

Nation-Building Governance and Its Criteria in the Public Structure of Afghanistan and India

1. Mohammad Saber Ensan Doost¹: Department of Public Law, Central Tehran Branch, Islamic Azad University, Tehran, Iran

2. Mehdi Shabannia Mansour^{2*}: Department of Public Law, Central Tehran Branch, Islamic Azad University, Tehran, Iran

3. Babak Baseri³: Department of Public Law, Shiraz Branch, Islamic Azad University, Shiraz, Iran

*Correspondence: mehdi.shabannia@gmail.com

Abstract

Throughout history, various phenomena have influenced the process of nation-building in countries, and history bears witness to the fact that, in many cases, these elements have produced different reflections and consequences across the world. Accordingly, the present study, using a descriptive-analytical approach and relying on library and documentary research methods, seeks to examine how nation-building has occurred and to identify its criteria in the public structures of Afghanistan and India. The findings of this study indicate that despite the many similarities between the two countries—such as ethnic, cultural, religious, and linguistic diversity—the approaches to nation-building and their reflections in these two nations have been markedly different. According to the results, historically, India has a distinguished background in nation-building, rooted in the collective determination and mobilization of its people, as well as their persuasion and consensus, which has led to internal cohesion. In contrast, Afghanistan has never experienced such a grassroots movement from within its masses, nor have its leaders initiated a unifying national endeavor that could foster collective unity among the people. The final findings of this study confirm that elements such as the struggle against British colonialism and the restoration of independence, democracy, pluralism, and the political structure have each played significant—yet different—roles in shaping the process and method of nation-building in these two countries.

Keywords: Nationalism, Nation-Building, National Identity, Afghanistan, India.

Received: 08 February 2025

Revised: 25 April 2025

Accepted: 03 May 2025

Published: 29 May 2025



Copyright: © 2025 by the authors. Published under the terms and conditions of Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International (CC BY-NC 4.0) License.

Citation: Ensan Doost, M. S., Shabannia Mansour, M., & Baseri, B. (2025). Nation-Building Governance and Its Criteria in the Public Structure of Afghanistan and India. *Legal Studies in Digital Age*, 4(2), 1-12.

1. Introduction

Fundamentally, the concept of the "nation" as the principal model of socio-political organization in today's world is a phenomenon rooted in the modern era. Prior to the modern age, individuals primarily defined themselves based on a combination of affiliations to local identities (such as birthplace and kinship) and broader religious identities (such as membership in a community of co-religionists). The vast transformations beginning in the 15th century, while on the one hand dismantling small, local communities and religious affiliations, simultaneously gave rise to the emergence of the "nation" and national identity as the main foundation of belonging. The establishment of national belonging as the basis for political and social organization occurred gradually and was ultimately consolidated in 19th-century Europe. Accordingly, it may be said that the idea and practice of national affiliation spread throughout non-Western societies during the 19th and 20th centuries (Kazemi & Mahboubi, 2022).

At present, there is a broad consensus that nation-building is the key to stability and development in societies facing multiple challenges. Ethnic and religious fragmentation is among the core causes of social fragility, political instability, and hindrance to nation-building in many societies, especially in transitional countries. This is because the affiliations and interests shaped by divergent ethnic and religious identities foster confrontation between these identities within the arenas of socio-political and economic competition. The mutually reinforcing dynamics of these oppositional interactions reproduce an accelerating cycle of social fragmentation. For this reason, many governments attempt to overcome such confrontational trends by reinforcing and applying nation-building strategies. Through fostering national belonging, they seek to neutralize ethnic and religious divisions and expedite their economic, political, and cultural development (Rahimi, 2017).

Scholars in this field have undertaken numerous studies and advanced various theories. Research has shown that countries have pursued different and often challenging paths in achieving nation-building, resulting in a wide array of experiences. These efforts, contingent upon the structural characteristics and inherent components of each nation as well as their compatibility with the specific features and conditions of the target society, have yielded differing levels of success and failure. Therefore, recognizing the fundamental components, distinguishing the successes and failures in this area, and identifying the causes behind them is of strategic importance for correcting inappropriate strategies, fostering national cohesion, and reducing threats to national security.

Historical studies indicate that in earlier periods, traditional and coercive methods of nation-building were widespread. Monarchs and rulers, in efforts to unify populations and construct a common political identity under the banner of nation-building, employed compulsory assimilation strategies. They perceived ethnic, linguistic, and religious diversity as destabilizing forces threatening their sovereignty, and thus sought to subsume them under the dominant religious, linguistic, and ethnic identity of the ruling power—often through acts of violence and even mass killings—in order to establish a homogenous and uniform nation. As a result, the world has witnessed prolonged instability and bloody conflicts. Many countries, including the Republic of India, experienced this type of nation-building under the rule of the Ghaznavid and Mughal dynasties and later under British colonialism. Afghanistan, too, especially during the reigns of Amir Abdur Rahman Khan and Mohammad Nadir Shah, endured unpleasant episodes of such coercive nation-building. However, in present times, these beliefs and methods have largely been reformed, and most countries have adopted more rational and modern approaches. In many instances, citizens themselves have proactively contributed to realizing this goal.

Thus, in light of these developments and the historical background, studying nation-building in Afghanistan and comparing it with a nation such as India—with its comparatively successful experiences—is both necessary and of special significance. Although both countries share relatively similar characteristics such as ethnic, dynastic, linguistic, and religious diversity, it is unfortunately evident that, unlike India, Afghanistan lacks a favorable state of pluralism and effective nation-building. This disparity naturally prompts the question of why such a difference should exist between the two nations. Accordingly, the present study attempts to address the central question: What differences exist in the components of nation-building between Afghanistan and India, and what are their similarities or distinctions in this regard?

2. Review of Concepts and Theoretical Foundations of the Research:

2.1. *Nation*

The term “nation” refers to a large-scale community of individuals who share common myths, a shared history, collective public culture, a common homeland, shared rights and obligations, and a unified economy. This community may be mono-ethnic or multi-ethnic—that is, it may be composed of a single ethnic group or several ethnic groups ([Alam, 1998](#)).

2.2. *Nation-Building*

In multicultural societies, nation-building constitutes a comprehensive approach aimed at mitigating or managing social conflicts (ethnic, religious, racial cleavages, etc.). This process generally focuses on components such as constitutional reconstruction, establishing authority (legitimate power), ensuring security and stability, and the peaceful transfer of power ([Riemer, 2005](#)). It is pursued through various educational, economic, military, and other instruments. The objective of this approach is the transition from weak nation-states (in terms of social and political cohesion) to strong states with robust political and social integrity.

When analyzing the process of nation-building, various propositions and analyses cite a multitude of factors and variables. However, among these, the most frequently emphasized elements include a common religion, common territory, shared history, common culture, shared ideology, and especially a common language ([Hippel, 2000](#)).

2.3. *Background of Nation-Building*

Although the process of nation-building has a several-hundred-year history—particularly since the French Revolution—it accelerated and expanded more significantly in the post-World War II era, especially in the Global South. In the post-Cold War context, a new form of state–nation-building emerged, primarily drawn from experiences in the 1990s in the Balkans, Iraq, and Afghanistan, in which an external actor seeks to direct the nation-building process in another country through planned policies and supportive interventions. This model, however, has its earlier precedents in the cases of Germany and Japan after World War II ([Dobbis, 2005](#)).

Undoubtedly, the United States of America should be regarded as the most prominent external actor engaging in state–nation-building in other countries. After the Cold War, the U.S., based on its hegemonic political and economic strategies, pursued military interventions aimed at fostering state–nation-building in various states ([Ghavam & Zarghar, 2009](#)).

2.4. *Objectives and Strategies of Nation-Building*

The goal of nation-building strategies is to forge an integrated national identity to enable a transition away from primary identities (ethnic, religious, etc.), thereby reducing identity-based political and economic divisions. A review of historical precedents in the policies and programs of different countries regarding nation-building reveals five major identifiable strategies in this domain:

A. Assimilation: The aim of assimilation is to construct a homogenous and uniform society by biologically, culturally, and socially integrating various ethnic groups, thereby reducing differences and establishing a society devoid of ethnic disparities ([Zandi, 2001](#)). Types of assimilation used in the nation-building process include cultural, structural, behavioral, identity-based, civic, material, and attitudinal assimilation. Among these, structural and cultural assimilation are the most common. Cultural assimilation focuses on adherence to dominant cultural traits such as language, religion, and behaviors, while structural assimilation operates on two levels. The primary level involves the integration of ethnic groups through intergroup social interactions (clubs, political parties, intermarriage, etc.), and the secondary level focuses on the establishment of equitable processes for accessing power, wealth, education, healthcare, and more ([Zandi, 2001](#)).

B. Unequal Pluralism: This strategy is characteristic of imperial or multinational states in which one of the constituent nations dominates the structure of the state—such as Punjabis in Pakistan or Tutsis in Burundi ([Buzan, 2010](#)). In this model, the dominant ethnic group seeks permanent supremacy over the state apparatus through control over resources and power. The approach toward subordinate ethnic groups is exploitative and based on internal colonialism.

C. Democratic Model (Cultural Pluralism): This model acknowledges and preserves ethnic, linguistic, and racial differences while attempting to manage these diversities by creating universally accepted rules and a shared set of values. The goal is to maintain loyalty among various groups to a common political system. Ethnic groups in this model transform into politically and socially invested stakeholders who compete over economic and political resources (Zandi, 2001). Switzerland, Belgium, and Canada are examples of this approach. Here, nation-building is achieved not by eliminating identity differences but by cultivating allegiance to a shared political system and territorial entity through common values and rules.

D. Unity in Diversity: This strategy may be seen as a hybrid of the first and third approaches. It respects ethnic, linguistic, and racial differences while emphasizing and reinforcing shared identity elements (such as common historical background, cultural and religious values, etc.). Concurrently, it employs egalitarian methods and promotes intergroup social interactions to strengthen national belonging and resolve its conflict with traditional identities. This approach is more suitable for multi-ethnic or multi-national states with significant shared historical and cultural foundations among their constituent groups.

E. Strategies Oriented Toward Globalization of Economy and Politics: Some contemporary perspectives, in light of recent economic and political developments and modern interpretations of citizenship, have proposed a new approach to nation-building. This view holds that, in the contemporary world, several synergistic forces act to weaken citizens' loyalty to nation-states. These forces include:

1. A critique of social citizenship, which emphasizes political participation rights and considers citizens' access to health, social security, education, etc., a prerequisite for political engagement;
2. Globalization of the economy and its consequences;
3. Globalization of politics and the increasing influence of transnational developments;
4. The resurgence of subnational affiliations due to globalization, resulting from the erosion of civic and national loyalty and the search for substitute identities;
5. The rise of the "consumer citizen," defined not by civic identity but by market behavior. Although this phenomenon may encompass the broader public in the cyber age, it predominantly pertains to economic elites whose affiliations are guided by their interests in a globally integrated economy (Bottery, 2003).

2.5. *Nation-Building and States*

Hobsbawm emphasizes that nation-building is not a one-sided or exclusively "top-down" process, but rather a reciprocal interaction between the state and the masses, in which the will and agency of the state become intertwined with the affiliations, fears, hopes, aspirations, and interests of societies (Hobsbawm, 1992). Therefore, the policy of state-driven nation-building is essentially a form of exchange between the state and society: the state defines the nation, society, power, and legitimacy, and guards national identity and culture, while society, in return, sustains the state. A large portion of Hobsbawm's work, along with that of other modernist scholars, focuses on the historical analysis of the processes and mechanisms through which modern states created and expanded national identity among their citizens during the modern era.

2.6. *Stages of Nation-Building*

In existing literature, nation-building is said to occur in several stages: the establishment of state authority within defined territorial boundaries; cultural homogenization through educational systems; promotion of public participation in politics; and the strengthening of national solidarity and identity through policies of welfare distribution. In this sense, nation-building comprises two dimensions: the expansion of state authority and the expansion of civil rights for citizens. According to Stein Rokkan's model, this process occurs through economic and cultural homogenization at the elite level; mandatory military service and school enrollment; and the development of mass media, which facilitate interaction between elites and peripheral individuals, along with the active participation of the masses in the political domain and the expansion of the executive apparatus of the state (Flora et al., 2005).

3. Methodology

This study employs a descriptive–analytical method, relying on a comprehensive review of the literature and documentation from reputable scientific sources using a library-based and archival approach. The theoretical foundations and a comparative analysis with India will serve as the central axis of the research.

4. Research Findings:

4.1. Nation-Building Methods

Nation-building is a necessity for the public life of any country, as peace and progress are unimaginable without it. This process also holds a significant place in the international system, as many of the insecurities and disorders in today's world—both directly and indirectly—originate from shortcomings in this domain. For this reason, nation-building efforts have been pursued by states, institutions, and various authorities using diverse foundations and methodologies and continue to hold fundamental urgency and importance.

Yet the question arises: how many methods of nation-building exist, and which ones apply to India and Afghanistan? It must first be acknowledged that a distinction exists between nation-building, state-building, the types of nation-building, and its methodologies. In general, five types of nation-building are identified; however, in terms of nation-building methods, the focus is on the manner and process of execution. Based on this, two primary methods of nation- and state-building are recognized. The first is internal or national and itself includes two subtypes. The first subtype is **nation–state building**, wherein the people—ethnic groups, linguistic communities, and internal non-governmental institutions—achieve unified consensus based on the necessities of development, convenience, and welfare. Through peaceful, coercive, or revolutionary means, they act from the bottom up to establish a state. This is also referred to as the **European model**, in which the nation is the founder and constituent power (Bellew, 2016).

The second subtype occurs when the people do not act directly; instead, the state engages in nation-building from above. In this model, the state pre-exists—regardless of its origin—and uses various tools to construct the nation in order to legitimize and sustain itself. This is called the **state–nation building** model.

The second major method is external or foreign. In this method, both the state and nation are established by an external actor. This external hand may be international institutions or unions—such as the United Nations—or a major foreign country invoking international law, democracy, or other rationales to create a state and nation within another country. There are numerous examples of this type, known as **external state–nation building**. Based on the foregoing, India and Afghanistan fall under specific categories of these methods.

4.2. India and Nation-Building

Since its establishment, the Republic of India has undergone substantial political and nation-building transformations. It moved beyond traditional nation-building (i.e., forced assimilation), which had characterized the country during six centuries of Ghaznavid and Mughal rule up to the 19th century. India's nation-building approach has been dual in nature. The first phase was **internal and people-oriented**, beginning when India first came under British colonial rule through the East India Company and later directly under the British Crown. At that point, a movement for public unity and persuasive nation-building began under the leadership of figures such as Lokmanya Tilak and later Mahatma Gandhi. During this movement, the people—supported by their leaders—achieved nationwide national solidarity, ultimately securing independence from Britain in 1947.

The second phase of nation-building in India began when an independent state was established by the will of the people. After achieving independence, Indians adopted a constitution and, based on it, established a modern state. From this point forward, the state engaged in **top-down nation-building** using a modern approach. In this model, the state sought to institutionalize its legitimacy by recognizing all fundamental rights, including those of ethnic, religious, and racial minorities. Efforts to ensure governmental accountability, deliver economic and social welfare, and promote political and civic advancement became hallmarks of this approach (Gopalkrishnan & Babacan, 2015). Today, the unity and solidarity of India's

people—despite considerable ethnic and cultural diversity—is a testament to the success of these methods. Accordingly, India has experienced **nation–state building** initially, and now continues to implement **state–nation building**.

4.3. *Afghanistan and Nation-Building*

Although Afghanistan has also experienced colonialism, its people have never achieved the necessary cohesion. Moreover, the country has never experienced a people-centered and pluralistic political structure. As such, both the coercive historical and externally-imposed modern methods of nation-building have always been top-down. Afghanistan has also witnessed various political and historical transformations. Following the formation of the modern state in the late 19th century (13th century in the Hijri Solar calendar), the country adopted a coercive, top-down approach to nation-building. Amir Abdur Rahman Khan, during his reign, initiated a severely traditional nation-building strategy that relied on assimilation through violence and massacre. Influenced by British colonial conspiracies and domestic advisors such as Mahmoud Tarzi—who advocated for indigenous nation-building—he viewed ethnic, linguistic, and religious diversity as threats to his dynastic rule and sought, through regulations and decrees, to assimilate all these diversities under a singular national identity aligned with his rule (Omar, 2018).

This nation-building strategy, in later phases, fluctuated in intensity but persisted until the American-led initiative of 2001. This later approach was also top-down but employed modern and non-violent methods, starting with a series of reforms including the ratification of a new constitution and the establishment of a new state. In Afghanistan, the external state–nation-building model was supported by the international community—primarily the United States—through the use of state power, promotion of cultural diversity in educational centers, and the provision of public welfare (Omar, 2018). However, both the traditional indigenous approach and the modern top-down model of nation-building have ultimately failed to achieve their goals. At present, under the rule of the Taliban, there is no effective method of state- or nation-building. On the contrary, ethnic, linguistic, religious, and especially gender-based issues have become the most significant and intensifying challenges to the state–nation-building process.

4.4. *Nation-Building Criteria in the Public and Legal Structures of India and Afghanistan*

The diversity and multiplicity of elements in India—especially in terms of religions, languages, identities, education, and the structure of political power and governance in the Indian Republic—have had a highly positive influence on its nation-building process. Indeed, the effects of democracy, including freedom of speech, minority rights, freedom of assembly, and civil rights, are evident in the nation-building trajectory of the country. Numerous tools and mechanisms of nation-building are visible in India. While it is not feasible to list all of them within a single research article, a comparative look at Afghanistan allows us to identify some of the most significant ones. However, the nature and quality of these components differ fundamentally between the two countries. The following subsections examine and compare these elements:

4.4.1. *The Struggle Against British Colonialism and the Restoration of Independence*

Nation-building becomes a topic of discussion only when a country exists—or emerges—as a result of unified popular struggles within a specific geographical area. In the nation–state-building model, the initial steps are grassroots reactions and actions by the people. These actions may take a revolutionary and violent form—such as the French Revolution in 1789, which led to the establishment of a popular political structure—or they may take a peaceful and non-violent form, of which India is a prime example. Countries that have lived under colonial rule and later achieved independence usually share a unified historical experience of collective struggle. Both the Republic of India and Afghanistan experienced colonialism at the hands of the same imperial power and eventually gained independence through the efforts of their people. However, the nature of these struggles and the degree of unity among the people during these processes differ significantly between the two countries (Ahmadi, 2012).

4.4.2. *The Collective Struggle of the Indian People*

The Indian subcontinent previously encompassed what are now the Islamic Republic of Pakistan and the nation of Bangladesh. Initially, Britain established its presence through a commercial company in eastern India and then formally incorporated the territory of the Indian Republic into its colonial holdings, implementing all imperial decisions within it. This situation prompted Indian leaders—supported directly by the masses, including followers of diverse religions—to establish organizations aimed at systematically resisting British rule and securing the country's independence. The people of India, regardless of ethnicity, language, or religion, participated in this struggle with unified determination. In particular, the Muslim population, comprising around 15% of the total, played a leading role. For instance, during an armed uprising against the British in the Asnot region, a Muslim named Mustafa cooperated with his non-Muslim compatriots and inflicted substantial damage on British soldiers.

As a result of the people's joint efforts, the British government was compelled to relinquish control of certain administrative sectors of the country back to Indian authorities between 1906 and 1915. This partial retreat led to further uprisings and protests, gradually weakening British control. Eventually, in 1947, under mounting pressure from the Indian people, British forces withdrew, and by 1949, the people of India had formed an independent government (Bagheri, 2017). The first constitution was adopted in 1949, formally establishing India as a democratic republic. The constitution enshrined justice, freedom, and equality as fundamental rights for all citizens. Thus, national narratives and significant historical events have served as effective tools and foundational criteria in India's nation-building process. A unified political identity in India has taken shape since the inception of this struggle (Jalali Naeini, 1996).

4.4.3. *The Joint Struggle of the Afghan People*

During the global power competitions of the mid-18th century, Afghanistan increasingly attracted the attention of British colonial powers. Initially, Britain sought dominance over the strategic strongholds of Asia—namely, the Hindu Kush mountains of Afghanistan—as a means to counter its northern rival, Tsarist Russia, which shared a border with Afghanistan. Thus, the first war between the Afghan people and the British occurred in 1839 in the southern province of Helmand. This conflict continued with alternating victories and defeats and culminated in a second war in 1878, which ended in 1880 with the victory of the Afghan people (Thomas, 2019).

However, following this triumph, the Afghan people failed to remain united or act as a cohesive nation in their political and domestic affairs. Despite their success, British interference and conspiracy did not cease. Amir Abdur Rahman Khan maintained open access for the British in Afghanistan—most notably exemplified by the signing of the Durand Line agreement and the demarcation of Afghanistan's northern borders with Tsarist Russia in 1873, both carried out with the direct involvement of the British. During the reign of his son, Amir Habibullah Khan (1901–1919), despite some internal advancements in economic, educational, and printing sectors, no significant steps were taken toward nation-building. He compelled Afghan Hindus to wear distinctive clothing to set them apart from others and reaffirmed all of his father's colonial-era treaties with the British (Rahimi, 2017).

Later, the first constitution of Afghanistan was passed, which included features of a modern state—such as equality of rights, individual freedom, and other core values—contributing, at least formally, to nation-building. However, during this phase, the process of state–nation-building continued to rely on traditional methods. At the end of his reign, Amanullah Khan, like his forefathers, attempted coercive assimilation, seeking to impose the identity and language of his own ethnic group. A notable example of this was the enactment of the “Naqelin Regulation,” which aimed to relocate populations to Qataghan. Nevertheless, these efforts never succeeded in creating unity or alignment among the country's diverse peoples.

Subsequent challenges primarily stemmed from continued efforts to implement top-down, traditional methods of state–nation-building. The Afghan people, who had once stood together in defense of religion rather than the homeland during British invasions, failed to translate that unity into political and national solidarity. Other major issues included a lack of political awareness, low national maturity, and limited public education and knowledge—factors that prevented the populace from standing together with the independence-seeking and modernizing king and from remaining united after military victory, or achieving economic, scientific, and cultural progress.

Therefore, despite the apparent similarities between Afghanistan and India, after regaining independence from Britain and adopting a constitution, Afghanistan never achieved nation-building in the same manner as India. Its various ethnic, linguistic, and religious groups never genuinely accepted one another and were easily manipulated by internal and external actors into conflict and hostility. The key difference between Afghanistan and the Republic of India lies in their nation-building trajectories: in Afghanistan, the process took the form of top-down state–nation-building, while in India, it began with bottom-up nation–state-building by the people and later continued as a state-led effort (Mohammad Ghubar, 1967).

4.4.4. *Democracy and the Republic of India*

Democracy is inherently one of the modern pathways to nation–state-building, as it allows people—by exercising their various freedoms as an essential element of governance—to consciously participate in decision-making and collective consensus through parties, institutions, elections, and civil structures. This creates the foundation for social cohesion and shared values among the population.

According to India's Constitution, the country is structured as a parliamentary democracy. Democratic development flourished after the Indian people secured independence, but the desire for democracy—and its earliest signs—can be traced back to the formation of the Indian National Congress, established by intellectuals and leaders as a means of achieving an independent government and promoting a non-violent political strategy during British colonial rule. Some scholars argue that Indian independence was, itself, a product of India's historical democracy. The influence of democracy in India's nation-building process is evident both before and after independence, in various forms. Having endured repressive regimes under the Aryans, the Mughals, and the British, the Indian people maintained unity and established common structures to jointly resist tyranny and colonialism. Thus, the foundational need for nation-building in India emerged within a democratic framework—through institutions, movements, and mass participation. One significant example was a massive anti-colonial rally in which 50 million Indians participated. This historic movement, which embodies the core of democracy, catalyzed unity and marked the initial signs of modern nation-building in the country.

Moreover, in a large, diverse country like India, nation-building would have been impossible without democracy. The democratic system facilitated political development, which had a direct impact on the nation-building process. In turn, grassroots movements led to the country's eventual independence. Therefore, democracy, its institutions, and people's unity were solidified even before the formal establishment of the state and played a prominent role in its creation (Doinger, 2015).

Nevertheless, three major challenges to India's nation-building process can be observed. First, the process was extremely prolonged—taking nearly a century—because bottom-up approaches inherently require more time. In other countries, particularly Afghanistan, the absence of strategic patience combined with internal instability and foreign interference has made such extended timeframes unfeasible. Second, Hindu nationalism—which seeks cultural homogenization based on Hindu identity and exhibits ethnonationalist and fascist tendencies—has historically and presently posed a serious threat to India's nation-building. Third, religious violence, present from the beginning of the nation-building process and still visible today, continues to undermine cohesion. The state's bias in such conflicts has exacerbated the issue and left a permanent stain on Indian democracy.

4.4.5. *Democracy and Afghanistan*

Afghanistan has mostly experienced authoritarian, non-democratic regimes and traditional forms of nation-building. However, signs of democracy have appeared in different historical periods. The first such instance was observed during the constitutionalist movement of 1908–1909, when reformists sought to weaken the king's traditional authority and introduce constitutional governance. However, this movement was met with severe backlash from the despotic ruler, Habibullah Khan, and was suppressed before it could become a prelude to nation-building; many of its participants were arrested, tortured, and executed.

The second wave of democratic development—as a gateway to nation-building—emerged during the 1960s under King Zahir Shah. For the first time, a prime minister was appointed from outside the royal family, and the constitution was amended to include provisions such as freedom of speech, the formation of political parties, the right to establish civil institutions, religious freedom, political activism, protection from exile and torture, and the sanctity of home and property. During this

period, nation-building quietly began beneath the surface of a soft monarchy—much like India, where the process began under colonial rule. However, this progress was cut short by the coup of Mohammad Daoud Khan, who reintroduced authoritarian governance and adopted a one-party system.

The third and most recent phase—spanning two decades—began with the U.S. military intervention in 2001. During this period, the constitution enshrined democratic principles such as the formation of political parties, civil and social institutions, elections, freedom of expression, the right to assembly and protest, justice, equality, and civil liberties. The nation-building process in this era, aligned with the American-style state–nation-building model, focused on establishing security, distributing humanitarian aid, institutionalizing state power, enabling political participation, and installing democracy.

However, unlike the Republic of India, this democratic experience did not effectively influence Afghanistan’s nation-building. Democratic components such as equal citizenship, elections, political parties, civil institutions, and the rule of law—which are hallmarks of modern nation- and state-building—became entangled in ethnic, linguistic, and sectarian identities, thus undermining their intended impact.

4.4.6. *Pluralism and the Republic of India*

Pluralism, as a modern concept with defined features and types, seeks to ensure that individuals, groups, ethnicities, religions, and speakers of diverse languages can live peacefully in a shared nation or society with equal citizenship rights. In essence, pluralism promotes multiculturalism, coexistence, and unity in diversity—without war or bloodshed.

Existing studies show that the degree of diversity and pluralism in the Republic of India is astonishing. Geography, religion, culture, language, ethnicity, customs, and traditions all vary significantly across this vast nation. India's appeal in the global context is largely based on its vibrant pluralism, which is an inherent characteristic of its society. There are phenomena and belief systems present in India that exist nowhere else in the world with such depth. Global recognition of India is deeply tied to this diversity, which has become a distinctive marker of its national identity. The historical coexistence of multiple religions, languages, cultures, and ethnic groups has placed India in a unique global position, influencing many dimensions of its society.

When assessed from a modern perspective, the role of pluralism in **nation–state-building** becomes clear: accepting difference fosters a positive pathway toward unity. The challenges of pluralism in relation to nation-building are minimal compared to its advantages. In pluralistic societies, achieving shared goals takes more time and requires accommodating various laws, educational systems, languages, and cultural norms. The main tension lies in the fact that nation-building tends toward unification and integration, while pluralism is rooted in respect for diversity and is fundamentally incompatible with homogenization.

4.4.7. *Pluralism and Afghanistan*

Although Afghanistan is geographically smaller than India, it shares many similarities in terms of diversity. The country encompasses a wide range of cultural, ethnic, religious, linguistic, and identity-based groups. Given its long history and geopolitical location—serving as both a habitat and a crossroads for major civilizations—Afghanistan has accumulated a wealth of traditions, customs, and belief systems. Known as the beating heart of Asia, its tumultuous history as a connector of the ancient world has witnessed migrations, relocations, invasions, and conquests, leading to the emergence and decline of various cultures, civilizations, and ideologies.

Afghanistan is home to multiple religions, including Islam, Hinduism, and Sikhism (Mohammad Ghubar, 1967). Among Muslims, sectarian diversity also exists, with followers of Sunni, Shia, and other Islamic schools of thought interpreting religious doctrines in diverse ways. Non-Muslim groups also live in Afghanistan. Despite existing challenges, ethnic, linguistic, and cultural diversity continues to enrich the nation's social fabric. From a linguistic and ethnic standpoint, Afghanistan is one of Asia’s most diverse countries and ranks 37th globally in terms of pluralism, hosting more than fifty ethnic groups and speakers of 64 different languages.

Culturally and racially, Afghanistan is as pluralistic and diverse as the Republic of India. Its people adhere to distinct customs and traditions shaped by historical identity shifts, ethnic movements, and the ongoing presence of diverse groups. This combination has produced a culturally vibrant and colorful country in the heart of Asia (Bellew, 2016). The country boasts

rich artistic, cultural, and archaeological heritage. The only areas where Afghanistan significantly differs from India are in cinema, music, and dance, which are less prominent in Afghan society.

Therefore, Afghanistan is not only a country of religious, linguistic, ethnic, and artistic diversity but also rich in geography, natural resources, landscapes, cuisine, clothing, and biodiversity. In this sense, it shares broad similarities with India and may be described as a living collection—or a cultural and linguistic kaleidoscope—in the heart of Asia.

4.4.8. *Political Structure and the Republic of India*

The political structure includes public institutions both within the governing system—such as the government—and outside of it, such as political parties and unions. These structures function under the foundational laws of society. According to the opening articles of its Constitution, India has adopted a federal political system, under which a pluralistic power structure is implemented in the form of a parliamentary republic. The Republic of India comprises 28 states, each of which possesses legislative, executive, and administrative authority within the limits set by the Constitution and the principle of federalism.

Another important component of India's political structure is its political parties, of which more than 700 operate at the national, state, and regional levels. The most prominent among them are the Indian National Congress and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). The political structure has played a significant role in India's nation-building process, which began with a series of historical developments. Long before the country achieved independence or had a defined political system, the Congress Party initiated a movement for national unity and integration as early as 1895. These efforts proved successful, as the people of India—regardless of ethnicity, religion, or language—united, laying the foundation for a positive legacy of nation-building.

Therefore, India's popular and non-governmental political structure has generally been nationalist in character and has played a pivotal role in the nation-state-building process. Today, political parties continue to play a constructive role by influencing public opinion and engaging in indirect oversight. According to the Constitution, the executive structure of the Indian political system comprises both a central federal administration and state-level administrations, both of which hold an essential place in India's state-nation-building process.

Moreover, the reactive and governance-based role of the Indian federal system in nation-building is also prominent. A key indicator of this is the effective rule of law across India. The Indian federal government prioritizes the maintenance of order and legality and upholds this principle with precision. The stability and progress of the country are closely linked to this commitment ([Ahmadi, 2012](#)).

4.4.9. *Political Structure and Afghanistan*

Afghanistan has experienced various political and legal structures, each playing a role—however limited—in its nation- and state-building processes. Most of these experiences, however, reflect top-down, traditional nation-building models, with few instances of bottom-up popular initiatives. Monarchs of the royal era often lacked either the capacity or the will to unify the people through civil means of nation-building. In many cases, for personal power or ethnic motives, they deliberately ignored or actively suppressed such efforts.

One of the earliest figures to advocate for equal participation of all Afghan citizens in governance was Tahir Badakhshi. His theory promoted regional autonomy for areas with distinct ethnic, cultural, or religious characteristics. In essence, he supported geographic federalism, grounded in diversity, as a framework for nation-building. Similarly, Abdul Ali Mazari viewed the federal model as the best means to ensure the inclusion of all ethnic, religious, and political groups in public governance. Abdul Latif Pedram, leader of the National Congress Party, also directly advocated for a federal system, considering it a necessary response to the country's needs and challenges.

These were all efforts to unify the nation through the development of a flexible political structure. However, no coordinated or defined movements have emerged from political parties or a significant segment of the Afghan population to establish a foundational political system or sustainable social fabric ([Bagheri, 2017](#)).

Afghanistan has never experienced federalism in the way that India has. In India, the political structure's flexibility allowed grassroots initiatives to take shape, enabling both bottom-up and top-down state-building efforts to succeed. By contrast, even during its most recent democratic period, Afghanistan missed critical opportunities to adopt a pluralistic political structure that aligned with its ethnic, religious, and cultural diversity.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

The final outcome of this study indicates that, historically, India's nation-building process has a strong and luminous background, rooted in the collective will of its people and their conviction in achieving internal cohesion. In contrast, Afghanistan has never witnessed such a movement, neither organically from the masses nor led by its political leaders, that could result in unified national identity and solidarity.

Despite extensive similarities in ethnic, religious, and cultural diversity, several crucial nation-building components in the Republic of India have facilitated and accelerated this process, many of which are enshrined in the Constitution—especially in its most recent version, drafted with direct support and guidance from international experts. Factors such as the struggle against British colonialism and the restoration of independence, democracy, pluralism, and the political structure have played a critical—albeit different—role in shaping the nation-building approaches of these two countries.

While both nations share similar histories in resisting British imperialism, significant differences emerge in other components. One critical difference lies in the political structure: India's Constitution institutionalizes federalism, whereas Afghanistan has consistently retained a centralized presidential system, even during its democratic periods. The constitutional provisions in Afghanistan were not effectively implemented. Despite the strong representation of democracy and pluralism in the document, they failed to bring about national unity and cohesion. This failure is attributed to the imported and imitative nature of these reforms, which never genuinely addressed the country's internal realities.

For example, elections—seen as the heart of democracy—were frequently marred by fraud, often driven by ethnic motivations, with electoral officials themselves implicated in the malpractice. Studies show that Afghanistan's political system was dominated by ethnic- or family-based parties, with government posts distributed not on merit but according to ethnic balance and quotas. In this context, real pluralism and religious freedom were never realized.

Historical evidence demonstrates that in India, the equal support of all religions under the banner of religious pluralism has created an environment of national unity and synergy, positively impacting the nation- and state-building process. In Afghanistan, however, such a climate has been insufficient. This vacuum has led to continued violence and the emergence of radical groups, each interpreting religious texts differently and perpetuating armed conflict under a single religious banner. Such conditions have fundamentally disrupted the civil and political nature of nation-state-building.

Another issue in Afghanistan's nation-building process is the lack of consensus among ethnic groups regarding national identity. According to one historical narrative, despotic rulers extended the "Afghan" identity—originally specific to the Pashtun ethnic group—to the entire population. This identity was then imposed on national currency, official buildings, and public symbols, despite the fact that Pashtuns are only one of about one hundred ethnic groups in the country. This generalization is unacceptable to many. By contrast, in the Republic of India, such a problem never existed. The actions of Indian political leaders have always centered on inclusive national unity, and the population rallied together under a shared national identity, laying the foundation for a modern, democratic state.

Authors' Contributions

Authors contributed equally to this article.

Declaration

In order to correct and improve the academic writing of our paper, we have used the language model ChatGPT.

Ethical Considerations

All procedures performed in this study were under the ethical standards.

Acknowledgments

Authors thank all individuals who helped us do this study.

Conflict of Interest

The authors report no conflict of interest.

Funding/Financial Support

According to the authors, this article has no financial support.

References

- Ahmadi, M. (2012). *Introduction to India*. House of Culture Publishing, Islamic Republic of Iran.
- Alam, A. (1998). *Foundations of Political Science*. Ney Publishing.
- Bagheri, E. (2017). The Political Structure of Afghanistan. *Normax Specialized Journal*, 5(69).
- Bellew, W. (2016). *The Ethnic Groups of Afghanistan*. Saeed Publishing.
- Bottery, M. (2003). The End of Citizenship? The Nation State, Threats to its Legitimacy, and Citizenship Education in the Twenty-first Century. *Cambridge Journal of Education*, 33(1). <https://doi.org/10.1080/0305764032000064668>
- Buzan, B. (2010). *People, States, and Fear*. Strategic Studies Research Institute Publishing.
- Dobbis, J. (2005). *Democracy in developing Countries: Persistence Failure and Renewal*. lynne Rienner Pub.
- Doinger, E. (2015). *pluralism and democracy in India*. Oxford of university.
- Flora, P., Stein, R., & Stein, K. (2005). *State Formation, Nation-building and Mass Politic: The Theory of Stein Rokkan*. Oxford UK.
- Ghavam, A., & Zarghar, A. (2009). *State-Building, Nation-Building, and International Relations Theory: An Analytical Framework for Understanding and Studying the World of Nation-States*. Islamic Azad University, Science and Research Branch.
- Gopalkrishnan, N., & Babacan, H. (2015). Cultural Diversity and Mental Health. *Australasian Psychiatry*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1039856215609769>
- Hippel, K. V. (2000). Democracy by Force: A Renewed Commitment to Nation Building. *The Washington Quarterly*, 23(1), 95-112. <https://doi.org/10.1162/016366000560764ER> -
- Hobsbawm, E. (1992). *Nations and Nationalism since 1780*. Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CCOL0521439612>
- Jalali Naeini, S. M. R. (1996). *India at a glance*. Shiraz Publishing.
- Kazemi, H., & Mahboubi, M. (2022). Formation and Evolution of State Nation-Building in the United Arab Emirates. *Scientific Quarterly of Political and International Approaches*, 14(1), 149-176.
- Mohammad Ghubar, M. G. (1967). *Afghanistan in the Course of History*. Afghan Printing Press.
- Omar, S. (2018). *Modern government and fear of pluralism in Afghanistan*. Afghan institute for strategic studies.
- Rahimi, A. (2017). Nation-Building Strategies and Uneven Development in Iran. *Strategic Studies*, 20(4), 56-101.
- Riemer, A. K. (2005). The concepts of state building, nation building and society building. *AARMS*, 4(3).
- Thomas, B. (2019). *Cultural and Political History of Afghanistan*. Erfan Publishing Institute.
- Zandi, E. (2001). *Political Rivalries and Challenges in Contemporary Iran (Collection of Articles)*. Farhang-e Gofteaman Publishing.