Multi-Ethnic Society and Lack of Political Culture in Afghanistan

Osman Mohammed Afzal[1]

[1] Budapest National University of Public Service, Hungary

Correspondence: Osman Mohammed Afzal, Budapest National University of Public Service, Hungary. E-mail: afzalosmani9@gmail.com

Abstract

Ethnic diversity and ethnic politics in Afghanistan overcome the common political culture that the nationalities have never been coherent regarding political decisions in the country. The only issue that led the nationalities to cohesiveness is religion as the common value and culture. Except for religion, the other commonalities do not highly influence the cohesiveness of the nationalities in Afghanistan. Thus, religion often brought together nationalities against foreign factors and withstanding interventions; however, concerning inner challenges and conflict, religion has never been a factor in diminishing and resolving inner conflict. The legitimacy of regimes and fair schemes for the welfare and the status quo change is not the fundamental issue for ethnicities in Afghanistan. Still, the extent of ethnic political participation in the government has often been considerable. The central government and centralised regime led to a big rift in the society and led to rivalry at any cost among the ethnicities to hold further political authority. The autocracy under the definition of Democracy, at least within the last 20 years in Afghanistan, one way or another, even changed the social norm among ethnicities that everyone, instead of feeling responsibility toward the government and national interest, focused on ethnic interests.

Keywords: multiculturalism, political culture, ethnicity, political system

1. Introduction

After the collapse of the Soviet Union and the winning of the Western block, most multi-ethnic societies got involved in a conflict that originated from the lack of a fair political system to resolve the rifts among ethnicities; however, several countries differently came to a solution, instantly through the federal system and another system which choose by the nations. However, Afghanistan remained on the stage with the exact definition of nation, nationalism and nationality architected since the modern state and afterwards (1880). The country experienced the Emirate, monarchy, absolute monarchy, and the republic. The mentioned political systems responded less to the need for a diverse society like Afghanistan. Although many authors defined the golden era of Afghanistan when Mohammad Daud established the Republic, that regime needed to demonstrate a system to embed all ethnicities or at least change the autocratic rules imposed. The Daud's Republic was based on a centralised system and an authoritarian regime. Most institutions, such as the Parliament, had been dissolved, and the power accumulated in the control of a single person.

There are varying schemes to the historic challenge of Afghanistan, often emphasising the same system that Afghanistan suffered from war and decades kept the country in the retard position. Regarding mosaic society, experts prefer a political system that ensures equality and justice among ethnicities, embeds diverse values, and nurtures the roots of Democracy in the country. However, Afghanistan has yet to experience the political system to give opportunity to the ethnicities and citizens to choose their local officials. Regarding Democracy and state-building, there have been two fundamental realities ignored in Afghanistan: the multiethnicity of the society and the fair political system that most of the multi-ethnic countries from Balkan to Africa and the Middle East have used. These two fundamental diversities in the country overcome the norms and attitudes of the society toward the government and political decisions. The culture of any society, whose main essence consists of traditions and ideas, dramatically influences the formation of human behavior and political decision-making that has a crucial impact on Democracy. Political culture means the nations know of their rights. The people's rights mean Democracy that emphasises people's will and desires. The people's demands and rights in the countries vary, though culture and attitudes and world views of each nationalities are different, which composite the political culture. As much as the political culture becomes rational and dynamic, the society's responsibility seems compelling, and the government gets inclined to the people's will and becomes responsive. The responsivity of the regimes and the government has

been ascribed to the political culture and consciousness of the society of the rights and the social contract (Rashidi & Ali, 2019).

This paper attempts to explore the infrastructure of political culture and its deterrent factors to explore how fundamental opportunities for culture and political system are lost and what are the foundations of political culture in Afghanistan due to ethnic diversity. Many questions can be raised in the field. However, concepts such as political culture and nationalism, which strengthen the state, are not seen, and Afghanistan's society suffers from the lack of political culture.

2. The Political Culture

Although the concept of political culture has been noticed and identified in the political and social literature of the West for a long time, in the political and social literature of Afghanistan, despite the efforts made, it is not well known, and knowing the political attitudes of society which is one of the essential issues for political and social activates. This issue, in general, makes it necessary to research the political culture shortage and find the factors considered as the hurdle in the country. The notion of political culture is different, such as personalities, beliefs, culture, values, norms, customs, traditions, and heroes of nations vary, and observing all these values complements a country and its political culture. Political culture demonstrates the nation's political personality. Political culture is one of the most abstract concepts of political science, and it is not easy to give a consensus and generally accepted definition of it. In general, in defining the concept of political culture, it should be divided into two components: culture and politics. In the past, the political issue had a smaller scope, and it was about what was related to the general administration of society and the government. However, since the 1960s, with the research of behaviourists who were trying to expand the field of political science, it gradually included more topics until the decade 1990, when it also included topics such as "gender, race, and class" and since then, the political culture topic as an aspect of all social relations considered, not only activities that concentrated in government institutions. In cultural discussions, the political matter can be regarded as depending on the type of perception or attitude. One of the modern-era scholars, Charles De Montesquieu, explains political culture in the book "The Spirit of the Laws." However, the book discusses philosophy. At the same time, it analyses political culture that considers cultural characteristics more important than legal institutions.

However, the law is made based on cultural characteristics. It considers political culture to be dependent on shared values, and legal and political institutions are also subject to political culture, or in other words, national character, which creates a relationship between the legal system, society, and the government. When underdeveloped communities are discussed, several social scholars believe that the roots of this underdeveloped should be sought in their political culture. Today, one of the essential concepts ascribed to political development is the concept of political culture. Gabriel Almond introduced this concept into political literature after the Second World War, which has provoked many controversies today. By studying the political culture of different societies, one can get to know their political behaviour patterns. Due to the importance of this concept, some other theories and approaches are used as theoretical foundations in research related to political and social sciences. As Shahrani quotes Lucian W. Pye's definition of political culture, "the set of attitudes, beliefs, and sentiments which give order and meaning to a political process, and which provide the underlying assumptions and rules that govern behaviours in the political system" (Shahrani,1997). According to this definition, sentiments and beliefs toward politics and social norms vary in Afghanistan's society. Only religion considers the shared values and commonality that often come from the faith; however, the cultural patterns and attitudes differ. There is no belief and reliability among ethnicities regarding politics, and ethnicities only support their ethnic interests instead of national interests (Charles, 1982).

To date, there is no precise theory to determine political culture; it combines political behaviour as the subjective element, which often needs to be clarified with public culture and has similarities and standard features in terms of definition. Culture is the way of life, customs, and beliefs of particular groups of people. Diversity without a fair political system to preserve and recognise it leads to conflict, and according to Huntington (1993), culture will be the source of competition in the new world—language and religion are the two factors that can create conflict among ethnicities. Huntington argued in a broad sense, in a minor sense, the intense conflict in the past Yugoslavia, Africa, and multi-ethnic societies origin of cultural diversity that led to a power-sharing in the Federal system and regional autonomy or the secession of nationalities. Although power-sharing in the chart of the Federal system of Past Yugoslavia did not come fruit, it had three main challenges: economic disparities, two visions regarding Federalizations that one party wished for a centralised Federal centre, and the other decentralised and robust region. Thirdly conflict of ethnicities (Critchley, 1993). These three elements regarding past Yugoslavia and the cessation of ethnicities have also been evident in other multi-ethnic countries. However, decentralisation of power in most multi-ethnic societies avoided intense conflict and decreased the flames of the conflict. This shortage in the history

of politics in Afghanistan has made it evident that sequentially regimes emphasised the same structure in the country.

Almond and Verba argue for three types of political culture: Parochial, Subject, and participant. Based on this classification of political culture, the citizen's vision and position are categorized instantly; in the Parochial, the citizen is remotely aware of the central government and political decisions; however, passive, there is no option to demonstrate their demands and critique, such as Tribes and villages. From the political participation perspective, citizens are strongly influenced by government decisions; however, there is not enough space for the opposition, which is most often in autocratic or dictator regimes. In the Participatory form, citizens have a high influence on government decisions, demonstrating the extent of high political culture and the society's awareness of their rights in political areas. Thereby, regimes are based on the will of citizens and the entire exercise of their rights and duties in political decisions. Remembering that none of these types exists in their pure state, they conclude that the third type is better suited than the other types, either democracies or stability and thus characterises the most advanced political systems. (Verba, 1965).

Political culture and political systems have close convergency and dependency on each other, symbols, myths, beliefs, and values embedded in the political system that give legitimacy to the political system (Inglehart, 1998).

"According to Pooja's narration from Almond and Powell, Political development is related by Almond to political structure and political culture. In the development approach, political development is measured by role differentiation, subsystem independence, and political culture by secularisation. Political culture also involves the socialisation process. The approach moving towards the direction of a scientific theory analyses political systems at three levels and by interconnecting them draws out certain important theoretical conclusions." (Pooja, n.d)

According to Powell and Almond, the sequence and linkage of the political system, political development, and political culture is inevitable; each concept first relates to the political system that nurtures and boosts the roots of political development and political culture. The modern political culture is ascribed to political integration that the political system preserves, leading to excellent political integration in multi-ethnic societies. According to Almond, every political system is embedded in a particular pattern of orientations to political action"; he referred to this pattern as "political culture" (Almond, 2001).

The current political systems have fundamental differences compared to the old political systems. One of the most critical features of new political systems is the massive volume of their duties. On the one hand, this shows the government's incredible power; on the other hand, it faces weakness and crisis when performing the assigned duties. The interaction between the people and the political system causes attitudes in the people's minds that affect individuals' behaviour.

It is generally believed that there is a special relationship between political culture and ideology; in other words, Marxists see political culture as a set of ideas towards the ruling class, and people such as Almond and Verba see it beyond the ideology's values. Political culture results from the end of ideology and emerges practically by discarding value ideologies. The quantity and quality of this interaction led to the formation of different types of political cultures. Although some social science scholars in the European area believe that culture cannot be divided into various components such as political culture, the rest, on the contrary, another group believes that separating political culture from culture in its general form is not only functional, but in some cases, it is necessary; because in this case, it is possible to deal with the cultural aspects of politics, independently of other aspects of politics, and to study the political aspects of culture separately from its other constructions. In this way, there is more opportunity for a more systematic analysis of politics.

According to the definition of political culture and the complementing elements of it in diverse societies, it is the political system that can only preserve and nurture sound political culture. Thus, one of the reasons for the absence of sound political culture in Afghanistan has been an unfair political system that could not strengthen a political culture in the country and could not embed minorities' rights and cultural values. Most authors believe the lack of a fair political system to settle the conflict in Afghanistan led to fragility. However, the disorder in social and political areas affiliated with the political and governance system showed that from both perspectives, all collapsed regimes had their weakness and could not ensure order in the social and political realm. On the one hand, political system and governance systems have been dysfunctional compared to diversity; on the other hand, autocracy and totalitarian demand for a single ethnic and identical issue which, since the formation of the modern state, existed in the country and never led to form a political culture to render a nation-state in Afghanistan. Although in different junctures of history, the assimilation and homogenization process officially by the autocratic regime functioned the history cannot be hidden from the eyes and pen of authors; autocratic and "Democrat" rulers always attempt to form a political system in the country to accomplish the homogenizations process in Afghanistan. Four critical

elements since the formation of the modern state (1880) in Afghanistan has had a harmful impact in both political and social domain: They are kingship (monarchic/unitary sovereignty), kinship (familism, clannishness/tribalism), and among the Pashtun adherence to the accompanying values of Pashtunwali (the Pashtun code of male honour), Islam (a universally acknowledged source of moral codes and guidance), and the political economy of state dependency on foreign subsidies or assistance" (Shahrani, 2012).

The four key points mentioned by Shahrani (2012) were the factors considered as the hegemonic resources of assimilation in the country that Afghanization of all ethnicities, parallel with that Pashtunizations of the country to strengthen of expanding authority have had flagrant adverse outcomes in Afghanistan "The most significant legacy of the institution of kingship is a claim to exclusive rights of personal sovereignty by rulers over their subjects. This problematic claim to exclusive rights of sovereign rule by members of one ethnic-tribal community over all the rest has turned into a virtual demand by the Pashtun elites to such an entitlement." (Sharani, 2012.p. 15). Furthermore, the second factor in the formation of political culture in the country has been kinship in rural areas; the leader of the Qawm and elder of the tribe has had authority in regional sections and has often been an influential inner factor in the government at the local level. The national politics of the country has been based on patrilineal and patriarchal values, which has been a problematic factor in both social and political areas. In political areas, Pashtun tribal leaders conflicted with each other to preserve political power dynasty; these conflicts in the chart of *Torborwali* and *Pashtunwali* happened often in the history. The core of all conflict among Pashtun tribes has been political power, territory, and pasture (Shahrani, 2012). Durani and Ghelzai, two tribes of Pashtuns, conflict and rivalry still exist. Each was looking to hire each tribe in the government or support any quarrelsome issues in local areas.

Nepotism has long-lasting roots in the government, the origin of mistrust of each other in the political arena. Throughout history, nepotism was considered the predominant issue in the government, specifically in the last twenty years of "Democracy." Nepotism was the pervasive challenge felt in the government and considered cancer in the regime by the United States leaders and politicians. One of the significant challenges of state buildings in the country is the corruption of political leaders, parliament members, and military high-ranking officials that brought the country to its knees (Dost, Arnold & Edwin, 2023).

3. The Social Structure of the Country

Except for the country being composed of different ethnicities, the society of Afghanistan based on four categories of life can also be analysed. There are nomad life, rural life, urbanity, and tribal life. These variables define another aspect of society and can analyse the correlation between these forms and the political culture and government attitudes based on the social contract. Furthermore, these are the fundamental structures of certain ethnicities that have. The dominant circle of these categories has been the clergies, aristocrats, and local lords that hold back the rural areas of the government and political legitimacy. In rural areas, Mullah and aristocrats greatly influence the people. The Rurales do not know their responsibility and the social contract between them and the government.
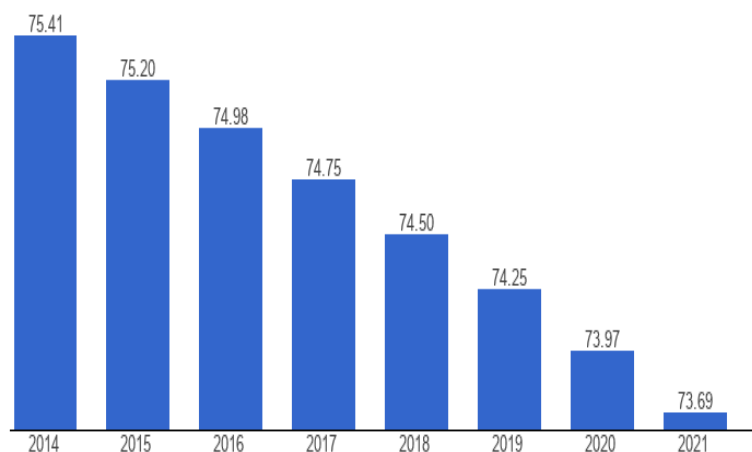

Figure 1.

The following statistic and diagram demonstrate the rural life percentage in Afghanistan between 1960 and 2021 to what extent people lived in rural areas and the cities. According to these percentages done by Global Economy

and authors who analyse the political culture in Afghanistan, 73.69 percent of the population lives in rural areas and the rest in cities. The rustic and urban political culture differs from each other. As Almond elucidated in the context of the civic political culture, people need to be made aware of the government and political decisions. Based on this statistic, the rurales must be made aware of the political decision; they do not even recognise the government and official authority.

This shortage is the government and regime's dysfunctionality that did not develop the rural areas to absorb the rural people through fundamental projects and create a sense of affinity and responsibility for them (Thier, 2020).

The variables of the political culture in Afghanistan generally are religious culture, tribal culture, ethnocentrism, regional culture, and paternal culture, and all have a high impact on the political destiny and the society of the country. Religion as the standard culture and institution has had a bottom-up influence on the political area, and there seems to be a contract between the tribal leaders, Mullahs, and aristocrats and the political leaders. The government's attitude toward aristocrats, regional lords, and mullahs strengthened these circle positions and false nobility in the society.

4. Patriarchal Culture

Patriarchal belief in Afghanistan at the first stage targeted women, restricting them from society, university, and the public domain. Restriction of women and holding them only for house staff is a strong belief in the society of Afghanistan, predominantly in tribal areas that never mind if women do not get educated. Education and awareness of women in different historical junctures have also been taboo for society. "Historically, the public rights of men—their prerogatives, privileges, and power—were formulated in contradistinction to the disempowerment of women and women's relegation to the private sphere and domesticity". (Moghadam, 2002). "During the 1980s, the women were held hostage to the notion that women's rights were considered Western value and that the modernising government of Afghanistan was merely replicating the so-called bankrupt Western (or Soviet) model. Tabooing of women's rights and the restriction of them in society has two fundamental supportive factors: first, tribal view upon women's restriction, and the second hurdle considering fundamentalism that Mullah, lords, and aristocrats preached as the value for the people and women have been considered as the segment in control of men that narrate of Prophet and verses of Quran.

By 1920, nationalists and reformists endeavoured for political reform that could give space for women; the only and first issue that brought the people's attention and raised against the reform was women's political participation and women's freedom. Such efforts toward political development, social development, and women's empowerment happened by the beginning of the modern state; however, they were suppressed by clergies and traditional society and tribal structure. By 1980, the Marxist and Islamist bloody war had women aspects that Marxists considered prone to women's freedom and their political participation, and the Jihadist vice-versa emphasised women's restriction (Maghadam, 2002). The patriarchal approach and women's restrictions were also rooted in autocratic regimes that were not prone to women's position in society and political participation of women. Thus, women's marginalisation in the country was rooted in the cultural cod of the ethnicities to what extent they were willing to women's political participation and position in the state institutions (Shahrani, 1997. p.24-29). According to the Erfan survey, women face two fundamental hurdles regarding their activity in the political area and public life—first, illiteracy of society, and second, cultural cod. The survey was conducted on Democracy's willingness in society and women's political participation. Uzbeks show the most political trust in the structure, and at the same time, they have shown the least trust in the political performance of the politicians. However, Pashtuns do not believe in the role of women in politics; toward Democracy, ethnic views have been almost similar. Regarding education, the higher-level students had a favourable view of women and Democracy in the country (Erfan, 2021, pp. 4-5).

The first regime that paved the way for women's education in the country and made many efforts to break taboos regarding women in society was the Amanullah regime. The first pamphlet, *Ershad ul Naswan*, was led by a woman to raise women's voices and follow the topics regarding women's activity and courage established in the country. However, by 1929, to diminish the revolt, Amanullah, in a meeting with conservatives and radical Mullahs to settle down the chaos, dismantled women's education, legalised underage girl marriage, and a man could get married to four women (Fatima, 2021, pp. 5-7; Meer & Yakta, 2021).

5. Historical Perspective of Political Culture in Afghanistan

Although political culture is a modern phenomenon that has been pioneered by Gabrial Almond and Sidney Verba, classical behaviourists in the context of "Civic Culture" (1963), however regarding the historical Perspective of the political culture in Afghanistan goes back to the formation of modern Afghanistan (1747, 1880 and 1929) and onward that the autocratic regime one after another sequentially inherited unstable ethnocentric regimes" (Shahrani,

2012). Amanullah's social-political reform could pave the way for political development, political culture, and social evolution; however, these steps toward changing the traditional political culture to participatory political culture in the country caused the opponent segment (Mullah, aristocrats and lord) to absorb the people's attention by condemning of the Amir social-political reform. The political culture and shortage of such a nuance phenomenon in the country roots back to political instability in the country that the transaction of political power has rarely been peaceful.

Ethnicities and their historical affiliations to empires and power dynasties in the country differ, and each considers the inheritance of different powers throughout history. However, the political culture history in Afghanistan, according to Daud Erfan, ascribes to Ariana, A vesta, Achaemenid, and Kushani periods. Admittedly, societies and nations have been specified based on their historical values and heritages, demonstrating their historical roots. As well as in Afghanistan, ethnicities ascribe their antiquity to the different empires and dynasties and consider themselves the predecessors (Erfan, 2021). However, the intense challenge versus political culture in the country is the identity dilemma that nationalities feel deprived of this value. According to Charles, "its most fundamental element is that of identity, which combines a definition of the individual and his role within society with complementary communities as well as geographical and ideological loyalties" (Charles, 1982, p.561).

The homogenisation of ethnicities by the autocratic regime and the ignoring of identities in Afghanistan often broadened the rifts and disloyalties of ethnicities regarding the regimes and politics. According to Sadr's quote, Kymlicka has "nine policies that regimes one after another adopted which consider homogenisation in Afghanistan: (1) adoption of the official language (2) construction of a nationalised system of compulsory education (3) centralisation of power (4) the diffusion of dominants groups languages and culture through institutions of state (5) adoption and celebration of the dominant cultures history and symbols (6) the construction a unified legal system (7) adoption of resettlement policies to dilute the density of minorities certain areas (8) the seizure of land and forest formerly belonged to minority groups and (9) adoption immigration policy that favours those how to know the dominant language" (Sadr, 202.p.98).

The roots of challenges versus political development and political culture are ascribed to the political history of Afghanistan, that regimes sequentially have inherited fragile and collapsed states and endeavoured to maintain the mentioned policies. These policies inherently in the multi-ethnic society of Afghanistan are the steps toward nationalism and political culture, which admittedly created rifts in both the social and political areas.

6. Summary

Afghanistan is a multicultural society with a different life, society and political visions. The cultural values and world views of the ethnicities and attitudes of nationalities vary regarding fundamental issues, such as religion, women, politics and the state. Although there are numerous commonalities among ethnicities, autocratic regimes could not bring cohesiveness among ethnicities and support the values of nationalities in the country.

Democracy often fails in the country due to the incompatibility of some nationalities' values with Democratic values as the prerequisite of democracy is social stability and literacy of the Afghanistan society due to political instability and dysfunctionality of the regime throughout history, deprived of education and awareness regarding government. On the other hand, the regime's dysfunctionality and politics broadened the ethnic rifts. These rifts, which originated from politics, caused a sub-political culture. Political culture in Afghanistan based on multiethnicity changed to the multi-cultural political culture in each ethnicity focusing on their belonging race and belonging regions, language and tribe. Each nationality has its heroes, leaders and patterns; no national value exists. This is the result of ignoring the multiculturality of the country and the assimilation of the ethnicities in the country through regimes and politicians that ignored the reality of the society in the country throughout history since the modern state of Afghanistan.

Religion, as the typical culture, strengthened the customary law and diminished the role of government in rural areas, even in the cities. Religious circles, to not lose their nobility in society, felt it necessary to preach negatively regarding democracy, state, human rights, women's rights, and politics; instead, they were willing to their authority in the country and customary. Thereby, the influence of clergies' circle compared to a politician or, according to Gramcsi, organic intellectuals, has been dominant enough in the society that led the people's minds versus any alien phenomenon. On the other hand, the community of Afghanistan did not inherit a reliable and responsible government throughout history to create loyalty to the citizens and endeavour for education and quality of the nationalities.

References

Ahmadi, F. (2021). *The Women's political participation in Afghanistan, Partal institute for Humanities and*

Cultural Studies Comprehensive Portal of Humanities. Retrieved from http://ensani.ir/fa/article/447199/بررسی-وضعیت-مشارکت-سیاسی-اجتماعی-زنان-در-کشور-افغانستان

Almond, G. A. (1990). *The Study of Political Culture. School and Sects in Political Science.* https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-349-62965-7_1

Charles, R. F. (1982). Political Culture and Regional Ethnic Minorities. *The Journal of Politics, 44*(2), 560–568. https://doi.org/10.2307/2130600

Critchley, W. H. (1993). The failure of federalism in Yugoslavia. *International Journal, 48*(3), 434–447. https://doi.org/10.1177/002070209304800302

Dost, A., Arnold, R., & Edwin, T. V. (2023). Management capacity in the Afghan Ministry of Public Health pre-Taliban: A mixed-methods study of political and socio-cultural issues. *Razi International Medical Journal, 3.* https://doi.org/10.56101/rimj.v3i1.67

Erfan, D. (2021). *Insular culture: Reflections on the political culture of Afghanistan.* Afghan Institute for Strategic Studies.

Global Economy. (2021). *Afghanistan: Rural population, percent.* Retrieved from https://tradingeconomics.com/afghanistan/rural-population-percent-of-total-population-wb-data.html

Meera, M., & Yekta, K. (2021). The Challenges to Women's Political Participation in Afghanistan: Historical and Cultural Perspectives. https://doi.org/10.4312/as.2021.9.1.65-91

Moghadam, M. V. (2002), Patriarchy, the Taleban, and politics of public space in Afghanistan. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0277-5395(02)00224-8

Montesquieu De Baron. (2001). *The Spirit of Laws.* Batoche Book. Retrieved from https://socialsciences.mcmaster.ca/econ/ugcm/3ll3/montesquieu/spiritoflaws.pdf

Nglehart, R. (1988). The Renaissance of Political Culture. *The American Political Science Review*, *82*(4), 1203–1230. https://doi.org/10.2307/1961756

Pooja. (n. d.). *Almond's and Powell's Contribution towards the Theory of Political Development.* Retrieved from https://www.politicalsciencenotes.com/articles/almonds-and-powells-contribution-towards-the-theory-of-political-development/518

Rashidzada, B., & Ali, M. Z. (2019). The political culture effect on Democracy failure in the Middle East.

Sadr, O. (2020). *Negotiating Cultural Diversity in Afghanistan.* Routledge India. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003000457

Shahrani, M. N. (2012). Approaching Study of Political Culture in Afghanistan with Institutional Analysis and Development (IAD) & Social-Ecological Systems (SES) Frameworks.

Shahrani, N. (1984). *State-building and social fragmentation in Afghanistan: a Historical perspective.* Indiana University Bloomington.

Their, A. (2020). *The Nature of the Afghan State: Centralization vs. Decentralization.* United Stats Institute of Peace.

Ethics approval

The Publication Ethics Committee of the Canadian Center of Science and Education.

The journal's policies adhere to the Core Practices established by the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE).

Provenance and peer review

Not commissioned; externally double-blind peer reviewed.

Data availability statement

The data that support the findings of this study are available on request from the corresponding author. The data are not publicly available due to privacy or ethical restrictions.

Data sharing statement

No additional data are available.

Open access

This is an open-access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution license (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).

Copyrights

Copyright for this article is retained by the author(s), with first publication rights granted to the journal.