

Multi-Ethnic Power Blocs and the Failure of State-Building in Afghanistan, 2001–2021

Mahmood. Eztarabi¹, Vahid. Sinaee^{2*}, Ahmad. Mahaghar³

¹ PhD student in Political Science, Faculty of Law and Political Science, Ferdowsi University of Mashhad, Mashhad, Iran

² Associate Professor, Department of Political Science, Faculty of Law and Political Science, Ferdowsi University of Mashhad, Mashhad, Iran

³ Assistant Professor, Department of Political Science, Faculty of Law and Political Science, Ferdowsi University of Mashhad, Mashhad, Iran

* Corresponding author email address: sinaee@um.ac.ir

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EDITOR:

Richard Dodder

Emeritus Professor of Sociology and of Statistics, Oklahoma State University Stillwater, Oklahoma, USA. Email: rdodder@hotmail.com

REVIEWER 1:

Muhammad Abdul Rahman

Department of Humanities, Rajaratnam School of International Studies, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore. Email: muhammadrahman@ntu.edu.sg

REVIEWER 2:

Zeynep Karal

Department of Computer and Instructional Technologies Education, Trabzon University, Trabzon, Türkiye. Email: zeynepkaral@trabzon.edu.tr

1. Round 1

1.1. Reviewer 1

Reviewer:

This section provides a strong historical sweep but compresses too many references. Consider restructuring into two shorter paragraphs: one covering pre-1978 developments and one from 1978 to 2001, to improve readability.

You classify theories of state-building into four categories. Please add citations for Otto Hintze and Michael Mann when first mentioned, since these are foundational figures and currently lack direct referencing.

The table is informative but lacks analysis of the power balance. Please add a paragraph evaluating how Pashtun–Tajik dominance shaped later political competition.

This is a valuable anecdotal source, but a thematic synthesis is needed. Suggest extracting patterns such as “informal governance,” “parallel networks,” and “tribal influence” to make analysis more systematic.

Authors revised the manuscript and uploaded the document.

1.2. Reviewer 2

Reviewer:

This claim should be substantiated with more empirical evidence. For example, how many NGOs, constitutions, or electoral reforms were introduced during this period?

The sentence “Rashid further emphasized ... undermined the independence of Afghan state institutions” would benefit from quantitative evidence (e.g., number of aid projects or IMF/World Bank figures) to make the argument more robust.

Please elaborate on the parliamentary balance of power—how many MPs were aligned with Qanuni vs. Sayyaf? Numbers would make the bloc structure clearer.

While the table clearly allocates ministries, the method of classification into Ghani vs. Abdullah blocs is not explained. Clarify whether this is based on formal party documents, cabinet decrees, or the authors’ categorization.

Authors revised the manuscript and uploaded the document.

2. Revised

Editor’s decision: Accepted.

Editor in Chief’s decision: Accepted.