socially defined array of ethnic identity becomes negotiable to individuals. Consequently, this change produces “*layering*”. The layering of ethnic identity includes the ascriptive mode of revealing the negotiated and reconciled ethnic identity. In the book *Asian American Panethnicity: Bridging Institutions and Identities*, Yen Espiritu (1992) studied the concept of “*layering*” among Asian

Americans. The author found that the “Asian” pan-ethnic is one level of identification, however the national origins (Chinese, Korean, Japanese, Vietnamese, etc.) remain as the basis of larger identification. She argued that the larger “Asian” pan-ethnic boundary is considered as an advantage in reaching resources or political power.

Having reviewed the various definitions, I use Thomas Barfield’s definition to refer to ethnic groups in Afghanistan in this research. In Afghanistan, ethnic groups are biologically replicating. One cannot differentiate all the ethnic groups by their appearance. Every ethnic group has its own fundamental cultural values. They do not share the same culture. For example, every ethnic group has at least a few cultural practices that distinguish them from each other. They also have their own field of communication and interaction. Most of the ethnic groups speak their own language. However, there are a number of ethnic groups who share the same language. Yet, despite sharing the same language, they speak the language in different recognizable dialects. For example, both *Tajik* and *Hazara* ethnic groups speak the same Persian language. The difference lies in their different dialects by which one can differentiate them from each other. Finally, they are defined through self-definition and through definition by others. I think the last component of Barfield’s definition is extremely important to take into consideration to define ethnic groups in Afghanistan. This component has also been stressed by Fredrick Barth’s definition, which argues ethnic identity comes to existence through a labeling process by oneself and others. It is the outcome of what one thinks his/her ethnicity is vs. what others think his/her ethnicity is. The last component of Barfield’s definition is what drives member ethnic group to treat “ethnicity” as an identity in Afghanistan. Ethnic groups in Afghanistan are not only well aware of their own ethnic cultural practices, values, and meanings, but they are also conscious of perceptions that they have of each other’s ethnicity. The “self-

definition” and “definition by others” are the two forces that turn the notion of ethnicity into identity, and then draw ethnic boundaries in Afghanistan.

## **4.2 Elements of Ethnic Conflicts**

Another major part of studying “ethnicity” is to discover the factors or elements that create and increase ethnic tensions, and strengthen ethnic boundaries between ethnic groups. In the literature, words such as hostility, consciousness, antagonism, solidarity, competition, rivalry, tensions, and cleavages have been used interchangeably to refer to ethnic boundaries and the actions and reactions of two or more ethnic groups against each other in societies. Among the elements, the “state” plays an important role. States can cause and manage ethnic conflicts (Byman 2002). When lack of central government to enforce order is present, groups rely on their own resources for survival. To Paul Brass (1985), state is not only a tool or arena of an ethnic group, but it also is the greatest reward and resource. The resource for which ethnic groups engage in conflicts and become hostile to each other over the state power has been studied to be useful for mobilization and counter-mobilization (Williams 1994). Control of the state allows an ethnic group to transfer important economic assets to the members of their community (Esman 1994). However, it’s important to understand the differences between competitions over resources. According Williams, there are peaceful individual competition and regularized collective opposition (in form of competition). The two are distinguished in the way that first former is based on rule-constrained individualized striving for scarce values, and the latter is defined based on collective actions aimed at displacing, neutralizing, injuring, or destroying the opponents (1994; 54).

Though rivalry for the control of state does not always lead to ethnic antagonism even if ethnic-politics is present in a society, because the consequences of ethnic politics depend on the

interplay of conflict-fostering conditions and conflict-reducing processes and institutions (Horowitz 1989). For example, ethnic rivalries in Nigeria have been as intense as in Sudan. Despite the same intensity of ethnic tensions in both countries, Sudan has experienced its second civil war while Nigeria has been successful in preventing any other civil war since its first one between 1967 and 1970. The difference lies in conditions of conflict-management institutions in both states. Victor T. Le Vine's (1997) model describes the stages through which ethnic conflicts take place – *the incipient stage*, *open stage*, and *out of control stage*. In this model, he explains that conflict is manageable in the first stage; it intensifies in the second stage however it could be still managed; and conflict takes place in the third stage and is hard to manage.

Other factors associated to ethnic tensions that are not limited to the state's role have been studied too. Retrieval of cultural heritage by the Sinhalese dominant ethnic group, and removal of the Sinhalese political domination by Tamils in Sri Lanka have been observed to be the two mechanisms behind the ethnic tensions and conflicts in Sri Lanka (Kearney 1978). Even though ethnic consciousness eternally appears to be everywhere, it is only realized when ethnic groups feel either threatened with a loss of previously acquired privilege or conversely feel that it is an opportune moment that politically to overcome long-standing denial or privilege (Wallerstein 1979). Modernity and the desire to be assessed along the dimensions of modernity in society also motivate individuals to engage in ethnic conflicts. The ones advantaged by modernity are recognized and feared by others and this leads to appearance of ethnic competition in societies such as in Calabar and Nigeria. David A. Lake and Donald Rothchild (1996) argue that it is the collective fears (physical insecurity) for the future that cause intense ethnic conflict. Ethnic fear concerns people more about loss than to pursue (Kaufman 1998). Although Ronald Grigory Suny (2004) acknowledges the role of fear, anger, hatred, and resentment, he – by

summarizing these elements in the concept of *emotions* – argues that emotions motivate ethnic hostilities because behind any human action – such as deciding to engage in ethnic competition – emotional motives lie. Where resources are scarce and where there is prior risk of ethnic violence, education, too, can be a potential contributor to ethnic hostilities and violence (Lange 2011).

While some invalid assumptions are made that multiplicity of ethnic groups can cause ethnic conflict, Carol Riphenburg has argued that the multiplicity of ethnic groups does not alone make for violence and conflict (2005). Rather, countries containing a single large ethnic group or two evenly matched groups have been found to be more prone to conflict than those containing a larger number of equally sized ethnic groups (Posner 2003). In contrast to considering only the size of one or more ethnic groups in a country, Carol Riphenburg has studied the population size of a country with other variables and their effects on ethnic war (2005). By placing Pashtuns' political dominance in the center of her observations of ethnic relations in Afghanistan, Riphenburg argues that Afghanistan ranks high on all of the indicators that predispose a country to insurgency. These indicators include poverty, political instability, rugged terrain, and a large population. According to her research, if these indicators are present in a society, the country is more prone to civil war than ever.

### **4.3 Theories**

A variety of theories have been used to examine and draw pictures of ethnic relations in social sciences. Among the theories, competition theory is very-well known among the scholars who have studied the relationship between competition for economic success and ethnic antagonism in order to understand how ethnic boundaries function and are formed (Olzak 1994). Additionally, rational choice theory portrays ethnicity as a rational choice. Scholars have used

rational choice theory to argue that creation of ethnic boundaries or expression of ethnic identity could be utilized as a strategy to reach political and economic ends by individuals and groups (Hechter 1988). Kanchan Chandra (2007) has used rational choice theory to show that political parties rationally organize themselves along the ethnic borders as voters use ethnicity as a tool to support candidates too. Similarly, Russel Hardin (1997) applies rational choice theory to study establishment of ethnic groups and that creation of exclusionary norms can lead groups toward violence. Sociologists – to explain ethnic-based social organizations – have used the concept of social capital and collective actions rooted in interpersonal networks, and have examined how such actions and organizations can generate and distribute resources along ethnic lines (Sanders 2002). Alejandro Portes and Julia Sensenbrenner (1993) –taking the rational choice approach – have introduced two mechanisms of social capital, *bounded solidarity* and *enforceable trust*.

Robert Bates's (1974) framework based on the rational choice theory has been widely influential in the social sciences. This theory stresses the rational basis for ethnic competition and views that ethnic groups – formed by rational efforts – represent coalitions to ensure themselves advantages created by forces of modernizations that are desired in society but are scarce. Benn Eifert, Edward Miguel, and Danial N. Posner (2010) have used Bates's theory to study 35,000 respondents in 22 public opinion surveys in 10 countries. The researchers have found strong evidence that ethnic identities in Africa are strengthened by exposure to political competition, and ethnic identity matters and is useful in the competition for political power. Game theorists have put efforts to use game theory to identify mechanisms of ethnic conflicts too. Among the mechanisms, *credible commitment* has been considered a major mechanism. James Fearon (1994) – using game theory – has argued that commitment problems can result in ethnic conflict in states where one dominant ethnic group has control of the state and at least one

powerful minority ethnic group is present in the society too. This commitment problem either has lurked or caused inter-ethnic violence in countries such the former Yugoslavia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine, Estonia, Zimbabwe, South Africa, and Northern Ireland.

As reviewed, three major theories have informed the works of scholars cited above. Competition theory, game theory, and rational choice theory have been widely used to study ethnic identity and ethnic boundaries and their effects on ethnic hostilities and violence. Among these theories, rational choice theory is consistent with the findings of my research.

Ethnic competition theory is mostly concerned with immigration's effect on ethnic competition. For example, one of the major focuses of Susan Olzak's work *The Dynamics of Ethnic Competition and Conflict* is to study the effects of immigration and other factors of economic competition on ethnic competitions. Similarly, game theory has been used to examine how political parties, states, and ethnic groups calculate the incentives, costs, and outcomes to strategize and decide whether to engage in ethnic wars or not. For example, James Fearon has studied the violent consequence of commitment problem when there is no third party to initiate an agreement between ethnic majorities and ethnic minorities. By applying game theory, Fearon has argued that when ethnic minorities, such as Serbs in Croatia, Armenians in Azerbaijan, and Ossetians in Georgia, anticipate that there is no guarantee that ethnic majority leaders protect their rights, they see fighting as the best way to resist the weak and barely formed state led by the majority regardless of what the majority agrees to. However, according to the theory, both parties will be worse off if they engage in ethnic war. Since neither immigration nor violence is concerned in my research, the ethnic competition theory and game theory frameworks are not suitable theories to explain my observations. In contrast, rational choice theory is mostly concerned with human actions and behavior as determinants of human decisions; and the theory



well suits this research's findings and analysis. Particularly, Robert Bates's theoretical framework developed based on the rational choice theory in *Ethnic Competition and Modernization in Contemporary Africa* will best explain the observations of this research. I will use his theoretical framework to explain my findings. The theoretical framework is discussed in detail in the Analysis section.

## **5. Research Methodology**

Since this research is to investigate how the participants construct *their* ethnic identity to distinguish themselves from each other (Pashtuns vs. non-Pashtuns), a qualitative approach added considerable strength to the study. I stratified the participants into two strata of *Pashtun Afghan Fulbright Scholars* and *non-Pashtun Afghan Fulbright Scholars*. I have created the two categories in an effort to compare the elements over which they build their *Pashtun* and *non-Pashtun* ethnic identities, and the roots of ethnic problems in Afghanistan.

### **5.1 Research Question**

*Is "non-Pashtun" only an ethnic identity or also an ethnic boundary? How is it constructed?*

The question aims to investigate why scholars from different ethnic groups other than Pashtuns would identify themselves as *non-Pashtun* besides their individual ethnic identity, and how this identity functions as a boundary. In other words, why non-Pashtuns negotiate their individual ethnic identity and rather identify themselves as one ethnic group (non-Pashtuns) in discussion of the political access and dominance of Pashtuns.

### **5.2 Data Collection**

There are over 450 Fulbright scholars from Afghanistan who have completed or are completing their education in the master's and PhD levels in the United States. Although

Fulbright also offers non-degree programs to Afghans, this research’s target population is only those Fulbright scholars who pursued or currently pursue master’s or PhD graduate degrees.

A survey questionnaire, attached in appendix A, was sent to over 450 participants. The Institute of International Education (IIE), which administers the Fulbright scholarship program for Afghan students in the United States, has the email directory of all Fulbright scholars (current students and alumni). Therefore, inviting the participants to participate in the online survey via email was the only and the best means of contacting the participants.

The survey questionnaire served two purposes. First, I was able to collect information on ethnic identity of every Fulbright scholar who filled out the questionnaire. Second, it provided me with a frame based on which I drew the sample. Among all the Afghan Fulbright scholars, 36 individuals completed and submitted the survey questionnaire.

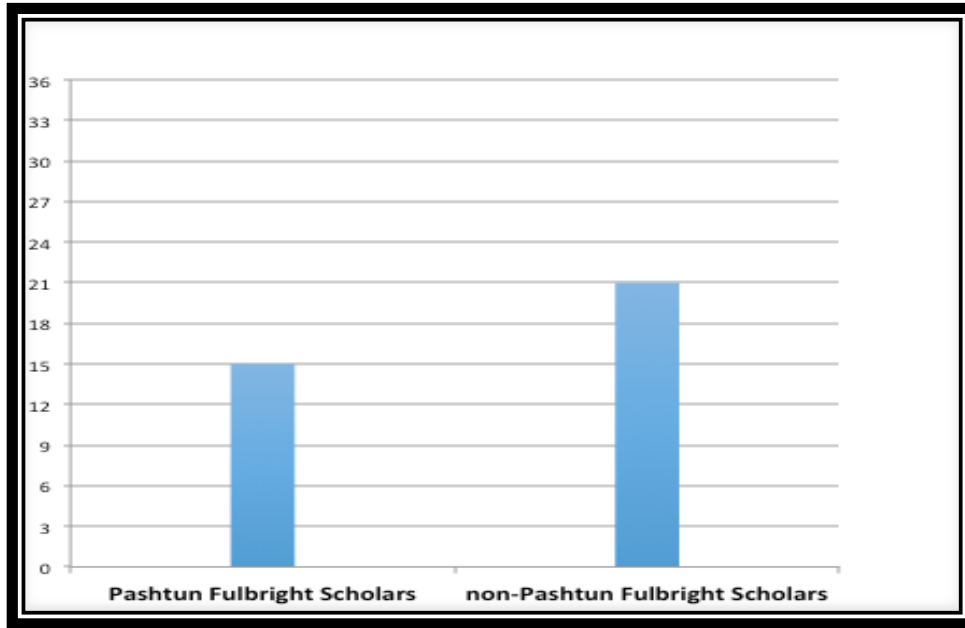
Ethnic information: To identify whether a participant belonged to the cluster of *Pashtun Fulbright Scholars* or *non-Pashtun Fulbright Scholars*, they were asked to provide their ethnic information. 15 participants identified themselves as Pashtuns, 1 as Hazara, 17 as Tajiks, and 3 as members of other ethnic groups. See the below table.

**Table 2:**

Ethnicity	Freq.	Percent	Cum.
Hazara	1	2.78	2.78
Other	3	8.33	11.11
Pashtun	15	41.67	52.78
Tajik	17	47.22	100.00
Total	36	100.00	

Pashtun vs. non-Pashtun: Since the study required that the participants be stratified into two ethnic subgroups, I labeled those identified as ‘Hazara’, ‘Tajik’, and ‘others’ as ‘non-Pashtuns’. Pashtuns made 42% of the total number of respondents (15 units), and non-Pashtuns made 58% (21 units).

**Table 3:**



Sex: The other two variables I considered in sampling were ‘sex’ and ‘wealth’. Although I did not study their effects in the analysis, I ensured that the sample included both male and female participants with respect to their wealth status. List of the participants consisted of 5 female (14%) and 31 (86%) male Afghan Fulbright scholars. Among the 5 female participants, one participant was Pashtun and four were non-Pashtuns. Among the 31 male participants, 14 participants were Pashtun and 17 were non-Pashtun.

**Table 4:**

Ethnicity	Sex		Total
	F	M	
Pashtun	1	14	15
non-Pashtun	4	17	21
Total	5	31	36

Wealth: Instead of the traditional ‘socioeconomic status’ variable, I created a new variable *wealth*. The reason I decided to create the ‘wealth’ variable was that the classic concept of ‘class’ or ‘socioeconomic status’ has not grown yet in Afghan society, and there is no class marker based on which I could determine a participant’s ‘socioeconomic status’ or ‘wealth’. Afghanistan has a newly established capitalistic economic system that ages only a decade and a half. Also, a focus group with four Afghan Fulbright scholars (three male; one female) was conducted to test the survey questionnaire as well as the qualitative interview questions. I created the concept of ‘wealth’ to measure their ‘socioeconomic status’. Each participant was asked if they had one of the four types of servants hired in their household. The servants included (1) a security person, (2) a cleaning person, (3) a driver, and (4) a cook. I gave the respondents ‘wealth scores’ based on the number of type of servants hired in their household. For example, if a respondent answered they had one type of servant hired e.g. a cleaner, I gave him/her ‘1 wealth score’; if two, I gave him/her ‘2 wealth score’; and similarly if none, I gave him/her ‘0 wealth score’. Based on that, I assigned the participants to 5 categories of wealth scores: ‘0 wealth’, ‘1 wealth’, ‘2 wealth’, ‘3 wealth’, and ‘4 wealth’.

**Table 5:**

Ethnicity	Wealth				Total
	0	1	2	3	
Pashtun	11	2	1	1	15
non-Pashtun	13	6	2	0	21
Total	24	8	3	1	36

As shown in the above table, the majority of participants received ‘0 wealth score’ – 11 Pashtuns and 13 non-Pashtuns. 8 participants received ‘1 wealth score’ – 2 Pashtuns and 6 non-Pashtuns. 3 participants fell under the category of ‘2 wealth scores’, and only 1 participant responded that s/he had three types of servants hired in their household. No respondent had all four types of servants hired in their household; therefore, the above table does not include the fifth wealth category, meaning the ‘4 wealth score’. The table shows that the majority of participants (66%) with the score of 0 are the least wealthy. Four participants are the wealthiest with the scores of 2 and 3, although they make very small percentage (11%). 8 participants (22%) received a score of 1, which makes the second largest portion.

The below table describes the Pashtun and non-Pashtun participants by their gender and wealth. However, the participants with 2 or more wealth scores have been dropped from this list because they were only 4 units (11%) of the total cases. In other words, 4 cases (two Pashtuns with 2 wealth scores, one Pashtun with 3 wealth scores, and two non-Pashtuns with 2 wealth scores) were considered outliers and, therefore, were dropped from the list of participants to avoid their inclusion in the sample. Only the participants with 0 and 1 wealth scores who make 89% remained in the list.

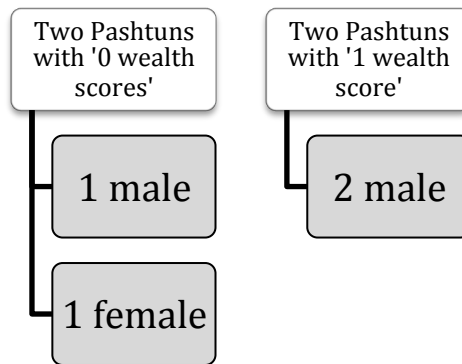
**Table 6:**

Participants by Ethnicity, Gender, & Wealth	Ethnicity		Gender				Wealth			
	#	%	Male	%	Female	%	0 score	%	1 score	%
Pashtun	15	41.7	14	38.9	1	2.8	11	30.6	2	5.6
Non-Pashtun	21	58.3	17	47.2	4	11.1	13	36.1	6	16.7
Total	36	100.0	31	86.1	5	13.9	24	66.7	8	22.2

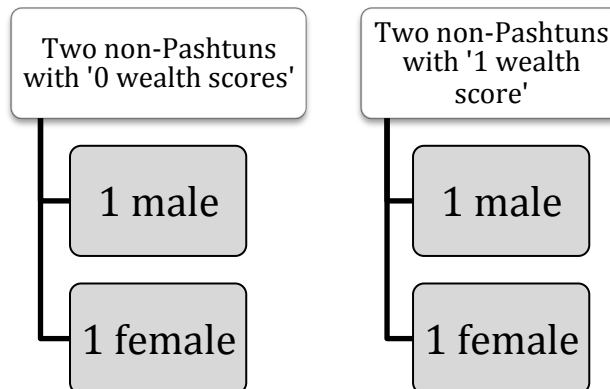
I drew a sample for the qualitative observations from the above list by applying simple random sampling strategy to ensure that all the units had equal chances of selection. The sample includes 8 participants as shown below:

**Table 7:**

Pashtun Participants:



Non-Pashtun Participants:



Each of the two strata of Pashtuns and non-Pashtuns included participants of both genders (male and female) and wealth scores (0 and 1). I conducted structured interviews with each sampled participant over Skype or phone. The interviews were conducted in three languages – Pashtu, Persian, and English. At the beginning of the interview, I informed the participant that s/he had freedom to choose the language of the interview s/he found convenient. Each interview lasted between 20 to 30 minutes, however I did not restrict participants' responses for the sake of time. The interview questions, attached in the appendix with description of strategies and questions, were pre-tested. Both the survey questionnaire and interview questions were reviewed by my supervising professors and the Center for Social Research at Lehigh University, and they were also pretested by four Fulbright scholars (3 male, one female). I created the survey questionnaire by using the software called 'Qualtrics'. I analyzed the survey data for the purpose of sampling and producing description of the participants by using the statistical software 'Stata'. The survey data were saved in my personal Qualtrics online account, and the qualitative interview data were audio recorded.

### **5.3 Interviewing**

I conducted all the interviews in a structured style, meaning that the interviews were conducted at specific scheduled times and the questions and the strategy to ask the questions were prepared before the interviews. All the questions were open-ended, and the interviews lasted for between 20 and 30 minutes.

I started the interviews with broad questions. The first two questions were broad because I did not want my interviewees to understand the central topic of interview. I narrowed the questions step by step. Since the topic of ethnic relations is sometimes too sensitive for Afghans, I emphasized to the interviewees that they had freedom to say whatever they wished. I also

insisted that I had no interest in hearing any specific answers, and no answer would upset me. I also ensured that the participants speak in the language (Pashtu, Persian, or English) they were comfortable with the most. The following table includes the questions and instructions I followed during the interviews to ensure that the data I collected from every participant provided me with valid answers to the questions of this research.

**Table 8:**

<b>1. Elements of unity</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are those elements that keep all Afghans united?</li> </ul>
<b>2. Elements of disunity</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are those elements that do not let all Afghans be united?</li> </ul>
<b>3. Ethnic related elements</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• You said that the X and Y elements prevent Afghans from being united. Why are these elements present in the Afghan society?</li> </ul>
<b>4. Elements and examples of conflicts between Pashtuns and non-Pashtun ethnic group/s</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do these elements exist among youth?</li> <li>• Next question: speaking of the youth reminded me of an incident. Pashtun and non-Pashtun students of Kabul University have engaged in bloody fights against each other over the name of the university. Pashtuns have insisted that the name on the board has to remain only in Pashtu Language as it is, but students of other ethnicities have tried to put a new board including Persian translation of the text. My question is why is language, or just a name so important to both Pashtun and non-Pashtun students? And why does this conflict happen between Pashtun and non-Pashtun students?</li> <li>• Next question: such conflicts between Pashtuns and non-Pashtuns do not happen only among youth. For example, there was a dispute during the Loya Jirga convention in 2004 about the language of national anthem. Some Pashtun members insisted that the national language be sung in Pashtu, while others insisted that it must remain in Persian Language. Finally, the Pashtuns won the bargain and now our national anthem is Pashtu Language. What's your opinion on that?</li> </ul>
<b>5. In depth discussion on Pashtun vs. non-Pashtun conflicts</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Why these non-Pashtuns think it's so important for them to fight and debate over things against Pashtuns? Or, why do these Pashtuns think it's so important for them to fight back?</li> </ul>
<b>6. Roots of problems</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are the roots of such ethnic problems?</li> </ul>
<b>7. Political dominance of Pashtuns</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If the answer is not on the political dominance of Pashtuns: some Afghans refer to our history to express their anger. For example, some refer to the name of the country <i>Afghanistan</i> to associate the problems with Pashtuns. Why making reference to just a name is so important to them? Why do they even refer to the history? Are the roots of problems in our history?</li> </ul>
<b>8. Discussion on the political dominance of Pashtuns</b>



- How is their political dominance related to the present ethnic relations?

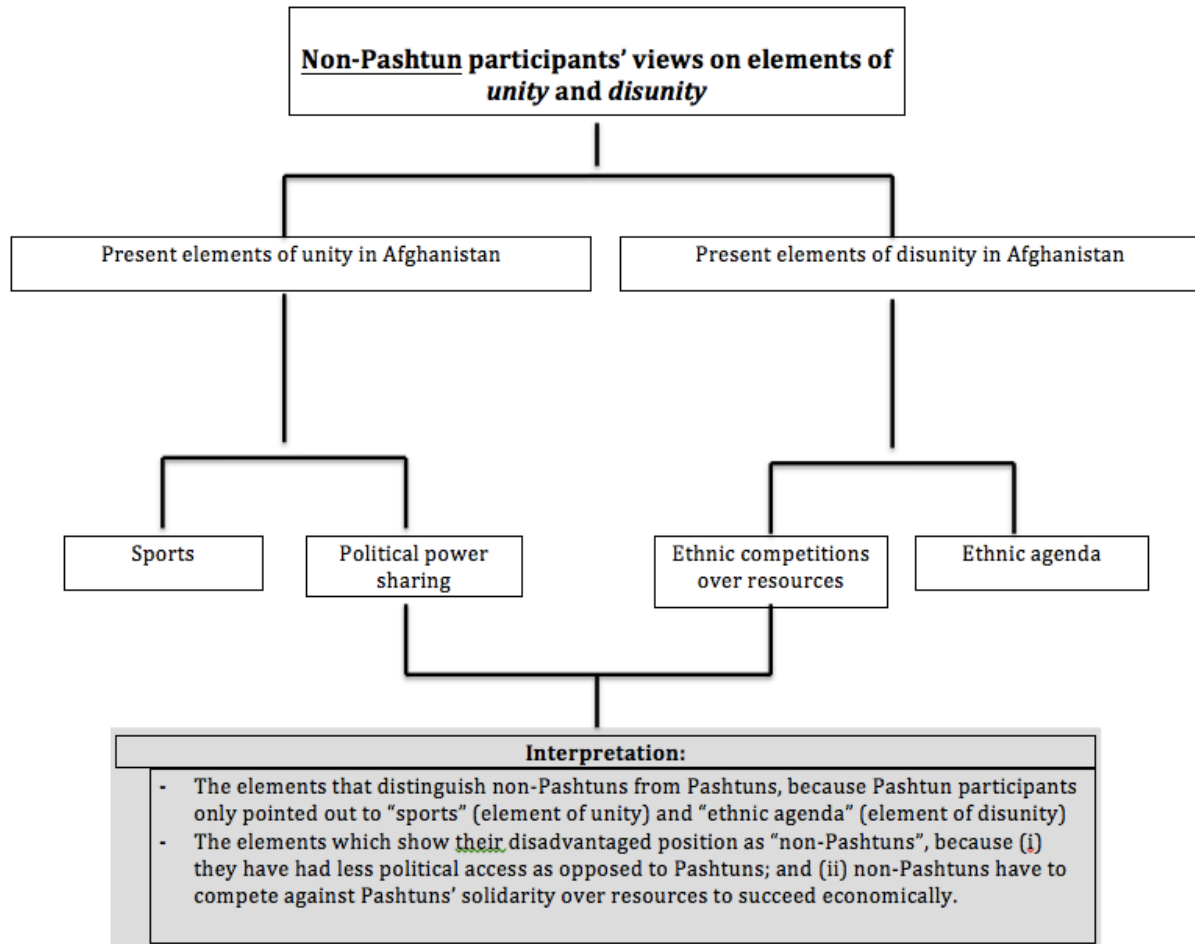
#### **5.4 Data Analysis Methodology**

The major questions of the interviews were on two topics: (1) elements of unity and disunity, and (2) roots of ethnic problems. I created four tables to be able to observe opinions of Pashtun and non-Pashtun Fulbright scholars on both topics comparatively.

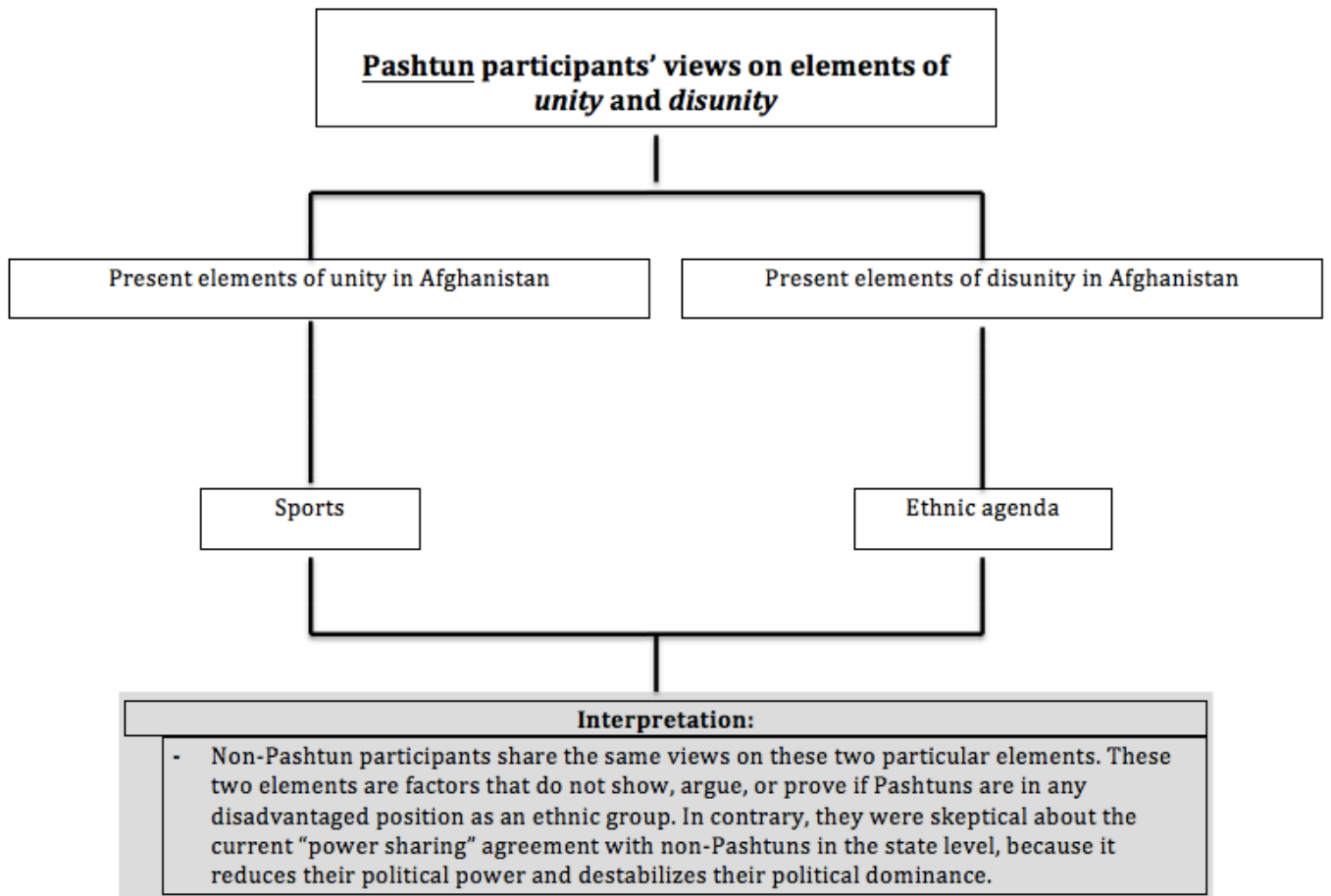
The first table included opinions of non-Pashtun participants on elements of unity and disunity. I created two different categories for their opinions – one for the elements of unity, and one for the elements of disunity. Although they pointed out to various elements some of which were related to the discussion of ethnicity in Afghanistan and some of which were not related, I picked the four major ethnic-related elements that were emphasized the most.

I created the same table for the opinions of Pashtun Fulbright scholars. Similar to the first table, I divided their opinions into two categories of *elements of unity* and *elements of disunity* as well. After the list of responses for both groups of respondents was prepared and their responses were listed under their categories accordingly, I found similarities as well as dissimilarities in their opinions. They shared the same opinions on two elements that both groups had mentioned; however, the *non-Pashtun* respondents had emphasized two different elements based on which I drew my conclusions on construction of their *non-Pashtun* identity.

**Table 9:**



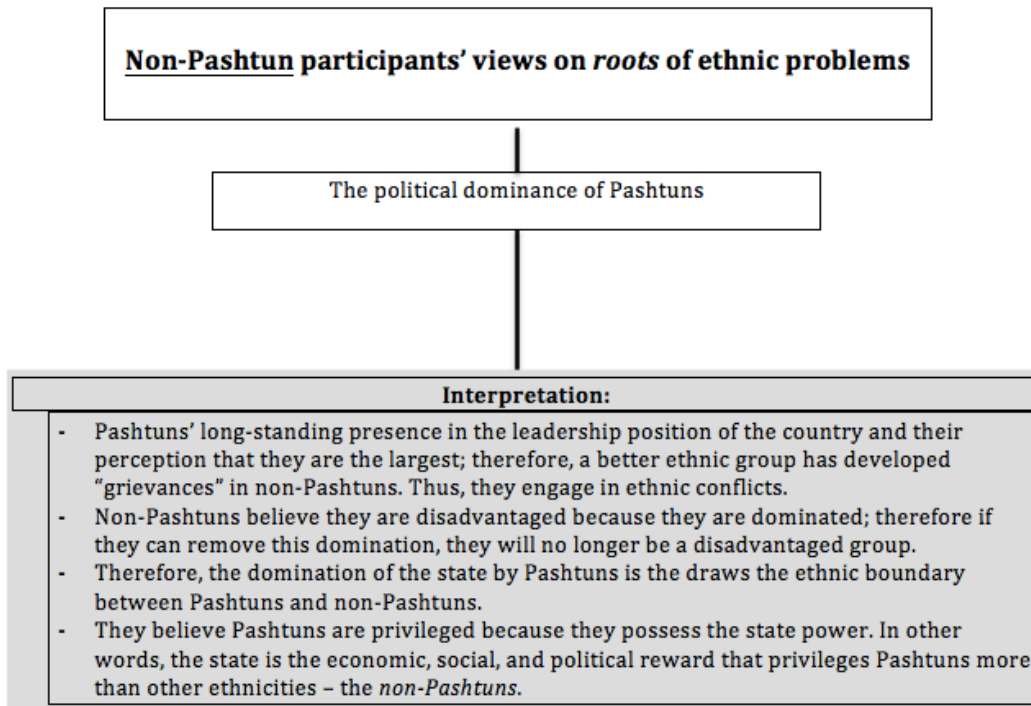
**Table 10:**



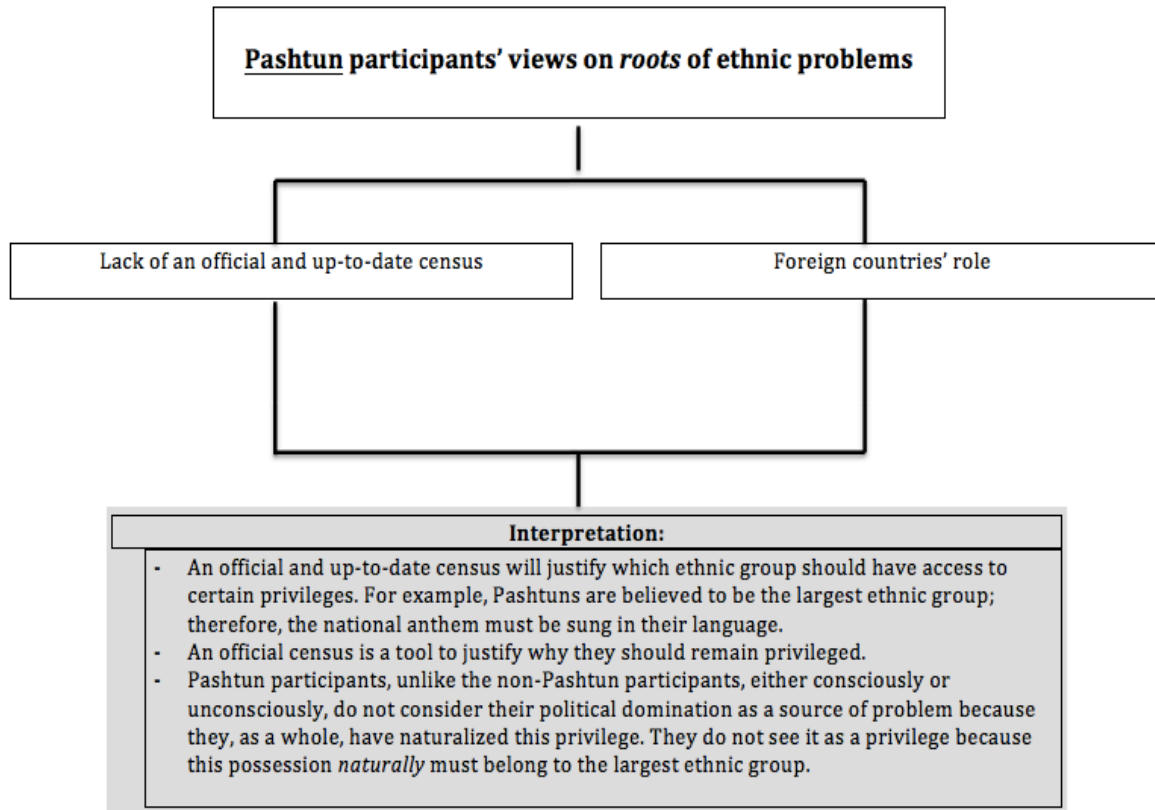
Next, I created two more tables – one for responses of non-Pashtun Fulbright scholars and one for those of Pashtun Fulbright scholars on the *roots of ethnic problems*. Among the responses, non-Pashtun participants had strongly emphasized only one source of ethnic problems, *political dominance of Pashtuns*. Pashtun Fulbright scholars, in contrast, argued that lack of official and up-to-date census data to determine what ethnicity is the largest [to have to certain privileges], and foreign countries’ roles in the political and social affairs of Afghanistan are the two major sources of problems, and they did not discuss any word on the dominance of Pashtuns in the state. Based on their emphasis on these elements, I drew my conclusions on the

role of these issues in the ethnic borderline between Pashtuns and non-Pashtuns, and on the importance of *state* as a reward for both ethnic categories.

**Table 11:**



**Table 12:**



The above four tables display the method I used to analyze the data and draw conclusions in response to the research question. The ‘findings’ section consists of in-depth discussion on the responses of the participants on both topics of *elements of unity and disunity* as well as *roots of ethnic problems*.

## **5.5 Weaknesses and Limitations of the Research**

Although I acknowledge that there are many flaws in my research methodology, I am going to underline a few of the major weaknesses and limitations that might have affected the results I present.

The number of respondents based on which I drew a random sample for this research was very small. Given the population of Afghan Fulbright scholars (over 450) who have completed

or are completing a master's or PhD degree in the United States, very few Fulbright scholars participated in the online self-administered survey. Therefore, by no means do I claim that the sample for this research is absolutely representative of the entire of population.

The topic of this research might have prevented the participants from expressing their complete and honest opinions. Since ethnicity is an extremely politicized concept in Afghanistan due to which millions of Afghans lost their lives during the civil war, even discussing this topic could be associated with fear, let alone expressing fully honest opinions. Since childhood, my parents have always insisted to me as well as my siblings to avoid ethnic related discussions with anyone outside the house. Ethnic identity is so important to Afghans that one could be easily offended by a single opinion on his/her ethnicity. That is why it was not only a challenge for me to ensure the interviewees felt absolutely free and comfortable to provide me with their honest responses, but I also felt that my own ethnic identity might have had influence on their responses. I avoided telling the interviewees about my parents' ethnic identities. However, I realized that it was not a secret to my interviewees that I came from an ethnic-Pashtun father and an ethnic-Tajik mother. After I had stopped the recording after an interview, one of the non-Pashtun participants apologized to me for speaking frankly about Pashtuns and their political dominance although I did not feel offended at all. She said that she liked to be frank and honest about her opinions; however, the fact that she apologized to me implies that she was conscious of my ethnic identity throughout the entire interview and that – I believe – might have affected the results.

Furthermore, two out of three female participants answered the interview questions in English, as opposed to only one out of five male participants. Afghanistan is a very male-dominated society. There are many privileges in being 'male' as opposed to female due to the

oppressive and conservative norms regulating the lives of women. There is a huge gap between the rate of female education and male education. Men by far have better access to education than women, and that gives them access to many other privileges in society. Although I insisted to all the eight participants to speak in any language they were comfortable with, the majority of female respondents, as opposed to male participants, responded in English. English Language is a marker of one's intelligence and status in Afghan society. The more fluent and confident an Afghan is in English, the more he or she can claim status in society. I feel that the dominance I can practice automatically for being male might have led the female participants to speak in English Language. They might have been more confident to present better and more fluent answers in one of the local languages.

## **6. Research Findings**

I have divided the findings of this research into two categories. The first category includes the elements that contribute to the unity and disunity of Afghans. Although the participants pointed out to many elements, only the elements that are concerned with the notion of ethnicity were selected and introduced here. The second category discusses the roots of ethnic problems. The discussion of the findings in the next section will provide us the answer for our research questions.

### **6.1 Elements of Unity and Disunity in Afghanistan**

I found the Fulbright scholars very much interested in discussing what unites and disunities people in Afghanistan. The first question I asked in the interviews was “*what are the elements that unite or keep all Afghans together?*” The second question was “*what are the elements that do not allow Afghans to be united?*” Although both questions are almost the same,

I asked both questions to observe whether their responses (the positive elements for the unity of Afghans and the negative elements that lead to disunity) were related to the topic of “ethnic relations and ethnic identity” or not.

As I expected, all the eight participants brought up the topic of ethnic relations and ethnic identity voluntarily. Most of them pointed out to ethnic related elements immediately in response to my questions. “Ethnicity” established the central point of participants’ responses. They put very much emphasis on ethnic relations in Afghanistan. As I expected and planned, all the participants mentioned the word “ethnicity” before I made any attempt to direct their attention to this topic.

Among the many elements mentioned by the participations, I found four major ones. Pashtun and non-Pashtun Fulbrighters shared the same views on two of the elements; however, non-Pashtun participants emphasized the importance of two additional elements that Pashtun participants seemed to be skeptical about. I have underlined the elements on which both Pashtun and non-Pashtun scholars shared agreement. The non-underlined elements are only the opinions of non-Pashtun scholars.

**Table 13:**

<b>Pashtun Fulbright Participants’ Opinions</b>	
Elements of National Unity	• <i>Sports</i>
Elements of Disunity	• <i>Ethnic agenda</i>

<b>Non-Pashtun Fulbright Participants’ Opinions</b>	
Elements of National Unity	• <i>Sports</i> • <i>Power sharing</i>
Elements of Disunity	• <i>Ethnic agenda</i> • <i>Ethnic competition</i>



## 6.2 Ethnic Agenda and Sports: Shared Views of Pashtun and non-Pashtun Fulbright scholars

As the tables illustrate, both Pashtun and non-Pashtun Fulbright scholars shared the same view on one element of unity (ethnic agenda) and on one element of disunity (sports).

Pashtun and non-Pashtun participants agreed that sports in Afghanistan have largely contributed to the unity of Afghans. By sports, the participants meant the Afghan national teams that have represented Afghanistan internationally. One of the Pashtun participants stated *“sports can play a major role in uniting Afghans, because Afghans do not care about ethnicity when they support the Afghan national teams.”* According to a non-Pashtun scholar, *“Sports in Afghanistan have brought all Afghans of every ethnicity together to cheer for our national teams.”*

The very first element that the majority of both Pashtun and non-Pashtun participants pointed out to was “sports”. Afghanistan has made significant progress in sports since the fall of the Taliban regime. Its taekwondo athletes are the winners of medals in the Olympic games; its cricket team has represented Afghanistan in the Cricket World Cup games a few times; and its soccer team secured the title of ‘South Asian Champions’ in 2014. As ethnic relations seem to be a complicated issue in the Afghan society, sports have reduced the ethnic antagonisms to some extent. In contrast to ethnicity, sports have not been politicized in Afghanistan. As stated by the participants, sports do not represent any ethnic identity and ethnic groups do not seek any advantages through sports to strengthen their ethnic solidarities.

Every time that sport was said to be a great element of unity among Afghans, the participants would explain the reason behind it. Unlike in other countries where nationalism is well established among its masses and where sports promote a pre-established national identity,

in Afghanistan the concept of ‘national identity’ is absent. Importance of sports in Afghanistan lies in the fact that it dissolves ethnic solidarities and brings Afghans of all ethnic groups to cheer for their national teams temporarily – only for the period of time the national sports team represents the country.

While Pashtun and non-Pashtun participants’ reasons in regards to the importance of sports demonstrate how greatly ethnic hostilities challenge the concept of nationalism in Afghanistan, they still felt obliged to point out to the dilemma of ethnic relations in response to the question “*what are the elements that do not keep Afghans united?*” to emphasize on its role in reinforcing borders across the ethnic lines.

To invite the interviewees to dig deeper into the discussion of ethnic relations, I would ask them for their opinions on the ‘elements of unity’ as well as ‘elements of disunity’. As discussed above, the term ‘sports’ was the central theme of discussion of both Pashtun and non-Pashtun participants as an element of unity. In discussion of the ‘elements of disunity’, the participants of both ethnic categories emphasized on what I have coded as “ethnic agenda.” By “ethnic agenda” the participants stressed on how important ethnic identity is to Afghans, which determines their social relations and personal behaviors in society. Both Pashtun and non-Pashtun shared the same views on this issue. A non-Pashtun Fulbright scholar pointed to the phenomenon in her words, as “*being conscious of their ethnicity is a big problem among Afghans.*”

When I asked the scholars what they meant by ‘ethnic conscience’ for the sake of clarity, they said that Afghans on a daily basis show extreme eagerness to find out the ethnic identity of their fellows around them. It is not only that they are interested in knowing the ethnic identity of

the second and third persons; it is because their interest comes from their ethnic conciseness. They are always aware of their own ethnic identity; therefore, they believe they must be aware of the ethnic identity of the people they encounter too. A Pashtun scholar underlined the phenomenon stating that “*everyone has ethnic-oriented objectives for himself or herself.*” Another non-Pashtun scholar also argued “*Afghans should accept each other as brothers and sisters regardless of their ethnicities. We care too much about ethnicities.*”

### **6.3 Ethnic Competition and Power Sharing: Views of non-Pashtun Fulbright Scholars**

The research findings on elements of unity and disunity included two more major themes that were emphasized only by non-Pashtun participants. I coded the first element as ‘*ethnic competitions*’ and the second element as ‘*power sharing*’.

The element ‘*ethnic competition*’ over resources and jobs in particular was discussed as an indicator of disunity among ethnic groups in Afghanistan. All non-Pashtun scholars stated that competitions over resources –jobs in particular– have largely accelerated ethnic hostilities and discrimination among ethnic groups. Although competition does not always carry a negative meaning, the non-Pashtun participants meant to suggest the biased and discriminatory aspect of the ethnic competitions as an element of disunity. A non-Pashtun scholar stated, “*There are a lot of ethnic competitions. If a Pashtun is in a leadership position in an organization, everyone he hires is Pashtuns. Same applies to people of other ethnic groups.*” Another non-Pashtun scholar said, “*Transparency in the employment system should be reinforced, because Afghans seek to hire people from their ethnic group.*”

The other element non-Pashtun scholars discussed, as an element of unity was “*power sharing*.” As I explained regarding the current state of Afghanistan in the “Background Information and Overview” section earlier, the Afghan 2014 presidential elections dilemma ended with the agreement of both candidates to share the state power. The President (Pashtun) shares 50% of the state power with the Chief Executive Officer who identifies himself as Tajik (non-Pashtun). While this agreement was not in favor of the Pashtun president and his Pashtun-majority supporters, non-Pashtun participants believe that this agreement will reduce the ethnic hostilities in Afghanistan. One of the non-Pashtun participants said:

*“Power sharing should be considered an element of unity. Although our leaders are sharing power just because they won votes from their ethnic populations which is bad, but I still am in favor of this because at least this has led to removal of ethnic tensions between the leaders and their supporters.”*

#### **6.4 Roots of Ethnic Problems in Afghanistan**

Afghanistan’s history has had very much influence on the current ethnic relations and behaviors of Afghans. ‘History’ is a central topic of discussion among Afghans in daily basis. If discussions are on ethnic relations and conflicts, they refer to the history of Afghanistan to prove their arguments. The political dominance of Pashtuns is a major historical fact, and I found it necessary to draw the attention of the participants to historical discussions and any other historical fact that is central to the discussion of the ethnic division between Pashtuns and non-Pashtuns. Throughout all the interviews I avoided asking the participants explicit questions about the Pashtun political dominance and the ethnic division between Pashtuns and non-Pashtuns. I instead asked other questions to persuade them to bring up the topic of ethnic tensions and Pashtuns’ political dominance voluntarily without feeling pressured by the interviewer. With that in mind, I first, as discussed above, related my questions to the discussion of elements of unity and disunity in Afghanistan. After they would immediately point out to ethnic problems, as my

interviewing plan projected, I would encourage and give them enough time to talk about the topic in depth. After I noted that the discussion was narrowed to ‘ethnic issues’, I asked them about the roots of ethnic problems in Afghanistan. As I had planned and practiced with other Afghan Fulbright scholars, the question immediately would direct their attention to the history of Afghanistan, Pashtuns’ political dominance, and non-Pashtuns’ access to political power. These topics created a great environment to lead the interviewees to express their ideas and observations of the characteristics and roots of the ethnic wall between Pashtuns and non-Pashtuns.

In discussion of the roots of ethnic problems between Pashtuns and non-Pashtuns, my findings include four major roots that define the origins of ethnic issues based on the views of Pashtun and non-Pashtun participants. Both Pashtun and non-Pashtun participants insisted on two issues each.

**Table 14:**

<b>Roots of Ethnic Problems in Afghanistan</b>	
Non-Pashtun Fulbright Scholars	- Pashtuns’ political dominance
Pashtun Fulbright Scholars	- Lack of an official and up-to-date census - Foreign Countries’ Role

### **6.5 Roots of Ethnic Problems According to Non-Pashtun Fulbright Scholars**

Three out of four non-Pashtun Fulbrighters asserted that the political dominance of Pashtuns has resulted in a lot of tensions in Afghanistan. By political dominance they meant how Pashtuns have not allowed non-Pashtuns to rule the country by claiming leadership for the past two and a half centuries – from 1747 to the present. One non-Pashtun Fulbright scholar explained the dominance this way:

*“Root of the ethnic problems lies in the dominance of one ethnicity (Pashtuns) who have occupied the leadership positions just because they claim that they are the majority. People of other ethnic groups have developed grievances to claim that Pashtuns are not better than people of other ethnic groups to remain politically dominant.”*

Another non-Pashtun scholar said:

*“The dominance of one particular ethnic group (Pashtuns) roots in the history of Afghanistan. They have built power over centuries, and their social relations are based on power. In order to keep their power solely in the hands of themselves, they have undermined the rights of others.”*

When I asked the participant to provide me with an example of how they have undermined the rights of others as she asserted, the participant pointed out to the Durand line issue. She said that they (Pashtuns) sold some parts of Afghanistan to Pakistan, which created a new borderline between the two countries. This borderline is known as the *Durand line*, and this is why Afghanistan has had continuous political problems with Pakistan.

She also added, *“Now they (Pashtuns) at the state level believe their portion of power is undermined by people of other ethnic groups, and this adds to discrimination and separation of ethnic groups.”*

Another non-Pashtun participant said, *“Other ethnicities have developed grievances to claim that Pashtuns are not better than people of other ethnic groups to deserve being politically dominant.”*

The next non-Pashtun participant referred to ranking of ethnic groups that is present among ethnic groups in society, and Pashtuns in this ranking are first. As the participant described it, the ranking is established based on the population size of the four major ethnic groups – Pashtuns (first), Tajiks (second), Hazaras (third), and Uzbeks (fourth). Since Pashtuns make up the largest ethnic group, they hold the first position in the ranking. Tajiks are the second largest ethnic group. Hazaras and Uzbeks come third and fourth respectively. Their ranking of

four major ethnic groups is based on the population census that was documented several decades ago before the war.

*“Afghans have ranked themselves as Pashtuns (ranked first), Tajiks (ranked second), Hazaras (ranked third) and Uzbeks (ranked fourth) and they discriminate against the minorities. At the same time, they compete between each other.”*

## **6.6 Roots of Ethnic Problems According to Pashtun Fulbright Scholars**

Although Pashtun Fulbright scholars were reluctant to discuss the political dominance of their ethnic group, I still tried to lead the conversations to this topic. My efforts to do so with Pashtun Fulbright scholars did not help because neither the Pashtun Fulbright scholars volunteered to raise this issue in the interviews, nor did I want to directly ask them for their opinions on Pashtuns’ political dominance. Though, as I had arranged my questions for the purpose of planning how to start, lead, and end the interviews, I would ask the Pashtun Fulbright participants for their views about ethnic tensions on the “Afghan national anthem”.

Pashtuns and non-Pashtuns have engaged in debates over the issue of national anthem since 2003, because most of non-Pashtuns were unhappy with the Pashtuns’ demand to change the national anthem from Persian Language to Pashtun Language. During the establishment of the constitution in 2003, Pashtuns succeeded to win the bargain against non-Pashtuns. Adeney has written about the tension between Pashtuns and non-Pashtuns over the language of the national anthem in 2003:

*“Establishment of the constitution in 2003 proceeded extensive deliberations and bargaining. Language and dominance by Pashtuns were the issues. Initially in the convention of the constitution, Pashtuns had objected to the quality of their language with Persian. They had demanded that Pashtu be the only national language and the national anthem only be sung in it. Though, their objections only managed to secure agreement only on the anthem issue. Pashtu and Persian were accepted as the official languages, and other languages too where necessary. The deliberations and bargaining*

*were all rooted in fear of Pashtun domination existing in Tajiks, Hazaras, Uzbeks, and other ethnic groups. (2008, 540-554)*

Since the issue of national anthem is related to the ethnic debates between Pashtuns and non-Pashtuns, asking the Pashtun Fulbright participants about their thoughts on the issue persuaded them to at least express their opinion on whether it was a good decision to change the language of national anthem by Pashtuns or not, and why.

All of the Pashtun Fulbright participants said that the national anthem should not be changed anymore and must remain in Pashtu Language. Two of them also argued that the ethnic problems are rooted in lack of neutral and official census, because, based on their explanations, Afghans will have to accept that Pashtuns are the majority of Afghan population, and therefore the national anthem must be sung in Pashtu Language. One Pashtun Fulbright participant stated:

*“The government should come up with official census, so Afghans know what ethnicity is the majority. For example, people debate on whether the national anthem remain in the Pashtu language or not. My opinion is that if we know that Pashtuns, who are speakers of the Pashtu language, are the majority, then the national anthem should be in Pashtu Language.”*

Although no Pashtun Fulbright participant explained why Pashtuns have been dominant or remain dominant and why they should be considered a privileged ethnic group, their answer to the question on national anthem implies that the first ranked position of the Pashtun ethnicity and the political dominance of Pashtuns must be considered feasible because Pashtuns constitute the majority of the population. In other words, the fact that they are the largest ethnic group answers why they have held the political leadership of the country for a very long period of time in the history, and why they should be considered a better or superior ethnic group according to the words of non-Pashtun participants.



The second source that Pashtun participants referred to as the root of ethnic tensions in Afghanistan was the ‘role of foreign countries.’ Three out of four Pashtun Fulbright scholars stated that the problems among ethnic groups are all created by the interference and roles of foreign countries in the political affairs of Afghanistan. One Pashtun participant said:

*“Problems are created by our neighbors. We have the worst neighbors in the world. One neighbor attacks our culture and another neighbor sends terrorists to our country which both intensify the ethnic tensions.”*

When I asked the participant to elaborate on how terrorism, produced by our neighbor in his words, creates ethnic problems, he replied *“when Hazaras were kidnapped by terrorists in the Zabul Province few months ago, people (non-Pashtuns) tended to create a perception that they were kidnapped and abducted by Pashtuns but not the terrorists.”*

We should keep in mind that by ‘foreign countries’ they did not point only to Afghanistan’s neighboring countries. When discussing the violent ethnic incident that took place two years ago between the Pashtun and non-Pashtun students at Kabul University over language of the name of the institution, a Pashtun participant asserted that *“a name is so important to Afghans because foreign countries wish to keep the conflicts and chaos going in our society so that they apply the ‘divide and rule’ strategy and we remain engaged in conflicts.”*

Based on the discussion of the findings in this section, the next section will answer the two central questions of this research – *“Is non-Pashtun” only an ethnic identity or also an ethnic boundary? How is it constructed?”*

## **7. Analysis**

The data presented above indicate that Pashtun and non-Pashtun Fulbright participants, despite sharing similar views on certain concepts, have distinct views on the general discussion of national unity, disunity as well as the roots of ethnic problems in Afghanistan. The distinction

in their views suggests that the “non-Pashtun” notion is not only an identity, but is more an ethnic boundary. “Non-Pashtun” is a pan-ethnic identity formed based on the individual ethnic identity (Tajik, Hazara, Uzbek, etc.). In other words, the individual ethnic identity of non-Pashtun Fulbright scholars becomes the basis for adding the “non-Pashtun” layering of identification to their individual ethnic identity in order to be able to distinguish themselves from Pashtuns. They attempt to distinguish themselves because they perceive their individual ethnic groups politically and economically disadvantaged by the long-standing dominance of Pashtuns as the advantaged ethnic group. With that in mind, they are ready to negotiate their individual ethnic identity by adding the “non-Pashtun” pan-ethnic layer in order to reach resources and political power by removing the fear of continuous domination and exclusion by the Pashtuns in the state. The ethnic behavior of non-Pashtun Fulbright scholars is a rational behavior which attempts to benefit from the modernization of Afghan society.

### **7.1 “Non-Pashtun” as an Identity**

Some scholars have suggested that common race, language, culture, appearance, ancestry, and regionality are the notions that form an ethnic identity (Kearney 1978; Yinger 1985; Sanders 2002; Kastoryano and Schader 2014; Horowitz 1985). None of these concepts, however, plays a role in motivating non-Pashtuns to form the “non-Pashtun” pan-ethnic identity. Race is not a marker of identity in Afghanistan at all and it has zero presence in society. Tajiks, Hazaras, Uzbeks, and members of any ethnic groups in Afghanistan other than ‘Pashtuns’ do not communicate in the same language. Each ethnic group has its own distinct ethnic culture. Although phenotype (bodily physical appearance) distinguishes people of different ethnic groups in other countries, Afghans as a whole are very replicating. In other words, appearance does not even have a role in differentiation of Pashtuns from non-Pashtun, let alone the non-Pashtuns

from each other. They come from different ancestors, and Afghans of all non-Pashtun ethnic groups are very much spread out in the entire country and there is no single Afghan province in which members of only one ethnic group would inhabit. All the provinces of the country are home to members of multiple ethnic groups.

Although commonality in some of these concepts such as language, culture, and ancestry do distinguish one ethnicity from another in Afghanistan, they do not distinguish Pashtuns from non-Pashtuns because non-Pashtuns, as members of one pan-ethnic identity, do not have any of these concepts in common. It is, rather, the “grievance” as a common cause that motivates them to reconcile their individual ethnic identity and speak on behalf of all non-Pashtun ethnic groups at times. As one of the non-Pashtun Fulbright scholars pointed out that *“people of other ethnic groups have developed grievances to claim that Pashtuns are not better than people of other ethnic groups to remain politically dominant”*, the common belief that they have been subject to unfair treatment by being politically dominated, or disadvantaged, or less privileged by the Pashtun ethnic group is, I argue, the only common motivation among non-Pashtun Fulbright scholars.

According to Barth, the notion of ethnicity is a kind of labeling process engaged in by oneself and others. In other words, the dialectical process of what *you* think of you ethnicity is and what *they* think your ethnicity is the producer of the internal and external opinions that best explains the notion of “non-Pashtun” as an identity. The internal opinion is the non-Pashtuns’ perception of their individual ethnicity. The external opinion is what non-Pashtuns think what Pashtuns’ perception of their individual ethnic group is. Non-Pashtuns stated that (i) ethnic competition or rivalries over resources, (ii) their access to political power being limited by Pashtuns in the leadership, and (iii) Pashtuns’ political dominance disadvantage them. This is the

internal opinion, or what each non-Pashtun scholar thinks his/her individual ethnicity's position is in comparison to the 'Pashtun ethnicity'. Moreover, they said that Pashtuns as a whole argue that they come from the best ethnic group in the country. This implies that non-Pashtuns already have a perception of Pashtuns' perception of their (non-Pashtuns) individual ethnic groups. In other words, their argument shows that non-Pashtun scholars believe that Pashtuns perceive other ethnic groups (non-Pashtuns) are not as privileged as Pashtuns themselves are. The perception non-Pashtuns demonstrated of their individual ethnic group and the perception they claimed to have of Pashtuns' perception of other ethnic groups (non-Pashtuns) as a whole, both as the internal opinion and external opinion are the factors that constitute the labeling process to create the 'non-Pashtun' identity.

## **7.2 “Non-Pashtun” as a Boundary**

Nagel has argued, “Ethnic identity is most closely associated with the issue of boundaries.” According to him, ethnic boundaries determine who is a member and who is not and designate which ethnic categories are available for individual identification at a particular time and place. Although it is clear that the boundary the non-Pashtun Fulbright scholars sought to draw –by explaining what ethnic elements add to the national unity and disunity and why the political dominance of Pashtuns is a problem– was to exclude Pashtuns from their “non-Pashtun” ethnic category, the purpose of an ethnic identity is not only to draw a borderline between two more ethnic groups. In discussion of ethnic boundary, it is important to note that the purpose of an ethnic borderline is to attach rewards to one or more ethnicities. Not only non-Pashtuns tend to distinguish themselves as the disadvantaged group, but construction of their pan-ethnic identity is also meant to compete and attach rewards and interests to their larger pan-ethnic level of identification.

### 7.3 “Non-Pashtun” as a Layer

This larger pan-ethnic level of identification is a “layer” produced based on the individual ethnic identity of non-Pashtun Fulbright scholars. In other words, it is a layer identity. Sally McBeth introduced the term “layering” in 1989 in a study of western Oklahoma Indian communities. McBeth argued that “layering” of identity is produced to combine with the ascriptive character of ethnicity to reveal the negotiated nature of ethnic identity. In other words, the additional layer of identity is considered as a means to reach privilege. As I have argued that the non-Pashtun pan-identity is a layer, this layer is produced by non-Pashtuns to reveal that the nature of their individual ethnic identity (either Tajik, Hazara, Uzbek, or any ethnicity other than Pashtuns) is open to negotiate their individual ethnic identity and represent themselves as members of the pan-ethnic identity *non-Pashtuns* for the sake of competition with Pashtuns.

The long-standing dominance of Pashtuns in the Afghan political state is the major motivation behind production of this layering process. As the findings indicate, the political domination of Pashtuns have restricted access of non-Pashtun ethnic groups, and as I argued that the non-Pashtun ethnic identity is also a boundary placed for competition over resources, the political power in the state level is the greatest resource. According to Paul Brass (1985), the state is not simply an arena or a tool; the state itself is the greatest reward and resource over which groups engage in a non-stop struggle. Therefore, we can draw two conclusions in regards to the relationship of Pashtuns’ political dominance and the non-Pashtun identity. First, the privileges Pashtuns as a whole enjoy come from the state power dominated by their ethnic group. Second, competing for reaching the state power and/or vanishing the dominance of Pashtuns’ dominance to remove the fear of continuous domination and exclusion is the major motivation behind the construction of the “non-Pashtun” pan-ethnic identity and boundary. The civil war in

the former Yugoslavia is a good example of ethnic political competition. The long-standing grievances of the various warring linguistic and religious groups there did not erupt into combat until the Soviet Union lifted the threat of intervention in the late 1980s and opened the door to the possibility of ethno-political competition. The result was an armed scramble for territory based on a fear of domination or exclusion by larger and more powerful ethnic groups.

#### **7.4 'Pashtun' and 'non-Pashtun' Group Formation Driven by Modernization**

Afghanistan has never been a modernized society. Even though a few components of modernization were present in the country until the war against the Soviet Union sparked, the society was yet not fully modernized. Women had the freedom to wear a headscarf or western clothes; education was growing fast; and the people had jobs and access to economic resources, but the society was still in the process of modernization. Its economy was dependent on foreign aid as today; the country was not as technologically sophisticated as other modernized countries; and neither did *all* women enjoy freedom, as discrimination against women and conservative practices were still present in society. Given the status of modernization of Afghanistan throughout history, I argue that the ethnic boundary between the Pashtun ethnic group and non-Pashtun ethnic groups has been fueled by the modernization process of Afghan society. My argument is built on Robert Bates's theoretical framework based on rational choice theory in *Ethnic Competition and Modernization in African Societies* (1974).

Bates argued that the foundation for ethnic group formation and ethnic competition is based on modernization of societies. Although he acknowledges that there are other reasons for the existence and behavior of ethnic groups, and also that modernization can take place without ethnic groups forming and competing, the two phenomena do intersect and the process of modernization can promote ethnic group formation as a rational act to attempt to benefit from the

modernization of society (1974, 181). In other words, modernization promotes competition, and the competition assumes ethnic form, because “modernity is valued; equally as important, the goods it represents are scarce in proportion to the demand for them. The inevitable is that people compete” (1974, 169).

According to Bates, the members of the advantaged ethnic group are driven to defend their leading position because modernity creates status differentiation. They apply strategies for sustaining their privileged positions. Since modernity is desired by everyone in society, members of the less the disadvantaged ethnic group/s on the other hand place immense pressure on the advantaged group to share the advantages derived from their privileged positions. As a result, a sense of threat and disadvantage is created. Particularly in the competition for jobs, they realize that they experience disadvantages and that they are placed at a disadvantaged position (1974, 175). Therefore, they perceive this position in ethnic terms, and they activate their sense of ethnic obligation to determine their individual advancement by their own collective resistance in order to gain access to modern sectors (1974, 176).

In addition to the competition over scarce resources, political competition in modernizing society leads to group formation too. According to Bates, “it is not just power that is at stake in the political arena, but also the benefit which power can bring: control over the distribution of modernity itself” (1974, 177). In such a situation, even electoral competition arouses ethnic conflicts. Therefore, politicians encourage formation of competitively aligned ethnic groups for benefits of modernity, the state power, and the prestige it confers. Since society is still in the modernization stage during which the resources are scarce and one ethnic group is advantaged over other/s, individuals perceive economic success in ethnic terms and rely on ethnic political competition as well.

The fact that Afghanistan has never been a modernized country and is still in the process of modernization implies that resources are scarce and this scarcity contributes to ethnic competition between Pashtuns and non-Pashtuns. By negotiating their individual ethnic identity and forming the group identity *non-Pashtun*, non-Pashtun individuals are collectively engaged in competition to benefit from the modernization of society as a rational act.

As the modernization process moves forward and non-Pashtuns initiate collective attempts, Pashtuns feel the need to defend their advantaged position. Pashtuns tend to apply methods to sustain their privileged position. For example, a Pashtun Fulbright scholar argued that the root of ethnic problems in Afghanistan is the lack of an official and up-to-date census. While an up-to-date official census might not be a significant determinant of ethnic problems to non-Pashtuns, an up-to-date official census would allow Pashtuns to restore their privileged position by claiming to be the largest ethnic group. As Pashtuns now make attempts to restore their privileged ethnic status, members of non-Pashtun ethnic groups put pressure on Pashtuns to share the advantages derived from their politically dominant position. Having experienced disadvantages and having perceived their weak position to be associated with their ethnicity, they feel threatened by the dominance of Pashtuns who are controlling the direction and distribution of scarce modern resources through the state. This is why non-Pashtun individuals have activated their sense of ethnic obligation, believing that their individual success is determined by being part of the non-Pashtun pan-ethnic identity to resist the Pashtuns' dominance in the state. They have realized that state power is the benefit that can secure control over the distribution of modernity itself.



## 8. Conclusion

Ethnic conflict is a major social issue in Afghanistan. There are always conflicts present between ethnic groups. The Afghan civil war started as *jihad* but it ended with an ethnic character. At least since the start of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, ethnicity has played a significant role in shaping social relations. Pashtun political dominance has led non-Pashtun ethnic groups to create their own solidarity in order to tackle the Pashtuns' dominance in the Afghan state. These ethnic groups, then, share the same *non-Pashtun* ethnic identity. Despite the presence of various ethnic tensions among all ethnicities, and Pashtuns and non-Pashtuns in particular in Afghanistan, there is a dearth of scholarship on ethnic identity and relations in Afghanistan. However, this research sheds a little light on the concept *non-Pashtun* as an identity and boundary, and the way it is constructed.

Based on the data collected from eight Afghan Fulbright scholars (4 Pashtun vs. 4 non-Pashtun), this research's analysis indicated that the "non-Pashtun" notion is not only an identity, but is moreover an ethnic boundary. "Non-Pashtun" is a pan-ethnic identity formed based on the individual ethnic identity (Tajik, Hazara, Uzbek, etc.). In other words, the individual ethnic identity of non-Pashtun Fulbright scholars becomes the basis for adding the "non-Pashtun" layering of identification to their individual ethnic identity in order to be able to distinguish themselves from Pashtuns. They attempt to distinguish themselves because they perceive their individual ethnic groups politically and economically disadvantaged by the long-standing dominance of Pashtuns as the advantaged ethnic group. With that in mind, they are ready to negotiate their individual ethnic identity by adding the "non-Pashtun" pan-ethnic layer in order to reach resources and political power by removing the fear of continuous domination and exclusion by the Pashtuns in the state. The analysis also suggested that the ethnic behavior of

non-Pashtun Fulbright scholars is a rational behavior which attempts to benefit from the modernization of Afghan society.

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## 10. Appendix A: Informed Consent Form & Survey Questionnaire



### INFORMED CONSENT FORM

You are invited to be in the research study of “Everyone Has Ethnic-oriented Objectives in Afghanistan.” A study of Ethnic Identity in Pashtun and non-Pashtun Afghan Fulbright Students. You were selected as a possible participant because either you have completed a graduate degree or you’re still completing a graduate degree in the United States on Fulbright Scholarship program. We ask that you read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

**This study is being conducted by:** Sayed Hamid Akbary, a graduate student at Department of Sociology of Lehigh under the direction of Dr. Hugo Ceron-Anaya, Professor of Sociology at Lehigh University.

#### Purpose of the study

**The purpose of this study is to understand Afghan Fulbright students/alumni’s choices and observations of social and political issues of Afghanistan to promote nationalism in the country.**

#### Procedures

**If you agree to be in this study, we would ask you to fill out the questionnaire attached to this consent form; submit it; and later, if selected to be part of the sample for this study, you will answer a number of open-ended questions on some socio-political issues of Afghanistan in an interview. Filling out the survey questionnaire will take three to five minutes, and if later selected, the interview will take 15 to 20 minutes.**

*Risks and Benefits of being in the study*

#### **Possible risks:**

**There is minimal risk to you in this study. The only risk of your participation in this study will be concerned with confidentiality of your responses. However, please be advised that your responses and any information you provide us now and in future will remain confidential.**

### **The benefits to participation are:**

There are two great advantages in participating in this study: first, the researcher will advantage from your scholarly views on some socio-political issues of Afghanistan for his research so that the issues challenging nationalism in Afghanistan could be overcome. Second, your responses for this study will greatly influence other Afghan youth to have a stronger sense of nationalism in the Afghan society at large.

### **Compensation**

There is no compensation considered for being in this study.

### **Confidentiality**

The records of this study will be kept private and confidential. In any sort of reports published, no information by which a subject would be identified will be used. Research records will be stored securely and only the researcher will have access to the records. Your responses will be used for education purposes and they will be erased later permanently. Because it will be essential to have a record of all your responses for better analysis, your responses in the interview will be audio-recorded. Therefore, if you consent to having your participation in this study audio recorded, please check the box below.

Yes, I consent to having my participation in the study audio recorded.

### **Voluntary Nature of the Study**

#### **Participation in this study is voluntary:**

Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with the researcher and Institute of International Studies (IIE). If you decide to participate both in this survey and later in interview (if selected), you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

### **Contacts and Questions**

#### **The researchers conducting this study are:**

Sayed Hamid Akbary and Dr. Hugo Ceron-Anaya. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact Dr. Hugo Ceron-Anaya in Bethlehem Pennsylvania at 610-758-3627 and [hrc209@lehigh.edu](mailto:hrc209@lehigh.edu).

#### **Questions or Concerns:**

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher(s), **you are encouraged** to contact Naomi Coll, Lehigh University's Manager of Research Integrity, at (610) 758-2985 (email: [nac314@lehigh.edu](mailto:nac314@lehigh.edu)). All reports or correspondence will be kept confidential.

*You may keep a copy of this information for your future records.*

**Statement of Consent**

If you have read and agree to the above terms, and consent to participate in this survey and later in an interview (if selected), please check the box for “yes”, fill out the questionnaire and submit it. Otherwise, you can check “no,” and refuse to take part.

- Yes, I have read and agree to the above terms and consent to participate in this survey and in an interview if selected.
- No, I refuse to take part in the survey and interview.



## Survey Questionnaire

### Demographic Information

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Gender:            \_\_\_ Male        \_\_\_ Female

What is your age? \_\_\_\_

What is your marital status? \_\_\_ Single            \_\_\_ Married        \_\_\_ Divorced \_\_\_  
Widowed  
                                 \_\_\_ Other (Please specify :) \_\_\_\_\_

Where were you born (city, district, and province)? \_\_\_\_\_

What year did you first begin your most recent Fulbright graduate program in the United States? \_\_

How long you have been away from Afghanistan for? \_\_\_\_\_

Name of the university that you attended or you are attending as a Fulbright student:  
\_\_\_\_\_

Your email address: \_\_\_\_\_

What is your major? \_\_\_\_\_

### Ethnicity and Language

Please state the ethnicity of the following?

Your ethnicity \_\_\_\_\_  
Your father's ethnicity  
Your mother's ethnicity  
Your spouse's ethnicity (if married)

In what language do you communicate with the following individuals?

	Pashtu	Persian	Uzbeki	Other
Mother	1	2	3	4
Father	1	2	3	4
Siblings	1	2	3	4
Spouse (if married)	1	2	3	4
Children (if you have any)	1	2	3	4

In what language did you receive the following?

	Pashtu	Persian	Other
Elementary education	1	2	3
Secondary education	1	2	3
High school education	1	2	3

For your two closest friends, what is their ethnicity?

Friend 1: \_\_\_\_\_

Friend 2: \_\_\_\_\_

For your two closest friends, in what language do you communicate with them?

Friend 1: \_\_\_\_\_

Friend 2: \_\_\_\_\_

### Personal Choices

What is your favorite province? \_\_\_\_\_

Who is your favorite Afghan singer? \_\_\_\_\_

Who is your favorite Afghan poet? \_\_\_\_\_

When in Afghanistan, what local language/s do you usually watch TV in?

### Socio-economic Status

What is the highest degree of education of parents?

	Below High School	High School	Two Year Diploma
College Graduate			
Mother's Education:	1	2	3
Father's Education:	1	2	3

Have you or any members of your family visited any European countries and the United States for sightseeing?    \_\_\_ Yes    \_\_\_ No

Does any member of your family perform the Eid prayer with the President and/or governor?  
\_\_\_ Yes    \_\_\_ No

Do you have any of these people hired for your family's service?

	Yes	No
Cook:	1	2
Security Person:	1	2
Cleaning Person:	1	2
Driver:	1	2

## **11. Vita**

Sayed Hamid Akbary was born and raised in Kabul, Afghanistan. He obtained his bachelor's degree in English Language and Literature from Kabul University in 2010, and after his graduation he worked for national and international organizations such as United Nations Development Program (UNDP), Strategic Social International, and Women Assistance Association (WAA). In 2013, he received a Fulbright scholarship from the U.S. government to pursue his master's degree in Sociology at Lehigh University located in Pennsylvania, United States.

Ethnic identity, nationalism, and gender and Islam are his areas of research interest. Specifically, he is interested in studying the way dominant and dominated ethnic groups challenge each other, and also the way ethnic conflict/hostility impacts nation-building in societies that are already at risk of ethnic violence. In the area of gender and Islam, he is interested in the study of how tribal solidarities and norms affect women's status by weakening the state and challenging its liberal social reforms in conservative Muslim-majority societies.