

Having traveled, observed, and researched intensively in Afghanistan since 1988, Gilles Dorronsoro is a uniquely well-informed analyst of the country and its peoples, with unrivaled knowledge, especially of its non-Pashtun areas.

While not underestimating the oft-cited "ethnic factor" in Afghan politics, especially Pashtun dominance, Dorronsoro argues that class and the competition for employment and education are key factors in explaining the country's recent past. The 1990s saw a confrontation between the educated and the religious authorities (the *ulema*) and the marginalization of the traditional elites. Contrary to the glib optimism of world politicians, this conflict may periodically go into quiet phases, but it has not ended.

With coalition intervention and the subsequent deposition of the w/embf-dominated Taliban government, the educated elites are back in power. However, as Dorronsoro argues, patching up the country by means of short-term ethnic alliances and a new division of the spoils will only perpetuate the schisms in society. He believes, on a very sound factual and analytical basis, that the Afghan civil war is set to continue and perhaps worsen over time, despite Western intervention since 9/11.