



Afghanistan Governed by a Federal System with Autonomous Regions: A Path to Success?

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Introduction

It is debatable whether Afghanistan 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 tribal lives. This historical trend raises questions about the United States' current efforts to strengthen Afghanistan's central government. We assert that Afghanistan should not be governed by a central government but by a federal system with strongly autonomous areas.

We begin with a brief background discussion of the recent history of Afghani governance and ethnic demographics. The second section defines a federal system and an autonomous region, detailing their respective strengths and weaknesses as a form of governance. The third section presents case studies of the countries of Belgium, Spain, and the autonomous Kurdish region of Iraq. Both Belgium and Spain 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 fourth section analyzes the country case studies focusing upon the applied strengths exhibited by these chosen political systems in relation to four prescribed assessment criteria. The study then looks for historical parallels between these federal systems of government with autonomous region(s) and the current situation in Afghanistan, as well as the current challenges facing Afghanistan that could be alleviated utilizing this alternative political system.

Afghanistan

Governmental History

Afghanistan has a long eventful governmental history. This study focuses on the time period beginning in 1919 to the present. The Third Anglo-Afghan War treaty of 1919 is viewed as the birth date of the modern country of Afghanistan. Regardless of the acknowledgement of Afghan sovereignty from outside powers, the struggle for Afghan governmental stability continues.

In 1927, the self-appointed King Aman-Ullah, 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.¹ 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 and other sweeping changes were viewed as drastic and unacceptable by the tribal Afghan population. The changes lead to a revolt in 1928 that ultimately removed Annan-Ullah from power replacing him with his cousin.²

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 influence in the country.³ 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.⁴ 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. King Zahir realized that many of Daoud's modernization efforts were pushing the country rapidly towards an uprising.⁵ 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.⁶ 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 to take over the government in a bloodless coup.⁷

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.⁸ 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 quickly began to consolidate power in Kabul under a communist vision.

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

¹ Tanner, *Afghanistan*, 222

² Tanner, *Afghanistan*, 222

³ Tanner, *Afghanistan*, 226

⁴ Tanner, *Afghanistan*, 226-227

⁵ Tanner, *Afghanistan*, 228-229

⁶ Tanner, *Afghanistan*, 229

⁷ Tanner, *Afghanistan*, 229-230

⁸ Tanner, *Afghanistan*, 231-232

Army troops were joining the rebels which led to bombing campaigns in the cities, such as the bombing of Her-at.⁹ The Soviet leadership was becoming increasingly aware that the 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, assonating Amin, the current leader, and putting Karmal in his place.¹⁰

The Soviets, like those before them, did not heed the lessons of history in Afghanistan. They rapidly reestablished a modernization plan and consolidated all governmental power/control in Kabul. One of the main Soviet endeavors was to push the acceptance of Communism on the Afghan people by use of force.¹¹ The feelings of resentment that this generated initiated another uprising. This time the populous turned its focus upon the Soviets. The Mujahedeen was born from this uprising and led a successful insurgency against the Soviets, evicting them from the country in 1989.

The Mujahedeen 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 Mujahedeen led to immediate problems.¹² The Mujahedeen were subsequently overthrown by Taliban forces in 1996. The Taliban immediately made 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 Mujahedeen, but brought new followers to their ranks. The Mujahedeen established the Northern Alliance. Fighting between the Taliban and the Northern Alliance would last until the United States invasion in 2001 which over-threw the Taliban government.¹³

Following the 2001 invasion, the Bonn Conference laid out a framework for the government of Afghanistan.¹⁴ 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.¹⁵ This gap in leadership and governance provided a situation where essential services were not meeting the populace's expectations. As a result of this lack in governmental penetration, the local populace began to perceive the leadership in Kabul as incapable of governing the country.¹⁶ Not surprising then is the fact Afghanistan faces a severe economic crisis throughout the country. The government has no means of revenue collection. The country as a whole has no stable industry that can produce a reliable revenue stream. Unemployment is at approximately forty percent, and the government's

⁹ Tanner, *Afghanistan*, 232-233

¹⁰ Tanner, *Afghanistan*, 235

¹¹ Tanner, *Afghanistan*, 237-238

¹² Tanner, *Afghanistan*, 284

¹³ Tanner, *Afghanistan*, 286-287

¹⁴ Dennis Young, *Overcoming The Obstacles To Establishing A Democratic State In Afghanistan*, (Carlisle, USAWC 2007), 1

¹⁵ Rubin, Barnett, "Afghanistan's Uncertain Transition From Turmoil To Normalcy," *Council on Foreign Relations*, CSR #12 (March 2006) 26-27

¹⁶ The Asia Institute, *Afghanistan in 2009*, <http://www.asiafoundation.org/resources/pdfs/Afghanistanin2009.pdf> (Accessed 28 October 2009)

annual budget is operating at a deficit of 290 million dollars.¹⁷ Thirty three percent of Afghanistan's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is generated from illicit means such as heroin trade.¹⁸

In the mean time, the Taliban political leadership has not remained idle. Taliban forces have continued waging an insurgency against the government of Afghanistan, the United States, and the NATO led coalition forces operating in 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.¹⁹

Ethnic and Cultural Background

There are seven distinct and ideologically conflicting ethnic groups within Afghanistan. They are the Pashtun, Tajik, Hazara, Uzbek, Aimack, Turkmen, and Baloch.²⁰ Each of these groups identifies strongly with a country other than Afghanistan. For example, the Pashtun ethnic group heavily identifies 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.²¹

Exacerbating the situation are further divisions within each major ethnic group. The Pashtun, for example, is divided between the Ghilzai and the Durrani super tribes.²² 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 friction 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. This environment has led to a high degree of ethno-centralism in Afghanistan, 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.²³ 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 understand one another. Many of these enclaves have varying dialects of their ethnic language.

¹⁷ *CIA World Fact Book, Afghanistan*. <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/af.html> (Accessed 24 February 2009)

¹⁸ *CIA World Fact Book Afghanistan*

¹⁹ Rubin, *Afghanistan's Uncertain Transition*, 26-27

²⁰ *CIA World Fact Book Afghanistan*

²¹ Young, *Overcoming the Obstacles*, 10

²² *CIA World Fact Book Afghanistan*

²³ Young, *Overcoming the Obstacles*, 10.

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.

Furthermore, 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 family. Afghans understand this in complete 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 necessitating strong local governance. In fact, this has led to local governance and a dislike of external influence upon local authority. The Afghan local governmental system is based upon 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 the lowest level of government, raising major issues to a Jirga or meeting of the clan leaders.

Federalism and Autonomous Areas

Federalism

Federalism is a political philosophy and governmental structure that stresses power sharing amongst varying levels of government.²⁴ It is widely used within the western world, especially in Europe, and most noticeably here in the United States.²⁵ An important strength of the federalist system of governance is the number of its thriving uses throughout the Twentieth and Twenty-First Centuries. 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.”²⁶ The balance is necessary in order to protect “the right to preserve their individual character and idiosyncrasies while being integrated into the larger whole.”²⁷ 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.²⁸ 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 while giving an outlet for their grievances.²⁹

The federal system is not without its challenges, especially when regions or states are established along ethnic grounds. When these regions are constituted along ethnic lines, the possibility of

²⁴ Jurgen Rose, Johannes Traut, *Federalism and Decentralization*, (Garmich, Germany George C Marshall Center 2001) 1

²⁵ Rose, Traut, *Federalism*, 1

²⁶ Rose, Traut, *Federalism*, 2

²⁷ Rose, Traut, *Federalism*, 2

²⁸ Rose, Traut, *Federalism*, 3

²⁹ Rose, Traut, *Federalism*, 4

increasing secessionist feelings amongst the separate regions of governance can materialize.³⁰ This often occurs when regions feel no reason to look to a central government and instead look internally or 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.

Autonomous Areas

An autonomous area, within a country is an area that has been granted a degree of autonomy from the state. These areas may be established for ethnic and political reasons, 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.³¹ 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 systems of governance. Part of the reason for this is their inherent ability to internally share power and divide power amongst varying levels of government. Another reason is their emphasis upon solving conflicts between people with differing schools of thought through peaceful means.³² 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. In this type of situation, a simple federal style of government has the ability to address the needs of all of its citizens.³³ 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.³⁴ 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 piece of geographical terrain.³⁵ Manteqa is formulated by large expanses of time spent by one ethnic group in one area.

³⁰ Murphy, *Territorial Policies*, 415-416

³¹ Scott Greer, *Nationalism and Self-Government*, (State University, NY, 2007) 2-3

³² Greer, *Nationalism and Self-Government*, 3-4

³³ Greer, *Nationalism and Self-Government*, 6

³⁴ Henry Hale, “The Federal Option For Afghanistan,” *East West Institute Policy Brief*, Vol 1, No 7, (2002) 3

³⁵ Nigel Allen, “Rethinking Governance In Afghanistan,” *Journal of International Affairs*, (2003) 196

This concept of Manteqa within Afghanistan has been shown to have strong presence amongst the Tajik, Uzbek, and Hazara ethnic groups. Manteqa has played a significant role in helping to establish autonomous parts in other areas of the world.³⁶

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. Regardless of its drawbacks, autonomous regions bring the best chance of success for most of these politically and ethnically charged nation-states.

The Case Studies

This study utilizes three country case studies to show the positive and negative aspects of federal government structures with 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 with autonomous areas has had positive influence in controlling secessionist feelings. The final case examines 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 has been a federal state since 1831. Leading up to this change, a number of factors contributed to conflict among the polity. First, a wide ethnic gap existed between the French speaking Walloons in the southern region and the Dutch speaking Flemish in the northern region. (Belgium's ethnicities are broken down into approximately fifty eight percent Flemish, thirty one percent Walloon, and eleven percent mixed minorities.)³⁷ Ideology also played a part with the differences between the Conservative Catholics and Protestant Liberals.³⁸ One of the final delineations was based upon the differences between labor and capital economic thinkers.³⁹ These conflicting ideas slowly brought about a situation where a unitary system gave way to a federal system that has since evolved with ever-increasing degrees of autonomy given the three respective regions of the country.

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 language on the southern provinces, however Article 30 of the new constitution allowed for freedom of language.⁴⁰ This small provision leads to the French, or Walloon, dominance over the Flemish.

³⁶ Allen, *Rethinking Governance*, 196-197

³⁷ CIA World Factbook Belgium

³⁸ Anthony Mughan, "Belgian History", in *Western Europe 2000*, (The Gresham Press, Old Woking, Surrey, UK, 2000) 65

³⁹ 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

⁴⁰ Alcantara, *Federalism*, 172-173

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.⁴¹ More specific legislation became law officially recognizing bilingualism in the Flemish provinces and French in the southern Walloon region.⁴²

In 1893 the Flemish accomplished their goal as bilingualism became officially recognized by the general electoral system.⁴³ 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.⁴⁴

The 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.⁴⁵ 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.⁴⁶ 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.⁴⁷ In 1980, the three regions that are in place today were formally established within the government. The country is further divided into 10 provinces within the three aforementioned regions. In 1988, the provisions for a complete federal system were codified into law, with respect towards the powers that the regional governments would control how the federal government would interact with them.⁴⁸

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.⁴⁹

⁴¹ Mughan, *Belgian History*, 66

⁴² Alcantara, *Federalism*, 173

⁴³ Hooghe, Liesbet, *Belgium: From Regionalism to Federalism*, P74-75

⁴⁴ Mughan, *Belgian History*, 66

⁴⁵ Alcantara, *Federalism*, 173

⁴⁶ Alcantara, *Federalism*, 173

⁴⁷ Hooghe, Liesbet, *Belgium*, 75

⁴⁸ Mughan, *Belgian History*, 66

⁴⁹ CIA World Factbook Belgium

The Legislative Branch of the Belgian government 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 it to restructure. The number of representatives allowed is 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.⁵⁰

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.⁵¹ 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.⁵²

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.⁵³ 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, could lead to increased regionalism that could adversely affect the nation-state of Belgium as we know it today.⁵⁴ Direct friction between the regions over treaties with other countries could result in greater regionalism as well. While not a current issue, it is a potential grievance that looms over the horizon.

Economically, the federal state of Belgium derives its revenue from taxes that are given directly to the regions to administer. This does not leave a great deal of money for federal administration.⁵⁵ In addition, a 1998 settlement established the ability of the regions to shift a fiscal responsibility to the federal government if they cannot meet it.⁵⁶ 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.⁵⁷ 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

⁵⁰ CIA World Factbook Belgium

⁵¹ Alcantara, Federalism, 175

⁵² Alcantara, Federalism, 175

⁵³ Alcantara, Federalism, 176

⁵⁴ Mughan, Belgian History, 68

⁵⁵ Alcantara, Federalism, 176

⁵⁶ Alcantara, Federalism, 176

⁵⁷ Hooghe, Liesbet, Belgium, 89

change drastically throughout any given session of the Belgium legislature.⁵⁸ These coalitions force consensus thinking that stagnates and outright ceases many law-making sessions.

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.⁵⁹ 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.⁶⁰

Belgium's economic development is another success that has stemmed from the federal system with autonomous regions. As previously noted, 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.⁶¹ The movement to a federal system of governance with autonomous areas served to alleviate this issue. Within the regulatory and statutory provisions, each region chose their respective economic system and laws that would govern them. This served to significantly increase economic development and per capita income while alleviating economic tensions.⁶² After these changes were incorporated Belgium's GDP grown at a rate much greater than before and above all estimates.⁶³ For the citizens of Belgium this has led to a higher standard of living and the choice in how they want to make their way economically.⁶⁴

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 the greater good to address grievances, protect ethnic groups from oppression, provide for greater governmental penetration and over time stabilize the 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 into its current state and may need more governmental solidification in the future. Governmental stability is not easily achieved; rather it takes time to accomplish, particularly with nations that have the internal regional challenges facing Belgium.

⁵⁸ Alcantara, Federalism, 176

⁵⁹ Alcantara, Federalism, 177-178

⁶⁰ Alcantara, Federalism, 178

⁶¹ Hooghe, Liesbet, Belgium, 89

⁶² Ray Riley, "Economy of Belgian," in *Western Europe 2000*, (The Gresham Press, Old Woking, Surrey, UK, 2000) 69

⁶³ Barrio, Robert, "Economic Growth in a Cross Section of Countries," *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, VOL 106, No 2 (May 1991) 406-407.

⁶⁴ 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 President that is appointed by the King, and confirmed by the parliament after general elections.⁶⁵ 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.⁶⁶ 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 in turn led to the Spanish Civil War and the rule of General Francisco Franco from 1939 until 1975. 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.⁶⁷ 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.⁶⁸ The Basque and Catalonians saw this as an opportunity to retake what they had lost under Franco. The Spanish Constitution Debate of 1978 sought to alleviate these desires through reforms made to the nature of the government of Spain.⁶⁹

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.⁷⁰ Second, there was a shared perception amongst most of the Spanish people that democracy and autonomy were an inter-related topic.⁷¹ After an extremely strong central unitary government under Franco, they had a vast desire to move away from this type of governance.⁷²

Unfortunately, the Spanish Constitution of 1978 was written with much ambiguity. Coming to a consensus was much more difficult than imagined. More important though was the creation of the Statute of Autonomy with the Constitution. This document lays out in detail how a region initiates becoming an autonomous region.⁷³ The first step is determining the level of autonomy that each region will have. This is initiated by the individual region, along with the central

⁶⁵ CIA World Factbook Spain, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/SP.html#top> (Accessed 2 June 09)

⁶⁶ CIA World Factbook Spain

⁶⁷ 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, Jürgen; and Traut, Johannes (Hamburg, Germany, LIT Verlag, 2001) 179-180

⁶⁸ Morales and Moles, Spanish Autonomic State, 180

⁶⁹ Morales and Moles, Spanish Autonomic State, 180

⁷⁰ Greer, Nationalism and Self-Government, 22-23

⁷¹ Morales and Moles, Spanish Autonomic State, 180

⁷² Morales and Moles, Spanish Autonomic state, 180

⁷³ Greer, Nationalism and Self-Government, 98-99

government within the desires of that region. The second step expressly demands the explanation and ratification of the governmental structure for the region. 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.⁷⁴

There are two very unique and important facets of this structure engineered by Spain. 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.⁷⁵ Secondly, the communities can choose at a regional or local level which responsibilities and laws they want to enforce and which will be left to a higher body of governance.⁷⁶ These two 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.⁷⁷ The Pact established a total of 17 autonomous communities in the country. The establishment of the Autonomic Pacts had a degree of similarity with the aforementioned Statutes of Autonomy.⁷⁸ While retaining the ability of the people of that region to choose which regulations and revenue collection means they wished to exercise, it established minimum standards for governance and streamlined governance between the federal and regional levels.⁷⁹ It also established a system to resolve disputes between the federal government and regions as well as regions with other areas. This system became known 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 governance problems. The Spanish central government was forced to deal with each region differently due to unique provisions regions had established for themselves. 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.⁸⁰ The new Pacts also further regulated minimum requirements for legislative bodies at the local levels, in order to streamline revenue distribution.

⁷⁴ Morales and Moles, Spanish Autonomic State, 184

⁷⁵ Greer, Nationalism and Self Government, 33

⁷⁶ Morales and Moles, Spanish Autonomic State, 185

⁷⁷ Morales and Moles, Spanish Autonomic State, 187

⁷⁸ Greer, Nationalism and Self-Government, 112-114

⁷⁹ Morales and Moles, Spanish Autonomic State, 187

⁸⁰ Gillespie, Richard, "History of Spain," in *Western Europe 2000*, (The Gresham Press, Old Woking, Surrey, UK, 2000) 483

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.⁸¹ 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.⁸²

Spain has benefited from the recent changes in a number of ways. First, the federal government has been able to successfully address many ethnic grievances in a legitimate and peaceful manner.⁸³ Second, 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 previously 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.⁸⁴ All of these outcomes can be seen as overwhelming successes.

The negative aspects of this evolving pattern of governance established by Spain are two-fold. Although few remain, some insurgents have not been completely dissuaded.⁸⁵ There continues to be extremist Basque and Catalanian elements that attempt to exercise their separatist desires through terrorist acts. Also, this system is still evolving. It remains to be seen if this governmental approach will continue to lay a firm foundation for long term stability. In the short run it certainly has done much to stabilize the country.

Kurdistan

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 countries of Iraq, Turkey, and Iran where they make up approximately twenty-three, twenty, and ten percent of the population respectively.⁸⁶ 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.⁸⁷

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

⁸¹ Morales and Moles, *Spanish Autonomic State*, 189

⁸² Morales and Moles, *Spanish Autonomic State*, 189

⁸³ Greer, *Nationalism and Self-Government*, 113-114

⁸⁴ Greer, *Nationalism and Self-Government*, 33, 37-38

⁸⁵ Jan Beck, *The Basque Power Sharing Experience, Nations and Nationalism*, (Univ. of Amsterdam, The Netherlands, 2008) 78-79

⁸⁶ Stephen Miller, *The Kurds*, (MMAS Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, 2005) 7

⁸⁷ Miller, *The Kurds*, 9

of life, and an absolutely unmolested opportunity of autonomous development.”⁸⁸ 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.⁸⁹ In 1921 the Treaty of Sevres again gave the Kurds hope for independence, but it did not come to fruition.⁹⁰ 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.⁹¹

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 ruling Iraq in the 1930’s⁹² 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.⁹³ 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.⁹⁴ 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 and infrastructure development. In 2003, during the United States led ground invasion of Iraq, the Kurdish areas were minimally touched by the fighting. Kirkuk, the largest city in northern Iraq, a city with many Kurds, was barely touched before being peacefully handed over to US forces. At the completion of the invasion of Iraq, the Kurdish people once again began movements for greater autonomy, which included seeking governance of Kirkuk.⁹⁵

Since the US led invasion of Iraq, the Kurds have been granted autonomous status by the government of Iraq.⁹⁶ The Kurdish region’s provinces remain part of Iraq but they have a greater degree of internal governance, to include control over internal economic issues and increased control over internal political matters. The Kurds are now part of the Iraqi legislative body and have significant representation within the executive branch. Internal to their autonomous area, they have the inherent ability to be self-sufficient in agriculture and economically due to vast oil

⁸⁸ Miller, *The Kurds*, 10

⁸⁹ Miller, *The Kurds*, 11

⁹⁰ Miller, *The Kurds*, 11

⁹¹ Miller, *The Kurds*, 13

⁹² Miller, *The Kurds*, 14

⁹³ Sultan Barakat, *Reconstructing Post-Saddam Iraq*, (Routledge, NY, 2008) 163-164

⁹⁴ Barakat, *Reconstructing Post-Saddam Iraq*, 69

⁹⁵ Barakat, *Reconstructing Post-Saddam Iraq*, 72-73

⁹⁶ Miller, *The Kurds*, 16

reserves/production.⁹⁷ They also have a sizeable military, militia, and police forces that are quite capable of providing internal security and regional border security.

The creation of an autonomous region for the Kurds has had positive effects. For many years, the Kurds have expressed deep grievances with past governments of Iraq over their mistreatment and their aspiration for independence. 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.⁹⁸ Local governance within the restructuring was strengthened and the people of Kurdistan have a much higher degree of internal governmental penetration than the non-Kurdish surrounding provinces.⁹⁹ 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.¹⁰⁰ 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 changes empowering Kurdish self-governance.

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 some degree of autonomy and have not voiced concern or opposition.¹⁰¹ 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 independent Kurdish nation, is also amenable to the idea of them being an autonomous area.¹⁰² 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 marginalized, AI has not conducted an attack in the past two years. Marginalization has decreased the likelihood of intervention from other ethnic groups and bordering countries outside of Iraq as well.¹⁰³ Turkey has only crossed the border twice to deal with Kurdish insurgent elements since 2003.

The negative impacts of the Kurds' 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.¹⁰⁴ 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 homogeneous 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 Kurds.¹⁰⁵ It has been demonstrated a number of times throughout history and most recently in Belgium, when a core ethnic group has its own state institutions it begins to look more to its own

⁹⁷ Miller, *The Kurds*, 39

⁹⁸ Miller, *The Kurds*, 43

⁹⁹ Barakat, *Reconstructing Post-Saddam Iraq*, 72-73

¹⁰⁰ Miller, *The Kurds*, 43

¹⁰¹ Barakat, *Reconstructing Post-Saddam Iraq*, 164-165

¹⁰² Barakat, *Reconstructing Post-Saddam Iraq*, 71-72

¹⁰³ Miller, *The Kurds*, 44-45

¹⁰⁴ Barakat, *Reconstructing Post-Saddam Iraq*, 80-81

¹⁰⁵ Barakat, *Reconstructing Post-Saddam Iraq*, 164-165

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 population 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 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.¹⁰⁶ 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 an 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 an autonomous region, the successes have also reignited some previous sentiments. Most significantly, the Kurdish idea of secession from Iraq and formation of an independent nation continues to surface and grow.¹⁰⁷ The outcome is not clear at this time, but in the short-run, there have been many more successes than failures.

Assessment Criteria

The study applies four assessment criteria against outcomes for employing the federal system of government with autonomous areas within the case study countries. The criteria are: grievances, ethnic tensions, economic livelihood, and lack of government penetration. These criteria are taken from within Paul Collier and Anke Hoefler's, "CH Model", explaining civil war and insurgency creation. This model is the model of choice for the World Bank since the mid 1990's¹⁰⁸ and has been determined to be the most accurate means of assessing a nation's propensity for stability.¹⁰⁹

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.¹¹⁰ 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

¹⁰⁶ Miller, *The Kurds*, 26-27

¹⁰⁷ Miller, *The Kurds*, 26-28

¹⁰⁸ Collier, Paul and Sambanis, Nicholas, *Understanding Civil War Volume Two*, (The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, The World Bank, Washington DC, 2005) IX

¹⁰⁹ Collier, *Understanding Civil War*, IX

¹¹⁰ Collier, *Understanding Civil War*, 3-7

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.

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 focuses intensely on this ethnic dynamic and concludes that high levels of ethnic tensions directly lead to violence and civil war.¹¹¹ 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.¹¹² It has also been shown that within many developing nations, ethnic conflict is a key criterion during the debate over the composition of their emerging government. Within the country case studies and 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 analysis.

Poor economic conditions or economic inequality amongst the people, as alluded to earlier, also tends to generate insurgencies when not addressed by the government of the nation-state.¹¹³ It is a key criterion in the analysis and will represent the degree at which the polity of a nation-state can provide for their family while seeking to improve their personal economic situation. No matter the locale, all societies have a desire to provide for themselves, their families, and the enhancement of their quality of life. When this is denied, or there is a perception of denial, the polity begins to harbor severe grievances against their nation-state’s governance.¹¹⁴ 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 their own form of economic system to enhance their development. As Collier demonstrates, revenue sharing and economic system choice are two pivotal areas that have demonstrated reduction of civil war or insurgent activity.¹¹⁵

Governmental penetration is the final criteria 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.¹¹⁶ 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 entire nation-state and this factor has led to successful insurgencies.¹¹⁷

Specific examples will be shown from each case study that demonstrates the positive and negative outcomes of these criteria in relation to federal systems of governance with autonomous

¹¹¹ Collier, *Understanding Civil War*, 52-54

¹¹² Horowitz, Donald, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000) 4-9

¹¹³ Collier, *Understanding Civil War*, 3-5

¹¹⁴ Collier, *Understanding Civil War*, 13

¹¹⁵ Collier, *Understanding Civil War*, 5-8

¹¹⁶ Collier, *Understanding Civil War*, P68-72

¹¹⁷ Herbst, *States and Power in Africa*, P27-30

areas. 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.

Analysis

The first area examined is how **grievances** and minimization of insurgent/separatist tendencies were accomplished in each case study. Within the Belgium study, grievances and separatist tendencies were shown to have existed amongst the Walloons and the Flemish prior to many of the changes made to the political structure of the government.¹¹⁸ Grievances were centered along perceived discrimination resulting from differing economic systems, lifestyles, and language.¹¹⁹ The federal system of governance adopted by Belgium addressed these problems directly. As a result, popular opinion began to move away from separatist rhetoric toward a belief that grievances could be adequately addressed by government.¹²⁰ Local government actions of each autonomous area were also being seen as much more responsive to the needs of the people.¹²¹ Concurrently, negative newspaper articles and non-violent protests decreased.¹²²

In the country of Spain, there is again a positive outcome. Both the Basque and the Catalonians displayed a high degree of separatist tendencies along with numerous grievances before the changes made to Spanish governance. The grant of autonomous status and continued reforms to this autonomous arrangement contributed directly to the dramatic decline in separatist tendencies.¹²³ Insurgent activity in these regions also declined greatly.¹²⁴ The insurgent groups were delegitimized in the eyes of the local populace by the reforms made to the Spanish system of governance. In essence, insurgents became separated from the local populace, and thus, were denied their support base.¹²⁵ 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 local reforms and reduce conflict at the provincial level through peaceful means.¹²⁶

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.¹²⁷ When autonomous status was granted, the Kurds gained control over their region which alleviated many of these grievances, including many of the separatist movements. Individuals from the local populace and insurgent groups were brought together to establish a local government structure, with national links.¹²⁸

¹¹⁸ Mughan, *Belgian History*, 66-67

¹¹⁹ Mughan, *Belgian History*, 66-67

¹²⁰ Alcantara, *Federalism*, 173

¹²¹ Alcantara, *Federalism*, 173

¹²² Mughan, *Belgian History*, 68

¹²³ Gillespie, *History of Spain*, 481-482

¹²⁴ Gillespie, *History of Spain*, 482

¹²⁵ Greer, *Nationalism and Self-Government*, 100-102

¹²⁶ Greer, *Nationalism and Self-Government*, 102-104

¹²⁷ Barakat, *Reconstructing Post-Saddam Iraq*, 68-69

¹²⁸ Barakat, *Reconstructing Post-Saddam Iraq*, 70-71

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 dramatically in Kurdistan after Iraq addressed Kurdish identity issues.¹²⁹ Even more significant, insurgent groups within Kurdistan were relegated to obscure areas within the Kurdish region due to the loss of their support base.¹³⁰ The change to an autonomous region significantly reduced Kurdish grievances and the power of insurgent groups within the province.

Ethnic tensions are the next area to be examined. Within the country of Belgium, the Flemish and Walloons were engaging in nonviolent political fighting on every issue brought to the central government.¹³¹ Because they could not agree on many governmental issues, proposed 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 was passed due to governmental gridlock.¹³² The movement to greater autonomy within Belgium's governmental structure helped to alleviate the situation. The autonomous areas were given greater power in administering law and administrative governance. This directly led to greater governmental responsiveness and less ethnic tensions.¹³³ Law creation and regulation was now able to move through the regional and central government(s) at a normal pace, assisted by political power sharing arrangements within the central government.¹³⁴ The movement to the federal system of governance within Belgium dramatically decreased 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.¹³⁵ 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.¹³⁶ Since the Spanish government's establishment of the Autonomic Pacts with its provinces, ethnic groups like the Basque and Catalonians were able to delineate exactly how they wanted their province to be administered.¹³⁷ They could also directly address which laws and regulatory statutes they wished to accept. As a result, ethnic tensions have been significantly reduced due to their increased ability to address issues pertinent to them.¹³⁸

Spain's success in alleviating tensions among ethnic groups is largely attributable to two decisions; the detailed analysis of ethnic boundaries before finalizing provincial territory and the degree of autonomy granted the provinces.¹³⁹ In many examples of ethnic strife around the world, border disputes between ethnic groups form a crucial initiator of tensions. Many of these

¹²⁹ Barakat, *Reconstructing Post-Saddam Iraq*, 79-80

¹³⁰ Barakat, *Reconstructing Post-Saddam Iraq*, 80-81

¹³¹ Mughan, *Belgian History*, 67

¹³² Mughan, *Belgian History*, 67

¹³³ Alcantara, *Federalism*, 175-176

¹³⁴ Alcantara, *Federalism*, 175-176

¹³⁵ Greer, *Nationalism and Self Government*, 16-17

¹³⁶ Greer, *Nationalism and Self Government*, 16-17

¹³⁷ Morales, Moles, *Spanish Autonomic State*, 190

¹³⁸ Morales, Moles, *Spanish Autonomic State*, 190

¹³⁹ Morales, Moles, *Spanish Autonomic State*, 188-189

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.¹⁴⁰ The accurate ethnic boundaries that the central government of Spain established circumvented tensions.¹⁴¹ The government analysis also prevented minority group placement in autonomous areas where new ethnic grievances could arise causing future problems.

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.¹⁴² 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.¹⁴³ The issue of expansion has given rise to most of the tension. The Kurds continue to pursue expanding their area of influence and the Iraqi central government has not dealt effectively with this issue. Outright physical attacks of Kurds on Arab peoples are still relatively low yet rising, but forced migration by means of threats are on the rise and could lead to further tensions.¹⁴⁴ The increase in violence between Arabs and Kurds could be a negative sign for their future relations.

Economic system gains for the general populace and the autonomous region is the third key area for examination. Economic gain in the country of Belgium was a dramatic positive outcome of the movement towards a federal system with strong autonomous regions.¹⁴⁵ Until the new system was adopted, the regions were opposing one another over conflicting economic interests i.e., agriculture versus industry.¹⁴⁶ The movement to greater autonomy led to greater economic independence and meaningful gains in revenue sharing, positively enhancing monetary outcomes in each chosen economic system.¹⁴⁷ It also helped to more effectively deal with economic related laws such as child labor laws that differed between the regions out of economic necessity. These changes to the laws greatly enhanced the individual autonomous regions economic productivity, while reducing inflation.¹⁴⁸

In Spain we see similar results due to their freedom of economic choice. As in Belgium, Spain's autonomous provinces individually choose a form of economic development that best suits their people.¹⁴⁹ These choices are supported by the central government within the tenets of the Autonomous Pact, and serve to strengthen the provinces economic status.¹⁵⁰ Prior to the adoption of a federal system of governance with autonomous areas, Spain's GDP was underperforming while inflation was rising.¹⁵¹ After the creation of the individual regions, revenue sharing with

¹⁴⁰ Nigel Allen, "Rethinking Governance In Afghanistan," *Journal of International Affairs*, (2003) 196

¹⁴¹ Gillespie, *History of Spain*, 485-486

¹⁴² Barakat, *Reconstructing Post-Saddam Iraq*, 78-79

¹⁴³ Barakat, *Reconstructing Post-Saddam Iraq*, 78-79

¹⁴⁴ Barakat, *Reconstructing Post-Saddam Iraq*, 78-79

¹⁴⁵ Riley, *Economy of Belgian*, 69

¹⁴⁶ Riley, *Economy of Belgian*, 69

¹⁴⁷ Riley, *Economy of Belgian*, 69-70

¹⁴⁸ Riley, *Economy of Belgian*, 69-70

¹⁴⁹ Morales, Moles, *Spanish Autonomic State*, 189-190

¹⁵⁰ Morales, Moles, *Spanish Autonomic State*, 189-190

¹⁵¹ Harrison, *Economy of Spain*, 487-488

the central government went from 15 to 30 percent resulting from the economic success generated by establishing autonomous areas.¹⁵² Success was achieved through the use of local economic plans, support from the central government, and streamlined tax processes as laid out by the Autonomous Pacts. Spain's GDP has grown as well and is now in a healthy state, while inflation has stabilized near record lows.¹⁵³

A negative impact from an autonomous region's economic growth is seen in the Kurdish region. The Kurds have been able to greatly accelerate their economic development through oil, agriculture, and tourism revenue.¹⁵⁴ This economic success has not been tempered with an increase in positive relations with the Iraq central government. In many ways, success has increased Kurdish determination to seek independence and nation-state status.¹⁵⁵ The Kurds are already looking to other countries for trade and economic development opportunities instead of their neighboring provinces or the Iraqi central government.¹⁵⁶ In the Kurdish 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 to be examined. 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 of their regions was the government's inability to provide basic services to the local populace.¹⁵⁷ Furthermore, local governance was generally overlooked in order to concentrate on developing the central government. As both countries completed their move to a federal system with autonomous areas this trend reversed itself.¹⁵⁸ Governance was now concentrated at the local level, was focused upon the local populace and was able to provide the desired services.¹⁵⁹ Measured increases in basic services can be observed in both countries.

In Spain, greater governmental penetration significantly reduced insurgent activities/attacks and in some instances, stopped them completely. Successes in the Basque region pushed insurgent groups to the fringes of society.¹⁶⁰ In Catalonia, very similar events took place resulting in a sixty percent decrease in insurgent activity/attacks.¹⁶¹ 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 significantly reduced.¹⁶² The increase in the number of police and special military units led to successful operations against insurgent elements. This activity, coupled with decreases in general populace

¹⁵² Harrison, *Economy of Spain*, 487-488

¹⁵³ Harrison, *Economy of Spain*, 487-488

¹⁵⁴ Barakat, *Reconstructing Post-Saddam Iraq*, 76-77

¹⁵⁵ Barakat, *Reconstructing Post-Saddam Iraq*, 78-79

¹⁵⁶ Barakat, *Reconstructing Post-Saddam Iraq*, 78-79

¹⁵⁷ Morales, Moles, *Spanish Autonomic State*, 189-190

¹⁵⁸ Morales, Moles, *Spanish Autonomic State*, 189-190

¹⁵⁹ Gillespie, *History of Spain*, 485-486

¹⁶⁰ Gillespie, *History of Spain*, 485-486

¹⁶¹ Gillespie, *History of Spain*, 485-486

¹⁶² Miller, *The Kurds*, 44-45

grievances, marginalized insurgent groups.¹⁶³ In addition, the greater focus on local governance increased basic services to the local populace. Just within the past year, services such as water and electricity supply have been substantially increased throughout Kurdistan.¹⁶⁴ However, these results were accomplished by an increase in regional Kurdish governmental penetration as opposed to the Iraqi central government.¹⁶⁵ 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.¹⁶⁶

Country Case Study Comparisons with Afghanistan

Afghanistan shares many similarities with the three case study countries. First among the similarities are the grievances held by the people. To this day, Afghans resent a controlling central government. The ethnic groups throughout Afghanistan desire to choose their own way of life without direct government intrusion into their personal, family, or tribal affairs. Many nations and national Afghan leaders have tried to force change upon the Afghan people and Afghan tribal culture.¹⁶⁷ This approach, coupled with a general Afghan belief that no central Afghan government has ever provided for the needs of all Afghans, has typically led to an outright revolt amongst the central government.¹⁶⁸ A basic level of stability in the form of local policing, fair justice, and education for their children are a routine demands not met.¹⁶⁹ None of these services have been effectively provided by any form of Afghan central government. Evidence of these enduring grievances has led to the acceptance of local Taliban “shadow-governments”,¹⁷⁰ who provide resources to the local populous, thus gaining their loyalty and support.

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.¹⁷¹ To further exacerbate the situation, there are sub-ethnic group tensions contained within these main ethnic groups.¹⁷² 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 the culture. The current form of government within Afghanistan has not addressed these issues nor tried to reduce the tensions.¹⁷³ Instead, the government has instigated conflict by haphazardly lumping rival clans into the same district or province.

¹⁶³ Miller, *The Kurds*, 44-45

¹⁶⁴ Barakat, *Reconstructing Post-Saddam Iraq*, 76-77

¹⁶⁵ Barakat, *Reconstructing Post-Saddam Iraq*, 78-79

¹⁶⁶ Barakat, *Reconstructing Post-Saddam Iraq*, 78-79

¹⁶⁷ Rubin, *Afghanistan's Uncertain Transition*, 26-27

¹⁶⁸ Tanner, *Afghanistan*, 222

¹⁶⁹ Rubin, *Afghanistan's Uncertain Transition*, 26-27

¹⁷⁰ Rubin, *Afghanistan's Uncertain Transition*, 19-20

¹⁷¹ Young, *Overcoming the Obstacles*, 10

¹⁷² Young, *Overcoming the Obstacles*, 10

¹⁷³ Rubin, *Afghanistan's Uncertain Transition*, 28

In addition to ties with their tribe or clan, the concept of Manteqa is very strong among the Afghans.¹⁷⁴ 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 decrease in tribal support of the Afghan central government.¹⁷⁵ One such event occurred in Regional Component South near the city of Kandahar.¹⁷⁶ 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 against the central government.

Economically, Afghanistan shares many of the same issues that Belgium and Spain dealt with over the years leading up to their establishment of autonomous areas. On the most basic of levels, the Afghan people are struggling currently with how to provide for their families.¹⁷⁷ Beyond basic sustenance, each province of Afghanistan is also struggling with adopting a viable economic system that will create enough of a revenue stream to provide for the well-being of its populace.¹⁷⁸ Some provinces can only support subsistence agriculture. Others, such as the province of Kabul, Kapisa, and Her-at are beginning to look at 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 support systems.¹⁷⁹ 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 equitable tax collection and revenue sharing amongst all autonomous areas. This served to provide a firm budget that 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 will facilitate revenue generation, provide for national revenue collection, and codify budgetary revenue sharing into law.¹⁸⁰ The case studies show that a federal system of governance with autonomous regions can accomplish these goals.

Summing up many of the issues mentioned above is the idea of governmental penetration. By definition it is based upon the premise of government control. Governmental penetration is affected by the amount of police, military, road infrastructure, governmental infrastructure and economic capability that exist in a nation-state. Afghanistan has one major highway in the entire country.¹⁸¹ Medium to small cities or towns have minimal to non-existent government/service infrastructure such as hospitals or police stations.¹⁸² Afghani general grievances and more

¹⁷⁴ Allan, Nigel, "Defining People and Place in Afghanistan," *Post Soviet Geography and Economics* No 8, (2001) 554-555

¹⁷⁵ Allan, Defining People and Place in Afghanistan, 554-555

¹⁷⁶ Boone, Beaumont, The Times Online, August 20th, 2009

¹⁷⁷ Rubin, Afghanistan's Uncertain Transition, 31

¹⁷⁸ Rubin, Afghanistan's Uncertain Transition, 31-32

¹⁷⁹ Rubin, Afghanistan's Uncertain Transition, 31-32

¹⁸⁰ Rubin, Afghanistan's Uncertain Transition, 31-32

¹⁸¹ CIA World Factbook Afghanistan

¹⁸² CIA World Factbook Afghanistan

specifically, economic issues are directly tied to the central government's inadequate penetration into many areas of the country.¹⁸³ In the case studies, establishing autonomous areas have increased penetration and services to the people. In Spain, revenue sharing was able to directly affect the populace in a more positive fashion when executed through the autonomous provinces rather than through central government agencies and their complex bureaucracies.

Among the Afghan people there are a number of separatist and insurgent elements. Separatism in Afghanistan has not yet manifested itself in any adverse way.¹⁸⁴ However, there are very strong ties between members of the same ethnic groups that are divided by Afghanistan's border with neighboring nations. An example of these ties can be found in the north of Afghanistan where the Tajiks identify very closely with the neighboring country of Tajikistan.¹⁸⁵ The Pashtuns in the south of Afghanistan are another example. The current border between Afghanistan and Pakistan splits this ethnic group.¹⁸⁶ Historically, a desire has existed to unite the Pashtuns on either side of the border into one entity separate from either country.¹⁸⁷ This separatist tendency has yet to become violent, but is an underlying motivation of much Pashtun' activity.

Afghani insurgents are more direct and violent in their objective to return Afghanistan back to a Taliban led regime.¹⁸⁸ Taliban insurgent groups are exploiting many of the pre-existing grievances, bending them for their purpose in order to gain popular support. They easily exploit the economic issues to their advantage by providing basic services to the people.¹⁸⁹ They are taking full advantage of the Afghan government's inability to penetrate much beyond the capital city of Kabul by filling the void in local governance.¹⁹⁰ Through these actions, the insurgents gain fertile ground for expanding their operational base. Very similar situations were negated in Spain and Kurdistan by changing their form of governance.

Potential Positives for Afghanistan

Based upon the comparative analysis, Afghanistan could gain by adopting a federal form of governance with autonomous areas. Grievances harbored by the local populace have shown to be positively affected by moving to this form of government. Spain exemplifies how the movement to a federal system of government accomplished precise goals and pushed a festering insurgency within the Basque and Catalonian regions into obscurity. Afghanistan could effectively use a federal system of governance to negate the effects of the insurgents within their own country.

Ethnic tensions are an inherent issue in Afghanistan, as well as the case study countries. A significant percentage of ethnic tensions were alleviated in all the case study countries following a movement to a federal system of governance with autonomous areas. Success in defusing ethnic tensions resided in the creation of power sharing and conflict resolution institutions. This

¹⁸³ Rubin, Afghanistan's Uncertain Transition, 22-24

¹⁸⁴ Allan, Defining People and Place in Afghanistan, 552-554

¹⁸⁵ Allan, Defining People and Place in Afghanistan, 550-551

¹⁸⁶ Allan, Defining People and Place in Afghanistan, 552-553

¹⁸⁷ Allan, Defining People and Place in Afghanistan, 552-553

¹⁸⁸ Rubin, Afghanistan's Uncertain Transition, 6-8

¹⁸⁹ Rubin, Afghanistan's Uncertain Transition, 7-9

¹⁹⁰ Rubin, Afghanistan's Uncertain Transition, 9

same success can be achieved by separating Afghanistan's ethnic groups into areas with independent jurisdiction over governance, lifestyle, and economic activity.

All of the case studies demonstrated economic growth with a federal system utilizing autonomous areas. Afghanistan is in dire need of a viable economic model that promotes enduring development. It is currently struggling with ways to create economic growth with its limited endowments. The autonomous system of governance provides a means to best capitalize on area resources while accommodating local ethnic norms and economic priorities. Such a system has shown the ability to generate enough revenue in the long run to share amongst area governments and the central government, advancing the social welfare of all.

Afghanistan needs to increase government penetration throughout the country. The lack of government penetration is a catalyst for insurgencies and secessionist tendencies. Within all three case studies, secessionist activities were decreased by the movement to a federal system of governance with autonomous areas. Insurgent groups became irrelevant by the strengthening of local responsive governance. Secessionist feelings and tendencies were similarly reduced by increases in local sovereignty. Local governance begets, lower ethnic tensions and grievances, economic activity, revenue sharing, and helps increase the level of overall government penetration.

Conclusion

Afghanistan is dealing with complex and dynamic issues that impede its stability. Grievances against the government, ethnic tensions, lack of a viable economic system, a growing insurgency, and the rise of separatist tendencies are some of the most significant challenges facing the Afghan people. The central unitary government of Afghanistan has not had much success addressing these issues. A federal system of government utilizing autonomous areas has been shown in Spain, Belgium, and the Kurdish autonomous area of Iraq to affectively deal with these challenges and holds promise for Afghanistan. However, it is a governance system that does not create positive change overnight. In each of the case studies, change evolved over many years and continues even to this day. Afghanistan would be no exception. Afghanistan must be given time and technical assistance in how to effectively govern in such a system. It will also require an enduring commitment by international governing organizations, the United States and her Allies, and international finance institutions. Although not a panacea for all of Afghanistan's ills, transforming to a federal system of government with autonomous areas gives hope to an otherwise bleak situation.

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