

# **Afghanistan as a Federal System with Autonomous Regions**

**A Monograph  
by  
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## Abstract

Afghanistan as a Federal System with Autonomous Regions by MAJ Bryan E Carroll, US Army, 63 pages.

It is debatable whether Afghanistan historically meets most accepted definitions of a nation-state. Afghanistan has historically been governed by local and tribal leaders with short-lived attempts at a strong central unitary government. Whenever there has been a strong central government, it has relatively quickly been removed from power. The people of Afghanistan resent strong central government and demonstrate this through their repeated revolts and coups that follow any bold government intrusion in their lives. King Amanullah's sweeping attempts at westernization of the country and the subsequent coup that overthrew him demonstrates this. This historical trend raises questions about the United States' current efforts to strengthen Afghanistan's central government. Given the current United States administration's goal to reevaluate Afghan policy, this research is timely.

This monograph asserts that Afghanistan should be governed utilizing a federal system with strong autonomous areas. It begins with a discussion of the modern history of Afghanistan, focusing on governance, and a brief background of Afghan cultural demographics. The second segment defines a federal system and an autonomous region. It also shows the strengths and weaknesses of each form of government. The third segment will be a case study of the countries of Spain, Belgium, and the autonomous region of Kurdistan in Iraq. Both Spain and Belgium are examples of nation-states that are made-up of strong ethnic groups in which a federal system with autonomous regions has helped to stabilize. The region of Kurdistan within Iraq is an example of a country using an autonomous region to decrease ethnic violence and separatist movements with a positive outcome. The analysis of these three case studies will focus first upon the strengths exhibited by these chosen political systems. The second part of the analysis will demonstrate the current parallels between these federal systems of government and autonomous regions and the situation in Afghanistan. The third portion of the analysis will explore the current challenges within Afghanistan that could be alleviated utilizing this alternative political system. Finally, this analysis will lead to a conclusion and recommendation that Afghanistan should alter its government's current design and adopt a federal system with strong autonomous regions. The monograph will not examine how to execute possible autonomous regions within Afghanistan and how the federal system should be specifically structured. This is a topic for future research.

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## Introduction

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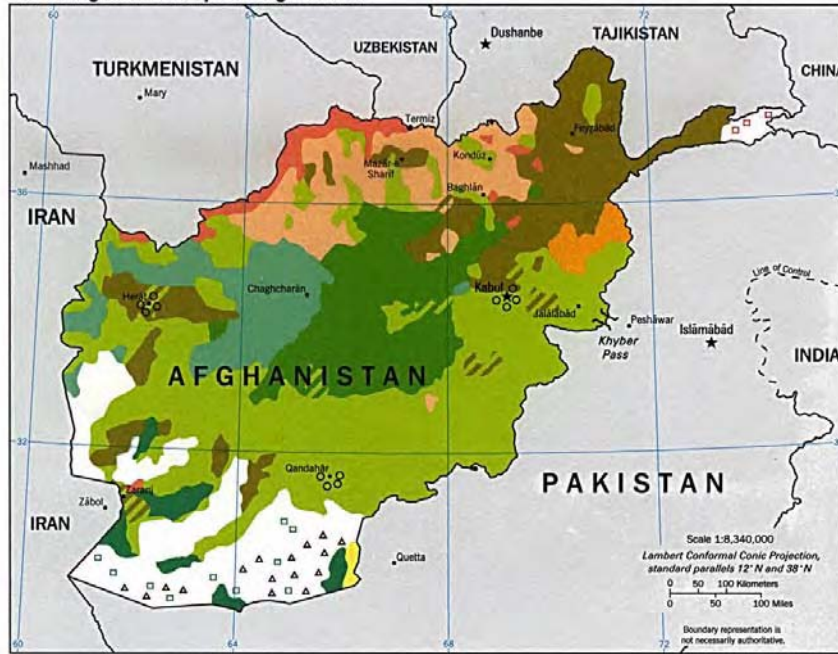
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# **Background of Afghanistan**

## **Governmental History**



**Ethnolinguistic Groups in Afghanistan**



Iranian	Turkic	Other
■ Baloch	□ Kirghiz	▲ Brahui
■ Aimak	■ Turkmen	■ Nuristani
■ Hazara	■ Uzbek	□ Sparsely populated or uninhabited
■ Pashtun		
○ Durrani, Ghilzai		
○ Qizilbash		
■ Tajik		

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<sup>1</sup> Perry-Castaneda Map Collection, University of Texas,  
[http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/middle\\_east\\_and\\_asia/afghanistan\\_ethnoling\\_97.jpg](http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/middle_east_and_asia/afghanistan_ethnoling_97.jpg)  
 (Accessed 28 July 2009)

The area that is now called Afghanistan has a long eventful governmental history. This monograph focuses on the time period beginning in the 1820's and continues to the present. This time period is contemporary and signaled the beginnings of a structured government in Kabul attempting global interaction. A period of struggle, called the Great Game, between the British Empire and the Russian Empire started in 1826 as an attempt to move Afghanistan into the modern age. Ultimately, the Game became most effective for the Afghan people.

The intervention and invasion by British forces of Afghanistan led to a national uprising that overthrew the British established government. Thus, the first Afghan Government was established under Dost Mohammed in Kabul.<sup>2</sup> The young government was not without challenges. Her-at and western Afghanistan was still under the leadership of the Durrani who sought closer ties to the Persians. This back and forth struggle with Russia and Great Britain would continue with numerous invasions and Afghan uprisings that would permanently evict the British from their territory.

The finale of the prolonged struggle with the British and Russians occurred in 1919 when Amanullah secured a treaty with the British at the end of the Third Anglo-Afghan War. This treaty contained a letter stating, "Afghanistan was free and independent in its internal and external affairs."<sup>3</sup> This treaty is viewed as the birth date of the modern country of Afghanistan.

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<sup>2</sup> Stephen Tanner, *Afghanistan*, (Cambridge, De Capo Press), 2002 166-167.

<sup>3</sup> Tanner, *Afghanistan*, 219

Regardless of the acknowledgement of Afghan sovereignty from outside powers, almost another century of struggle took place before any type of long-term government in Afghanistan was solidified.

In 1927, the new self-appointed King Amanullah, embarked upon a world-wide tour conferring with other leaders in such capitols as Cairo, London, Paris, and Moscow. He returned from his trip captivated by western society.<sup>4</sup> He immediately set himself upon a course to modernize Afghanistan and to centrally consolidate his power in Kabul. An example of the modernization efforts included making men shave their beards and wear top hats. These minor changes along with many sweeping changes were viewed as drastic by the tribal Afghan population. A rapid timeline enacting Amanullah's modernization efforts lead to a revolt in 1928 and to his ultimate removal as king.<sup>5</sup> The revolt was short lived and resulted in Amanullah's cousin coming to power. King Amanullah's actions demonstrate a critical principle. Consolidating power to a central government and making vast sweeping changes leads to revolt in Afghanistan.

Between 1928 and 1970 many changes in Afghanistan would set the stage for further turmoil. In the 1950's and 1960's, both the Soviet Union and the United States competed for power in the country. The United States launched a hydro-electric project within the country that

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<sup>4</sup> Tanner, *Afghanistan*, 222

<sup>5</sup> Tanner, *Afghanistan*, 222

rivalled the Tennessee Valley Authority development. The Soviet Union also launched numerous large scale projects, particularly in the north, that they hoped would expand their political and strategic influence. At the same time, a power struggle was brewing between Afghanistan's King Zahir and his brother-in-law, Afghanistan's Prime Minister Mohammed Daoud. King Zahir was much more enthralled with the West while Daoud was courting favor with Moscow.<sup>6</sup> Their conflicting ideologies put them on a collision course.

In 1964, Daoud's rapid modernization efforts and iron fist control led to the King asking him to resign. Surprising many, he accepted the request, and did just as the King asked. King Zahir realized that many of Daoud's modernizations were pushing the country rapidly towards an uprising.<sup>7</sup> He backed away from Daoud's attempts at a very vast and powerful central government. King Zahir set forth a plan intended to move the government towards greater autonomy at the local level. Unfortunately, Zahir did not move quickly enough, and gave Daoud the opportunity he needed. Daoud had enacted enough of these rapid changes so that he had indeed fostered the beginning of a revolt. By stepping down, Daoud had distanced himself from the King and allied himself with the Peoples Democratic Party of Afghanistan. In 1973 he used this alliance while the King was gone to Italy. Zahir's government was taken over in a bloodless

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<sup>6</sup> Tanner, *Afghanistan*, 226-227

<sup>7</sup> Tanner, *Afghanistan*, 228-229

coup.<sup>8</sup> Daoud's coup would lead to a spiral of events ending in the Soviet Invasion. Again, Afghanistan shows its disdain for rapid modernization and central consolidation of power.

Even though the Peoples Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) had brought Daoud to power, he recognized that they were also a threat to him. Daoud immediately began a harsh campaign of asserting the central government's power and cracking down on the PDPA. He also attempted to reestablish many of his projects modernizing Afghanistan. He believed these tasks should be done aggressively and immediately.<sup>9</sup> In 1978, Daoud's actions led to his overthrow by Communist military officers. In addition, the PDPA was given the responsibility of forming the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan. The PDPA did not learn from any of the historical examples, nor the very trend that brought them to power. They also began to move quickly to change Afghanistan within their Communist vision and again to consolidate power centrally in Kabul.

In October of 1978, the first revolts against the Communists began. Discontent started with the tribes in the hills and valleys then quickly spread to the cities. In 1979, large groups of Afghan Army troops were joining the rebels which lead to bombing campaigns in the cities, such as the bombing of Her-at.<sup>10</sup> The Soviet leadership was becoming increasingly aware that the

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<sup>8</sup> Tanner, *Afghanistan*, 229-230

<sup>9</sup> Tanner, *Afghanistan*, 231-232

<sup>10</sup> Tanner, *Afghanistan*, 232-233

Democratic Republic of Afghanistan could not retain power. On Christmas Eve of 1979, the Soviet's began their invasion of Afghanistan under the guise of supporting the floundering government. The Soviets moved quickly, assassinating Amin, the current leader, and putting Karmal in his place.<sup>11</sup>

The Soviets, like those before them, did not heed the lessons of history in Afghanistan. They again reestablished modernization and rapid change in Afghanistan with all governmental power being centrally controlled from Kabul. One of the main Soviet endeavors was to push the acceptance of Communism on the Afghan people by use of force.<sup>12</sup> The feelings of resentment that this generated initiated another uprising. This time the populous turned its focus upon the Soviets. The Mujahideen was born from this uprising and led a successful insurgency against the Soviets, evicting them from the country in 1989. Recently, General (Ret) Boris Gromov, the last Russian General in Afghanistan made a statement in Kabul saying that, "We tried to change the Afghans and bring them Communism, you (ISAF) are now making the same mistakes in trying to bring them Democracy."<sup>13</sup>

The Mujahideen established a short lived government in Kabul. The upheaval from the retreat of the Soviets and the lack of a clearly defined leadership among the Mujahideen led to

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<sup>11</sup> Tanner, *Afghanistan*, 235

<sup>12</sup> Tanner, *Afghanistan*, 237-238

<sup>13</sup> Statements by GEN (Ret) Boris Gromov, <http://www.foxnews.com/wires/2009Feb13/0,4670,EURussiaAfghanistanAnniversary,00.html> , 15Feb 09

immediate problems.<sup>14</sup> The Taliban had risen to power in southern Afghanistan around the area of Kandahar. They preyed upon the lawlessness of the era, and the people at first embraced them judging that order was better than complete anarchy. The Mujahideen were subsequently overthrown by Taliban forces in 1996. Again, we see a group, the Taliban in this instance, come to power in Afghanistan and immediately attempt to make vast and sweeping changes while attempting to centralize their power. Many of the changes evoked were directly and intrusively affecting people's lives due to the Taliban's radical view of Islam. This not only emboldened the disenfranchised Mujahideen, but brought new followers to their ranks. The Mujahideen established the Northern Alliance. Fighting between the Taliban and the Northern Alliance would last until the United States invasion in 2001.<sup>15</sup>

Following the 2001 invasion, the Bonn Conference laid out a framework for the government of Afghanistan.<sup>16</sup> This framework provided a strong unitary government in Kabul with a constitution and national assembly. The Bonn Conference neglected the development of lower level governance at the provincial and district level.<sup>17</sup> This gap in leadership and governance provided a situation where essential services were not meeting the populace's

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<sup>14</sup> Tanner, *Afghanistan*, 284

<sup>15</sup> Tanner, *Afghanistan*, 286-287

<sup>16</sup> Dennis Young, *Overcoming The Obstacles To Establishing A Democratic State In Afghanistan*, (Carlisle, USAWC 2007), 1

<sup>17</sup> Rubin, Barnett, "Afghanistan's Uncertain Transition From Turmoil To Normalcy," *Council on Foreign Relations*, CSR #12 (March 2006) 26-27

expectations. The inability of the Afghan National Security Forces to secure the country, led to a lack of penetration by the central government in Kabul. As a result of decreased penetration, the local populace began to perceive the leadership in Kabul as incapable of governing the country.<sup>18</sup>

Taliban forces have continued waging an insurgency against the government of Afghanistan, the United States, and the NATO led coalition forces that are within Afghanistan. They have taken advantage of leadership and governance gaps by establishing their own shadow-governments. In many areas, the shadow-governments have become the de facto leadership. The people of Afghanistan desire essential services without heavy intrusion into tribal issues and personal affairs. Currently, the Taliban's shadow-governments are a main source of essential services in many of the areas they occupy.<sup>19</sup>

Afghanistan also faces a severe economic crisis throughout the country. The government has no stable revenue collection program. The country as a whole has no stable industry that can produce a constant revenue stream. Currently, unemployment is at approximately forty percent, and the government's annual budget has a deficit of 290 million dollars.<sup>20</sup> Thirty three percent of

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<sup>18</sup> The Asia Institute, *Afghanistan in 2009*, <http://www.asiafoundation.org/resources/pdfs/Afghanistanin2009.pdf> (Accessed 28 October 2009)

<sup>19</sup> Rubin, *Afghanistan's Uncertain Transition*, 26-27

<sup>20</sup> *CIA World Fact Book, Afghanistan*. <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/af.html> (Accessed 24 February 2009)



Afghanistan's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is generated from illicit means such as heroin trade.<sup>21</sup> Afghanistan must address these issues that bolster the strength of the insurgency while undermining the government.

Historical evidence clearly shows that Afghanistan has a defined trend of revolt against their government. Within each example, the sitting government was carrying out two distinct actions. Each government was trying to conduct radical and drastic changes to the culture of Afghanistan and trying to assert a strong central unitary government in Kabul. In every single instance, this led to a successful insurgency against the current government and eventually to the demise of their control.

## **Ethnic Background of Afghanistan**

Afghanistan is a country of approximately 647,000 square kilometers, or roughly the size of the state of Texas in the United States.<sup>22</sup> Land size is critical because within a relatively small area, there are seven distinct and ideologically conflicting ethnic groups. They are the Pashtun, Tajik, Hazara, Uzbek, Aimack, Turkmen, and Baloch.<sup>23</sup> Each of these groups identifies strongly with a country other than Afghanistan. For example, the Pashtun ethnic group heavily identifies

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<sup>21</sup> *CIA World Fact Book Afghanistan*

<sup>22</sup> *CIA World Fact Book Afghanistan*

<sup>23</sup> *CIA World Fact Book Afghanistan*

with their Pashtun brethren in neighboring Pakistan. This type of individual association leads to Afghans not seeing themselves as citizens of Afghanistan but rather as members of a specific ethnic group.<sup>24</sup>

Exacerbating the situation, there are further divisions within each major ethnic group. The Pashtun, for example, is divided between the Ghilzai and the Durrani Super Tribes. These Super Tribes have ancient conflicts among each another. The tension created by these two tribes alone has been the root of serious internal conflict within Afghanistan. We see recurring evidence of the same type of internal strife among the other main ethnic groups within the country. Warlords and competition amongst smaller elements within the ethnic groups creates this strife. Each conflict contributes to the division of the country. Within this type of culture, Afghanistan has developed a high degree of ethno-centralism causing ethnic groups to look for leadership only from those within their particular ethnic group.

In addition to ethno-centralism, the geography of Afghanistan lends itself to further isolation of ethnic groups. Afghanistan is characterized by large mountains and sweeping desert like expanses. These features isolate even smaller groups within the same ethnic group.<sup>25</sup> For example, a Tajik in one mountain valley may live only a couple of miles from another group of Tajiks in a neighboring valley. They most likely do not know each other and may not be able to

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<sup>24</sup> Young, *Overcoming the Obstacles*, 10

<sup>25</sup> Young, *Overcoming the Obstacles*, 10.

understand one another. Many of these enclaves have varying dialects of their ethnic language. Some are discernable to one another, others are not. Many of these sub-ethnic groups have grievances towards one another that lead to sporadic warfare between them.

In addition, Afghans historically and culturally see themselves in a reverse western order of hierarchy of belonging. Within the western world, people generally see themselves as a member of their country, state, town, and then their unique family unit. Afghans understand this in a completely reverse order. They see themselves as first belonging to their family, their extended family, their clan, their tribe, their ethnic group, and then part of Afghanistan. This further compounds ethnic divisions within the country and creates an atmosphere of strong local governance. Historically, this has led to a strong desire for local leadership and a dislike of external influence upon the local authority.

The Afghan people slowly established a strong local government system based upon their family, clan, tribal, and ethnic backgrounds. In many of its dynamics, it is very similar to a federal system in its make-up. They have resolution of routine issues at a low level, raising major issues to a Jirga or meeting of the clan leaders. In all of the historical examples cited prior, insurgencies grew from these small-scale families and clans into full-blown revolts with the usurping of power from this system.

# Federalism and Autonomous Areas

## Federalism

Federalism is a political philosophy and governmental structure that stresses power sharing amongst varying levels of government.<sup>26</sup> It is widely used within the western world, especially in Europe, and most noticeably here in the United States. For example, within the United States there is a federal government as well as state and local governments with varying levels of responsibility and sovereignty accorded to them from a constitution. Responsibilities are divided between these elements in order to attain a greater degree of responsiveness to the local population and to resolve conflict at the lowest possible level.<sup>27</sup>

One of the primary ideas behind Federalism is its ability to balance divergent interests. “One of these interests is to secure a peaceful, stable social environment and political order by creating a broad set of options for cooperation and mergers among nation-states.”<sup>28</sup> The balance is necessary in order to protect, “the right to preserve their individual character and idiosyncrasies

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<sup>26</sup> Jurgen Rose, Johannes Traut, *Federalism and Decentralization*, (Garmich, Germany George C Marshall Center 2001) 1

<sup>27</sup> Rose, Traut, *Federalism*, 1

<sup>28</sup> Rose, Traut, *Federalism*, 2

while being integrated into the larger whole.”<sup>29</sup> This is of vital importance since the purpose of federalism is to provide for the people while maintaining their identities.

Federalism also creates opportunities for conflict resolution through its various power sharing techniques amongst the different levels of governance.<sup>30</sup> It has received much study in recent years due to its potential to alleviate ethnic, minority and sub-nation-state conflict before it becomes outright bloody warfare. Federalism, within this capacity, protects the cultural distinction of one people and the right of the nation state to have its own internal sovereignty. This provides for the protection of minority groups’ human rights and while giving an outlet for their grievances.<sup>31</sup>

One of the key elements of federalism is its adherence to the principle of non-violence within the political arena of governance. Violence in many countries is fueled by ethnic grievances focused upon the group’s suppressed participation within the nation-state government.<sup>32</sup> Federalism alleviates this by ensuring that the populous of the nation-state maintain participation. It further creates the opportunity to realize this participation thru the

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<sup>29</sup> Rose, Traut, *Federalism*, 2

<sup>30</sup> Rose, Traut, *Federalism*, 3

<sup>31</sup> Rose, Traut, *Federalism*, 4

<sup>32</sup> Rose, Traut, *Federalism*, 4

inclusion of the ethnic groups within its structure without moving towards secessionist activities that have struck many nation-states in recent years.

Cooperation is another tenet of Federalism. It is the key to progress without contradiction. The original Christian idea of “unity in variety” provides an example of this dynamic in action. The goal of this tenet is to solve controversies through peaceful means giving each side an equal voice regardless of their social/economical standing. Thus, federalism rejects extremely strong centralized governments due to the tendency to negatively impact upon participation by minority groups.<sup>33</sup>

An important strength of the federalist system of governance is the number of thriving usages within the Twentieth and Twenty-First Centuries. Beginning with the United States of America, moving through Europe, and technically to the Russian Federation; the federal style of government has been widely successful. It has provided a way for nation-states to embrace diverse ethnic groups, opinions, and political groups still maintaining a civil discourse between them.<sup>34</sup> It has provided for equal participation in governance and alleviated many conflicts before they became outright strife or warfare.

The federal system is not without its challenges especially when regions or states are established along ethnic grounds. Studies have shown that tensions are encouraged when a core

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<sup>33</sup> Rose, Traut, *Federalism*, 27

<sup>34</sup> Rose, Traut, *Federalism*, 28-29

ethnic region, one in which a numerically superior ethnic group is in the preponderance of the population, is broken up in this way.<sup>35</sup> The minority ethnic groups still feel grievances due to possible geographical size disparities even if given other regions to govern.

When these regions are constituted along ethnic lines, the possibility of increasing secessionist feelings amongst the separate regions of governance materializes.<sup>36</sup> The regions have no reason to look to a central level of government and instead look to a separate nation-state that includes the specific ethnic group with which they identify. It can also have the effect of polarizing cultural artifacts such as different languages or strong cultural differences which make these regions gravitate away from one another. Any of these challenges can lead to tensions and further destabilizing activities such as insurgency.

One possible alternative to division along ethnic boundaries is to break ethnic areas into multiple regional state areas. This method has been successful in limiting these problem sets. A possible negative outcome of this alternative can be seen within the federal country of Belgium and will be expounded upon in the case study section.<sup>37</sup>

Another possible negative outcome is represented by warlords that can be found in various regions throughout the world, to include Afghanistan. They represent another negative

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<sup>35</sup> Alexander Murphy, "Territorial Policies in Multi-Ethnic States," *Geographical Review*, *American Geographical Society* (1989) 413-414

<sup>36</sup> Murphy, *Territorial Policies*, 415-416

<sup>37</sup> Young, *Overcoming The Obstacles*, 14-15

influence that could usurp the power and authority from the regional or sub-regional level governments. As regional figures, they are mainly focused upon their own personal economic gain and will utilize illicit means, fear inducing tactics, and strong militias of their own in opposition to the federal or regional authorities. Warlords are a threat to the federal system when they become so strong that they are the defacto local level of government bringing into question the need for federal government involvement.

### **Autonomous Areas**

An autonomous area, or region, within a country is an area that has been granted a degree of autonomy from the nation-state level of government. These areas may be necessary due to ethnic regions, political feelings, or deep geographic divisions within the nation-state.

Autonomous areas may be based around a region, a sub-state, a city, or simply a geographical division.<sup>38</sup> Some examples include the region of Kurdistan within Iraq, the autonomous regions within Belgium, and the provinces within the country of Spain.

Autonomous regions are generally found within federal styles of governance. Part of the reason for this is their inherent ability to internally share power and divide power amongst varying levels of governance. Another reason is their emphasis upon solving conflicts between

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<sup>38</sup> Scott Greer, *Nationalism and Self-Government*, (State University, NY, 2007) 2-3



people with differing schools of thought through peaceful means.<sup>39</sup> Autonomous regions have been seen as examples of the ability of these federalist governments to provide ethnic or political minorities with greater participation and protection.

In many countries, these various ethnic and political groups are interspersed within the whole of the country. For that scenario, a simple federal style of government demonstrates the ability to address the needs of all of its citizens.<sup>40</sup> However, within nation-states where deep ethnic or political differences are coupled with geographical division, utilization of these autonomous areas have assisted in further alleviating tensions.<sup>41</sup> It has been shown that in many cultures, people gain and maintain their identity from their geographical locations. The people of the area know that their voices are being heard when they are represented by a leader with whom they can identify. A leader of such an area will bring local issues to the national level. Thus, the usage of autonomous areas to defuse conflict and provide for greater participation should be emphasized in nation-states with this type of ethnic and geographical division.

An example of this ethnic tie to a geographical area is the concept of, “Manteqa.” Manteqa is found in the Middle East, but also within various other portions of the developing world. Simply put, it refers to the very strong bond between a specific ethnic group and a specific

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<sup>39</sup> Greer, *Nationalism and Self-Government*, 3-4

<sup>40</sup> Greer, *Nationalism and Self-Government*, 6

<sup>41</sup> Henry Hale, “The Federal Option For Afghanistan,” *East West Institute Policy Brief*, Vol 1, No 7, (2002) 3

piece of geographical terrain.<sup>42</sup> Manteqa is formulated by large expanses of time spent by one ethnic group in one area. This concept of Manteqa within Afghanistan has been shown to have strong occurrence within the Tajik, Uzbek, and Hazara ethnic groups. The Pashtuns have not exhibited as strong an idea of Manteqa. Manteqa has played a significant part in helping to establish autonomous areas in other areas of the world by examining where exactly ethnic groups identify their homeland.<sup>43</sup>

Autonomous regions are a good solution to many regional tensions. However, there are drawbacks. As much as they serve to protect an ethnic or political group, they can also be shown to further polarize differences. As demonstrated within the case study of Kurdistan, the Kurdish people have shown signs of moving away from, instead of towards, the central government of Iraq. This is a danger that can become a reality. If the group that serves as the identity within the autonomous area continues to gravitate away from the central government and towards another country, it can exacerbate secessionist ideas. Regardless of these drawbacks, autonomous regions bring the best chance of success for most of these politically and ethnically charged nation-states.

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<sup>42</sup> Nigel Allen, "Rethinking Governance In Afghanistan," *Journal of International Affairs*, (2003) 196

<sup>43</sup> Allen, Rethinking Governance, 196-197

## **Case Studies**

This monograph will utilize three studies to show the positive and negative aspects of federal government structures and autonomous areas. The first, Belgium, is a nation-state that came very close to being torn apart by large internal divisions spearheaded by ethnic and linguistic groups. The nation-state of Spain will illuminate the steps taken to address the challenges with ethnic groups that have deep grievances with the central government. In this case federal governance and autonomous areas have had positive influence in controlling secessionist feelings. The final case study will examine the autonomous area of Kurdistan within the country of Iraq. Focus will be given to the steps taken by a government to utilize an autonomous area to reduce tensions between ethnic groups, prevent secessionist activities, and cease possible insurgent activities.

## Belgium



Belgium was a unitary state until 1831. It has since become a federal state. Leading up to this change, a number of factors contributed to conflict among the polity. First, a wide ethnic gap exists between the French speaking Walloons in the south and the Flemish speaking people of the northern region. Ideology also played a part with the differences between the Conservative

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<sup>44</sup> Perry-Castaneda Map Collection, University of Texas,  
[http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/cia08/belgium\\_sm\\_2008.gif](http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/cia08/belgium_sm_2008.gif) (Accessed 28 July 2009)

Catholics and Protestant Liberals.<sup>45</sup> One of the final delineations was based upon the differences between labor and capitol economic thinkers.<sup>46</sup> These conflicting ideas slowly brought about a situation where a unitary system has given way to a federal system with increasing degrees of autonomy within their respective regions of the country.

Belgium is a relatively small country that is roughly the size of the state of Maryland with 30,500 square kilometers within its borders.<sup>47</sup> Situated along the northern coast of Europe, it is bordered by the countries of France, Germany, Luxembourg, and the Netherlands. Belgium has a low infant mortality rate, high life expectancy, and a ninety-nine percent literacy rate produced through a robust schooling system. Its ethnicities are broken down into approximately fifty eight percent Flemish, thirty one percent Walloon, and eleven percent mixed minorities.<sup>48</sup> The country is divided into 10 provinces within three regions with the capital city in Brussels.

During the establishment of Belgium in 1831, the French speaking nobility were able to preserve their power against the Dutch King Willem I. Willem wanted to impose the Dutch

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<sup>45</sup> Anthony Mughan, "Belgian History", in *Western Europe 2000*, (The Gresham Press, Old Woking, Surrey, UK, 2000) 65

<sup>46</sup> Alcantara, Gonzales, "Cultural, Ethnic and Economic Factors Behind The Belgian Federalization Process," in *Federalism and Decentralism: Perspectives for the Transformation Process in Eastern and Central Europe*. Edited by Rose, Jurgen; Traut, Johannes. (Hamburg, Germany, LIT Verlag, 2001) 172-173

<sup>47</sup> *CIA World Factbook Belgium*, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/BE.html> (Accessed 2 June09)

<sup>48</sup> *CIA World Factbook Belgium*

language on the southern provinces, however Article 30 of the new constitution allowed for freedom of language.<sup>49</sup> This small provision led to the French, or Walloon, dominance over the Flemish. The Walloons spoke French and most of the trade was done in French. Therefore, the Walloon minority controlled most of the country's trade. The Flemish and French elites were both Catholic, a strong religious tie that kept any Flemish backlash peaceful and slow to develop. Starting in 1850, industrialization of the country again led to the importance of language re-asserting itself. The citizens in the differing parts of the country that had not depended on one another now were forced by industrialization to be in constant contact. The issue of language, while avoidable before, now became a major issue.<sup>50</sup> More specific legislation became law officially recognizing bilingualism in the Flemish provinces and French in the southern Walloon region.<sup>51</sup>

In 1893 the Flemish accomplished their goal as bilingualism became officially recognized by the general electoral system.<sup>52</sup> Belgium's money, stamps, laws, and government paperwork were printed in both languages. The Flemish continued this movement by establishing Flemish Universities, creating Flemish Crests, and commissioning a National Anthem. The

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<sup>49</sup> Alcantara, *Federalism*, 172-173

<sup>50</sup> Mughan, *Belgian History*, 66

<sup>51</sup> Alcantara, *Federalism*, 173

<sup>52</sup> Hooghe, Liesbet, *Belgium: From Regionalism to Federalism*, P74-75

Flemish continued to move towards more separation and emancipation from the Walloons leading to greater friction between the two groups. Between the two World Wars, the “territorial principle”, was introduced, strengthening regional languages, and allowing for regional languages to be determined by the citizens of that region.<sup>53</sup> After the Second World War, the political cohesion of the northern and southern parts of the country became more consistent and they combined their peoples with a traditional unionist Belgian establishment.

In 1962 and 1963 Linguistic Laws established the four linguistic territories of Flemish, French, Bilingual Brussels, and German.<sup>54</sup> In 1970, a constitutional reform introduced linguistic territories into the constitution of Belgium. In addition, the majority principle was dissolved within the parliament preventing any threat to the ethnic minority of the Walloons.<sup>55</sup> In 1980, the three regions that are in place today were formally established within the government. In 1988, the provisions for a complete federal system were codified into law, with respect towards the powers that the regional governments would control and how the federal government would interact with them.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Alcantara, *Federalism*, 173

<sup>54</sup> Alcantara, *Federalism*, 173

<sup>55</sup> Hooghe, *Liesbet, Belgium*, 75

<sup>56</sup> Mughan, *Belgian History*, 66

The current government of Belgium has solidified for the time being. Their executive branch, at the federal level, is led by the King. He is Commander in Chief of the armed forces and represents Belgium as a nation-state when dealing with foreign powers. He does not have many true governmental powers. The majority of the country's power lies within the Prime Minister and the cabinet. The King appoints the Prime Minister, but in reality it is a result of coalition building within the legislative branch.<sup>57</sup>

The Legislative Branch is called the Federal Parliament and is comprised of the Senate and the Chamber of People's Representatives. The representatives are elected for a maximum of four years and have the ability to vote for no confidence in the government and force a restructuring of it. The number of representatives allowed are calculated through a mathematical formula to determine the correct amount to represent each region with a maximum of 150. The Senate is comprised of 71 members and is elected from the regions, again utilizing a mathematical system to determine the correct numbers to represent each region. The Senate can recommend legislation but has no veto ability over the Representatives. These vague delineations between the houses have led to stalemates, and a great number of votes of no-confidence forcing government restructuring.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> *CIA World Factbook Belgium*

<sup>58</sup> *CIA World Factbook Belgium*



The Regions have their own separate assemblies and governments to administrate their respective areas. There are also separate assemblies and governments for sub-regional areas due to linguistic differences.<sup>59</sup> The regions have been given the ability to make and break treaties with foreign powers, control educational establishments and industrial areas, establish laws, and provide for the needs of their citizens. However, revenue collection is still administered by the federal government, and then divided among the regions to administer.<sup>60</sup>

There are a number of issues with Belgium's current system. One of the largest is the issue of residual powers or powers that the autonomous regions retain. These residual powers have been assigned to the regions but only in theory, not codified into law<sup>61</sup>. This vagueness is due to the lack of solidification of the federal government of Belgium. The uncertainty created has the propensity, within this fluid system, to lead to additional grievances toward the central government. Increased grievances, thus, lead to increased regionalism that could adversely affect the nation-state of Belgium as we know it today.<sup>62</sup>

Treaty making capability with other nations is usually reserved for the federal government; however, this is not the case in Belgium. All of the regions have the ability to make

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<sup>59</sup> Alcantara, *Federalism*, 175

<sup>60</sup> Alcantara, *Federalism*, 175

<sup>61</sup> Alcantara, *Federalism*, 176

<sup>62</sup> Mughan, *Belgian History*, 68

and break treaties with other countries.<sup>63</sup> This could be minimized or negated by a constitutional reform, but for now, this is the current law. Direct friction between the regions over treaties with other countries could result in greater regionalism. While not a current issue, it is a potential grievance that looms upon the horizon.

Economically, the federal state of Belgium bases its revenues upon taxes that are given directly to the regions to administer. This does not leave a great deal of money for federal administration and use. In addition, a 1998 settlement establishes the ability of the regions to shift a fiscal responsibility to the federal government if they cannot meet it.<sup>64</sup> This does not bode well for the fiscal health of the federal government in a country where public debt has reached one hundred and thirty percent of the country's Gross Domestic Product.<sup>65</sup> This further serves as a friction point between the regions and could fuel additional grievances and further regionalism.

Another issue with the current government is the proportional voting system based on the population of individual regions. This generally leads to party coalitions among the regions that change drastically throughout any given session of the Belgium legislature.<sup>66</sup> These coalitions force consensus thinking that stagnates and outright ceases many law-making sessions.

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<sup>63</sup> Alcantara, *Federalism*, 175

<sup>64</sup> Alcantara, *Federalism*, 176

<sup>65</sup> Hooghe, Liesbet, *Belgium*, 89

<sup>66</sup> Alcantara, *Federalism*, 176

As described above, a federal government with autonomous areas has many challenges as these regions attempt to grab power and influence for their individual region. The federal government must face highly corrosive forces brought on by regionalism, language differences, ethnic differences, and varying economic development. There were many times in the modern history of Belgium that these forces could have torn apart the small country and left it in complete disarray.<sup>67</sup> However, the federal system of government was able to address these grievances to an extent great enough to maintain the nation state. The hope is that as the country continues to successfully develop, the solutions will be solidified into laws, and constitutional reforms will address the challenges in greater detail.<sup>68</sup>

Belgium's economic development is another success that has stemmed from the federal and autonomous region system. As was noted above within the challenges that face Belgium, codification of revenue sharing and taxation is still a developing issue. Nonetheless, before the movement to a federal system of governance, the country of Belgium was being pulled in numerous directions due to divergent economic interests. Industrial and agricultural based economic systems in the varying regions were threatening to exacerbate many of the other issues facing the country.<sup>69</sup> The movement to a federal system of governance with autonomous areas

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<sup>67</sup> Alcantara, *Federalism*, 177-178

<sup>68</sup> Alcantara, *Federalism*, 178

<sup>69</sup> Hooghe, Liesbet, *Belgium*, 89

served to alleviate this issue. Within the regulatory and statutory provisions, each region chose their respective economic system and laws that would govern it. This served to significantly increase economic development and per capita income while alleviating economic tensions.<sup>70</sup> After these changes were incorporated, Belgium's GDP has grown at a rate much greater than before, and above all estimates.<sup>71</sup> For the citizens of Belgium this has led to a higher standard of living and the choice in how they want to make that living economically.<sup>72</sup>

Belgium exposes how the issues described can have a large negative impact upon the stability of a nation-state. The country also provides a modern look at how a federalist style of government can be used to alleviate issues and bring the regions together for greater to address grievances, protect ethnic groups from oppression, provide for greater governmental penetration, and, through time, stabilize a nation state. Of all the lessons learned, the most important may be that time is a key commodity. It has taken Belgium over a century to stabilize to its current state and may need more governmental solidification in the future. Stabilization is not a quick fix, but rather one that takes time to accomplish with any nation that has regional challenges.

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<sup>70</sup> Ray Riley, "Economy of Belgian," in *Western Europe 2000*, (The Gresham Press, Old Woking, Surrey, UK, 2000) 69

<sup>71</sup> Barrio, Robert, "Economic Growth in a Cross Section of Countries," *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, VOL 106, No 2 (May 1991) 406-407.

<sup>72</sup> Riley, Economy of Belgian, 70-71

## Spain



The Spanish government of today is a constitutional monarchy composed of seventeen autonomous regions. The executive branch consists of a Council of Ministers presided over by a

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<sup>73</sup> Perry-Castaneda Map Collection, University of Texas,  
[http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/cia08/spain\\_sm\\_2008.gif](http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/cia08/spain_sm_2008.gif) (Accessed 28 July 2009)

President that is appointed by the King, and confirmed by the parliament after general elections.<sup>74</sup> The legislative branch is comprised of the Congress of Deputies, elected by popular vote, and the Senate that is elected by popular vote and regional legislatures.<sup>75</sup> It is arguably one of the most decentralized governments in Europe, next to Belgium. It is this decentralization that has done much to stabilize the country.

From 1923 to 1931 Spain was governed by General Miguel Primo de Rivera. His rule ended with his overthrow and the establishment of the Second Spanish Republic. This then led to the Spanish Civil War and the rule from 1939 until 1975 by General Francisco Franco. During his rule he attempted to suppress many separatist agendas especially from the Basque and Catalonia Regions. They had been granted greater autonomous status from the Second Republic in 1931 which Franco had supplanted during his coming to power.<sup>76</sup> Upon his death in 1975 his son Prince Juan Carlos came to power. With his ascension to the throne, ethnic desires with separatist ideals began to come to the forefront, especially within the Basque and Catalonia Regions. The Basque and Catalonians saw this as an opportunity to retake what they had lost under Franco. The

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<sup>74</sup> CIA World Factbook Spain, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/SP.html#top> (Accessed 2 June 09)

<sup>75</sup> CIA World Factbook Spain

<sup>76</sup> Morales, Maria, and Moles, Eduard, "The Spanish Autonomic State," in *Federalism and Decentralism: Perspectives for the Transformation Process in Eastern and Central Europe*. Edited by Rose, Jurgen; and Traut, Johannes (Hamburg, Germany, LIT Verlag, 2001) 179-180

Spanish Constitution Debate of 1978 sought to alleviate these desires through reforms made to the nature of the government of Spain.<sup>77</sup>

The Constitutional Debate grew from a number of differing political and ethnic factions. The largest issue at hand was the desire for decentralization. There were two driving forces behind this issue. First, there were the groups that had nationalist aspirations. The strongest of these were the Basque and Catalonia Regions.<sup>78</sup> Secondly, there was a shared perception amongst most of the Spanish people that democracy and autonomy were an inter-related topic<sup>79</sup>. After an extremely strong central unitary government under Franco, they had a vast desire to move away from this type of governance.

Unfortunately, the Spanish Constitution of 1978 was written with much ambiguity. Coming to a consensus was much more difficult than imagined. The Spaniards thus laid a framework for how the government would be established, leaving it vague and only establishing general guidelines. More important though was the creation of the Statute of Autonomy with the Constitution. This document lays out in detail how a region executes becoming an autonomous region.<sup>80</sup> Each time this process is executed, the Statute of Autonomy slightly changes, but

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<sup>77</sup> Morales and Moles, *Spanish Autonomic State*, 180

<sup>78</sup> Greer, *Nationalism and Self-Government*, 22-23

<sup>79</sup> Morales and Moles, *Spanish Autonomic State*, 180

<sup>80</sup> Greer, *Nationalism and Self-Government*, 98-99

generally follows this model.<sup>81</sup> The first step is determining the level of autonomy that each region will have. These are established by the individual region, along with the central government, within the desires of that region. The second step expressly demands the explanation and ratification of the governmental structure for that region to be completed. The determination of the borders of the region is the third step. The most important question being, will it exist along already drawn borders of a region or, because of ethnic group dispositions, should the borders be re-drawn. Next, the revenue sharing plan and revenue collection program between the region and the Spanish Central Government must be agreed upon. Finally, between the National Parliament of Spain and the Regional Parliament that is established, decisions are made solidifying which laws and responsibilities the region will execute and enforce and which the central government will continue to enforce.<sup>82</sup>

There are a number of very unique and important facets of this structure engineered by the Spanish. First, they have firmly laid the framework for these regional governments on the passions of the people. Each region will look different from all the others. The people of that region choose how it is to be constituted, and thus reflect their expressed desires.<sup>83</sup> Secondly, the communities can choose at a regional or local level which responsibilities and laws they want to

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<sup>81</sup> Morales and Moles, *Spanish Autonomic State*, 184

<sup>82</sup> Morales and Moles, *Spanish Autonomic State*, 184

<sup>83</sup> Greer, *Nationalism and Self Government*, 33



enforce and which will be left to a higher body of governance. This, again, lets the people choose what they want and do not want.<sup>84</sup> Third, because each Statute of Autonomy is different for each region, they again firmly express what the people of that region want. These three facets allow for a great deal of local participation in the establishment of the regional and local governments and have been very productive in dealing with ethnic grievances.

Between 1979 and 1983, however, Spain had a great deal of political upheaval. There was a failed coup d'état at the national level, numerous subsequent changes in the national government, and finally a splintering of the two main national political parties. In 1981, the government signed what was known as the, "Autonomic Pacts", by which all of the Spanish Regions became autonomous regions.<sup>85</sup> This established a total of 17 autonomous communities in the country. The establishment of the Autonomic Pacts lent a degree of similarity to the before-mentioned Statutes of Autonomy.<sup>86</sup> While retaining the ability of the people of that region to choose which regulations and revenue collections they wished to exercise, it established minimum standards for governance, that would help establish a streamlined system between the federal and regional levels.<sup>87</sup> It also required a system to resolve disputes between the federal

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<sup>84</sup> Morales and Moles, *Spanish Autonomic State*, 185

<sup>85</sup> Morales and Moles, *Spanish Autonomic State*, 187

<sup>86</sup> Greer, *Nationalism and Self-Government*, 112-114

<sup>87</sup> Morales and Moles, *Spanish Autonomic State*, 187

government and regions as well as regions with other regions. This system became established as the Constitutional Court System and would deal with disputes in an impartial manner.

In 1992, a second round of Autonomic Pacts were signed that sought to alleviate some ongoing problems. The Spanish central government was forced to deal with each region differently due to the provisions that the particular region had established for itself. This second round of pacts sought to homogenize the interactions between different levels of government in order to allow for more effective relationships between the governments at all levels.<sup>88</sup> The new Pacts also further regulated minimum requirements for legislative bodies at the local levels, in order to streamline revenue distribution.

These changes led to an ability to grant greater revenue sharing to the regions. In 1992 the regions reciprocated approximately fifteen percent of what their people paid in taxes. By 1997, the amount was increased to thirty percent.<sup>89</sup> The changes also led to a greater ability of the national government to partake in European Union votes since the regional legislative bodies were able to make their opinions known in a much more efficient way.

The Spain have benefited from the recent changes in a number of positive ways. First, the federal government has addressed many ethnic grievances that led to successful conflict

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<sup>88</sup> Gillespie, Richard, "History of Spain," in *Western Europe 2000*, (The Gresham Press, Old Woking, Surrey, UK, 2000) 483

<sup>89</sup> Morales and Moles, *Spanish Autonomic State*, 189

resolution in a peaceful and structured fashion.<sup>90</sup> Secondly, it has successfully and peacefully transformed a central system of government into a decentralized form of governance that is very responsive to the needs of the people. Along with this, it has also helped to develop local community governance that had been traditionally neglected. Third, it has inspired a culture of autonomy through progressive reforms that have become ingrained into the Spanish psyche. Spain has finally stabilized, if only for the time being, the separatist and nationalistic tendencies of the Basque and Catalanian people.<sup>91</sup> All of these outcomes can be seen as overwhelming successes.

The negative aspects to this pattern of governance established by the Spanish are two-fold. To begin, there continues to be extremist Basque and Catalanian elements that attempt to exercise their separatist desires through terrorist acts. The majority of the people in these regions are satisfied at this time with their level of governance, but insurgents have not been completely dissuaded.<sup>92</sup> Also, this system is still evolving and is generally young in nature. It remains to be seen if this government will continue to lay a firm groundwork for long term stability. In the short term, though, it has done much to stabilize the country.

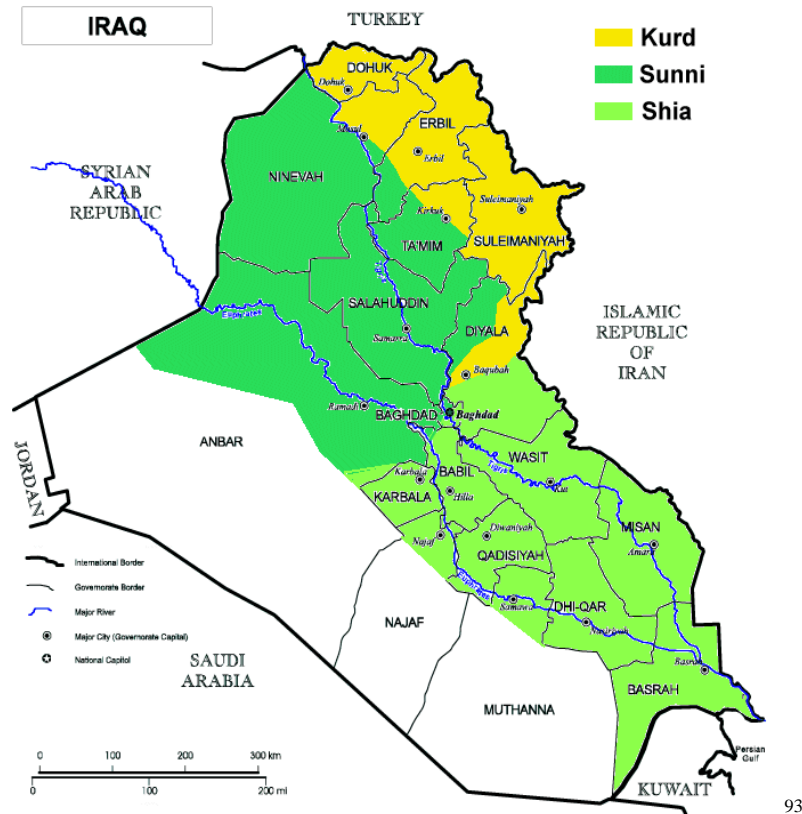
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<sup>90</sup> Greer, *Nationalism and Self-Government*, 113-114

<sup>91</sup> Greer, *Nationalism and Self-Government*, 33, 37-38

<sup>92</sup> Jan Beck, *The Basque Power Sharing Experience, Nations and Nationalism*, (Univ. of Amsterdam, The Netherlands, 2008) 78-79

## Kurdistan



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The Kurdish People are, by far, the largest ethnic group in the world without a home country. They stretch across most of Northern Iraq, North-Western Iran, Syria, and Turkey with smaller enclaves spread out beyond these boundaries. They exercise strong influence in the

<sup>93</sup> Global Security, Map of Iraq, <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/iraq/images/iraq-map-group1.gif> (Accessed 29 July 2009)

countries of Iraq, Turkey, and Iran where they make up approximately twenty three, twenty, and ten percent of the population respectively.<sup>94</sup> For centuries, the Kurds have exercised great power over trade routes in their area and have been recognized as one of the most developed civilizations in the region. Following World War One, when the boundaries of newly formed countries were redrawn, the Kurds failed to achieve statehood and instead became a substantial ethnic group within these new nation-states.

In 1918, after the defeat of the Ottoman Empire, the Kurds were certain they would be given a nation of their own. US President Woodrow Wilson seemed to echo this opinion when he stated, “Other nationalities, which are now under Turkish rule, should be assured an undoubted security of life, and an absolutely unmolested opportunity of autonomous development.”<sup>95</sup> Nonetheless, at the Paris Peace Conference in 1919, these hopes were dashed when the Treaty of Versailles took no action in regard to the Kurds.<sup>96</sup> In 1921 the Treaty of Sevres again gave the Kurds hope for independence, but it did not come to fruition. Both the Turkish people and the European Powers fought over the resource rich areas that were home to the Kurds. Boundaries for new nation-states were drawn up that did not take into account regional ethnic groups, leaving the Kurds again without a nation of their own.

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<sup>94</sup> Stephen Miller, *The Kurds*, (MMAS Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, 2005) 7

<sup>95</sup> Miller, *The Kurds*, 10

<sup>96</sup> Miller, *The Kurds*, 11

After these setbacks, the Kurds fought off and on with the government of Iraq from the 1930's until 1970. Mahmud Barzinji fought against the British in the 1930's<sup>97</sup> and Mulla Mustafa Barzani fought against the Iraqi Government in the 1950's and 1960's. Barzani was responsible for the formation of the Kurdish Democratic Party (KDP) as a political party with its own internal defense forces. In 1970, the Ba'athist Regime in Baghdad settled the issue for a time by guaranteeing the Kurds the right of self government in their region and equal representation within the Iraqi legislative process.<sup>98</sup> In 1974, however, the Iraqi government made constitutional reforms without Kurdish participation that negated most of the guarantees. The Kurds refused to accept the reforms, so the Iraqi government sent in their military to occupy the Kurdish region. The Kurds argument for autonomy is based on the 1970 agreement.

From 1974 until 1991, the Kurdish people suffered great atrocities at the hands of Saddam Hussein, the Iraqi government, and military.<sup>99</sup> One of the more well known incidences concluded with the horrific gas attacks used against Kurdish men, women, and children in their villages. The invasion of the United States in 1991 established a no fly zone and provided protection to the Kurdish regions. Then with the advent of the UN Oil for Food Program in 1997, they began receiving large oil revenues directly. This helped to revitalize the Kurdish economy

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<sup>97</sup> Miller, *The Kurds*,14

<sup>98</sup> Sultan Barakat, *Reconstructing Post-Saddam Iraq*, (Routledge, NY, 2008) 163-164

<sup>99</sup> Barakat, *Reconstructing Post-Saddam Iraq*, 69

and infrastructure. In 2003, during the ground invasion of Iraq by the United States and the Coalition, the Kurdish areas were minimally touched by the fighting. The largest city of Kirkuk, in the north, was barely touched while being peacefully handed over to US forces. At the completion of the invasion of Iraq in 2003, the Kurdish People once again began movements for greater autonomy and even for their own nation-state.<sup>100</sup>

After the US led Invasion of Iraq in 2003 the Kurds were granted a semi-autonomous status by the government of Iraq.<sup>101</sup> They are still provinces Iraq, but they have greater degrees of internal governance to include control over internal economic issues and increased control over internal political structures. The Kurds are now part of the Iraqi legislative body and have significant representation within the executive branch. Internal to their semi-autonomous area, they have the ability to be self sufficient in regards to food and economic production. They have significant oil reserves, drilling infrastructure, hydropower facilities, and a robust agricultural infrastructure.<sup>102</sup> They also have sizeable military, militia, and police forces that are quite capable of securing their internal areas and external boundaries.

This creation of the semi-autonomous region for the Kurds within Iraq has had positive effects. The Kurds, for many years, expressed deep grievances with prior governments of Iraq

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<sup>100</sup> Barakat, *Reconstructing Post-Saddam Iraq*, 72-73

<sup>101</sup> Miller, *The Kurds*, 16

<sup>102</sup> Miller, *The Kurds*, 39

over their brutal mistreatment and aspirations for an independent country. Becoming an autonomous region has alleviated many of these grievances. In addition, the ability to have a degree of self governance has also addressed many of the local issues to a greater degree.<sup>103</sup> Local governance within the restructuring was strengthened and the people of Kurdistan have a much higher degree of internal governmental penetration than their surrounding provinces.<sup>104</sup> Support for violent insurgents has also decreased within Kurdistan. Insurgent groups that were specifically fighting for greater autonomy within Iraq in the past years have been significantly marginalized.<sup>105</sup> Ansar Al Islam is an example of an insurgent group within the region of Kurdistan that has been reduced to almost no support from the local people due to these positive changes.

In addition to the positive influences within the Kurdish Autonomous Area, the other ethnic groups within Iraq are amenable to this situation. The Iraqi Sunni and Shiite ethnic groups are used to the Kurds having this degree of autonomy and have not voiced concern or opposition to it.<sup>106</sup> As long as oil revenues continue to be shared, they do not have a grievance with the situation as it stands. The country of Turkey, while having significant issues with a completely

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<sup>103</sup> Miller, *The Kurds*, 43

<sup>104</sup> Barakat, *Reconstructing Post-Saddam Iraq*, 72-73

<sup>105</sup> Miller, *The Kurds*, 43

<sup>106</sup> Barakat, *Reconstructing Post-Saddam Iraq*, 164-165



independent Kurdish nation, is also amenable to the idea of them being an autonomous area.<sup>107</sup> In addition, marginalization of Kurdish insurgent groups has aided the Turkish government in dealing with similar groups within their own borders. The Ansar Al Islam(AI) insurgent group, up to ten years ago, was conducting high profile attacks in Turkey. Now, due to the fact that they have been completely marginalized, AI has not conducted an attack in the past two years. This result of marginalization has decreased the likelihood of intervention from other ethnic groups and bordering countries outside of Iraq.<sup>108</sup> Turkey has only crossed the border twice to deal with Kurdish insurgent elements since 2003.

The negative impacts of the Kurds' semi-autonomous area have been varied, but similar to others around the world. First, in the last two years, there has been increased sentiment among the Kurds for the creation of an independent Kurdistan.<sup>109</sup> The original move helped to alleviate these sentiments. Now, as the Kurdish people have become stronger and more self-governing, they are beginning to feel as though they can become an independent nation. Secondly, they are becoming more of a core ethnic group within their region. Arabs that had resided there, due to Saddam Hussein's resettlement program, have left or are being actively displaced by the

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<sup>107</sup> Barakat, *Reconstructing Post-Saddam Iraq*, 71-72

<sup>108</sup> Miller, *The Kurds*, 44-45

<sup>109</sup> Barakat, *Reconstructing Post-Saddam Iraq*, 80-81

Kurds.<sup>110</sup> It has been shown a number of times throughout history, and most recently within Belgium, that when a core ethnic group has its own state institution it begins to look more to its own demands rather than to the nation-state as a whole. The issue that is most concerning the Iraqi government is the growing belief, throughout the Kurdish region, that there is no need to be part of Iraq.

In addition, as the Kurds grow stronger, there are attempts being made to expand their territory by means of populace migration. Most specifically, they are interested in the oil rich area of Kirkuk and the urban area of Mosul. Kirkuk and Mosul are both major Iraqi cities that lay outside of the semi-autonomous area but have high percentages of Kurdish people. A popular tactic employed by the Kurds has been the migration of more Kurdish people to these areas to increase the amount of votes they can cast in local elections.<sup>111</sup> Possible repercussions from these moves could include an increase in Kurdish-Arab tensions, an increased Turkish interest in the domestic workings of Iraq, and an increased Kurdish sentiment to secede from Iraq and become an independent nation.

Declaring the Kurds a semi-autonomous region within Iraq has had a great deal of positive repercussions and some negative. It decreased ethnic tensions and it strengthened local governance. It helped alleviate ethnic grievances as it decreased secessionist feelings. As a semi-

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<sup>110</sup> Barakat, *Reconstructing Post-Saddam Iraq*, 164-165

<sup>111</sup> Miller, *The Kurds*, 26-27

autonomous region, the successes have also sparked the reigniting of some previous sentiments. Most significantly, the Kurdish idea of secession from Iraq and formation of an independent nation continues to surface and grow.<sup>112</sup> The outcome is not clear at this time, but in the short-term, there have been many more successes than failures.

## Methodology

The methodology utilizes four assessment variables to determine outcomes in employing the federal system of government with autonomous areas within the three country case studies. The variables are: grievances, ethnic tensions, economic livelihood, and lack of government penetration. These variables are taken from within Paul Collier and Anke Hoefler's, "CH Model", explaining civil war and insurgency creation. This model is being utilized here due to its establishment as the model of choice for the World Bank since the mid 1990's.<sup>113</sup> The CH Model

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<sup>112</sup> Miller, *The Kurds*, 26-28

<sup>113</sup> Collier, Paul and Sambanis, Nicholas, *Understanding Civil War Volume Two*, (The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, The World Bank, Washington DC, 2005) IX

has been determined to be the most accurate means of assessing a nation's propensity for stabilization versus collapse.<sup>114</sup>

Insurgencies are begotten of grievances by the polity toward their nation-state. These grievances are created by feelings of oppression toward either the government or the majority ethnic group and can be fostered along ethnic or economic lines. The CH Model states that grievances are a major factor in contributing to the creation of insurgencies and civil wars.<sup>115</sup> As Kalyvas demonstrates in his seminal work, "The Logic of Violence in Civil War", grievances of the polity are a leading cause of spawning violence and creating insurgencies in nation-states. Grievances have a tendency to grow over time and governments have a tendency to ignore them for as long as they can. Unabated, as Collier and Hoefler show, they continue to grow until they reach a point when the polity of the country revolts against its government. The positive and negative implications of federal systems of governance with autonomous areas pertaining to grievances will be demonstrated.

Closely related to grievances, ethnic tensions are those feelings of hostility that exist between members of differing ethnic groups within a chosen nation-state. These feelings may exist due to the presence of a majority ethnic group attempting to pressure minority ethnic groups, or when there are multiple splintered ethnic groups with long standing issues. The CH Model

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<sup>114</sup> Collier, *Understanding Civil War*, IX

<sup>115</sup> Collier, *Understanding Civil War*, 3-7

focuses intensely on this ethnic dynamic and concludes that high levels of ethnic tensions directly lead to violence and civil war.<sup>116</sup> Looking to Horowitz in his book “Ethnic Groups in Conflict”, ethnic tensions are closely tied to creating grievances and producing violence within nation-states when not addressed.<sup>117</sup> It has also been shown that within many developing nations, ethnic conflict is a key variable during the debate over the composition of their emerging government. Within the case studies, and within Afghanistan, ethnic tensions have been an area that has produced significant challenges for those governments. Federal systems of governance with autonomous areas have shown the ability to negate this result and will be explored in the remainder of the analysis.

Economic livelihood of the people, as described previously, is also shown to lead towards generating insurgencies when not addressed by the government of the nation-state.<sup>118</sup> It is a key variable in the analysis and will represent the degree at which the polity of a nation-state can provide for their family units while seeking to improve their personal economic situation. No matter the locale, all societies have a desire to provide for themselves, their families, and their continued improvement. When this is denied, or there is a perception of denial, the polity begins

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<sup>116</sup> Collier, *Understanding Civil War*, 52-54

<sup>117</sup> Horowitz, Donald, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000) 4-

<sup>118</sup> Collier, *Understanding Civil War*, 3-5

to harbor severe grievances against their nation-state's governance.<sup>119</sup> Specifically, economic livelihood will be examined by looking at the amount of revenue sharing between federal and local governments as well as the ability of the polity to choose forms of economic systems for their further development. As Collier demonstrates, revenue sharing and economic system choice are two pivotal areas that have demonstrated reduction of civil war or insurgency eruption.<sup>120</sup> Therefore, within the analysis of the case studies, examples will be given of federal systems of governance with autonomous areas having positive implications on the economies of the countries.

Governmental penetration is the final variable to be examined. Governmental penetration refers to the ability and amount of control the national government has over the entire expanse of their country. Collier demonstrates that the amount of governmental penetration has been shown to directly impact the ability to successfully initiate insurgencies and violence within a nation-state.<sup>121</sup> While not a requirement for a successful insurgency, it can be a powerful agent of support when there is low penetration. Jeffrey Herbst in his book, "States and Power in Africa", also clearly demonstrates that governments with low levels of penetration cannot control their

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<sup>119</sup> Collier, *Understanding Civil War*, 13

<sup>120</sup> Collier, *Understanding Civil War*, 5-8

<sup>121</sup> Collier, *Understanding Civil War*, P68-72

entire nation-state and this factor has led to successful insurgencies.<sup>122</sup> The case studies demonstrate how federal systems of governance directly increase the levels of penetration of their governments by decreasing grievances, ethnic tensions, and improving economic systems. They accomplish these positive changes and increase their penetration by providing essential services for their populations. Afghanistan has a low level of governmental penetration, so the positive outcomes, as demonstrated by the case studies, will be analyzed for their potential usage within Afghanistan.

The examination of these variables will be accomplished utilizing qualitative analysis.<sup>123</sup> Specific examples will be shown from each case study that demonstrate the positive and negative outcomes of these variables in relation to federal systems of governance with autonomous areas. Parallel challenges from Afghanistan will then be demonstrated. The final portion will show how a federal system of governance with autonomous areas could have positive usages within Afghanistan. Finally, an examination of the governance challenges facing Afghanistan under its current central unitary government is conducted and compared with the strengths and weaknesses of a federal system with autonomous areas. The analysis will subsequently determine the appropriateness of such a governance system for Afghanistan going forward.

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<sup>122</sup> Herbst, *States and Power in Africa*, P27-30

<sup>123</sup> Garson, David, North Carolina State University, *Qualitative Analysis and Case Studies*. <http://faculty.chass.ncsu.edu/garson/pa765/cases.htm> (Accessed 8 September 2009)

## Analysis

The first discussion will examine how grievances and minimization of separatist tendencies were accomplished in each case study. Within the Belgium study, a large amount of grievances and separatist tendencies were shown to have existed prior to many of the changes made in the political structure of the government.<sup>124</sup> The Walloons and Flemish were quite literally spinning away from each another with a high degree of centrifugal force. The grievances caused by perceived discrimination based upon differing economic systems, lifestyles, and language was increasing exponentially.<sup>125</sup> Non-violent protests and newspaper articles followed this trend and also significantly increased.<sup>126</sup> The federal system that encompasses the Belgium form of governance addressed these problems directly. As a result, popular opinions started to move away from these separatist tendencies and sway toward a belief that their grievances were being addressed.<sup>127</sup> The local actions of the individual governments of each autonomous area were also seen as being much more responsive to the needs of the people.<sup>128</sup> In conjunction with this, the trends of negative newspaper articles and non-violent protests decreased.<sup>129</sup>

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<sup>124</sup> Mughan, *Belgian History*, 66-67

<sup>125</sup> Mughan, *Belgian History*, 66-67

<sup>126</sup> Mughan, *Belgian History*, 67-68

<sup>127</sup> Alcantara, *Federalism*, 173

<sup>128</sup> Alcantara, *Federalism*, 173

<sup>129</sup> Mughan, *Belgian History*, 68



In the country of Spain, there is again a positive outcome. Both the Basque and the Catalonians displayed a high degree of separatist tendencies and grievances before being alleviated by the changes made in their form of governance. The grant of autonomous status and the continued reforms to this autonomous arrangement, contributed directly to the drastic decline in separatist tendencies.<sup>130</sup> Insurgent acts that had been very active in these regions also declined greatly.<sup>131</sup> The insurgent groups were delegitimized in the eyes of the local populace by these reforms to the Spanish system of governance. In essence, they became separated from the local populace and, thus, were denied their support base. Total reduction of insurgent activity can be seen in the level and frequency of attacks that dropped drastically.<sup>132</sup> For the country as a whole, province to province grievances were also significantly reduced. The court system that was established as part of the autonomous pacts was able to initiate reforms and conflict resolution at the province level to solve issues through peaceful means.<sup>133</sup>

The autonomous region of Kurdistan within Iraq shows additional positive outcomes. The Kurdish people had a very high level of grievance against the Iraqi government to include harsh treatment and denial of their bid for an independent nation.<sup>134</sup> When autonomous status was

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<sup>130</sup> Gillespie, *History of Spain*, 481-482

<sup>131</sup> Gillespie, *History of Spain*, 482

<sup>132</sup> Greer, *Nationalism and Self-Government*, 100-102

<sup>133</sup> Greer, *Nationalism and Self-Government*, 102-104

<sup>134</sup> Barakat, *Reconstructing Post-Saddam Iraq*, 68-69

granted, the Kurds gained self-control over their region's destiny and alleviated many of these grievances. At the same time, many of the separatist movements within the Kurdish region were eliminated. Individuals from the local populace and insurgent groups were brought together to establish government structure at a local and national level.<sup>135</sup> With this in place, they were able to work for the people instead of against the central government. Just as we saw in Spain, insurgent activity dropped drastically in Kurdistan after addressing this issue.<sup>136</sup> Even more significant, insurgent groups within Kurdistan were relegated to obscure areas due to their separation from the populace base.<sup>137</sup> The change to an autonomous region drastically reduced Kurdish grievances and the power of insurgent groups within the province.

Ethnic tensions are the next area of examination. Within the country of Belgium, the Flemish and Walloons were engaging in nonviolent political fighting on every issue brought to the central government.<sup>138</sup> Because they could not agree on many governmental issues, new laws were being tied up within bureaucratic processes never to see the light of the day. At one point, there was a two month period when nothing could be passed due to complete deadlock of the government.<sup>139</sup> The movement to greater autonomy within Belgium's governmental structure

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<sup>135</sup> Barakat, *Reconstructing Post-Saddam Iraq*, 70-71

<sup>136</sup> Barakat, *Reconstructing Post-Saddam Iraq*, 79-80

<sup>137</sup> Barakat, *Reconstructing Post-Saddam Iraq*, 80-81

<sup>138</sup> Mughan, *Belgian History*, 67

<sup>139</sup> Mughan, *Belgian History*, 67

helped to alleviate the situation. The autonomous areas were given greater power over their areas, their laws, and their procedures. This directly led to greater governmental responsiveness and less ethnic tensions between the two main ethnic groups.<sup>140</sup> It also aided in moving many of these national law creating mechanisms to the regional level where solidarity in thought was much stronger.<sup>141</sup> Law creation and regulations were now able to move through the regional and central governments at a normal pace. In addition, political power sharing arrangements have drastically increased.<sup>142</sup> The movement to the federal system of governance within Belgium drastically assisted them in decreasing their ethnic tensions.

In the country of Spain, we see some of the same positive outcomes as within Belgium. There were great ethnic tensions involving groups like the Basque and Catalonians directed toward the central government and other ethnic groups within Spain.<sup>143</sup> Many of these grievances stemmed from the perception by the Basque and Catalonians that the central government of Spain did not understand or address their needs.<sup>144</sup> Since the Spanish government's establishment of the Autonomic Pacts with its provinces, ethnic groups like the Basque and Catalonians were able to

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<sup>140</sup> Alcantara, *Federalism*, 175-176

<sup>141</sup> Alcantara, *Federalism*, 175-176

<sup>142</sup> Alcantara, *Federalism*, 175-176

<sup>143</sup> Greer, *Nationalism and Self Government*, 16-17

<sup>144</sup> Greer, *Nationalism and Self Government*, 16-17

delineate exactly how they wanted their province to function and operate.<sup>145</sup> They could also directly address which laws and regulatory statutes they wished to accept. Ethnic tensions were drastically decreased due to ethnic group's ability to adequately address issues pertinent to them.<sup>146</sup>

Spain's success in alleviating tensions among ethnic groups resides mostly in two areas: the greater degrees of autonomy and the detailed analysis of ethnic boundaries when finalizing province territory.<sup>147</sup> In many examples of ethnic strife around the world, border disputes between ethnic groups form a crucial initiator of tensions. Many of these ethnic groups also have high degrees of Manteqa, the feeling of strong linkage to certain geographical areas regardless of where a boundary is on the map.<sup>148</sup> The accurate ethnic boundaries that the central government of Spain established denied these tensions the chance to formulate.<sup>149</sup> This detailed analysis also resulted in the prevention of minority group placement in autonomous areas where new ethnic grievances could appear to cause problems and tensions in the future.

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<sup>145</sup> Morales, Moles, Spanish Autonomic State, 190

<sup>146</sup> Morales, Moles, Spanish Autonomic State, 190

<sup>147</sup> Morales, Moles, Spanish Autonomic State, 188-189

<sup>148</sup> Nigel Allen, "Rethinking Governance In Afghanistan," *Journal of International Affairs*, (2003) 196

<sup>149</sup> Gillespie, History of Spain, 485-486

In contrast, within the autonomous region of Kurdistan positive results were minimal. While the granting of autonomy was successful in reducing Kurd and Arab tensions, the ultimate outcome brought about a greater separation of the two groups.<sup>150</sup> The establishment of autonomous areas in Kurdish areas was not based upon mutual understanding and conflict resolution as shown within Belgium and Spain. In border regions, where Kurds and Arabs are still in direct contact with one another, there is evidence of continued ethnic tension.<sup>151</sup> The issue of expansion has given rise to most of the tension. The Kurds continue to attempt expansion and the Iraqi central government have not dealt directly with this issue. Outright physical attacks of Kurds on Arab peoples are still relatively low, but forced migration by means of threats are on the rise and could lead to further tensions.<sup>152</sup> Also, within the last year, an increase in violence between Arabs and Kurds could be a negative sign of relations in the future.

Economic system gains for the local populace and the autonomous region is the third key area of examination. Economic gain in the country of Belgium was a dramatic positive outcome of the movement towards a federal system with strong autonomous regions.<sup>153</sup> Until the new system was initiated, the two regions were opposing one another. One area was agriculture based

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<sup>150</sup> Barakat, *Reconstructing Post-Saddam Iraq*, 78-79

<sup>151</sup> Barakat, *Reconstructing Post-Saddam Iraq*, 78-79

<sup>152</sup> Barakat, *Reconstructing Post-Saddam Iraq*, 78-79

<sup>153</sup> Riley, *Economy of Belgium*, 69

while another become strongly industrial based.<sup>154</sup> The movement to greater autonomy provided for drastic gains in revenue sharing and greater enhancement of their chosen economic system.<sup>155</sup> Each individual region was allowed to choose its form of economic development and concentrate on only that chosen form.<sup>156</sup> They were no longer forced to follow other plans of development that did not assist them. It also helped to more effectively deal with economic laws such as child labor laws that differed between the regions. For example, in the agriculture strong regions child labor laws may not have been appropriate in many areas, but were paramount for the industrial he areas.<sup>157</sup> These changes to the laws greatly enhanced the individual autonomous regions economic production capabilities. They also led to a drastic increase in GDP and reduction in inflation since regions could concentrate on developing an economic system that was best for them and their particular area.<sup>158</sup>

In Spain we see similar results due to their freedom of economic choice. As in Belgium, Spain's individual autonomous provinces choose their form of economic development that best suits their people.<sup>159</sup> The choices are then supported by the central government within the tenets

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<sup>154</sup> Riley, *Economy of Belgian*, 69

<sup>155</sup> Riley, *Economy of Belgian*, 69-70

<sup>156</sup> Alcantara, *Federalism*, 175-176

<sup>157</sup> Alcantara, *Federalism*, 175-176

<sup>158</sup> Riley, *Economy of Belgian*, 69-70

<sup>159</sup> Morales, Moles, *Spanish Autonomic State*, 189-190

of the Autonomous Pact, and served to strengthen the provinces economic status.<sup>160</sup> Prior to the movement into a federal system of governance with autonomous areas, Spain's GDP had minimal growth and inflation was skyrocketing.<sup>161</sup> After the individual regions were created, revenue sharing with the central government went from 15 to 30 percent due to the success of autonomy and the individual economic plans.<sup>162</sup> Success was achieved through the use of local economic plans, support from the central government in a manner of their choosing, and stream-lined tax processes as laid out by the Autonomous Pacts. Spain's GDP has also grown exponentially and inflation has stabilized at a thirty-year low of 1.4%.<sup>163</sup>

A negative impact from an autonomous region's economic growth is seen in the Kurdish region. The Kurds have been able to greatly accelerate the economic development of their particular region. From oil production, agriculture, and attracting tourism they have drastically increased their revenue stream.<sup>164</sup> This increase has not been tempered, however, with an increase in relationships with the central government. In many ways, success has increased their determination that they could be an independent nation-state.<sup>165</sup> In addition, the Kurds are now

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<sup>160</sup> Morales, Moles, Spanish Autonomic State, 189-190

<sup>161</sup> Harrison, Economy of Spain, 487-488

<sup>162</sup> Harrison, Economy of Spain, 487-488

<sup>163</sup> Harrison, Economy of Spain, 487-488

<sup>164</sup> Barakat, *Reconstructing Post-Saddam Iraq*, 76-77

<sup>165</sup> Barakat, *Reconstructing Post-Saddam Iraq*, 78-79

looking to other countries for trade and economic development opportunities instead of their neighboring provinces or the Iraqi central government.<sup>166</sup> In this case, greater economic development of the autonomous area did not bring greater alliance with the central government of the nation-state.

Governmental penetration by a nation-state's central government is the final area of examination. In the countries of Belgium and Spain comparable success of governmental penetration has been achieved. In both instances, one of the main grievances of many regions was an inability to provide basic services to the local populace.<sup>167</sup> Local governmental structures were generally overlooked in order to concentrate more on developing the central government. As both countries completed their move to a federal system with autonomous areas, this trend saw change toward a local focus.<sup>168</sup> Governance was now concentrated at the local level, was focused upon the local populace and was able to provide the desired services.<sup>169</sup> A measured increase of basic services was observed in both countries.

In Spain, greater governmental penetration led to the inability of insurgent groups to conduct attacks and in some instances to operate at all. Police conducted a series of highly

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<sup>166</sup> Barakat, *Reconstructing Post-Saddam Iraq*, 78-79

<sup>167</sup> Morales, Moles, *Spanish Autonomic State*, 189-190

<sup>168</sup> Morales, Moles, *Spanish Autonomic State*, 189-190

<sup>169</sup> Gillespie, *History of Spain*, 485-486



successful operations against insurgent groups within the Basque region as these groups are being pushed to the fringe of society.<sup>170</sup> In Catalonia, very similar events took place resulting in a sixty percent decrease in insurgent attacks and operations.<sup>171</sup> The movement to a federal system of governance with autonomous areas directly increased penetration and reduced the ability of these insurgents to operate.

Within Kurdistan, Kurdish insurgent groups just as in the Spanish example were drastically decreased.<sup>172</sup> The increased levels of police and special military units were able to conduct operations against these elements. Coupled with decreases in grievances, insurgent groups were operating more and more on the fringe of Kurdish society.<sup>173</sup> In addition, the greater focus on local levels of governance also increased basic services to the local populace. Just within the past year, services such as water and electricity supply have been substantially increased.<sup>174</sup> However, these results were accomplished by an increase in regional Kurdistan governmental penetration due to designating Kurdistan as an autonomous region. The Kurds, not Iraq, developed basic services for their people to include police and military units separate from those

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<sup>170</sup> Gillespie, *History of Spain*, 485-486

<sup>171</sup> Gillespie, *History of Spain*, 485-486

<sup>172</sup> Miller, *The Kurds*, 44-45

<sup>173</sup> Miller, *The Kurds*, 44-45

<sup>174</sup> Barakat, *Reconstructing Post-Saddam Iraq*, 76-77

run by the Iraqi central government.<sup>175</sup> The creation of an autonomous region provided an opportunity for increased Iraqi governmental penetration, but the Kurds strong desire for independence has blocked those attempts.<sup>176</sup>

### **Governmental Comparison with Afghanistan**

Afghanistan shares many similarities with the three case studies. First among the similarities are the grievances held by the people of Afghanistan historically and currently towards a strong central government. The local population of Afghanistan desires the ability to choose their own way of life without bold government intrusion into their personal, family, or tribal affairs. Historically, many have tried to force change into Afghan personal and tribal lifestyles. This path has lead from grievances to outright revolt, such as the coup against King Amanullah.<sup>177</sup> In addition, there is a general grievance that the basic needs of the people are not being provided for by the current or any recent government.<sup>178</sup> A basic level of stability in the form of local policing, a justice system, and education for their children are a routine demand.<sup>179</sup> None of these services have been effectively provided by any form of central government.

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<sup>175</sup> Barakat, *Reconstructing Post-Saddam Iraq*, 78-79

<sup>176</sup> Barakat, *Reconstructing Post-Saddam Iraq*, 78-79

<sup>177</sup> Tanner, *Afghanistan*, 222

<sup>178</sup> Rubin, *Afghanistan's Uncertain Transition*, 26-27

<sup>179</sup> Rubin, *Afghanistan's Uncertain Transition*, 26-27

Evidence of these grievances can be demonstrated by the local acceptance of Taliban “shadow-governments”.<sup>180</sup> These entities provide resources to the local area thus gaining loyalty and support from the local populous.

A high degree of ethnic tension exists within the country of Afghanistan. The Pashtun ethnic group, for example, contains two major tribes. These tribes have been in conflict with one another for much of recorded history. The Pashtuns have also been in direct conflict with other major ethnic groups such as the Tajiks, Uzbeks, and Hazara.<sup>181</sup> To further exacerbate the situation, there are sub-ethnic group tensions contained within these main ethnic groups.<sup>182</sup> Warfare that occurs between neighboring valleys over agricultural and herding lands is an example of sub-ethnic tensions. These tensions are historical and have become engrained into their culture. The current form of government within Afghanistan has not addressed these issues nor tried to reduce the tensions.<sup>183</sup> Instead, the government has amplified conflicts by trying to lump rival clans within a haphazardly drawn district or province.

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<sup>180</sup> Rubin, *Afghanistan's Uncertain Transition*, 19-20

<sup>181</sup> Young, *Overcoming the Obstacles*, 10

<sup>182</sup> Young, *Overcoming the Obstacles*, 10

<sup>183</sup> Rubin, *Afghanistan's Uncertain Transition*, 28

In addition to ties with their tribe or clan, the idea of Manteqa is a very strong trend among the Afghans.<sup>184</sup> The tribal and local village groups feel a very strong bond to the geographical area that they inhabit. When districts and province boundaries run counter to these ideas of Manteqa there is a decreased in tribal support of Afghanistan's central government.<sup>185</sup> One such event occurred in Regional Component South near the city of Kandahar.<sup>186</sup> During the elections, polling sites were established along arbitrary district boundaries without regard to tribal designations. As a result, the local populous disregarded the election. The idea of Manteqa cannot be ignored without inducing ethnic tensions and grievances towards the central government.

Economically, Afghanistan shares many of the same issues that Belgium and Spain dealt with in the case studies. On the most basic of levels, the Afghan people are struggling currently with how they will provide for their family units.<sup>187</sup> Beyond basic sustenance, each province of Afghanistan is also struggling with which economic system will create a revenue stream that will provide revenue sharing for its populace.<sup>188</sup> Some provinces can only support hand to mouth agriculture. Others, such as the province of Kabul, Kapisa, and Her-at are beginning to look at

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<sup>184</sup> Allan, Nigel, "Defining People and Place in Afghanistan," *Post Soviet Geography and Economics* No 8, (2001) 554-555

<sup>185</sup> Allan, Defining People and Place in Afghanistan, 554-555

<sup>186</sup> Boone, Beaumont, The Times Online, August 20<sup>th</sup>, 2009

<sup>187</sup> Rubin, Afghanistan's Uncertain Transition, 31

<sup>188</sup> Rubin, Afghanistan's Uncertain Transition, 31-32

various industrial solutions to these economic issues. As these economic plans begin to diverge, each province will have varying levels of requirements for economic assistance and desire different economic laws.<sup>189</sup> Similar to Belgium, child labor laws in Kabul Province may be necessary, but they may not be applicable in an agricultural based province.

In addition, these divergent economic situations within the provinces will demand a plan for revenue sharing through an Afghan national government. Within the country of Spain, a plan was developed to guarantee an equal level of revenue stream from production and collection to all provinces. This served to provide a firm budget and gave each province the ability to provide services to their constituents no matter the chosen economic base. Like Spain, Afghanistan's government will need a national infrastructure that can support revenue production, provide for national revenue collection, and codify budgetary revenue sharing into law.<sup>190</sup> The case studies show that a federal system of governance with autonomous regions accomplishes these goals.

Summing up many of the issues mentioned above is the idea of governmental penetration. Its definition is based around the premise of how much area a government can actually control. Governmental penetration is affected by the amount of police, military, road infrastructure, governmental infrastructure and economic capability that exist in a nation-state.

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<sup>189</sup> Rubin, Afghanistan's Uncertain Transition, 31-32

<sup>190</sup> Rubin, Afghanistan's Uncertain Transition, 31-32

Afghanistan has one major highway in the entire country.<sup>191</sup> Medium to small cities or towns have minimal to non-existent governmental infrastructure such as hospitals or police stations.<sup>192</sup> Historically, and within Afghanistan's current situation, grievances and economic issues are directly tied to the central government's inadequate penetration into many areas of the country.<sup>193</sup> In the case studies, autonomous areas have increased penetration and services to the people within the nation-states that have used them. In Spain, revenue sharing was able to directly affect the populace in more positive fashion when executed through the autonomous provinces at a local level. The government was able to provide greater services than before when revenue was distributed primarily by central government agencies and complex bureaucracies.

Among the Afghan people there are a number of separatist and insurgent elements. Separatism in Afghanistan has not yet lead to any direct action.<sup>194</sup> However, there are very strong ties between members of the same ethnic groups that are divided by Afghanistan's borders with neighboring nations. An example of these ties can be found in the north where the Tajiks identify very heavily with the neighboring country of Tajikistan.<sup>195</sup> The Pashtuns in the south of Afghanistan are another example. The current border between Afghanistan and Pakistan splits

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<sup>191</sup> *CIA World Factbook Afghanistan*

<sup>192</sup> *CIA World Factbook Afghanistan*

<sup>193</sup> Rubin, *Afghanistan's Uncertain Transition*, 22-24

<sup>194</sup> Allan, *Defining People and Place in Afghanistan*, 552-554

<sup>195</sup> Allan, *Defining People and Place in Afghanistan*, 550-551

this ethnic group.<sup>196</sup> Historically, a desire has existed to unite the Pashtuns on either side of the border into one entity separate from either country.<sup>197</sup> This separatist tendency has yet to become violent, but is an underlying motivation to many of the Pashtuns' actions.

The insurgents are more direct and violent in their objective to return Afghanistan to a Taliban type regime.<sup>198</sup> These various groups are exploiting many of the pre-existing grievances, bending them to their purpose in order to gain support. They easily exploit the ethnic tensions and economic issues to their benefit by causing infighting amongst ethnic groups and then providing basic services to the people.<sup>199</sup> They are taking advantage of the Afghanistan lack of penetration by filling the void of local governmental support.<sup>200</sup> Through these actions, the insurgents gain a fertile ground for growth and expansion to their base of operations. Very similar situations were negated in Spain and Kurdistan by changing their form of governance.

### **Potential Positives for Afghanistan**

From the parallels discussion, one can contemplate Afghanistan's potential gain by becoming a federal form of governance with autonomous areas. Grievances harbored by the local

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<sup>196</sup> Allan, *Defining People and Place in Afghanistan*, 552-553

<sup>197</sup> Allan, *Defining People and Place in Afghanistan*, 552-553

<sup>198</sup> Rubin, *Afghanistan's Uncertain Transition*, 6-8

<sup>199</sup> Rubin, *Afghanistan's Uncertain Transition*, 7-9

<sup>200</sup> Rubin, *Afghanistan's Uncertain Transition*, 9

populace have shown to be positively affected by moving to this form of government. The Afghanistan people historically and currently harbor many grievances against their government. They fear and resent high levels of government intervention into their lives. A current demonstration of these fears has been seen by Coalition Forces since the onset of Operation Enduring Freedom.<sup>201</sup> In contradiction to their fear of an intrusive government, the people also understand the need for its support.<sup>202</sup> Their grievances can potentially be better addressed by the locally focused governance through a federal system with autonomous areas.

The ethnic tensions are not a unique phenomenon throughout the world. They are an inherent issue in Afghanistan as well as the three case study countries. A significant percentage of ethnic tensions were alleviated in all the case studies following a movement to a federal system of governance with autonomous areas. Success in defusing their tensions resided in the creation of power sharing and conflict resolution institutions. This same success can be achieved by separating Afghanistan's ethnic groups into areas with independent jurisdiction over governance and lifestyle. Ethnic geographical desires can be addressed and tensions defused by allowing the local populace to attain and live in their chosen area. Alleviating these issues provides a clearer path to peaceful and constructive mediation of ethnic tensions without resorting to violence.

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<sup>201</sup> Rubin, Afghanistan's Uncertain Transition, 10-12

<sup>202</sup> Rubin, Afghanistan's Uncertain Transition, 10-12



All of the case studies demonstrated economic growth with a federal system utilizing autonomous areas. Afghanistan is in dire need of a viable economic base and enduring development. They are currently struggling with ways to create revenue production in a widely diverse culture. The forms of production must vary from province to province depending on the level of urbanization and resources available to them. The autonomous system of governance provides a model that could potentially provide for that variance. Such a system has shown the ability to provide revenue sharing between the local and the central government. In opposition to a strong top down approach unable to reach the lowest levels, an autonomous system can deliver individualized needs to the local populace.

Afghanistan and its people have a great desire and need to increase their government's penetration. The federal system of governance with autonomous regions would assist in this endeavor. Increases in local governance, revenue sharing, economic stimulus along with tension and grievance reduction help to drastically increase the level of governmental penetration. The federal system with autonomous areas has resulted in a high degree of penetration by focusing on the local issues instead of forcing control by a strong central government.

Finally, lack of penetration and economic development are catalysts to secessionist tendencies and insurgent groups within Afghanistan. Within all three case studies, secessionist tendencies were decreased by the movement to a federal system of governance with autonomous areas. Insurgent groups became irrelevant by the strengthening of local governance and reduction of potential vacuums used to achieve support from the people. Secessionist feelings and tendencies were similarly reduced by perceived increase in local sovereignty. There is immense potential for positive results in Afghanistan's insurgent and secession issues through the induction of a federal autonomous area system.

## Conclusion

Afghanistan, as a nation-state and as a government, contains several complex dynamics and issues that block the stabilization of their country. Grievances, ethnic tensions, developing a viable economic system, a growing insurgency, and the expansion of possible separatist tendencies are the current challenges facing their people. The central unitary government of Afghanistan has not had a great deal of success with addressing these challenges. Transformation to a federal system of government with autonomous areas would better address these challenges.

Afghanistan's local population has historically resented strong central government intervention. From the King to the PDPA, then to the Soviets, and finally, the Taliban; they have resented a high degree of intervention in their lives. Each of these circumstances generated a great deal of grievance against the central government. The grievances led to an insurgency and, finally, an overthrow of that government. In many ways, identical grievances from the past are beginning to appear against the central government in Kabul. A federal system of government with autonomous regions has been proven in other countries to establish an effective form of governance that does not lead to these grievances.

The study of what entails a federal system of governance and autonomous regions demonstrates a number of points. Federal systems enhance a nation-state's power and economic revenue sharing capabilities. They also alleviate ethnic and cultural grievances against a central government while allowing for peaceful conflict resolution. From the case studies of Belgium, Spain, and the Autonomous Region of Kurdistan in Iraq; many of the strengths were shown to be successful in stabilizing the countries. Afghanistan shares many of the same challenges with the case study countries. Incorporating a federal system of governance within the country of Afghanistan would alleviate many of these challenges.

The government of Afghanistan is continually attempting to resolve penetration problems throughout their entire country. Currently the government does not have a high degree of penetration. In over twenty five percent of the country, neither civil nor military means of

effective governance have been established. This lack of representation in the local area additionally affects basic services such as stability, security, sustenance, and rule of law. While the people do not want heavy intrusion into their lives by the government, they do expect basic services to be provided. A federal system of governance with autonomous areas would be able to establish governance and increase the penetration levels within Afghanistan without the intrusion.

Ethnic tensions are a historical part of Afghanistan's culture. They are a by-product of an artificially formed nation that disregarded ethnic divisions and feelings of Manteqa. Provinces and districts created within Afghanistan divided ethnic groups and many times placed them into areas where they became a minority to other groups. Similar ethnic tensions around the world, and specifically in Spain and Belgium, have shown a propensity to creating challenges for the country that have led to the failure of the nation-state. These countries have shown that a federal system with autonomous areas would alleviate many tensions within Afghanistan and pave the way to a more stable country.

Afghanistan also has numerous challenges with insurgency within their country. Groups like the Taliban and Al Qaeda are exploiting the gaps in governmental support and the existing ethnic tensions to provide stabilization for the local population. As primary providers of these services, their strength and loyalty continue to grow. Federal systems of governance have shown a great ability to delegitimize insurgencies. They accomplish this by improving the services and support to the local population and directly negating many of the ethnic tensions and grievances of the local population. Spain exemplifies how the movement to a federal system of government accomplished precise goals and pushed a festering insurgency within the Basque and Catalanian regions to a position of obscurity. Afghanistan could effectively use a federal system of governance to negate the effects of the insurgents within their own country.

Federal systems of governance with autonomous areas are not a form of government that creates overwhelming positive change overnight. In each of the case studies, accomplishing the positive changes took years, if not decades, to finalize. In many of the examples, changes are

continuing to evolve. Afghanistan must be given time to accomplish needed changes as well. In addition to time, Afghanistan's economic stability will still depend on economic assistance from the international community. A three hundred million dollar budget deficit will not be overcome in the next year, or even the next five years. Revenue creation and revenue collection by the nation-state also will take time to codify and execute. A long term commitment by international governmental organizations, the United States and her Allies, and international finance institutions is an absolute necessity.

Afghanistan faces many issues and challenges in the development of their country into a viable and self-reliant nation-state. Ethnic tensions and grievances, challenges in economic development, and a growing insurgency all plague them at this time. Federal systems of government utilizing autonomous areas have been shown in such nations as Spain, Belgium, and Kurdistan to address and negate these detrimental factors. Afghanistan should embrace a federal system of government with autonomous areas in order to create stability and security for their people while becoming a self-reliant and viable nation-state within the world community.

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