

Nationalism, Not Islam

The “Awaken Youth” Party and Pashtun Nationalism

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Wish Zalmyan, the “Awaken Youth” Party (AYP), was the first political party to operate openly in Afghanistan. Emerging in the late 1940s soon after World War II, it enjoyed support from the intelligentsia and the tacit approval of a monarchical regime hostile to any oppositional voice. The AYP’s emergence depicts the stage that political development had reached in Afghanistan, as well as the political rhetoric of the opposition and the government between 1947 and 1953. Nationalism and constitutionalism made up the backbone of the AYP’s ideology. The AYP was the first political party to openly advocate these goals. Although they made the party popular with a segment of the ruling elite and the intelligentsia, they brought resentment from the religious establishment, for which Islam was the only ideology to be followed and the Quran the only constitution that the country needed. There were many grounds on which the AYP promoted nationalism and constitutionalism: the Constitutional Party (known as Jam‘iyyat-i Siri Milli or National Secret Association) of the early 1900s; the impact of World War II; the emergence of the Pashtunistan issue; changes in governmental ruling methods; and the establishment of a new Afghan cabinet.¹

This chapter examines how, in the aftermath of World War II, most members of the educated class leaned toward nationalism and constitutionalism as the driving forces for new political dynamics and the progress of the country. The AYP’s platform brought to the surface a new political reality in which a new generation of politically minded people were searching for new ideas in order to do away with traditional ones such as Islam and tribalism. The AYP’s platform also demonstrates how in the mid-twentieth century the rise and popularity of nationalism among the majority of the educated class, including the ruling elite, alarmed the

clergy. They discovered that they were losing their ideological dominance in the political process. It made some of them think about how to organize themselves in a changing world in order to regain their ideological supremacy by mobilizing the clergy class and others throughout the country for their cause. This led them to embark on the establishment of an Islamist party, and it was the beginning of political Islam in Afghanistan.

The AYP's ideas of nationalism and constitutionalism were not completely new in Afghanistan. It was the Constitutional Party that had first introduced these concepts to Afghan political discourse in the early twentieth century. Benjamin Hopkins has noted that the country "now known as Afghanistan had no previous existence as a united, independent political unit" before the twentieth century.² Although the concept of nationhood was very useful in terms of unity of the population, it was much resisted by power centers from the monarchy to the tribal chiefs and the religious establishment, because nationalism regarded people as citizens rather than subjects of the ruler, members of a tribe, or members of the universal Muslim community (*umma*). Moreover, the Constitutional Party advocated that sovereignty lay in the nation. Afghanistan was just a loose political entity in the early twentieth century, located between British India, Tsarist Central Asia, Persia, and China. It was only a geographical reality with fixed boundaries.

For the Constitutional Party, nationality and state were founded on territorially defined conceptions of the modern nation-state and a geographically distinct and historically unique Afghan nation. The party emphasized the independence of the country and focused on the unity of the people, regardless of their ethnoreligious affiliation or birthplace. This idea was completely new in the country.³ Although the party had operated only underground and had been completely suppressed in the early 1930s, its ideas still had currency on the eve of World War II in the minds of the Afghan elite.⁴

AFGHAN POLITICAL DYNAMICS AND WORLD WAR II

Although Afghanistan did not participate in World War II, it had a significant place in international politics.⁵ Its strategic location on the borders of British India and Soviet Central Asia had turned it into an important place for the warring sides, especially for the Axis powers.⁶ Afghanistan was regarded as the gateway to India. The country, which had been isolated from the outside world since the early nineteenth century, had become engaged in international politics.⁷ During the war, the Axis in Afghanistan had made the idea of the return of Pashtun territories (called the Pashtunistan Issue) lost to British India as a result of the Durand Agreement of 1893 a reality for the royal family as well as for some nationalist intellectuals. Although the official policy supported the Allies, most young members of the royal family, including Zahir Shah (r. 1933–73) and Muhammad Da'ud (the

king's first cousin, the commander of central forces and later president between 1973 and 1978) were in favor of the Axis.⁸ This was a view shared by the majority of Pashtun nationalists, most of whom desired the establishment of a political party centered on the issue.

World War II and its aftermath once again brought the idea of nationalism to members of the educated class in Afghanistan who regarded it as the driving force that could guarantee the country's social, cultural, and economic progress. Moreover, they believed that Islam was the source of disunity between the various ethnoreligious groups such as Shi'i and Sunni, and an obstacle to the progress of society. The association of the religious establishment with tribal leaders and despotic rulers made it antagonistic toward sociopolitical development, and it was seen as supporting the status quo. In the eyes of most members of the educated class, the clergy was responsible for keeping the people, especially the rural population, backward, discouraging them from learning modern science and technology; instead it was responsible for spreading superstition. The war and its outcome had two simple messages: the supremacy of science and technology, and the staggering backwardness of the country. In order to make progress, there was a dire need for unity, the rule of law, and the spread of modern science.⁹ The educated class believed these shared interests would lead to unity among the population.

It is interesting that among most young members of the Musahiban royal family, the idea of change and progress also made them think about aligning with various social groups. Whereas in the past the Musahiban dynasty had relied heavily on the tribal leaders and the religious establishment to gain and consolidate power, now they began to lean toward the emerging educated class, which was considered the tool of change for the implementation of modern policies in a new, changing world. Until the end of the war, the Musahiban dynasty had been fiercely engaged in consolidating their power, which included eliminating members of the Constitutional Party. Now the young members of the family wanted to modernize society. But perhaps of equal importance, the Musahiban rulers understood that the educated class was the weakest in society, and therefore the government had little to fear from it, whereas because of the power of the tribal leaders and the religious establishment, the government was fearful of them.

Another factor in the alternation in the Musahiban dynasty's view was the international political change occurring soon after the war, namely the departure of Great Britain from the region in 1947. Each side of the political spectrum looked at it differently but with the same outcome. Whereas for the Musahiban dynasty the presence of Great Britain had been considered a form of patronage, in the eyes of Afghan intellectuals it was one of the main sources for the increase in the power of the religious establishment and tribal leaders.¹⁰ Three Anglo-Afghan wars during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries greatly damaged the power of the central government in Afghanistan but enhanced the power of the religious

establishment and tribal leaders to the extent that they became the most powerful institutions in the mobilization of people in defense of the country. In addition, because of continuous unrest among the British Indian tribes and their kinship connection with Afghanistan, British officers had used various means to appease some of the tribal leaders and clergy in order to further their politics in the area.¹¹

The AYP emerged against a backdrop of change in the method of rule after World War II, including the departure of the most powerful man, Prime Minister Muhammad Hashim, who had ruled the country with an iron fist between 1929 and 1946. He was replaced by his moderate brother, Shah Mahmud. This was accompanied by the release of political prisoners, allowing the emergence of political parties, the publication of independent newspapers, and a free national-assembly election.¹² It resulted in the emergence of three nationalist democratic parties, the AYP, Watan (Homeland), and Khalq (Masses), who had an assertive presence in the assembly.

The emergence of AYP brought confrontation between two ideologies, Islam and nationalism, and two groups, the clergy and the nationalists. At the beginning the difference was hidden, but it soon became public and confrontational. This development marked the beginning of a long dispute that has continued to the present day and showed that in the mid-twentieth century, the most dynamic political party was nationalist rather than Islamist. Although it is beyond the scope of this chapter, the successful early struggle of nationalist politicians raises the question of what happened after the suppression of the nationalist parties in 1952, when they increasingly lost ground to extreme ideologies such as Islamism and Marxism—to the extent that in the last two decades radical political Islam has completely dominated the Afghanistan political landscape.

The emergence of the AYP received support from some elements of the royal family, who saw in it not only a political organization reflective of their worldview but one that could also be used in their aspirations to gain power. Muhammad Da'ud, the then-powerful Minister of Defense, was one of the main supporters of the AYP. In the words of one of his close aides, Shams al-Din Majruh, Da'ud was an ultranationalist Pashtun who aimed at reviving the Pashto language and culture and the supremacy of the Pashtuns, and he held strong beliefs about the liberation of Pashtunistan.¹³

WHY NATIONALISM?

What was it in nationalism that made it the most appealing ideology to various sociopolitical groups, especially the ruling elite in mid-1940s Afghanistan? The fact was that it could unite different sociopolitical groups such as the ruling elite and the intelligentsia. Nationalism provided a real opportunity to claim the lost Pashtun territories in the south and east of the country. With the withdrawal of the

Raj, the Pashtun belt of British India could rejoin the motherland, which would lead to the emergence of a greater Afghanistan and thus provide new economic opportunities for the landlocked country, including, important access to the sea.¹⁴ To further its own ambitions, the royal family was compelled to allow political activities including the foundation of the AYP, even though they had little tolerance of criticism. This was a significant departure from the old methods of ruling, but the Musahiban dynasty used the situation for their own political ends. The establishment of the AYP served the aspirations of the Musahiban and the Pashtun nationalists well.

During the war the royal family tried to set up its national ideology, Pashtun nationalism, in more sophisticated and explicit ways. By allowing the emergence of the AYP, which was promoting this ideology, the government could now claim that Pashtun nationalism was the dominant ideology among members of the intelligentsia. This also provided the Musahiban with the opportunity to establish connections with the intelligentsia. It was the first time during their rule that they had found a common political language with any members of the intelligentsia. Nevertheless, the emergence of the AYP, along with its ideology, manifesto, structure, and even membership, remained in line with the government's ideological and political undertakings. However, because of the autocratic nature of the regime and the intelligentsia's lack of trust of the government, the establishment of the AYP took a unique course.

THE FOUNDATION OF THE AYP

Ghulam Muhi al-Din Zarmalwal (b. 1919), one of the AYP's leaders, notes that prior to the formal establishment of the party, there were a few circles discussing its founding. They commissioned some individuals to travel around the country sounding people out, especially to the east and south, and cautiously contacted members of the educated class about the possibility of founding a political party.¹⁵ They took another initiative by publishing a book under the title *Wish Zalmiyan*, to which fifty people contributed, among them the most outstanding of the elite, including members of the cabinet.¹⁶ It was a survey (*iqtrah*) among the intelligentsia as to whether the name and the idea of the party were right. The publication of the book and its warm reception among the elite, and the change in the government political rhetoric, convinced the leaders that the time was ready to launch the party. The AYP was formed in 1947. The date of its first congress was one year later. Wali Zalma'i, a member of the party and a participant in the first congress, states that it was held in Kabul with the participation of twenty-two members on May 28, 1948.¹⁷ At this meeting three proposals for the organization were made, which showed the different leanings in the party and its rather loose structure.¹⁸ Some of the leaders wanted to establish an organization dealing more with cultural and

social matters than politics, whereas others wanted to begin with something less provocative than a political party such as an association. The party's move toward a more cultural orientation arose because literary associations had a rich tradition in the country and would arouse little reaction from sociopolitical forces such as the religious establishment, the tribal chiefs, and some members of the court who did not like political groupings. Moreover, it was in line with government ideology, and the majority of its leaders were literary men.

Other ideological factors also drove the AYP toward a cultural orientation, namely the promotion of Pashtun nationalism, the Pashto language, and reforming Afghan society. The party's focus on the promotion of the Pashto language and literature was a key factor in its attraction for Pashtun nationalists across the country, because Pashtun nationalism was inextricably linked to the Pashto language. As Fredrik Barth has noted, Pashtun custom is actualized through the Pashto language.¹⁹ In addition, because the majority of the AYP leaders were literary men who had held high positions in government cultural institutions, the party was more culture-oriented from its very outset. This was primarily because its members were authorities in these activities and, secondarily, they used the institutions to publicize their ideas. The government was also in favor of cultural rather than political activities. It feared that with the spread of political activities other politically minded people, who had little sympathy for the government's political and ideological views, would organize themselves in new and oppositional political parties.²⁰

The key ideological approach of the AYP was to reform Afghan society. In its view, sociocultural practices were responsible for holding people, especially the Pashtun tribes, from becoming a political force in the changing world. Although the Pashtun tribes had played the role of kingmakers throughout the nineteenth and the early twentieth century, only the chiefs received the benefits of this power, not the ordinary people. The mobilization of tribal people by claimants to the throne and tribal chiefs happened under the pretext of tribal rivalry or religious differences but resulted only in internal conflict with the other tribes and the spread of superstition and backward traditions. For the AYP leaders these were the most harmful features that had hindered unification of the Pashtun population and their rise to become the central component of the new nation. This is why the spread of modern education, the new ethical code of conduct, and fighting against backward traditions including superstition found prominent consideration in the manifesto of the party.

In order to reform social practices, cultural activities were the best means. For the AYP these were a tool to make people aware of the real situation that they were struggling with, as well as to encourage them to participate in the political process. Here literature, of which the AYP leaders were great masters, played an important role in the political awakening. Literature was the "primary activity" through which members of the party were able to carve out a public arena that their critiques would inhabit.²¹ In order "to create a critical social consciousness"

among ordinary people, some members of the party used their literary skills and wrote anonymous lyrics in the style of Pashto folk poetry which were sung by popular musicians.²²

THE AYP AND ITS PROGRAM

Three key elements made up the backbone of the political orientation of the AYP: constitutional monarchy, Pashtun nationalism, and the freeing of Pashtunistan. The manifesto of the party was based on five articles, and included the following:²³

Supporting the constitutional monarchy. The spread of modern education and enlightenment of the people. National unity through the following measures: making efforts to unite the Pashtuns; the abolition of special privileges and securing equality and removing difference among all ethnic groups of the great Pashtun land or Afghanistan; observing the right of minorities, and using Pashto and Farsi as means of communication; making every effort to revive and make Pashto a scientific language and writing and publishing in it and teaching it to all people of the country; loving and supporting the national government; struggling against corruption, bribery, and treachery, and avoiding being involved in them; fighting against superstition and bad social customs; being optimistic and expressing solidarity with others; having love for the nation; consuming local products as much as possible and avoiding being extravagant and sensual; making great efforts for the liberation and making of Pashtunistan.

Whereas the spread of modern education, promoting nationalism, freeing Pashtunistan, and supporting constitutional monarchy were the backbone of the party's program, the rest of its agenda had more to do with ethical change than a real political program. The program was actually designed to attract the support of the government as well as to find a wider audience. For the party, ethical change was an important tool not only to reform Pashtun society both socially and culturally but also to bridge connections with the masses. It also aimed at encouraging and facilitating the participation of people in national politics. As long as the majority of the people were not engaged in politics, any kind of change in the political system, including in the method of rule, was temporary and reversible. In addition, for the people, especially the Pashtuns, to become a genuine *ethnos*, they needed to become interested in national issues.

However, the important point is that there was no reference to Islam in the AYP's manifesto. The requirements for membership were Afghan citizenship, taking part in the party's activities, accepting and implementing its decisions, and paying membership fees, but there was no mention of having to be a Muslim or adhere to Islamic doctrine.²⁴ Having in mind the general sociopolitical and cultural environment of the time, this was a significant step toward the democratization of society, but equally it alarmed the conservative groups, especially the clergy.

THE AYP AND ITS LEADERSHIP

One of the unique characteristics of the AYP was that it was not founded around a single charismatic personality. Instead, several people contributed to its foundation, including Muhammad Rasul Pashtun (1900–1983), Ghulam Hasan Safi, Fayz Muhammad Angar (1915–79), ‘Abd al-Ra’uf Binawa (1913–84), Qiyam al-Din Khadim, Gulpacha Ulfat (1909–77), Tahir Safi, and Nur Muhammad Taraki (1917–78). According to Taraki, it did not have a president but was run by a seven-member executive committee, “none of whom was individually prominent.” They were Sidiqullah Rishtin (1919–98), Hassan Safi, Ulfat, Binawa, Rasul Pashtun, Angar, and Taraki.²⁵ The committee was chosen by the congress. This multiplicity of leaders suggests that there was no one outstanding figure but a group of prominent men. But although apparently the reason could have been fear of possible persecution by the government, the leadership decided that the party should be led by a committee rather than by a single person.

The AYP’s leadership had three features: they were urban-based with roots in rural Pashtun areas; they had a reformist agenda; and they had close ties with the ruling class. Almost all the AYP leaders belonged to the Eastern and Southern Provinces (Nangarhar and Qandahar were their capitals, respectively), the two most important Pashtun cultural and political centers in Afghanistan. They were well-educated men who wanted to transform Afghan society from a tribal to a modern one. They had held high government positions and had connections with the establishment. Having in mind that senior government positions were mainly in the hands of members of the royal family and those very close to them who contributed to the empowerment and consolidation of Musahiban rule, these men generally were considered as the second tier of high officials, trusted by the establishment. These features, including connections with major sociopolitical forces, placed AYP’s leaders between the various sociopolitical worlds. Because of their rural roots, they understood the social mores of the people, and because of their education they had a modernizing worldview. Their connections with the establishment meant that they had a good understanding of the overall situation in the country, the policies of the government, and the real nature of the ruling class. These features were reflected in their political and ideological approaches. They sought change, but they were cautious about the limits and pace of their demands. Even their emphasis on the constitutional monarchical system, which had replicated the government polices, at least on paper, was taken with caution.

THE AYP AND ITS MEMBERSHIP

The AYP managed to attract various groups of elites from around the country. The membership was mixture of anticolonial elites, aristocrats, government officials,

Pashtun nationalists, middle-rank businessmen, and landlords, urban traders, and even military officers. Membership in the AYP depicted the nature of society, its political structure, and the social groups that were the driving force behind the political system. According to declassified Soviet documents, membership in 1951 reached a total of 825 and was distributed over the following provinces: Kabul (130), Qandahar (300), Paktiya (10), Nangarhar (150), Faryab (15), Baghlan (80), Pul-i-Khumri (30), Herat (5) and Mazar-i-Sharif (105).²⁶ Nevertheless, these statistics show two important points: first, the high number of members in the AYP; second, the membership in Qandahar was more than double that in Kabul. The power bases of the party were Qandahar and Nangarhar, despite the fact that the party headquarters were in Kabul and most prominent members of the party lived in Kabul and had high positions in government departments. The main reason for the attraction of the AYP in Qandahar and Nangarhar was that most leaders originated from these provinces, and the issues it propagated such as Pashtun nationalism and the Pashtunistan issue were more appealing to people there.

THE AYP AND CONSTITUTIONALISM

One of the principal undertakings of the AYP was to advocate a constitutional monarchy, and it was the first political party in Afghanistan to do so publicly. From its emergence the AYP promoted a civic form of belonging and stood for constitutionalism, the drawing up and implementation of secular laws, the separation of the elements of power, and freedom of expression. In his article "Dar Kishwar-i ki Qanun Nabashad" (In the Absence of a Constitution in a Country), 'Abd al-Razaq Farahi (d. 1975), a leader of the party and in charge of its financial affairs, wrote that:²⁷

When a country does not have a constitution or has but does not implement it, the destiny of its people is in the hands of a few powerful men. Here the success or failure of the people is not because of their talent, knowledge, educational background, or hard work but because of the favor of powerful men. Reaching any status is because of connections and therefore requires seeking opportunities and pleasing certain people by any means. . . . But when there is a constitution and the rule of law, the rights of the people are secured, and people are defended against injustice.

The AYP's leaders tried to convince the royal family that they were not against their rule, with Farahi writing that "an Afghan loves his homeland, the nation, and the king."²⁸ For the AYP a constitutional monarchical system meant reforming the political system, especially the method of rule, the separation of different branches of power, a guarantee of freedom of expression, and the engagement of the majority of the people in the political process.²⁹ The AYP did not want regime change, because the survival of the party was linked to the system; it could function only

in the presence of a constitutional government. So the AYP took a cautious approach toward constitutionalism. The party leaders were aware that emphasizing it too strongly might be seen as pitting them against the government. It could even provoke the government to end the breathing space and go back to dictatorship.

The AYP demanded other measures, including spread of modern education and an end to family, tribal, and religious privilege. It considered these as keys to the building of a new nation. Nur Muhammad Taraki, a leader of the party, stated that “we want a modern, national, widespread educational system. We want all ethnic and tribal privileges to be eliminated.”³⁰ Such privileges sustained the power of the tribal chiefs, religious leaders, and members of the royal clan in sociopolitical and cultural matters, and prevented members of the educated class from playing a more active role and having a share in the political leadership. They maintained the status quo and prevented progress. Moreover, these privileges prevented the ordinary people from participating in politics, because they were represented by the tribal chiefs and religious leaders. But the spread of modern education was not the only solution. In another article, Taraki argued that “for the progress of society, the engagement of the ordinary people in sociopolitical affairs is essential.”³¹

THE AYP AND NATIONALISM

The AYP vigorously propagated nationalism. It was the most significant issue that the party was formed on, and it could mobilize people around it. Nationalism was considered the most suitable ideology for a country with a makeup of diverse social groups. In the aftermath of World War II and the emergence of political parties, the idea became a hot topic in the media. According to ‘Ali Asghar Shu‘a‘, “the centerpiece issue of the time was national unity and the equal rights of all citizens of the country.”³² In another piece, “Luzum-i Mujadila bi Tasubat Bija” (The Need to Fight against Prejudice), Shu‘a‘ emphasized that the most “damaging germs, which undermine the existence of our nation and kill its unity and ability, are ethnic, language, and the like prejudices.”³³ Ghulam Muhammad Ghubar provided a detailed description of terms such as “nation,” “nationalism,” “homeland,” and “state”:³⁴

When a group of people living within the specific boundaries of a territory share interests and losses with each other, that territory is the country, the people are the nation, and the institution that arranges sociopolitical affairs is the state. Traditionally, the elements that made up the nation, apart from shared territory and interests, were ethnicity, religion, and language. However, today two elements, ethnicity and religion, have lost their positions in the makeup of a nation. Even language is not an essential component of the formation of a nation. The Afghan nation is one that has been formed between the Sind [Indus] and Amu [Oxus] rivers because of a shared territory, interests, culture, history, and religion.

This was the most modern concept of the nation and nationalism, which suggested a civic type of nationalism. However, the authors of the above excerpts, published in AYP's paper, were not members of the AYP. Ghubar and Shu'a' were outstanding political leaders of the time, the former a member of the national assembly and the leader of the Homeland Party and the latter a member of the Kabul City Council and a Shi'i. While the AYP strongly believed in nationalism, it propagated one of a different type: ethnic nationalism, which fitted well with its program, power base, structure, and membership.

The AYP's program emphasized the promotion and development of the Pashto language, defending the independence and sovereignty of the country, respecting the national heritage, spreading science and modern culture, and establishing good relationships between the people and the government, all of which were nationalist objectives.³⁵ Its ideology, which reflected the outlook of the Pashtun nationalists, was also shared by the royal family. In fact, the party shared the Musahiban dynasty's dominant ideological orientation (which continued until 1978). But the type of nationalism that the AYP was promoting represented an *ethnos* in which the Pashtun ethnic group was considered as the heart of the nation.³⁶ The Pashtuns' deep feelings of group commitment were expressed in altruistic values and actions, and included a sense of belonging to a common ethnic group considered superior to other forms of collective identification. Ethnic solidarity overrode all other types of individual and collective attachments such as class, politics, and regional affiliations. According to Anthony Smith, to speak of a genuine *ethnos*, this "sense of solidarity and community must animate at least the educated upper strata, who can . . . communicate it to other strata and regions in the community."³⁷ While the AYP aimed at uniting all ethnic groups under such a banner in Afghanistan, in fact this resulted in the fragmentation of society. Pashtun nationalism caused boundaries to be drawn between various ethnic groups and promoted cultural distinctiveness between the Pashtuns and the other ethnic groups. It also affected the distribution of power and access to economic resources.³⁸

But why did the AYP leaders, who seemed to be the modernizers of their time, promote Pashtun nationalism? Because they were Pashtuns themselves, with strong roots in eastern and southern Afghanistan, Pashtun nationalism seemed to them a normal political discourse to connect their two worlds, the rural and the modern. According to Zarmalwal, "all members of the party were Pashtuns and Pashto-speaking people."³⁹ Some members were in fact zealous Pashtun nationalists. For the AYP leaders, the Pashtuns who made up the majority of the population, who had ruled the country for the past two centuries, were the only group qualified to become the centerpiece of the new nation.

For the AYP, whose core leadership was in the hands of Pashtuns from Qandahar and Nangarhar, Pashtun nationalism seemed a natural approach, because Pashtun ethnicity and language were the decisive criteria for Afghan nationhood.

The criteria for Pashtun identity were Pashtun descent, speaking Pashto, conducting life in accordance with the Pashtun code of values (*pashtunwali*), and Islam.⁴⁰ Pashtuns identified themselves as Muslim by birth, to the extent that most of the time Pashtunness and Muslimness overlap.⁴¹ All Pashtuns, whether settled or nomad, and regardless of tribal affiliation, believed in their common descent from Qays 'Abd al-Rashid, a contemporary of the Prophet Muhammad.⁴² *Pashtunwali* is "an ethnic self-portrait of the Pashtuns according to which the Pashtuns are distinct from other ethnic groups not only because of their language, history, and culture, but also because of their behavior."⁴³ However, although the AYP advocated Pashto as the national and official language, it did consider the other two specifically Pashtun elements as possibly counterproductive for nation building. The party had a very ambivalent attitude toward instituting *pashtunwali* as the national code of behavior. It wanted to introduce a new set of ethics, some of them based on some elements of *pashtunwali*, and its leaders never hid their admiration for it (as reflected in their publications).⁴⁴ Descent was even more problematic for the AYP, because it institutionalized to the Pashtun model of tribal organization, based on nested sets of egalitarian clans and lineages defined by patrilineal genealogies stemming from a common ancestor. This was not how other ethnic groups regarded their history. According to Thomas Barfield, in the absence of government institutions such descent groups act to organize economic production, preserve internal political order, and defend the group against outsiders. The relationships between these "lineages rest on segmentary opposition, that is, lineages are supported by, or opposed to, one another based on their degrees of relatedness and the problems confronting them."⁴⁵ For the AYP, which wanted the unification of all Pashtuns as an *ethnos* in the new national discourse, descent could well cause disunity and confrontation. As discussed above, the party introduced a new ethical code of conduct that was a combination of traditional and modern values and shared interests.

PASHTUN NATIONALISM AND THE ROYAL FAMILY

The Musahiban promoted Pashtun nationalism in various levels because they had a great stake in it. They were Pashtun themselves; they had come to power with the help of Pashtun tribes in 1929; and their power base remained strong among the southern Pashtun tribes. In order to consolidate their monopoly on power and to mobilize people around their internal and external policies in a changing world, the Musahiban rulers transformed Pashtun nationalism into a collective national ideology. John Breuilly asserts that nationalism is, "above and beyond all else, about politics and that politics is about power." The central task is "to relate nationalism to the objectives of obtaining and using state power."⁴⁶ The underlying goal of promoting Pashtun nationalism was the inculcation of the idea that the "royal

family and their Muhammadza'i clan in particular,⁴⁷ and the Pashtun tribes in general, [were] the only legitimate rulers of Afghanistan."⁴⁸ The government decreed that the "Afghan monarch was always a Pashtun, and his right to rule was based on the Pashtun concept of legitimacy and on Pashtun consent." Government in Afghanistan was "of the Pashtuns, by the Pashtuns, and for the Pashtuns."⁴⁹ In fact this idea had been significant in the Musahiban role in removing the Tajik ruler Habibullah Kalakani in 1929 with the help of the Pashtun tribes. According to Nick Cullather, Nadir Shah "established a monarchy based on Pashtun nationalism, with overtones of scientific racism."⁵⁰ He allocated "governmental positions . . . to buy the support of the religious establishment and the tribes."⁵¹ Under his rule, old "privileges for Pashtuns were renewed, and new ones were granted."⁵² They also used all the resources, including those obtained from their foreign connections, to create a patronage network "calculated to strengthen Pashtun nationalism," which they saw as an ideological buttress for their rule.⁵³

However, it was not until the outbreak of World War II that Pashtun nationalism came to play a significant role in organizing Pashtun intellectuals into a political grouping. In part this was because of the significant opportunities they enjoyed after the ascendancy of the Musahiban to power in 1929, but it was also because of the government's Pashtunization policy in the wake of World War II and the emergence of the Pashtunistan issue. Some members of the ruling class, especially in the south and east of the country, began to appease members of the Pashtun intelligentsia because of their political ambitions and ideological considerations. Zalma'i notes that when, in the 1930s, Muhammad Da'ud and Muhammad Gul Muhmand became Chief Civil and Military Officers of Southern and Eastern Provinces, respectively, they encouraged and supported Pashtun intellectuals to participate in cultural, social, and political activities under their patronage. Both of them were zealous Pashtun nationalists. For example, in Qandahar, the capital of the Southern Province, the Pashto Literary Association (*De Pashto Adabi Anjuman*) was established, and a magazine entitled *Pashto* was published.⁵⁴ When Muhammad Da'ud became Minister of Defense, in the late 1940s, he supported the emergence of the AYP. Indeed, along with 'Abd al-Majid Zabuli, the Minister of National Economy, he played a significant role in the foundation and promotion of the party, and the party supported him in his struggle to become Prime Minister.⁵⁵

With the emergence of the Pashtunistan issue after 1947, Pashtun nationalism received a significant boost.⁵⁶ The two issues reinforced each other. The government instrumentalized Pashtun nationalism in order to "keep the Pashtunistan issue alive,"⁵⁷ and this became the backbone of both the internal and especially the external policies of the government. The AYP's advocacy of Pashtun nationalism and Pashtunistan established a good relationship between the party and the government. These issues were the mainstay of government strategy at the time and would be so in the decade to come. It was in the above context that the AYP

emerged. Thus the AYP's program of nationalism fitted very well with the Musahiban government's agenda.

Paradoxically the clergy had little sympathy for the Pashtunistan issue. They considered it a source of difference between Afghanistan and Pakistan, two Muslim nations, that would result in the weakening of Islam. In their eyes, regardless of birthplace or national boundaries, all Muslims were members of the *umma* and should treat each other as brothers, whereas the Pashtunistan issue made Afghanistan and Pakistan enemies. This view was reflected in a statement by the most prominent Sufi leader, the so-called Hazrat of Shur Bazaar, Fazl 'Umar Mujaddidi (d. 1956), who traveled to Pakistan in December 1948. He preached friendship toward Pakistanis as coreligionists and called upon both countries to join in a religious war in Kashmir.⁵⁸ Instead of promoting the Pashtunistan issue, he advocated "effective unity of the Muslim countries."⁵⁹ His stand was in line with Pakistani official policy and contrary to Afghan policy. The hereditary Sufi Hazrat was "strongly in favour of liaison with, not antagonism to, Pakistan."⁶⁰ Unsurprisingly, the government and Pashtun nationalists were annoyed by his remarks.

The Hazrat, Fazl 'Umar Mujaddidi, was heir to the authority of the Naqshbandi-Mujaddidi Sufis, whose ascent in eighteenth-century Afghanistan is discussed in Waleed Ziad's chapter in this volume. His family remained extremely influential in the mid-twentieth century. Moreover, he was a very close supporter of the ruling Musahiban dynasty, had contributed greatly to their gaining power, and had served their government in various capacities, including as Minister of Justice between 1929 and 1932. But now Fazl 'Umar stood against the government. Thus the course of events was speeding up the disappearance of earlier religious forms of consciousness, when religious leaders had been able to mobilize people for the national cause, as happened against the British during the nineteenth and the early twentieth century. The Hazrat's remarks and the clergy's stand on the Pashtunistan issue alarmed the Musahiban government, especially those who had a great interest in the issue, such as Muhammad Da'ud. They realized they had no backing from the clergy on vital issues, whereas the nationalists, especially the AYP, were promoting the Musahiban's agenda intensely. This had a great implication for the Musahiban's approach toward the clergy and the nationalists, distancing them from the former and inclining them increasingly toward the latter.

However, there were some differences between the AYP and the government with regard to Pashtun nationalism. Whereas the former genuinely believed in it as the basis of their approach to nation building, for the latter it was a political means to an end. The government knew Pashtun nationalism would divide the intelligentsia and would cause suspicion among the other ethnic groups. The AYP's advocacy of Pashtun nationalism undermined its other proposals, such as its advocacy of a constitutional monarchical system that did not consider the Musahiban as the

only legitimate rulers of the country, and the pluralization of power—that is, that executive power should be separated from the royal family. Some non-Pashtuns who believed that the government would not abandon its discriminatory policies toward the minorities established underground political organizations. Aiming to establish a republic, one of these parties, the Sir-i Ittihad or Secret Unity Party, staged a coup on March 21, 1950, but it failed.⁶¹

However, although Pashtun nationalism made the AYP appealing among the ruling elite, it alarmed non-Pashtun political activists. It made most non-Pashtuns leave the party or cease formal association with it. According to Mirza Muhammad Ludi, a few of the most outstanding political leaders, such as Ghulam Muhammad Ghubar, Sidiq Farhang, and ‘Abd al-Rahman Mahmudi, who had attended the party’s first congress, left because of its Pashtun nationalist orientation.⁶² They established their own parties, Watan and Khalq.

PROMOTION OF THE PASHTO LANGUAGE

One of the elements through which the AYP articulated nationalism was the promotion of the Pashto language, because in the discourse of nationalism language is perceived as the very embodiment of the national character and its genesis, the main marker of national identity. The word “Pashto” has a significant connotation other than merely referring to the language of the Pashtuns. The phrase *Pashtu kawal* (doing Pashto) means to exercise ideal Pashtun values.⁶³ It is the core of Pashtun identity. According to Zarmalwal, one of the articles in the manifesto of the AYP demanded that in order to maintain national identity and promote the national language, all people of Afghanistan, especially students, civil servants, and military officers, were obliged to speak and write in Pashto.⁶⁴ For the AYP, the promotion of Pashto was not just about the language but was aimed at all the distinctive Pashtun sociocultural values. Anthony Smith argues that the ideologies of “nationalism require an immersion in the culture of the nation—the rediscovery of history, the revival of its vernacular language”;⁶⁵ Aneta Pavlenko and Adrian Blackledge say as well that “languages may not only be ‘markers of identity’ but also sites of resistance, empowerment, solidarity or discrimination.”⁶⁶ It was in this sense that Pashtun nationalists, the AYP leaders, and the ruling class placed the Pashto language at the heart of Pashtun nationalism and tried everything they could to make it a distinct entity.

In the case of the Pashtuns, who were divided into various tribes, it was the Pashto language that connected them. Pashto was considered as an “indispensable attribute of Pashtun identity.”⁶⁷ For the AYP’s leadership, the promotion of the Pashto language was both personal and political. It was their most important undertaking, because almost all of them were scholars, writers, or poets in the language, were Pashtuns and spoke Pashto, and also believed that it was the driving



FIGURE 17. Interior of modernist Baihaqi bookstore, Kabul, built ca. 1965. (Photograph © Nile Green)

force to attract Pashtuns. Thus Pashto symbolically mediated between the authoritative traditions and notions associated with Pashtun heritage and those who, across a broad area, maintained a sense of Pashtunness and participation in the larger “imagined community.”⁶⁸ For many Pashtun nationalists, the language itself was a presumed symbolic link between past and present. Therefore the promotion of Pashto was underlined in the party’s manifesto, which spoke of the party’s obligation to transform it into the medium of education throughout the country and to make it the national language.⁶⁹ There is no doubt that language was the most important symbol of differentiation in a country where Islam was common to the vast majority of the people.⁷⁰

This notion of Pashto as the most important element of ethnic nationalist discourse began to be advocated by the government in the wake of World War II. In 1936, through a royal decree, the government endorsed Pashto as the national language and the language of education throughout the country at the expense

of Persian, which had held the position for hundreds of years.⁷¹ According to the decree, all civil servants and military officers were obliged to attend Pashto language courses (newly established for the purpose); otherwise they did not qualify for a monthly allowance. But upon successful completion they would receive a 10-percent increase in salary.⁷² In 1937, the government had established the Pashto Tulana (Pashto Academy) to conduct research into and publications on the Pashto language, literature, and culture and for the “Pashtunization of every aspect of life in non-Pashtun ethnic communities.”⁷³ The aim was to promote Pashto as the only national language with a long history and fine literature, and to prove that Pashtun culture represented the national identity. The appointment of the leaders of the AYP to the key institutions to implement the policy showed the close ideological connections between the ruling class and the party. However, contrary to what Prime Minister Hashim claimed, the imposition of the Pashto language became a source of disunity, differentiation, suspicion, and antagonism among the different social groups. In fact, as James Caron has noted, supporting Pashto studies at the center “redirected the energies of talented intellectuals into a competitive arena, split between Persian and Pashto language communities.”⁷⁴

THE AYP AND THE PASHTUNISTAN ISSUE

The foundation of the AYP coincided with a new political sentiment aroused by the departure of Great Britain from the subcontinent in 1947, the partition of India and the loss of territories in the east and south of the country that were annexed to Pakistan.⁷⁵ These territories originally had been removed from Afghanistan in 1893 as a result of an agreement between British India and Amir ‘Abd al-Rahman Khan (r. 1880–1901) that created the Durand Line, named after Sir Mortimer Durand, who negotiated the agreement. The agreement separated the territories and delineated the influence of the Raj and the Amir. The line passed through the tribal areas lying between Afghanistan and India, thus dividing the Pashtun communities.⁷⁶ Upon the partition of the Indian subcontinent in 1947, it became the permanent border between Afghanistan and Pakistan. In June 1947 the Afghanistan government called for an independent Pashtunistan and denounced the 1893 agreement, and in 1949 a Loya Jirga or Great Assembly declared the Durand Line invalid. Since then successive Afghan governments have rejected it, saying that it was never meant to be a formal international boundary.⁷⁷

For the AYP the Pashtunistan issue made up of one of their five key concerns. It was considered a national issue rather than foreign policy. In an article “Zalmiyan se Ghuali?” (What Does Wish Zalmiyan Want?), Safi wrote: “Wish wants an honest approach toward the Pashtunistan issue. The nation’s whole power and effort should be channeled in the direction of the liberation and formation of Pashtunistan.”⁷⁸

In the eyes of the AYP leaders, who had a very strict pro-independence policy, despite the fact that the government had made the Pashtunistan issue the hallmark of its foreign policy, it did not do enough to achieve the area's independence. The party's leaders wanted the government and the ordinary people, especially Pashtuns, to take an active part in the struggle for the liberation of Pashtunistan. In order to achieve its goal, the AYP even sent missions to work closely with the Khuda'i Khidmatgar (Servants of God Party, also known as the Red Shirts), discussed in Sana Haroon's chapter in this volume.⁷⁹ In a verse, "Pashtunistan pa Gatum" (I'll Secure Pashtunistan), 'Abd al-Habib Safi portrayed the sentiment of the party members toward the issue very well:⁸⁰

If I am an awakened youth [*wish zalmi*], I'll make the name and fame of the nation;
 I'll secure Pashtunistan for the nation;
 I'll take Charsada [district], where beloved young men were martyred;
 I'll secure Pashtunistan for the nation.
 If I am an awakened youth, I'll open the jail's gates to my brothers,
 I'll liberate the imprisoned souls.
 I'll secure Pashtunistan for the nation.
 If I am an awakened youth, I'll take revenge for my brothers,
 Get a national reward.
 If I am an awakened youth, I'll elude the bad traditions,
 Get rid of the prejudices;
 For my martyred brothers I'll get flowers.
 I'll secure Pashtunistan for the nation.

Pashtun nationalism and the Pashtunistan issue paradoxically prevented the AYP from becoming a national party and led to its ultimate collapse. Despite much publicity and the investment of an enormous amount of money by the government, the issues did not have much appeal to the community in general, among the educated class, or even among most Pashtuns.⁸¹ It was of little interest compared with economic and social issues. Moreover, these issues divided the Pashtun intellectuals. According to Olivier Roy, although some Pashtuns found in it an ideology that gave them "an opportunity to improve their social lot and the means of wresting the monopoly of power from the establishment," the majority did not support it.⁸²

NATIONALISM VERSUS ISLAMISM

The AYP's main undertaking was to modernize Afghan society through the introduction of new ethical codes, including the spread of modern education and fighting against the backward traditions that were impeding social progress. These measures brought resentment from the two most powerful sociopolitical institutions, the tribal leaders and the religious establishment, who saw in them not only

a challenge to their worldviews but also to their sociopolitical and cultural status and privilege. For example the clergy, who had a monopoly on the educational system as a source of both ideology and income, would lose both with the spread of modern education. Therefore, in order to maintain their authority, the tribal leaders and clergy sought to maintain the status quo. But for the AYP the establishment of a modern educational system around the country, including in rural areas, was a priority.⁸³ In a piece in *Angar*, Babrak Ghishtili wrote: "Before anything else we need a proper modern educational system. We want the biggest portion of the national budget to be allocated for education, especially training teachers, equipment, and administration and the students' welfare and health."⁸⁴ These conflicting worldviews brought confrontation, especially between the clergy and the party.

Until the end of World War II, the general policy of the government had been to appease the tribal chiefs and the religious establishment. The Musahiban government, which had taken power and consolidated its authority with the help of these two groups, granted them privileges such as exempting some tribes from military conscription and taxation, and gave land to the clergy as *waqf* (endowments). Some mullahs were appointed to high positions such as the minister of justice, ambassadorships, or editors of the main Afghan newspapers such as *Anis* and *Islah*. Mullahs were also exempt from conscription. They had total control of the judiciary.⁸⁵ According to Richard Newell, the Musahiban achieved a large share of "stability from having successfully incorporated religious specialists into government service and by emphasizing the religious components of its authority."⁸⁶ In the area of education, the religious establishment "attained a controlling power."⁸⁷ After taking power, one of the first undertakings of the Musahiban was the establishment of the Jam'iyyat al-'Ulama or Association of Clerics (not to be confused with the Indian Jam'iyyat al-'Ulama-yi Hind discussed in Sana Haroon's chapter). Apart from its other duties, this Afghan Association of Clerics was assigned the responsibility of adapting the syllabus to Islamic values.⁸⁸ In this way the government not only accepted the monopoly of the clergy over traditional institutions such as *madradas* but also over modern ones.

For the AYP to implement its program it had to challenge the tribal leaders' and clergy's domination of sociopolitical and cultural fields, as well as fight against a political culture that sustained their domination. However, the real problem was the influence of the clergy on the minds of the people, including on some of the ruling elite. But the changes that took place after World War II brought hope that some members of the ruling elite would join with the political parties to change the mindset and culture of the people. It was against this backdrop that the AYP promoted its modernizing ideas. The party's leaders were aware of the difficulties that they were encountering. One of the main undertakings of the party was to fight against backward traditions, including superstitious practices, instead promoting the spread of modern education. One incident that brought the two sides

head to head was when the governor of the Eastern Province saw in a dream that a hair of the Prophet was located in the very place where a high school was under construction. On his orders a shrine was built there instead. In the article “Riyakar Ta” (To the Hypocrite), published in *Angar* on April 1, 1951, there was direct criticism of the governor:⁸⁹

All you do is only show. You have no any interest in the progress and happiness of the nation. You do only things for which some people applaud you; but you deceive them. While in public meetings you express your interest in modern science and knowledge, behind the scenes you make every effort to eliminate them. This is the method of criminals. This is because in reality in your view, science and enlightenment are the biggest sins. You suppress signs of progress anywhere in the country and instead strengthen the stand of the reactionaries.

But the opaqueness of the article meant it provoked little reaction. However when another article, “Da‘wat-i Mardum bi Khurafat” (Inviting People to Superstition) was published a week later in *Nida-yi Khalq*, it brought a massive reaction from the clergy. Hassan Safi, a leader of the party, had brought the religious establishment and members of the educated class into outright conflict because he openly criticized the governor and the clergy for building a shrine in Jalalabad to venerate a hair said to belong to the Prophet:⁹⁰

Because of the building of the shrine, the building of the school next to it has been stopped. Even all its material had been used for the shrine. The question is, From the viewpoint of religion and the demands of modern life that oblige men and women to learn, do we need to build a school or a shrine? Our current condition is shameful. In order to open the eyes of people to the heartbreaking realities in the country and help them to salvage it from ignorance, backwardness and superstition, Afghanistan and especially the Eastern Province need modern schools. We hope that our great religious scholars [*‘ulama-yi kiram*] and enlightened young people will fight against such superstitious practices.

The article led to public demonstrations in Kabul headed by the country’s most prominent religious leader, the Sufi Hazrat of Shur Bazaar, Fazl ‘Umar Mujaddidi. The Hazrat took exception to the article and tried to stir up a public outcry by accusing Safi of heresy (*takfir aw rajim*) and demanding that according to Shari‘a he should be stoned. A great uproar took place with many mullahs mobilized in support. The Hazrat even tried to mobilize his followers from the southern province of Paktia.⁹¹ In defense of Safi, members of the educated class, headed by the democratic parties Watan and Khalq, also staged massive public demonstrations.⁹² This brought conservative groups led by the Hazrat’s family into direct conflict with those in favor of reform. Safi was arrested, tried, and imprisoned until “the sign of repentance and reform appears on his forehead.”⁹³ But the demonstrations continued. The religious establishment was not happy with what it considered a

light punishment, and so it tried other means. According to the Pakistani embassy in Kabul, on July 1, 1951,⁹⁴

'Ulama from all parts of Afghanistan presented the following demands to the King: (i) Safi and his principal supporters should be tried again by a board of competent *'ulama* from Muslim countries such as Egypt, Iraq, and the Hijaz; (ii) that the independent paper *Nida-yi Khalq* was creating disaffection against the King and the people, and as such it must be banned; (iii) that writers who spread communist doctrines through their writings in local papers should be punished.

The *'ulama's* demands highlighted first and foremost that any matter to do with religion was their domain: no other people or organizations were allowed to deal with Islam, let alone criticize it. Their demands were obviously directed at a larger scheme than merely Safi's punishment, and for this reason they tried to engage *'ulama* from other Muslim countries. Because in their eyes Safi's article represented the views of a political party, the issues needed to be addressed in a broader way rather than just punishing the author, especially after the massive demonstrations in Kabul in support of Safi. Moreover, the *'ulama's* contention that anything that challenged their authority should be considered communist not only would provoke condemnation from Afghans generally but would also attract the attention of Muslims from around the world, thus making the case a global issue. By including the term "communism," the *'ulama* were insinuating that the ideas behind Safi's article were rooted in a larger conspiracy against Islam.

The confrontation between Islam and nationalism, and the failure of the clergy to achieve its goals, had paradoxically made some of the younger mullahs think about establishing their own political party, not only to propagate their ideas but also to compete with the nationalist democratic political parties. They had learned from the AYP that in order to achieve their goals and have a strong presence in the political landscape, they needed to organize themselves politically. Fazal-ul-Rahim Marwat has stated that young members of the hereditary Sufi Mujaddidi family "decided to form a political party that would work against the Communistically inclined" AYP.⁹⁵ Other scholars have claimed that such an organization actually emerged as early as 1952.⁹⁶ However, there is no evidence to prove this. In fact the clergy failed to establish an Islamic party at the time. But by establishing contacts and starting regular meetings they did begin the process.

This was not the first open confrontation in Afghanistan between the religious establishment and members of the intelligentsia. During the 1920s the clergy had mobilized people and led a rebellion against the government in the remote areas of southern and eastern Afghanistan. This time, however, the confrontation took place in Kabul through public demonstrations. It was a demonstration against a democratic nationalist party that advocated constitutionalism and nationalism instead of Islam. Both sides expressed their views through public demonstrations

rather than by taking up arms or engaging in an uprising. In reality the demonstrations marked the emergence of the intelligentsia as a new force in the country and ended in favor of the AYP. Although the government had imprisoned Safi, it generally aligned itself with the intelligentsia. It did not respond to the *'ulama's* demands and clearly did not consider Safi's article to constitute the spread of communist doctrine. Even Safi's punishment was comparatively light, pardoning him from execution and not even imposing a lifetime prison sentence. Indeed, the term of his punishment was in the hands of the government. After two years in prison, he was released and appointed to the Afghan General Council, in Peshawar. This indicated a major shift in the government policy toward the *'ulama*, from appeasing and aligning with them to ending support for them vis-à-vis the intelligentsia. The government no longer relied on the clergy's support to maintain power.

Nevertheless, the confrontation between the clergy and the AYP was not limited to the pages of the newspapers and public demonstrations. The party used other means, such as publishing books, to fight against the reactionary forces. For example, in 1948 AYP published a book entitled *Hazrat Shur Bazar Suk Di?* (Who Is the Hazrat of Shur Bazaar?), about the leader of the Naqshbandi Sufi Mujaddidi family and the most influential clergy in the country.⁹⁷ In the book, not only was the Hazrat's negative role in the political turmoil of Afghanistan in the early twentieth century discussed, but also how he and other clergy prevented the country from progressing.⁹⁸ The book had to be distributed secretly.

However, whereas the AYP and other political parties of the period between 1947 and 1952 prevailed against the religious establishment, they lost the ground to the government. Their criticism of the government in their publications, through demonstrations, and especially in the national assembly caused the government to crack down on them in April 1952. In the new round of parliamentary elections, the government prevented the parties' members from being elected and imprisoned most of their leaders, including those of the AYP. This was the end of an era. Although the government adopted some of the nationalist measures of the AYP, such as the Pashtunistan issue, the promotion of the Pashto language, and the spread of modern education, it showed little interest in constitutionalism. The crackdown on the party had a wider and deeper implication for Afghan political thinking. Never again would nationalism and constitutionalism become driving forces for political organization and mobilization. Instead, during the Constitutional Decade, between 1964 and 1973, a number of political parties emerged, but these mainly espoused radical imported ideologies such as Marxism and Islamism.

CONCLUSIONS

The rise of the AYP signified a period of change in Afghan politics after World War II. Its establishment demonstrated the desire for change by members of the

intelligentsia and the favorable attitude of some of the royal family, although underlying support for the party was actually rooted in a power struggle within the royal family. Nevertheless the party's views were close to the rulers' own world-views. The royal family overall saw in Pashtun nationalism the consolidation of its power and a real chance for the liberation of the Pashtun lands lost to British India in the late nineteenth century, which now belonged to Pakistan. This situation was a key factor in the party's moderate attitude toward government policies. However, the factors that prevented it from surviving were its desire to operate as an oppositional political party, the emergence of other political parties, and its approach toward Pashtun nationalism. In particular, its promotion of Pashtun nationalism and the Pashtunistan issue prevented it from becoming a truly national political party, and its later criticism of the government eventually led to a crackdown.

The emergence of the AYP, its wide membership, and its active role in the politics of the time showed that society was reaching a certain level of political maturity. The time of traditional ideology and political makeup was over. The party's advocacy of nationalism and constitutionalism attracted quite a large number of people, not only in Kabul but also in the provincial capitals. It demonstrated that Islam and tribalism were no longer suitable to mobilize young people and to ensure the progress of the country.

The AYP's popularity among different segments of society brought prominence to its ideology and leadership vis-à-vis religion and the clergy. By the mid-twentieth century, nationalism and the nationalists had become more successful in propagating their ideas, attracting a wider audience in society and playing a more prominent political and ideological role in the country than traditional forces such as the clergy were able to. Party members found their way into various levels of political leadership, from the national assembly and city councils to cultural institutions. They managed to advocate their ideas through different means: the national-assembly podium; public demonstrations; the pages of their newspapers and those of government-run periodicals; and traditional public ceremonies throughout the country.

All this marked the beginning of a new political discourse in Afghanistan that, although it inspired politically minded people, alarmed traditional political and ideological forces such as the clergy. Paradoxically the clergy learned that in order to compete with the AYP and other nationalist democratic political parties or have a chance to play a significant role in politics in the new, changing world, they too had to organize; and this led to the emergence of political Islam in Afghanistan.