Aga Khan: I think the reintegration of areas of countries like Pakistan after -- 1947 to 2010, what’s that, over 50 years? -- reintegrating areas which have not been under control after 50 or 60 years of quasi-autonomy is pretty tough going. And it’s not an Asian phenomenon, this is true of Africa also.

Globe and Mail: What elements are needed to make that progress further, that process of reintegration?

Aga Khan: I would say security, civil society, and a meritocratic approach to development, particularly in regard to human resources, because those three elements brought together could underwrite a continuous process of change....

Globe and Mail: You mentioned meritocratic development. Can you expand on that please?

Aga Khan: Well, I think in countries like Afghanistan, Pakistan, areas of Pakistan also, many areas throughout the developing world, the competence of younger generations is an absolutely essential issue. If you can harness that competence and you have competent younger generations, they will underwrite the processes of change. If you don’t have educated youth, then you will have nothing to work with. You have to try to change older generations’ attitudes, you have to try to teach them new knowledge. And we certainly found that the whole development process is accelerated massively when small communities have one or two young educated people who are going to run with the endeavour. These are not necessarily big communities either.

Globe and Mail: Does that include girls?

Aga Khan: Yes, without any doubt....
Globe and Mail: The modernists would argue that modernisation in any society is going to overcome tribal or ethnic difference. You point out that in Africa that has not been the case. It may take time, yet there's been an acceleration of modernisation and economic growth in Africa and not a simultaneous deceleration of tribalism.

Aga Khan: There is a younger generation of educated youth in Africa and they're moving forward. The question is, is there equity in access to education? If there's inequity of tribal people or whatever it is, you have a problem. So we talked about meritocracy. If the meritocracy is inequitable, what do you [sic]? Cause societies to deepen the fissures? One of the things I admire about Canada, in your plural society, is that you have made meritocracy work across all the communities in Canada. I've observed that, I've watched it, I've admired it, and I say to myself, how has Canada succeeded in doing it? You have to tell me the answer. What I can tell you is that would be a primary objective for me in the developing world.

His Highness the Aga Khan's 2010 Globe and Mail Interview (4th) (Toronto, Canada)

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