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Abstract

Ethnicization of politics is extremely prevalent in Afghanistan. It turned out to be an essential component of the Bonn Agreement of 2001, which aimed to put an end to the civil wars and to outbalance ethnic applications to overcome the prolonged conflict. This research explores the role of the factors that added to the ethnocentricity promotion in Afghan society post-2001. It demonstrates how the political display of ethnicity in Afghan politics and ethnocentricity promotion have manipulated the political structure of Afghanistan. This research study is qualitative in nature, and the analysis is based on secondary sources. The study outlines the spread of ethnicity in Afghanistan on two grounds, including internal as well as external factors. The reasons include tribalism, mismatched leadership and corruption; control of material and spiritual resources; marginalization of some ethnic groups; and strategic goals and interests of regional stakeholders that exacerbate the spread of ethnocentricity in Afghanistan. The study recommends a strong central government to keep the ethnic card players in check, and in the meantime, the government should provide equal opportunities to all ethnic groups and eradicate discrimination from the governmental structure. The government needs to allocate national annual budgets properly, which can address grievances from regions and rural areas, and take steps to ensure the inclusion of all ethnic groups.

Keywords: Afghanistan, Ethnocentricity, Regional Powers, Politics, Diplomacy.

Introduction

Ethnocentrism is almost a worldwide set of symptoms of behaviors and attitudes. These attitudes comprise considering one's own group or the in-group as worthy, superior, and higher and an out-group as disgraceful, inferior, and substandard.¹ The behaviours accompanying ethnocentrism are cooperative relations with the in-group and the absence of cooperative relations with the out-group.² The membership in an ethnic group is normally assessed in terms of one or more than one noticeable feature such as inflexion, language, tangible topographies, or religion) that are observed as representing shared ancestry. In conclusion, ethnocentrism can be termed as in-group favouritism or out-group hostility.³

¹ Michailova, Snežina, Rebecca Piekkari, Marianne Storgaard, and Janne Tienari. "Rethinking ethnocentrism in international business research." *Global Strategy Journal* 7, no. 4 (2017): 335-353.

² Zeugner-Roth, Katharina Petra, Vesna Žabkar, and Adamantios Diamantopoulos. "Consumer ethnocentrism, national identity, and consumer cosmopolitanism as drivers of consumer behavior: A social identity theory perspective." *Journal of International Marketing* 23, no. 2 (2015): 25-54.

³ Lustig, Myron W. *Intercultural competence: Interpersonal communication across cultures*. Pearson Education, 2010.

In social science, ethnocentrism means to spread over and apply one's own culture or ethnicity as a point of reference to judge other behaviors, people, beliefs, cultures, and practices as a replacement for using the principles of the particular culture involved.⁴ Since this judgement is often negative, some people also use the term to refer to the belief that one's culture is superior to, or more correct or normal than, all others, especially regarding the distinctions that define each ethnicity's cultural identity, such as language, behavior, customs, and religion. In common usage, it can also simply mean any culturally biased judgment.⁵

Afghanistan's political history has been shaped by various factors, including religion, economics, geography, and ethnicity. Ethnicity, on the other hand, has a distinct influence on politics among these groups, and thus turned out to be an essential component of the Bonn Agreement of 2001, which aimed to put an end to the civil wars and unrest in Afghanistan that have been continuing since 1979. In this version of political development, ethnic classes were assumed to be the basic structural blocks of Afghan society. In principle, the Agreement of Bonn was pursued to outbalance racial concentration and interest for the sake of overcoming a significant core reason for this prolonged conflict. This system shaped incongruous costs and outcomes, which is the political display of ethnicity in Afghan politics. Thus, the political design of the Bonn Agreement disregarded the vagueness of the concept of ethnicity in the society of Afghanistan as well as the tacit and planned approach of using ethnicity on the political ground.⁶

The Afghan people have been divided for four decades as a result of prolonged internal conflict, the presence of rival parties and *Jihadi* assemblies, political competing groups, and external interference. Studies show that Afghanistan's conflicts have both external and internal roots and causes, but the success of foreign states is more due to the fragmentation of Afghan political society. The leading motive for the absence of social cohesion and congruence among ethnic clusters and the lack of a stable central government in Afghanistan is the presence of substantial ethnic dissimilarities and power-sharing in governmental bodies, followed by conventional ethnic intolerance. As ethnicity has been identified as the main source of contention, ethnic categories were identified as critical elements in the country's new political development.⁷

This study investigates the role of the factors that contributed to the promotion of ethnocentrism and the involvement of external intrusion, which resulted in the disintegration of Afghan society. It assists in the understanding of numerous internal and external factors in the promotion of ethnocentricity in Afghanistan. The study is qualitative in nature, and analyses have been carried out based on primary and secondary sources. Exploratory and descriptive means have been utilized. The foremost purpose of this study is to find out the relationship between the factors caused by ethnocentrism in Afghanistan, the impact of social disintegration, and the promotion of ethnocentricity.

The rest of the study is divided into 4 subsections, with section 2 presenting the factors promoting ethnocentricity in Afghanistan; section 3 presenting the

⁴ Matsumoto, David, and Linda Juang. *Culture and psychology*. Cengage Learning, 2016.

⁵ LeVine, Robert A., and Donald T. Campbell. "Ethnocentrism: Theories of conflict, ethnic attitudes, and group behavior." (1972).

⁶ Barve, Madelina. "Careless Peacebuilding: A Poststructural Policy Analysis of the Afghanistan Study Group Final Report: A Pathway for Peace in Afghanistan (2021)." (2021).

⁷ Misdaq, Nabi. *Afghanistan: Political frailty and external interference*. Routledge, 2006.

solutions to ethnocentrism in Afghanistan; and finally, section 4 concludes the study with policy recommendations.

Factors Promoting Ethnocentricity in Afghanistan

Ethnocentricity is a major issue in Afghanistan's conflict. It is not a new phenomenon, but rather one that has been going on for decades. Ethnocentrism, racial discrimination, and a lack of religious tolerance have led to insurmountable challenges in Afghanistan. A large number of individuals are discriminated against because of their ethnic and sectarian backgrounds in collective life. Discrimination has been deeply embedded in the traditional culture of Afghanistan, and the bulk of the challenges in the country stem from racial, sexual, religious, and sectarian discrimination. That is the reason that ethnocentrism and sectarian orientation have been playing a highly destructive role in Afghanistan.⁸ To view history, civil unrest and deadly conflict are rooted in ethnocentrism and religious and sectarian orientation. Capitalizing on the religious sentiment of the public, Afghan kings had *fatwas* (religious decrees) issued against an ethnic group to justify their acts of violence and killing. To put it succinctly, civil unrest in Afghanistan was painted with the brush of religious and racial color.⁹

The issue of ethnicity is a new phenomenon that has replaced tribalism in Afghanistan. There are no comprehensive statistics on the number and population of ethnic groups in Afghanistan. Some have counted these tribes up to 50, but the constitution recognizes 14 ethnic groups: Pashtun, Tajik, Hazara, Uzbek, Turkman, Baluch, Pashayee, Aymaq, Qazal Bash, Gojar, Brahawi, Qarghiz, etc. Among the first four ethnic groups, they are the most populous ethnic groups in the country and play a major role in the field of political power.¹⁰ As a result of this proportionality, what was agreed at the Bonn Summit also largely meant the division of power among the tribes in proportion to their estimated population. After that, although the law forbade any kind of political behavior based on ethnicity, in fact, from the state structure of political power to the organizational structure of major parties and the behaviour of political actors, it has all ethnic colors.¹¹ The parliamentary stances of the last several years, the last two presidential elections, and the recent bargaining between the presidential candidates and their deputies have shown the extent to which the stances and the vote have become ethnic. The term "vote bank" for some political leaders refers to the ethnic influence and their role in the election.

Apart from the ethnocentric mindset and religious exploitation of radical individuals, discrimination exists even within the government. That is, ethnic orientation has been a factor in one's appointment to a higher political position within the government's body. Even though some posts are allocated to a particular ethnic group based on ethnic quota, which suggests that ethnicity outweighs one's merit and abilities.¹² Ethnic, racial, and sectarian discrimination also continues at the grassroots level as some individuals are treated unfairly by others simply for being born into a certain racial or religious background. Meanwhile, some people spread ethnic hatred on social media and hurl vitriolic attacks against a certain ethnic

⁸ Hafizullah Zaki / Afghanistan Mao6 February 2018. Retrieved from <http://www.payam-aftab.com/fa/doc/news>

⁹ Ethnocentrism Played Destructive Role in Afghanistan (2019). Retrieved from http://outlookafghanistan.net/editorialdetail.php?post_id=23712

¹⁰ *ibid*

¹¹ Schetter, Conrad. *Ethnicity and the political reconstruction of Afghanistan*. No. 3. ZEF Working Paper Series, 2005.

¹² Geib, Robin, and Michael Siegrist. "Has the armed conflict in Afghanistan affected the rules on the conduct of hostilities?." *International Review of the Red Cross* 93, no. 881 (2011): 11-46.

group. They are believed to fan the flame of hatred and discrimination on social media and exploit public sentiment for the interests of their own or affiliated groups. They will also trigger individuals' feelings against the government through exaggerating a minor issue and airing disinformation.¹³

Afghanistan's dilemma did not simply end with the withdrawal of Soviet armed forces; rather a new or different stage of war and conflict started amongst the Afghan groups and collections that had fought with Russia. This new phase of war and conflict has been no less damaging compared to the military intrusion of the Soviets. The structure, character, and underlying forces of the new-fangled chapter of the conflict are not the same and pose larger and countless complications in solving the conflict. Several of these underlying factors have their origins in the ideological, political, and ethnic separation or divergence that the Soviet war made happen. With each passing year, the civil war in Afghanistan became more intense and multifaceted, and ethnocentricity became even more prevalent, causing further disintegration in Afghan society and the formation of several more internal and transnational networks of power politics.¹⁴

The conflict was further widened by the leaders of different ethnic groups to gain additional dominance and power in the political sphere of Afghanistan, while some others were struggling for at least satisfactory political demonstration and a share in the politics of the country. As a religious group, the upsurge of the Taliban has further increased the complexity of the Afghan civil war; it has caused severe disintegration and fragmentation of Afghan society. They practiced war as an appliance for nationwide association or unification and political amalgamation, while this practice instead increased the gap of disunity and fragmentation amongst numerous conflicting Afghan parties and groups.¹⁵

From an ethnic perspective, Afghanistan is a distinct and diverse country that has been conquered and dominated by the majority group, the Pashtuns, at the upper level, and all of the kings have come from the same majority group. Nevertheless, in Afghan politics, ethnicity and cultural practices were certainly not a very solid factor before the Saur revolution of 1978. A kind of political sense of balance goes forward amongst the numerous groups, and all of them have allotted seats and spaces inside the country's hierarchical system. The former traditional equilibrium or balance of power amongst the ethnic clusters has been immensely transformed due to war and conflict. In general, minority groups and non-Pashtun minority groups have gained more power and share in Afghanistan's political sphere in the last two decades. For the first time in the history of Afghanistan, during the era of anarchy, lawlessness, and insurgency, the Tajiks, Uzbeks, and Hazaras experienced complete political and administrative autonomy.¹⁶

Ethnic political participation further developed in the 1970s. The Tajiks had the largest share in the ethnic composition of the ruling People's Democratic Party, and the Uzbeks gained undeniable political and military power. In the early 1970s, the whole structure of political power changed, and the Tajiks climbed to the top of the

¹³ Shahrani, Nazif M. (1986): *State Building and Social Fragmentation in Afghanistan: A Historical Perspective*.

¹⁴ Rasul Bakhsh Rais; *Conflict in Afghanistan: Ethnicity, Religion and Neighbors*. Ethnic Studies Report, Vol. XVII, No. 1, January 1999

¹⁵ *ibid*

¹⁶ Goodson, Larry P. *Afghanistan's endless war: State failure, regional politics, and the rise of the Taliban*. University of Washington Press, 2001.

power pyramid. In the ethnic composition of the People's Democratic Party in 1979, the Pashtuns were 56%, the Tajiks 35%, and the rest of the tribes 9%, but in 1987 the Tajiks were 47%, the Pashtuns 37%, the Uzbeks 8%, and the Hazaras 4%.¹⁷

With the rise of the Taliban, the ethnic structure of political power returned almost to the previous situation. The Taliban, as a predominantly Pashtun group, maintained a one-ethnic power structure for five years. With the collapse of the group, the Bonn Summit of Germany (December 5, 2001) pyramided the participation of all ethnic groups in power: Pashtuns at the top, Tajiks, Hazaras, and Uzbeks at the second, third, and fourth ranks, and the rest at the base.¹⁸ At present, the ethnic structure of political power is the same. In fact, the atmosphere of bargaining for power ultimately confirms the presence of ethnic pyramids in the structure of political power.

The issue of ethnicity is a new phenomenon that has led to the rise of ethnic nationalism with the collapse of the former Soviet Union. Foreign powers, through intelligence agencies, have fueled ethnicity in Afghanistan. According to him, these organizations fattened the small suffering in terms of ethnic participation in power in Afghanistan in their favour. Perhaps another reason that can be added in this regard is that following the decades of war, the formation of various groups and the rise of public knowledge, ethnic self-awareness among tribes grew rapidly. This self-awareness created a set of requirements for tribes, including having political and social rights and identities.

The civil war of the 1970s was largely rooted in ethnic strife. The historical and strong centrality of ethnicity in the political structure of Afghanistan has provided the ground for conflict and divergence. Ethnic heterogeneity and the unequal distribution of power among ethnic groups are the main causes of the ethnic divide. It has further raised suspicions between non-ruling tribes and ruling ethnic groups. This suspicion has become a chronic social issue long ago, along with other factors such as underdevelopment, weak political management, and foreign intervention, which have led to conflict and social violence.¹⁹ The factors that have promoted ethnocentricity in Afghanistan, are categorised into internal and external factors, and presented as follows:

Internal Factors

The complex situation of ethnicity in Afghanistan is one of the most influential factors that have an increasing ability to determine and change the political equations of the country. The multiplicity of ethnic groups, their social quality, the religion associated with each ethnicity, and the role they play in Afghanistan's political structure are inevitable elements. The country's political and social turmoil can easily be traced directly to the problem of ethnicity and its complexities. The Afghan constitution recognizes 14 ethnic groups while the number of ethnic groups in the country is close to 50. Among these, the four main ethnic groups are more involved in the social arena of the country (Pashtuns, Tajiks, Hazaras, and Uzbeks) and play a role in terms of religion, and political influence, and demographic context.²⁰

¹⁷ Antonio Geostozzi, *Afghanistan; War, Society and Politics*, Translated by Assadollah Shafaei, Tehran: Erfan, 2009, p. 148

¹⁸ Johnson, Thomas H. "Afghanistan's post-Taliban transition: the state of state-building after war." *Central Asian Survey* 25, no. 1-2 (2006): 1-26.

¹⁹ Ayub Arvin, BBC, 18 November 2013 - 9 November 2013. Retrieved from https://www.bbc.com/persian/afghanistan/2013/11/131109_k02-afghanistan-ethnicities-political-power-2

²⁰ Siddique, Abubakar. "Afghanistan's ethnic divides." (2012).

The effect of ethnocentrism is the lack of a nation-building process in the country. In ethnocentric systems, national identity will never be fully formed, and what plays a role in politics are ethnocentric goals; the national interests of the system will undoubtedly be overshadowed by the demands of the dominant ethnic group. Another result of the influence of ethnicity on the political arena of Afghanistan is the attachment of memory to ethnicity in all areas.²¹ Whereas in modern systems based on the rule of state-nation-building, this belonging is to the law or collectively accepted norms. But in Afghanistan, due to the extreme adherence to ethnic traditions, the masses seek their demands within ethnic behaviors; this undoubtedly spreads among the elites as well.²²

Since the ethnicity channel is one of the simplest and most appropriate ways to achieve socio-political power in Afghanistan, the widening of cultural and demographic divisions should not be taken for granted. This can be considered the main reason for the lack of the formation of democratic institutions such as active parties or civic groups in today's Afghan society. As a result, national interests are in the realm of ethnic interests. Developing long-term goals and keeping followers of all ethnicities satisfied and advancing the country's interests on the path to comprehensive progress seems difficult, which can be achieved in a very long time. In terms of advocating decisions, the prevalence of influence is to the extent that some Afghan experts believe that in order to achieve goals, Afghan elites and politicians need to have a strong two-way relationship with the people (tribes and leaders), as this eases and facilitates the implementation of political decisions by the country's politicians.²³

The role of ethnic politics in electoral process has been an indigenous element. With the exception of the 2004 Afghan elections, almost all elections in Afghanistan over the past 19 years have been marked by controversy. The 2009 presidential election, in which Hamid Karzai and Dr. Abdullah Abdullah advanced to a run-off, continued to be marred by fraud.²⁴ At that time, pressure from the international community, especially the United States, pushed Dr. Abdullah out of the race without a second round, and Hamid Karzai was re-elected president. However, the next presidential election (2014) was not the same. The dispute between the two leading candidates (Ghani and Abdullah), who accused each other of widespread fraud, created a deep crisis that inevitably led to the mediation of the US Secretary of State and the formation of a national unity government.²⁵

The controversy did not end with verbal clashes between fans of the two rival teams. The deep tensions of ethnic hatred have also entered the field of the electoral system. Unfortunately, the presidential candidates, in order to attract more votes, consider the ethnic card as the best tool to form voting banks, regardless of the fact that, in the long run, the ethnic gap in Afghanistan is widening

²¹ Ali Banuazizi & Myron Weiner (eds.): *The State, Religion, and Ethnic Politics: Afghanistan, Iran, and Pakistan*. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press: 23-74

²² K.M. de Silva and R.J. May Eds, *Internationalization of Ethnic Conflict* (London: Pinter Publishers, 1991).

²³ Ibrahim, Niamatullah. "Framing ethnicity under conditions of uncertainty: the case of Hazaras during Afghanistan's 2014 presidential elections." *Conflict, Security & Development* 16, no. 6 (2016): 635-652.

²⁴ Barfield, Thomas. "Afghanistan's ethnic puzzle: decentralizing power before the US withdrawal." *Foreign Aff.* 90 (2011): 54.

²⁵ Tchalakov, Mara. *The Northern Alliance Prepares for Afghan Elections in 2014*. Institute for the Study of War., 2013.

day by day.²⁶ At the same time, the humiliation of other people became a tool to show the superiority of one nation over another. Politicians are well aware that no ethnic group in a democratic system, in which the principle of governance is based on popular choice, can take the helm of power alone. Inevitably, coalitions must be formed to gain power.²⁷

External Factors

One of the main reasons for the foreign interventions in Afghanistan is that the civil war, political opposition and division amongst the Afghan groups paved the way for the intervention by external powers. The political polarization of the Afghans pushed them to seek out outside support for the sake of defeating or offsetting their inner opponents. Such funding, backing, and support are not free of certain agendas and are aimed at attaining undeniable and tangible political objectives. The external powers that have intervened in the Afghanistan dilemma and endeavoured to gain their national interests in the last 4 decades include the role of Iran, Central Asian countries (Tajikistan and Uzbekistan), Pakistan, and Saudi Arabia.

Though Iran was concerned and busy with its war with Iraq in the 1980s, it still kept an eye on the internal issues of Afghanistan and never disregarded them. Inside Afghanistan, Iran gave greater concentration to the Shia group's political and military competencies in the central *Hazarajat* region. Iranian advisers, ecclesiastics, military apparatus, and money went collectively into the high-handed area of the Shia ethnic group.²⁸ Upon the coming of Iran's Islamic revolution into power, Iran's foreign policy objectives have experienced tangible transformation and alteration, especially regarding the empowerment and welfare of Shiite Muslims, who comprise the minority in almost every Muslim country. Iran settled an awareness and understanding with the Soviet troops on the question of the Hazara Shia's role in the war. The Soviet militia did not attack them in retaliation for their calm and inactivity, as well as their refusal to join the Mujahedeen resistance. For the sake of pursuing its long-term objectives, Tehran has dedicated most of its resources to unifying, training, equipping, and organizing the strength of the Shia ethnic cluster in Afghanistan. It is worth mentioning that Iran's eyes are on its planned goal, which is the establishment of a terrestrial or land corridor that would link up the Persian-speaking populations of Afghanistan with Iran, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan. Its direct aim and goal are to strengthen the non-Pashtun factions by providing them with political and material support.²⁹

Insecurity and instability in the international arena are, directly and indirectly, influencing the countries, that's why the Central Asian countries remained curious about the situation and developments in Afghanistan. They also thought that social fragmentation, disintegration, and civil war were not in the well of their interest, therefore they took steps to prevent its likely fall out on their own civilizations and societies.³⁰ More or less, they had diverse benefits that they followed with different degrees of involvement, but in comparison to Afghanistan's close neighbors, these

²⁶ Naby, Eden. "The ethnic factor in Soviet-Afghan relations." *Asian Survey* 20, no. 3 (1980): 237-256.

²⁷ *ibid*

²⁸ Rais, Rasul Bakhsh. "Ethnicity and Politics in Afghanistan: An Uncertain Balance." *Journal of South Asian and Middle Eastern Studies* 45, no. 3 (2022): 79-98.

²⁹ Goudarzi, Hadi. "Conflict in Afghanistan: Ethnicity and religion." *Ethnic Studies Report* 17, no. 1 (1999): 430-437.

³⁰ *ibid*

countries reveal a collective aspiration for the end of the protracted conflict and obtaining political stability in Afghanistan. The leaders of these countries knew that religious radicalism and Islamic fundamentalism were a dangerous basis for conflict in Afghanistan and a latent threat to its neighbors. Despite the fact that Turkmenistan has not acknowledged or recognized the Taliban, it was one of the Central Asian countries that dealt openly and indirectly with the Taliban.³¹

While, in comparison to Turkmenistan's comparatively unbiased and neutral policy, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan have become aggressively involved in the conflict in Afghanistan. Two central benefits have dragged them into the Afghan predicament: security and ethnicity.³² Uzbeks and Tajiks form the second and third biggest ethnic groups in Afghanistan. The Tajik population of the country is the only group holding on to territory bordering with Tajikistan. Uzbekistan, on the other hand, backed its co-ethnic groups around the border, mainly the Uzbek militia, which was commanded by Rashid Dostum. Apparently, they are attentive to the question of ethnic rights, but their major motive lies in promoting modest Afghans and mainly the security of their southern borders. An inclusive and broad-based type of government in which all the Afghan factions can secure their representation, rights of the minorities, a cease-fire, and a negotiated settlement of the conflict are the main elements of their common policy.³³

The role of Pakistan in the conflict in Afghanistan is quite vague and more complex than any other state in the region. Pakistan's benefits and interests in Afghanistan stay the same, but it changes its policies with each sequential conversion in the political situation of Afghanistan. Pakistan's policy toward Afghanistan for the past numerous years has established increasing aid to the Taliban for their interests.³⁴ Pakistan's strategy is based on immediate benefits in Afghanistan rather than distant internal threats. Such benefits are about the greater matters of power and influence, ethnic balance, regional influence, and access to the Central Asian region. Pakistan is the country most accused of interfering in Afghanistan because some people think that Pakistan's interests in Afghanistan are due to the disintegration and fragmentation of this country. As per different perceptions, a unified and powerful Afghanistan will never be a true friend of Pakistan. At the same time, Pakistan's interests are linked to Afghanistan's on three key issues. First, unconditional use of Afghan waters because Pakistan's agricultural economy is heavily dependent on Afghanistan's rivers. Second, reducing Afghanistan-India relations will prevent a powerful Afghanistan whose troops lack advanced weapons and modern equipment. This third variable makes up much of Pakistan's current policy. It should be noted that Pakistan's actions have led to the growth of extremism and fundamentalism in Afghanistan.³⁵ Afghanistan's neighbour countries like Iran, Pakistan, and some of the Central Asian states follow incompatible benefits, and as a consequence of the four-decade civil war, Afghanistan has been turned into the play area of a new "great game" between the regional superpowers, which has advanced social disintegration in the country and further fragmented Afghan society.

³¹ *ibid*

³² Hyman, Anthony. "Nationalism in Afghanistan." *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 34, no. 2 (2002): 299-315.

³³ S. Fida Yunas, "Afghanistan's Minority Nationalities," *Central Asia* No. 40, summer 1997, P. 186.

³⁴ Marsden, Peter. *The Taliban: War, religion and the new order in Afghanistan*. Palgrave Macmillan, 1998.

³⁵ *ibid*

Since the Cold War, Saudi Arabia has been involved in most of Afghanistan's political games. This is because the resources of a number of religious extremist groups originate in Saudi Arabia. On the other hand, in the regional context, Saudi Arabia has a clash of interests with Iran. Therefore, Saudi Arabia's competition with Iran and supporting fundamentalist Sunni groups will further harm Afghanistan's political consensus. It often looks at Afghanistan for the following reasons: the spread of Wahhabi Islam to reduce the influence of the revolutionary Shiites of Iran; emotional and political ties with a number of Islamic extremist groups that have continued since the Cold War; and a lack of interest in democratizing Afghanistan's political climate. For these reasons, Saudi Arabia's foreign policy approach ignores Afghanistan's religious community and does not take into account the stability of Afghanistan's political system because of its regional rival.³⁶

Ethnocentrism's Destructive Role in Afghanistan: The Consequences

Afghan society has a different ethnic and social fabric and is currently in the phase of recuperating from the four decades of war losses and destruction. Afghanistan desperately desires to overcome its struggle with nation-building and state-building in a considerably more inclusive and comprehensive way than ever and needs to bring together all segments, parties, and groups of its population, which is widely dis-unified, disintegrated, and fragmented.³⁷ Unfortunately, due to numerous reasons and motives, people have lost interest in the notion of nationhood, unity, national unification, and the quest for identity in the name of ethnicity or tribe. Broadly speaking, the economic and socio-political fortunes of the Afghan people are mainly in the control of their ethnic and political leaders. Therefore, the prospects for peace within the ethnic groups in Afghanistan also lie in the hands of these leaders. Unfortunately, whenever these ethnic and political leaders want to support and backing, they very cleverly use linguistic and ethnic cards for their motives.³⁸ Afghanistan could face more dire consequences due to ethnic hatred and the promotion of ethnocentricity if the leadership and people of Afghanistan do not work to tackle it and work towards uniformity and togetherness. Ethnocentrism and preconception in Afghanistan will lead to social anarchy and the lack of any form of order and solidarity. The spread of ethnocentrism could also lead to lagging behind in the field of global competition, turning the country into a battlefield for foreign countries, and paving the way for cultural aggression. Due to the instability in the security institutions and the inefficiency of the actors in these institutions, we can see the country becoming a laboratory of foreign policy. In a country where all social forces and citizens do not have equal access to opportunities and there is no balance between their rights and duties, they are frustrated or forced to migrate illegally, or they may join anti-national groups. This results in forced migration, terror, panic, and even the possibility of the country's disintegration.

Conclusion

Afghanistan is experiencing more ethnic tensions than ever. The study outlines the spread of ethnicity in Afghanistan on two grounds, including internal as well as external factors. The reasons include tribalism, mismatched leadership and

³⁶ Turton, David, and Peter Marsden. "Taking refugees for a ride." *The politics of refugee return to Afghanistan* (2002).

³⁷ Michèle A. Flournoy, *Prospects for Peace in Afghanistan*, February 19, 2020

³⁸ Meghna Chakrabarti, *The Prospect of Peace in Afghanistan*, March 02, 2020

corruption; control of material and spiritual resources; and marginalization of some ethnic groups, which exacerbated the spread of ethnicity in Afghanistan. Lack of visualization: the previously mentioned causes have prevented governments from assembling all ethnic clusters to feel commuted to it and find their welfare safeguarded by such a prophecy. In Afghanistan, there is no ideal to encourage patriotism and or nationalism amongst citizens. Therefore, Afghanistan needs an ideal that can bring the entire nation united. Nonetheless, what matters is that some sort of relevant solution is delivered in order to avoid severe promotion of ethnocentricity in the future, which could push the country into civil war. To conclude, social disintegration, political incongruence, and incoherence of a state are more likely to lead to civil war if sensibleness is not considered. Furthermore, the polarization of Afghan society in the direction of tribal lines and ethnic identity will pose a severe political and security problem not only for Afghanistan but for the whole region.

Recommendations and Solutions

The foremost solutions are safeguarding the balanced development of all chunks of Afghanistan and exercising impartiality and equity in public positions. Certainly, the use of ethnic feelings to cause disharmony within the nation will lose its appeal when the government treats all its citizens equally. Unfortunately, the level of ethnocentrism and bias is so blatant that it is not possible to eradicate it without the unity of different ethnicities, religions, and traditions. It is very difficult to treat partiality in the face of many disorders and non-accountability to the law. The people of Afghanistan favour an inclusive government and a pluralistic state with access to fair justice and enough representation in the political system of the country. Though Afghans from all ethnic clusters have remained and stood together for a shared cause, they were not successful in continuing to unify and have botched sharing a conjoint stand and a common platform. In the politics of Afghanistan, ethnicity will keep on playing a prevailing role. The rebuilding of nationwide harmony over the independent democratic process and the political system is vital to the country's steadiness and solidity. Hardening a countrywide identity is extremely imperative to escape hostility among ethnic clusters and groups. Therefore, settlement and reconciliation should not be centred on ethnic politics or anxiety but on a pan-Afghan vision where inclusivity and integration are granted.

In a country like Afghanistan, a strong central government to keep the ethnic card players in check is necessary. In the meantime, the government should provide equal opportunities to all ethnic groups and eradicate discrimination from the governmental structure. The government needs to allocate national annual budgets properly, which can address grievances from regions and rural areas, and the government should take steps to ensure the inclusion of all ethnic groups and provide equal opportunities. Pluralism and interaction of ethnic groups will not be realized in Afghan society unless ethnic tolerance replaces ethnicism and political elites play their role in social change in the direction of interaction and development. This can pave the way for the institutionalization of a pluralistic political system, independent of ethnic conflicts and, most importantly, widely trusted. Different groups and individuals within Afghanistan emphasize the establishment of an Islamic government to resolve various social and political conflicts, but the bottom line is that perceptions of such a government are very diverse. In the last two decades, three types of Islamic government have been

experienced in Afghanistan: the Islamic State, the Islamic Emirate, and the Islamic Republic; again, the Islamic Emirate. It has even emphasized the importance of building trust between ethnic groups to facilitate interaction between them. In his view, the ethnic problem will not be solved until distrust is replaced by trust and confidence. Building trust needs the localization of trust, balanced economic development, culture, and education are the main ways to localize trust.

In general, it can be said that by using a combination of diverse approaches in a rational environment and emphasizing the creation of strong and pluralistic political institutions that can generalize the concept of trust, it is possible to provide a viable solution to the ethnic problem and end the political crisis in Afghanistan. However, it seems that if there is no strong political will to use a proper approach to solve the ethnic problem, the Afghan political system will always be in danger of destabilization. The use of social networks to strengthen national unity; engaging young people in promoting mutual acceptance and tolerance; the role of politicians and leaders in generating mutual trust and respect among each other; political parties should change from ethnic to national status, and party privileges should be based on ethnic composition and merit among party members; people should be treated free of racial, linguistic, and regional restrictions so that social forces do not feel alienated and excluded; the role of the government as the executive and implementer of national policies can paint a picture of unity and participation through the creation of social opportunities, thus preventing crises; and avoiding the use of words such as Hazara, Pashtun, Tajik, and Uzbek. These factors will altogether guarantee and safeguard the legitimacy and participation of ethnic groups in power as well as the structure of political power nationally.

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