AFGHANISTAN: POST-MODERNIZING A PRE-MODERN SOCIETY?

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Abstract. The defined purpose of this paper is to analyse the phenomenon of post-modernizing pre-modern societies, having as example the case of Afghanistan. Assuming that political modernity implies the existence of a centralized state, we will show that there never was a modern period in the history of Afghanistan. The last part of this paper focuses on presenting the impact that the phenomenon of post-modernization has had on Afghanistan, by analysing four characteristics of the contemporary world - the world after the collapse of the Soviet Union: the critique of the fungible character of power; the privatization of security; the new types of wars; the regionalization and fragmentation of the world. The dilemma that needs to be solved is that of surpassing the risks brought about by the co-existence of three levels of evolution: the pre-modern level (the segmented Afghan society), the modern level (the attempt to founded a centralized state), the post-modern level (the attempt to anchor the new-founded state in the global system, from a political, economic and cultural point of view).

Keywords: geopolitics, International Relations, modernism, postmodernism, politics

Seven years have passed since the 9/11 terrorist attacks, when Afghanistan was dragged out from the penumbra cone and appeared as a place of interest on the world map. In spite of the progress acquired in understanding the real situation in Afghanistan, there are still lots of simplifications, stereotypes, black-and-white dichotomies that only manage to harden the identification of viable solutions for the stabilization and democratization of Afghanistan.

The profound cause of the problems Afghanistan faces nowadays is structural, which explains the difficulties the international community encounters when trying to normalize things. The Afghan society is a pre-modern society that lives its daily life and acts in full political post-modernity.

A relevant analysis of post-modern Afghanistan can only be made after a careful time-framing of what we understand by modernity/modernization and post-modernity/post-modernization. From a political point of view, modernity began with the Peace of Westphalia in 1648 and ended with the collapse of the communist regimes and the disintegration of the Soviet Union (1989-1991). The
fundamental feature of this period is the modern, centralized national state as the only actor of the international system. Unlike modernity, post-modernity erodes the force of the national state, by focusing on two opposite developments - regionalization and fragmentation – that co-operate for achieving the same goal. Although the national state continues to maintain its leading role, it loses ground against non-state actors (international intergovernmental/nongovernmental organizations, transnational companies, terrorist and Mafia networks). In light of the recent developments in international relations, the following questions appear more and more often: Can a viable Afghan state be built in the new international context? Can the pre-modern Afghan society be framed within the structures of a modern state, that in its turn be integrated within the international system in an accelerated process of post-modernization? The passing of time and the subsequent evolution of international relations will most likely answer these two questions.

1. Pre-modernity. Modernity. Post-modernity

From a political point of view, pre-modernity, modernity and post-modernity can be circumscribed by taking into consideration two fundamental criteria:

• The way in which power is understood and used;
• The international players.

Different geographic areas pass through these stages of political evolution successively, although development may be realized either at a slow pace or in a more alert rhythm, according to Ernst Gellner’s modernization “time zones” model. The concept of “power”, considered an umbrella term¹, which is fundamental in the theory of international relations, can be a useful tool for the theoretic delimitation of pre-modernity, modernity and post-modernity, and for explaining the changes that the concept of power suffers from authority to sovereignty and to the dissolution of power.

During the pre-modern period the power is on the one hand brute force and on the other hand authority, being in close connection with the importance that religion and divinity play in the social system: power firstly as deontic authority, and only secondly as epistemic authority. The monarch is God’s representative on earth and the Church (especially the Pope) has an enormous influence over the laic power. Modernity has a close connection with the contestation of the papal authority by the European princes and kings that launch the process of political centralization. The modern political system, whose single player will be the centralized modern national state, appears after the Thirty Years’ War² and the Peace of Westphalia³.

² The Thirty Years’ War (1618-1648) was fought under a religious excuse, but its real cause was the fight for supremacy in Europe, especially the ambition of the French, led by Cardinal Richelieu, to gain pre-eminence at European level in prejudice of the Holy Roman Empire of German Nation.
³ The Peace of Westphalia in 1648 put an end to the Thirty Years’ War. The Treaty comprises of two documents: The Peace Treaty of Münster (between the Holy Roman Empire and France) and the Peace Treaty of Osnabrück (between the Holy Roman Empire and Sweden). The following decisions were taken: Sweden received the town of Stettin and the surrounding regions, the town of Wismar and the Prince-Bishoprics of Bremen and Werden; Denmark does not obtain any satisfaction of its territorial requirements; Austria gives Sundgau to France; France becomes the biggest and most influent country in Western Europe; the landlocked German states are excluded from sea trade.
The disappearance of the old pre-modern system takes place slowly, à la longue durée: the political vassalage links and the arborescent structure of power become less functional and more incompatible with the institutions of the new centralized states; traditional authority relations are replaced by impersonal relations of submission to the legal and legitimate authority of the national state; the local community, the ethnic group becomes consistent and powerful by means of the creation of the national state.

The distinctive element of political modernity is the centralized national state based on the guiding principle of national sovereignty. A long time since the French king Louis XIV stated “L'état c'est moi!”; the Western nations begin to follow their national destiny by creating national states that fight over international power. This fight represents the main point around which the international relations develop in the modern period. And the modernists see these international relations through the looking glass of a polarized world where nations head, on the one hand, towards a series of “clash of civilizations” (Samuel P. Huntington) and, on the other hand, towards a democratic uniform world (Francis Fukuyama). The secularization of social life, the minimization of the authority and interference of the Church in the political life, the standardization and systematization of society by creating impersonal relations between people instead of links based on kinship are the effects of the new conditions. The national sovereignty has two aspects: the internal affairs – the state’s capacity to assure the observance of the law and the security of its citizens (the Weberian principal of legitimate violence) and the foreign affairs – the state’s capacity to assure the territorial integrity, to guarantee the existence of a national territory.

By contrast, the political post-modernity represents the erosion of the power of the national state, under the impact of globalization forces and also under the theoretical attack launched against the modern concept of power. The post-modern paradigm of international relations is constituted as a critique to realism, which dominated the academic courses in the Cold War period and imposed concepts that influenced the evolution of relations between the two superpowers/military blocs/ zones of domination, interest or influence. Given the new international conditions, the way in which realist theorists understand the concept of “power” as “balance of power” in the first place is out-of-date. And if the confrontation between the USA and the Soviet Union was seen as a zero sum game, in which the power lost by one of the players was inevitably found on the other scale of the balance, the new conditions bring a new concept of power. From this point of view, the post-modern critique on the fungible character of

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5 The classical work for this vision is Francis Fukuyama’s book The End of History and the Last Man, Editura Paideia, București, 1992.
6 Globalization implies “the opening of the national space for the free movement of goods, capitals and ideas. Globalization removes the obstacles for this movements and creates the conditions in which international trade with goods and services can develop” (Brian Blouet, Globalization and Geopolitics, Reaktion Books, London, 2001, p. 1).
power is well grounded. Can the military power really be converted in economic power or vice-versa? Is the power lost by an international player transferred to other players? In the realist view, where national states are actors of an anarchic international system, the answer may be positive. But when the national states are no longer the sole actors, although they undoubtedly remain the main players, the paradigm and our conception of the world change. The power can be lost, without it being won by other players, much like a black hole that absorbs everything around it. The result: a no man’s land that Afghanistan has become after the withdrawal of the Soviet army. In practice, the post-modern state facing new challenges to its security and being in the impossibility of dealing with them gives up some of its prerogatives to some supra-state and sub-state entities. Regionalization and fragmentation, the two facets of globalization, co-operate towards the same purpose: eroding the sovereignty of the national state. The threats multiply and diversify, so that the privatization of internal and external security becomes a trend. Professional armies, even those that are parts of international collective defence/security organizations, replace national armies of citizens-soldiers. The post-modern warfare is fundamentally different from the modern wars (wars of conquest of territories/national wars): economic warfare, which has reached the post-modern stage of the opposition between legal economy vs. illegal economy, asymmetric wars, including the war on terrorism.

2. Afghanistan

Afghanistan has never had a modern period in its history. The Afghan society in the third millennium is organized on the same principles as those functioning in the times of its founder, Shah Ahmad Durrani, who in 1747 begins to conquer the Pushtun tribes’ territories around Kandahar and then conquers the territories inhabited by the Ghilzai Pushtun, Tajik, Uzbek, Hazarahi and Turkmen tribes. The development level reflected in the geo-demographic data\(^8\) is undoubtedly pre-modern. Having as starting point the pre-modern/pre-national conceptual overlap, tribalism and fragmentation on ethnic and religious criteria appear as the most important elements of our analysis. They are fundamental characteristics of the nowadays Afghan society and they determine us to consider it a pre-modern society by definition.

The dominant characteristic of all ethnic groups in Afghanistan, Tajiks

\(8\) The 25 years of war have left deep marks in the economy: mined arable terrains, destroyed irrigation systems, power plants, dams, transports infrastructure, a collapsed banking system. Over 80% of the labour force works in the subsistence agriculture. The illegal economy thrives, poppy cultivation reached record levels in 2007 and Afghanistan became a narco-state. The living standard of the population is very poor: in 2004 the World Bank estimated that 20% of the families cannot assure their daily food, and 50-60% live at the limit of extreme poverty. During the Soviet occupation and the civil war, most intellectuals fled the country and during the Taliban regime the number of madrassa schools rose exponentially; the girls were denied access to education; all those mentioned above determine a literacy rate of 36% in 1999; only 51% of men and 21% of women knew how to write and read.
excepted, is the tribal organization, defined by the Afghan term qwam\(^9\). Each tribe comprises clans, in their turn comprising many families. The members of tribe claim their origin from a common forefather, male, that often gives the name of the tribe. The tribe’s chief is chosen for his qualities, charisma and origin. Jirga\(^10\) and Shura\(^11\) are the decision bodies of the tribe. These institutions were very affected during the civil war, when the decisions were imposed to the tribe by local warlords, as opposed to being taken by consensual agreement within the Shura, and most of all in the Taliban period, when the moral code guiding the tribe was replaced with a fundamentalist interpretation of Sharia, promoted by the mullahs. Today, we can observe an expansion of the importance tribes have at the local level, what the think-tank International Crisis Group refers to as “government tribalization”\(^12\).

For an external observer, the ethnic fragmentation is more likely to be noticed than the tribal fragmentation. From an ethno-linguistic point of view, Afghanistan is a mosaic (see Appendix 2), comprising more than 55 ethnic groups\(^13\). There is no main ethnic group, as the 2008 CIA reports show. Yet there are main ethnic groups in certain regions, causing inter-ethnic tensions and problems for the regional minority groups.

The Pushtuns, dominating the Southern and Eastern parts of the country in the so-called “Pushtun belt” and accounting for 42% of the population, speak Pushtu (Afghani) and they are divided in many patriarchal conservative tribes. The Durrani and Ghilzai tribes have the biggest demographic and historical importance. They have often contested for political power. A problematic division are the kuchi, the nomadic Pushtuns that represent 80% of the nomadic population. Mainly farmers and shepherds, guiding themselves by the Pushtunwali, the moral code based on values like: honour, solidarity, hospitality, mutual aid and revenge, the Pushtuns have been the leading ethnic group since the 18\(^{th}\) century, a fact illustrated by two personalities: Ahmad Shah Durrani, the founder of Afghanistan, and Zahir Shah, the former king. Over ten million Pushtuns live in Pakistan, mainly in the North of Baluchistan, beyond the Durand Line\(^14\). The number of the Pakistani Pushtun is bigger than that of the Afghan Pushtun, although the former represent a smaller percent of the Pakistani population.

The Tajiks, 27% of the population, are concentrated in the North-Eastern part of the country and in the Herat province; they speak Dari (Persian) and represent the only ethnic group that is not organised in tribes, that is why they introduce themselves especially by their region of origin. Having a better economic situation than the rest of the population, the Tajiks are the founders

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\(^9\) Qwam refers to the traditional system of relations in the Afghan society, based on ethnicity, tribe, and family. The term designated the village, the family, the clan, the tribe, the ethnic group.
\(^10\) Peace mission
\(^11\) Council
\(^12\) International Crisis Group - „Afghanistan: The Problem of Pushtun Alienation“ p. 17
\(^14\) The Durand Line, dividing the Pushtun tribes and named after Sir Mortimer Durand, the governor of the British India province, was established in 1893 to separate Afghanistan and British India.
of Kabul and they represent the majority in towns, where they dominate the army and the police. Two Tajik personalities from the recent past of Afghanistan are the general Ahmad Shah Massoud\textsuperscript{15} from the Panjshir Valley and Burhanuddin Rabbani\textsuperscript{16} from Badakshan, president of Afghanistan between the years 1992-1996.

The Hazarahi population, estimated at 9\%, lives in the poorest region of Afghanistan, the mountainous region in the centre of the country, the Hazarajat, and speaks Hazarahi, a language derived from Persian, with many Mongolian words. Because they are Shi’\(\text{a}\), the members of the Hazarahi minority have been persecuted and oppressed throughout the 19\textsuperscript{th} century while the Shi’a Islamic parties were excluded from the mujahedeen alliances.

The Uzbeks, 9\% of the population, are concentrated in the North-West of Afghanistan and they speak Uzbek, a Turkic language, are organized in patriarchal tribes, based on endogamous marriages and manifest an open aversion towards Pushtuns. The Uzbeks were one of the most important ethnic groups in the Northern Coalition opposing the Taliban. General Abdul Rashid Dostum is one of the most prominent Uzbek figures.

Beside the four major groups, in Afghanistan there also live other ethnic groups: Aimak (4\% of the population, concentrated in the West of the country, organised in tribes of farmers and shepherds; they are Sunni Muslims and speak Dari related dialects), Turkmen (3\%, concentrated in the region neighbouring Turkmenistan, they speak Turkmen, a Turkic language and are Sunni Muslims), Balochi (2\% of the population, organised in very conservative patriarchal tribes, they dominate the South-West of Helmand province and also form the majority in Iranian and Pakistani Baluchistan; they speak Balochi, a language from the Iranian branch and are Sunni Muslims), Kirghiz (they live in the region neighbouring Kirghizstan, speak Kirghiz, a Turkic language and are Sunni Muslims; many Kirghiz emigrated in Turkey or Pakistan after 1978), Nuristani (a different population in Afghanistan, obligated to embrace the Islamic religion, they live in the Nuristan province, a bosky and difficult to access region), Brahui (they live in the South-West of Afghanistan and speak the Brahui language, of the Dravidian branch with influences from Balochi), Wakhi (they live in North-East, in the Wakhan Corridor and the Badakshan province; most of them are Shi’a Muslims and speakers of Wakhi language), Farsiwan (most of them are Shi’a Muslims, they live along the Iranian border in the Herat, the Kandahar and the Ghazni provinces, they speak Farsi, a variant of Persian), Arabs (nomadic tribes, that do not speak Arabic, but Dari and Uzbek, they live in Kunduz, Takhar, Baghlan and Faryab) etc.

Ethnic tensions and crises marked the entire history of Afghanistan. They did not appear as a consequence of the Soviet invasion, although it aggravated them as open conflicts. Prior to the

\textsuperscript{15} General Ahmad Shah Massoud (1953-2001) is a symbol of the Afghan resistance against the Soviet invasion and also against the Taliban, with which he fought until the end of 1994.

\textsuperscript{16} Burhanuddin Rabbani (born in 1940) is the founder of the Anti-communist Islamic Movement, initially the only personality recognized as Afghanistan’s leader by the international community.
Soviet invasion in Afghanistan, the most frequent conflicts were inter-ethnic, between different tribes, villages. There were inter-ethnic conflicts, but they were rarely a consequence of the mere desire of ethnic purification; often, they were provoked by personal hatred, the rehabilitation of diminished honour, access to resources, the control over a region. After 1979, the war was fought in the name of ethnicity, the fighting determined ethnic-based alliances and the important ethnic groups wanted to conquer the power. During the process of gaining central power, crimes and genocides were committed and they amplified the already existent tensions. This makes the reconciliation process very difficult and intricate.

The so-called “Pushtun problem” appeared after the establishment of the Durand Line by the British administration and it haunts the history of Afghanistan to this day. Afghanistan has never recognised the international boundary separating the Pushtun tribes and this enabled the Pakistani “Trojan horse” to enter the fortress each time it felt its interests were threatened. Ethnically speaking, today, the main problem is the Pushtun representation in the central administration, which they dominated since the foundation of the state, with just few interruptions. The Bonn conference in December 2001 did not offer a solution to the Pushtuns’ dissatisfaction regarding the Tajik dominance of the security structures. The Pushtuns’ disappointment is amplified by the results of the Emergency Loya Jirga in June 2004 that elected the Transitional Administration. The Pushtuns saw that the Tajiks imposed their requirements by means of pressure, although the international community was overseeing the process. The discretionary generalizations such as “All Pushtuns are Taliban”, the severe violations of the Pushtun minority rights in the North of the country, the lack of interest of the international Coalition forces towards the civil Pushtun victims of the attacks against Taliban amplify the dissatisfaction and de-legitimize the central power that is inefficient in assuring the security and stability in the Pushtun regions from the East and South of Afghanistan.

Islamic religion is one of the linking factors of the Afghan society, but there are major differences between the Islamic branches and denominations. 80% of the population are Sunni Muslims, of the Hanafite School that is also predominant in Pakistan, the Middle East and among the Indian Muslims. The Shi’a Muslims represent 19% of the population and they are a majority in the Hazarahi ethnic group. Although major changes occurred, Muslim religion dominates the political life in post-Taliban Afghanistan: the Constitution lays the foundations of an Islamic Afghan state, and the observance of the Islamic values is a pre-condition for creating political parties.

Afghanistan has never been a centralized state let alone a national state. The “Kabul island” phenomenon dominated Afghanistan’s history. The monarchic authority could only be extended beyond the region of the capital-city with difficulty, seldom and partially, even during the reign of Abdur

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17 The Bonn conference, organized under UN auspices, was intended to draw the line of a political regime in Afghanistan by the agreement of the different Afghan ethnic groups’ representatives.
Rahman\textsuperscript{18}, the Iron Emir, or during the 40-year reign of king Zahir. With or without intention and under the impact of the Taliban barbarity, the Western media idealized a false image of a modern, pro-Western Afghanistan that had an important middle class of rich tradesmen. Without mentioning the gap between the richer region of the capital and the rural, isolated region of the Hazarajat, a comparison between different districts of king Zahir’s Kabul shows that richness and extreme poverty co-existed in Afghanistan. The Soviet invasion, the civil war that followed the retreat of the Red Army and the Taliban regime increased divisions and destroyed the institutions of the modern state, which were anyhow at an early stage of their development.

The central authority, weak or falling apart, was not capable of assuring the security of the citizens and the observance of the laws. The tribe exercised the legislative function by means of the moral authority of the tribe’s chiefs, the only persons sanctioned to make justice. In spite of legislative reforms, the basic structure of the Afghan society remained untouched, immobilism being, in fact, a feature of pre-modern societies. With the promulgation of the 1964 Constitution\textsuperscript{19}, the king wanted to lay the foundations of a constitutional monarchy, but the failure was obvious. The Afghan state was even less capable of assuring the security of its citizens. This function was initially performed by the tribes and by the mujahedeen parties during the Soviet invasion. During the civil war, the warlords imposed themselves. They maintained the state of insecurity and were also the only persons able, by means of an intricate relation with their origin tribes, to maintain the illusion that they were the suppliers of security. Co-opted in the war against terrorism, the warlords remain one of the greatest challenges for the establishment of an Afghan centralized state. The term “lords” used for their description literary demonstrates that the reality we are analysing is a pre-modern one.

The incapacity of Afghan leaders to build a state is the result of the convergence of the internal factors, previously analysed, and of the external factors, of which the buffer-state statute is fundamental. The modern state implies the creation of administrative structures, by means of which central authority can be exercised. What is the difference between Afghanistan and other states nowadays considered pre-modern and tribal? As in the case of the African states, the borders of Afghanistan’s were also set without taking into consideration ethnic lines, as a consequence of the agreements

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\textsuperscript{18} Abdur Rahman (1880-1901), Durrani Pushtun, tried to lay the foundations of the modern Afghan state. He created a system of provincial governments that overlap the old tribal borders, gave legislative powers to the provincial governors in local issues, created the Afghan army in order to counterbalance the tribal armies, laid the foundations of the first institutionalized Afghan bureaucracy, created a unified tax collecting system. The emir tried to erode the traditional power of the tribes and those which did not obey were transplanted. The Ghilzai Pushtuns were thus moved from their origin regions to the North of Afghanistan and the Hazarai ethnic group was harshly oppressed.

\textsuperscript{19} The Constitution settled the following: the creation of an independent Afghan Parliament that would meet regularly, not only at the request of the king; the use of the Afghan term for all the citizens; Islam is the state religion, but the secular law is more important then the Sharia. The 1964 Constitution lays the foundations for the current Afghan Constitution.
between the two great powers taking part in the Great Game\textsuperscript{20}, in accordance with their own interests and without consulting the Afghan leaders. But unlike the case of Afghanistan, in the African states the Great Powers tried to impose a series of administrative structures with the intention of controlling and economically exploiting those territories. The former African colonies, which were better integrated in the colonial system, thus have an easier transition to post-modernity, while those less integrated find their way with difficulty. Afghanistan was not seen as an interesting resource region, but as a strategic territory. The goal of the Tsarist and British empires was to control the foreign policy\textsuperscript{21} of Afghanistan and not to impose certain internal political-administrative structures that could subsequently be the embryo of the state’s centralization process.

At the beginning of the 20\textsuperscript{th} century, the rise of Germany in Central Europe leads to the improvement of Russian-British relations in Central Asia. Afghanistan becomes a buffer-state between the two empires. The Russian-British agreement in 1907 settles the zones of influence in the region for the two Great Powers and lays the foundations for the neutrality of Afghanistan: Russia accepts that Afghanistan remains outside its sphere of influence, and Great Britain commits itself not to conquer or to annex Afghanistan and not to interfere in Afghanistan’s internal politics; the two empires shall consult each other on every issue concerning the Russian-Afghan relations. The buffer-state statute, the acknowledgement of the Afghan politics of the British Empire, clearly shows that the Great Powers had neither the interest, nor the intention to impose their administrative structures in Afghanistan. Lacking a powerful monarchy and external pressure, the traditional tribal organization of the Afghan society was maintained during the 19\textsuperscript{th} and 20\textsuperscript{th} centuries.

\textsuperscript{20} In 1885 the Russians defeated the Afghans in a short battle and occupied the Merv oasis, thus neighbouring Afghanistan. The two great powers reached an agreement that stipulated that a joint Russian-British commission was to establish the Afghan-Russian border on the Amu Daria River. In 1895 and 1896 another joint Russian-British commission established the North-Eastern border of Afghanistan with the territories inhabited by the Chinese, officially recognised by China in 1964. In 1893, the emir Abdur Rahman accepts a mission led by Sir Mortimer Durrand, the secretary for foreign affairs of British India, to define the limits of the British and Afghan control over the Pushtun territories. The Durand Line did not take into consideration the demographic and topographic realities and was the cause of the continuous problems between the British India and Afghanistan, and later between Afghanistan and Pakistan.

\textsuperscript{21} The attempt of the British to protect their interests by controlling Afghanistan’s foreign policy led to 3 Anglo-Afghan wars, the last being the independence war in 1919. The first war took place between the years 1838-1842 and was caused by the rising irritation of the British triggered by the presence of a Russian envoy to Kabul. It was a military and political failure for the British that did not manage to crown Shuja, whom they supported. This led to the tribes’ mutiny and to the massacre of the withdrawing British army. The second Anglo-Afghan war was caused by the rising Russian threat in the North of Afghanistan. The excuse of the war was the acceptance of a tsarist diplomatic mission in Kabul. The British asked the Afghan leader to accept a British diplomatic mission in the capital, but the Afghan leader refused, as he was afraid of the Anglo-Russian rivalry. Wanting to preserve their control over the region, the British attacked Afghanistan and occupied the biggest part of the country. In 1879 the Gandamak Treaty was signed. It recognised British control over Afghanistan’ foreign affairs, in exchange of a very a vague promise of assistance in case of foreign intervention in Afghanistan. British missions were established in Kabul and the big cities, the British took control over the Kyber and Michni passes, and Afghanistan ceded border territories to the British.
3. Post-modern theories

The post-modern theories do not consider power a fungible resource, “the power resides in micro-relations that form networks”\(^{22}\). Afghanistan’s case shows in practice the solidity of the post-modern critique regarding the concept of power. In terms of power, who are the winners after the retreat of the Soviet army? The United States of America or China? Iran, Pakistan, the Central Asian states, India, Saudi Arabia? The warlords or the drug lords? The Mafia? The organized crime? The Pakistani or the Saudi secret services? The terrorists? Al-Qaeda? The Taliban? Many actors can be counted, each having their relative benefit. If power were to be calculated on mathematic formulas and a comparison were made between the relative stability before the Soviet invasion and the extreme anarchy that followed the retreat of the Red Army, we could easily see that the power has scattered until evanescence in a place that threatens to destabilize the entire region.

The Soviet invasion and the civil war that followed the retreat of the Red Army destroyed the Afghan institutions, which were anyhow in an incipient phase. The state, the economy and the internal market were completely fragmented. Even before the Soviet invasion, certain groups started to set up checking points along the main commercial routes to survey the transport or to confiscate the goods – a sign that the central authority was falling apart. The Kabul-Jalalabad railway was the most profitable, mainly because of the heavy traffic between Kabul and Peshawar. At the end of the 1980s, the mujahedeen levied taxes in every free region, and the traders paid up to 10-20% of the value of the goods and also additional taxes for wood, meat, and jewels transportation\(^{23}\). The situation worsened after the retreat of the Soviet army, when the state was divided into many private domains where the local leaders exercised their power and imposed transit taxes. The rise of the Taliban is also connected to the support of the transportation Mafia, which considered that the existence of centralized structures was in its benefit. As a consequence, after 1996, the year the Taliban conquered Kabul, the smuggling of wood, stolen cars and electronic devices flourishes, especially along the Afghan-Pakistani commercial routes (Quetta and Peshawar).

After the implosion of the Soviet Union, the challenges for security diversify and multiply worldwide, and the nation state is not able to handle them. The inexistence of a national state in a power vacuum – the case of Central Asia at the beginning of the 1990s – complicates the situation beyond any previously imagined pattern. The warlord, a typical product of the Afghan civil war, was co-opted by the international Coalition forces in order to assure the security in the Afghan state after 2001. Soon after that, the signs of this wrong option became visible: the long-term security was sacrificed to the prejudice of short-term security using a wrong approach.

The effort of the international community involved in Afghanistan to

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create the Afghan National Army and the Afghan National Police – fundamental institutions of every viable modern state – advances slowly, in spite of what the official figures state. One of the most important goals in the reconstruction of the Afghan state is the disarmament, the demobilization and the reintegration (the DDR process\textsuperscript{24}) of the former fighters. Without this compulsory stage one cannot conceive a long-term stable and functional state. The existence of different militia impacts on the already precarious security. Assuring security in the post-Taliban Afghanistan must be seen from a comprehensive point view, which makes it necessary to co-ordinate different courses of action: the disarmament of official and unofficial armed groups, building a stronger Afghan National Army and Afghan National Police, including the Border Police, justice reform and the full implementation of the DDR programme. Launched on April 6\textsuperscript{th}, 2003 under the co-ordination of the UNDP, the DDR programme failed to disarm the Tajik dominated militias in Kabul and Panjshir Valley, to resolve the issue of the unofficial militias that were not of DDR competence, to watch the evolution of the Afghan militias that were integrated in the police forces or in the security forces of the local governors\textsuperscript{25}. A series of aspects render the process difficult: the changes in the strategy of the local military leaders that do not want to possess heavy weapons and concentrate on small weapons, which are more difficult to find and confiscate by the DDR teams; the appointment of former fighters from the Afghan Military Forces in public positions (governors, police chiefs, road patrol chiefs) from where they control the drug trafficking between the Afghan towns and Pakistan; the proliferation of unofficial militias financed with money coming from drug trafficking. It is estimated that in Afghanistan there are 853 illegal armed groups, comprising of 65,000-80,000 fighters; the dominant characteristic of the militias to have few active members but also a great capacity to mobilize them; the transformation of some militias in political parties just by changing their names (Ittihad-i Islami became Dawat-i Islami, the Uzbek militia Jowjsan became Junbish-i Islami); the weak co-ordination between the strategy of the fight against terrorism and the political process initiated in Bonn.

Political post-modernity is characterized by the changing of the warfare types. In close-up we find the economic warfare (with its chronic stage of legal economy vs. illicit economy) and the asymmetric wars.

At the beginning of the 1990s, Afghanistan once again becomes “the pivot of the first battle in the new Great Game”\textsuperscript{26}, the state from where the economic domination of Asia could start. This first battle was initially fought between Bridas, an Argentinean oil company, and Unocal, an American company, which, in 1994 and 1995, launch two rival projects of dis-enclavisation of the Turkmen oil to Pakistan and India via Afghanistan. Although the economic relation between

\textsuperscript{24} Officially called Afghanistan’s New Beginning Programme, it was launched in 2003 with the goal to achieve the disarmament of 100,000 fighters from the Afghan Military Forces

\textsuperscript{25} International Crisis Group - “Getting Disarmament Back on Tracks” p.1

\textsuperscript{26} Ahmed Rashid - L’ombre des taliban. Traduit de l’anglais par Geneviève Brzustowski et Laurent Bury, postface
the Argentinean giant Bridas and the Turkmen state dated since the beginning of the 1990s, president Niazov showed more interest for the offer of the American company Unocal, especially because this also triggered the involvement of the Clinton administration in Turkmenistan’s development. As an obvious consequence, in 1995 Turkmenistan signed an agreement with Unocal and its Saudi partner, Delta Oil Company. Soon after the “battle of the pipelines” started and worsened the surrounding context, the regional powers, whose interests were in close connection with the gas and oil pipelines projects, became active parts of this game. The states involved themselves in the pipelines issue up to the secret services level, or maybe the secret service chose to involve the states in the pipelines issue, up to the point that the relationship between Unocal, the American administration and the Saudi monarchy seems to be part of espionage movies. Although a 30-year agreement between Bridas and the international recognised government of Burhanuddin Rabbani was in place, in 1996, the oil giant Unocal takes its place. The American company approaches the Taliban, believing they will bring stability in Afghanistan. Delta Oil Company, Unocal’s Saudi partner, exerts pressure for supporting the Taliban, in spite of the support received from Pakistani authorities. The substantial support given in 1996 to the Taliban by the Pakistani government of Nawaz Sharif, by the army and by ISI should be analysed in relation with the evolution of the Bridas-Unocal economic battle. In 1996 Pakistan panicked and substantially supported the rise of the Taliban, who conquered Kabul that same year. The United States accepted this result that served the interests of Unocal, as part of American regional interests. Given the appearance of a more viable project (the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline) than the Unocal project and under the pressure of the American feminist groups (whose support for Hillary Clinton’s future presidency was very important) the Clinton administration policy towards the Taliban suffered a profound change. In 1997, it culminated with the declaration of Madeleine Albright, the American Secretary of State, a declaration in which she blamed the Taliban regime for their behaviour toward women.

Illicit economy thrived in Afghanistan, the production and drug trafficking reached huge figures thus transforming Afghanistan into a narco-state. The drug production boom in Afghanistan is directly linked to the war against the Soviet Union: the mujahedeen used the funds obtained from the drug trafficking to support the military actions, even though they constantly denied it. The transfer of the drug production from Pakistan (which was one of the most important opium producers in the world in the 1980s) to Afghanistan took place under the excuse and legitimacy of the resistance against the Soviet Union by using the clandestine supply network build by ISI with the tacit agreement of CIA. A series of scandals exposed the connections between some ISI officers, mujahedeen, Afghan Army representatives and Pakistani drug dealers. “The heroine unions”, a term used by Lawrence Lifschultz for the drug Mafia represent an enormous risk to the stability of every state. The Pakistani example is revealing: in the beginning of the 1990s, the black market absorbed

30-50% of the Pakistani economy. The strict control of the Taliban over the Afghan state brought a certain stability which assured favourable conditions for drug transportation towards the Pakistani Balochistan (heading towards the Indian Ocean), Northern Iran (heading towards Turkey and Europe) or Central Asia (mainly Turkmenistan, having the Russian market as final destination). The Russian Mafia took full advantage of these circumstances, especially because the illegal activities multiplied at an alarming speed: shortly after important drug trafficking routes heading towards Russia were established in Tajikistan and Kirghizstan, these countries became important opium producers.

Compared to 2007, 2008 brought a 19% reduction of the number of opium-cultivated hectares. However, the situation still remains very dangerous. The opium production diminished with only 6%, and the eradication of poppy cultures proved inefficient, especially since there were also casualties among the UNDOC inspectors during the process. Moreover, although poppy is no longer cultivated in more than 50% of the Afghan provinces, there are still some Eastern and Southern regions where the situation remains critical. The Helmand province, a Taliban stronghold, is responsible for 2/3 of the Afghan opium production. Furthermore, in the Northern provinces where the eradication of poppy succeeded, the farmers started to grow cannabis. This demonstrates that the illicit economy wins more and more battles against the legal economy. Corruption, insecurity and drug trafficking form a complex dependence network which undermines any attempts at building an Afghan state.

Afghanistan faces one of the most intricate asymmetric post-modern wars. The diversity of the non-state actors involved, opposing national interests (regionally and internationally), different approaches of the causes of insecurity amplify the crises and conflicts. In the case of Afghanistan, we speak about simultaneous wars: the war against terrorism (opposing the international coalition and Al-Qaeda), the war against insecurity (ISAF initially supported by the warlords vs. the Taliban), the war against the drug-lords, the war for the reinforcement of the institutional capacity of the Afghan state, interethnic tensions.

The last feature of the political post-modernity we will analyse is the contradictory tendency of regionalization/fragmentation. Afghanistan's integration in supra-state regional structures can be achieved only with the agreement and impetus of the great powers and regional powers. But when the national interests fight for different goals, the result is from the very beginning a failure. Afghanistan is a pawn on the Euro-Asian chessboard, its evolution on whichever side triggers different evolutions of the regional balance of power. But the Great Powers have no coherent strategy concerning Afghanistan. The United States dealt with the Afghan problem in the far too wide context of the international war against terrorism, subsequently turning its attention towards Iraq. The increase of Afghanistan’s importance in the foreign

29 UNODC - „Afghanistan Opium Survey 2008. Executive Summary” p.v
policy of the Obama administration could bring hope again. Caught in the games for dominating the “near abroad” region, Russia has neglected Afghanistan. Even though the drug problem affects it, Russia did not formulate a clear strategy for dealing with this issue. China is more attracted by other rich-energy resource regions. Its strategy is centred more on “maritimization” than on turning its attention towards continental Asia. The European Union has formulated its strategy for Central Asia, in which Afghanistan was not taken into consideration. Iran and Pakistan, two essential elements in the evolution of the Afghan conflict, are caught in the middle of their own internal and international problems.

Fragmentation is a characteristic of Afghanistan. Based on this assumption, the international community decided to expand the role of the local government in order to legitimise the central government. The decentralization functions normally in states in which democracy is well rooted. Otherwise, there is a big risk of power being taken over by some local leaders that mainly control the economy and the security. Afghanistan deals with this syndrome. A self-speaking example is represented by the elections of electors for the Emergency Loya Jirga, in 10-21st June 2002, the main purpose being to appoint the Transitional Administration. The elections had two stages (local level and regional centres) and were characterized by the pressure exerted by local warlords who thus gained great influence within the Loya Jirga. The lack of resources and the incapacity of the international community to formulate a single global vision regarding the election process added to the insecurity climate. The lack of honesty that characterized the elections could be seen at the formal level (the process in itself) and also in the negotiations of the Loya Jirga, the results of which displeased the Pushtuns. During the elections, a lot of irregularities conflicting with the provisions of the Bonn Agreement took place: the number of the electors suffered a last minute change and 100 more candidates, among which 32 provincial governors, were accepted at the negotiations; the police, dominated by the Tajiks from Shura-i Nazar party had free access to the Polytechnic College in Kabul, where the negotiations took place, and exercised pressure on the electors; the important negotiations took place behind closed doors, so that the opinions of most electors were overlooked, which led to their disappointment; international pressure and the requests of certain ethnic groups forced Rabbani and king Zahir to withdraw their candidature in favour of Hamid Karzai, supported by the United States of America; the approval of the key-positions, a competence established in Bonn for the Loya Jirga, did not occur; all important warlords, excepting mullah Omar and Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, did not only participate in the negotiations, but they also imposed their opinion concerning the election of the Transitional Administration. On the other hand, a powerful executive (like the Karzai administration) which is unable to deal with the problems affecting the state does not seem the appropriate solution.

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31 International Crisis Group - „The Afghan Transitional Administration: Prospects and Perils” p. 3-7
Instead of conclusions

The power that dissipated with the withdrawal of the Soviet army must be recreated out of anarchy, by creating an Afghan state. The new state cannot be left alone and unsupervised, because there is a real risk for it to become once again a stronghold for international terrorists; the Afghan state should be internationally anchored. As long as there is no coherent strategy for Afghanistan, post-modernity in the form of regionalization only manages to amplify the connection of terrorist, mafia and drug trafficking networks with the global economy. Up to this point, the isolated attempts of regional networking do not take into consideration the realities of the pre-modern Afghan society and cannot have spectacular results. On the other hand, refusing to act, even in this clumsy way by skipping the stages, could prove a negligence one cannot afford.

Building the local governance may be a problematic action. On the one hand, its necessity is proven by its capacity to legitimize the central government, by involving the latter in improving the Afghans’ daily life. On the other hand, it determines the increase of the regional, ethnic and tribal fragmentation and the rise of certain very influent local chiefs that base their power on complex networks that include warlords, drug and arms trafficking.

The post-modern global system appeared after the collapse of the Soviet Union and it is the legacy of the Western political modernity, based in its turn on the national modern state and the structures it imposed at the international level. Afghanistan was never a part of the formal domination system, the buffer-state statute gave it a “splendid isolation” from the modernization process, which could not have been achieved by other means either. Can the pre-modern Afghan society be caught in the structures of a modern state, that in its turn be integrated in the international system facing an accelerated process of post-modernization? The way out of this dilemma is the fact that, nowadays, the international system is still dominated by sovereign states. And as the post-modern theorist Robert B.J. Walker states, as long as the concept of sovereignty cannot be contested by other concepts offering better explanations, building a sovereign state remains the solution. The dilemma appears when one tries to implement the theory. The sovereignty of the state resides in the nation (either civil nation or ethnic nation). Afghanistan does not offer the conditions for building none of the two types of nations mentioned above. Ethnicity has always been a fragmentation element; the recent civil war was fought under the shield of ethnicity, the Taliban rise to power is seen as the regaining of power by the

32 An example is the Virtual Silk Highway NATO project, launched in 2003 with the aim to assure the Internet access for the academic community in the Central Asia and the Caucasus. Although Afghanistan was not initially included, in 2004, NATO officials decided to include Afghanistan in the project in order to: connect the University of Kabul to Internet via satellite; organize videoconferences between the University of Kabul and the universities from the NATO member states and the neighboring countries; connect the campus of the University of Kabul to the Internet via fiber optic; train specialists, inclusively in the counter terrorism reaction field, by using e-learning methods.

dominant ethnic group. On the other hand, the civil nation is built around the concept of citizen, which is incompatible with the Afghan realities. Citizen means democracy, law, civil rights. Citizen means identification with a state, and not with a tribe, an ethnic group or with the larger religious community of Muslims, the ummah.

B. Anderson states that nations are “imagined societies” and E. Gellner proposes a model of nations built as a result of the modernization process of the society as a whole. Solutions can be found for the Afghan case. The dilemma that needs to be solved is that of surpassing the risks brought on by the co-existence of the three levels: pre-modern (the segmented Afghan society), modern (the attempt to build a centralized state), post-modern (the attempt to anchor the newly founded state in the global system, from a political, economic and cultural point of view). A shorter period of coexistence of the three levels is compulsory, which is why the modernization process of the Afghan society has to be forced. The change in Afghanistan implies the change of mentality. But the history of mentalities is a history of long duration.

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Appendix 2:
The Afghan ethnic mosaic