

A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF FEDERALISM APPLICABILITY IN
AFGHANISTAN

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By Ali Jan Rasikh

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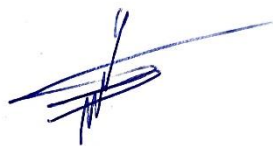
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Abstract

Afghanistan has experienced a centralized system of governance since its modern foundation under Amir Abdul Rahman Khan in 1880. This centralized structure has contributed to political instability, civil war, and ongoing conflict. A particular group, primarily from a dominant ethnic background, has monopolized political power, marginalizing not only other ethnic communities but also its own members residing in the provinces. Except for a small elite based in the capital, most citizens, regardless of ethnicity, feel excluded from political participation. A recent example of this dynamic can be observed during the era of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan. Although the Pashtun ethnic group held significant influence in the capital, other ethnic groups, as well as Pashtuns in the western and eastern regions, felt politically isolated and, in some cases, began to resist the central government. In response to such challenges, scholars have proposed divergent solutions: some advocate for stronger centralization and national cultural homogenization. In contrast, others argue for decentralization and granting autonomy to regional and ethnic groups. However, these proposals often lack a rigorous academic framework and tend to offer conclusions without thorough empirical analysis. This study tries to understand how diverse societies manage ethnic diversity and political power. It provides a comparative analysis between countries that have successfully managed diversity and achieved political stability, such as Switzerland, and those that have failed to do so and resulted in conflict, like Yugoslavia, to identify the underlying factors that lead countries with similar levels of diversity to follow vastly different political trajectories. After identifying the reasons behind the success of federalism, the study will examine the context of Afghanistan to determine which characteristics of federalism are present and which are absent. Specifically, it examines whether a decentralized model, such as federalism, could be a viable governance structure for Afghanistan, given its complex cultural and ethnic composition. This study adopts a qualitative research methodology that combines comparative case study analysis with an extensive review of academic literature, policy reports, and constitutional documents to examine why similar systems lead to different outcomes.

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Introduction

The central government in Afghanistan has always had a lot of power, which shows that the country has been slow to give up some of its power. This trend began with Amir Abdul Rahman Khan's centralization of power in the late 1800s. He set up a centralized monarchy for the first time, putting an end to traditional tribal councils and putting all power in Kabul (Kakar 1992, 158). The next leaders kept their policy of centralization by setting up permanent institutional frameworks of governance that are still in place today (Rubin 2020, 3). Afghanistan has passed ten constitutions since 1921, and each one has given more power to the central government ("Afghanistan and the Path of Federalism" 2024). Even though there have been big changes in politics, like the fall of monarchies, the rise of republics, and changes between liberal and Islamic rule, all constitutional frameworks have kept centralized administration as a key idea. Article 108 of the 1964 Constitution clearly said that "the administration of Afghanistan is based on the principle of centralization." This phrase was also used in the 2004 Constitution and in later constitutional proposals (Rubin 2020, 8).

Sarwar Danish, the former vice president of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, in his advocacy for *Federalism: A Path Toward Justice and Stability in Afghanistan*, categorizes three periods as the most important in Afghanistan's constitutional history: the 1923 Constitution during Amanullah Khan's reign, the 1964 Constitution, and the Republican Constitution (2004-2021). According to Danish, a constitution must be fair to the social group it protects. It can't be too strict or too loose; it must protect, keep political life healthy, and stop disintegration and collapse. Sadly, Afghanistan's constitutions have not done this job. The constitutional frameworks in Afghanistan have generally created systems that don't work well with the fact that the country is very diverse and has many different groups. The Constitution of 2004 established a highly centralized presidential system, concentrating extraordinary powers within the executive branch. The president oversaw the appointments of provincial governors, district administrators, and key judicial positions. Scholars have concluded that it created "a government barely distinguishable from the centralized monarchies and dictatorships that had characterized earlier regimes" (Barfield 2010, 342). This is a basic and common flaw in all of Afghanistan's constitutions. It has led to cycles of

exclusion, insurgency, and state collapse that have marked the country's modern political history (Rubin 2004, 16).

This study will address the question of how diverse societies manage ethnic diversity and political power. Specifically, it examines whether a decentralized model, such as federalism, could be a viable governance structure for Afghanistan, given its complex cultural and ethnic composition. In today's world, identity diversity is the general rule, while ethnic or identity homogeneity is the exception. According to various studies on the demographic composition of countries, most nations are characterized by identity diversity. Only in 14 countries worldwide is there no significant multi-ethnic composition or notable ethnic minority presence. Additionally, only four percent of the global population lives in countries where a single ethnic group constitutes the entire population. One scholar of federalism notes that there are approximately 5,000 ethnocultural groups worldwide, distinguished by language, dialect, religion, culture, and race. In contrast, the number of sovereign states is around 200, meaning that, on average, each state governs around 25 distinct groups (Danish 2024). Afghanistan is by no means an exception to this global reality. In fact, it exemplifies identity diversity in an especially broad and complex form. Both domestic and international experts describe Afghanistan as a beautiful mosaic of diverse colors. The country is home to various religions and at least 30 ethnic groups and languages, each with distinct cultural, social, and even geographic characteristics. Considering this fact, this study will provide a comparative analysis between countries that have successfully managed diversity and achieved political stability, such as Switzerland, and those that have failed to do so and remain in conflict, like Yugoslavia, to identify the underlying factors that lead countries with similar levels of diversity to follow vastly different political trajectories and apply them to the context of Afghanistan.

In response to this challenge, scholars have proposed various solutions. Some advocate for cultural and religious homogenization as a means of fostering national unity. They think that diversity is the main source of instability, civil war, and conflict. Samsur Afghan, in his book "Second Saqawi," advocates for a highly centralized and ethnically homogenized state in Afghanistan, offering the Taliban thirteen radical proposals. These include enforcing the Hanafi school as the only recognized sect, imposing a single national identity under the term "Afghan," institutionalizing Pashto as the sole official language, and implementing policies of forced displacement and

ethnic cleansing, particularly targeting ethnic minorities like Hazaras, Uzbeks, and Tajiks. He argues that such measures are essential for national unity and stability (Afghan, 1998). These proposals not only reflect a dangerous attempt to erase Afghanistan's rich ethnic and cultural diversity but also illustrate how centralized state policies have historically marginalized minorities, setting the stage for conflict. On the other hand, some scholars see the centralized state as the main source of conflict and long-standing instability. They advocate for a more decentralized state where autonomous local governance has the authority to manage its internal affairs. Sarwar Danish is a prominent scholar who, in his book *Federalism: A Path Toward Justice and Stability in Afghanistan*, proposes federalism as a viable solution. In his book, he cites Abul Ali Mazari, one of the most prominent and active advocates of federalism in Afghanistan's history: We believe that the only solution to Afghanistan's problems is the establishment of a federal government in this land. We are convinced that without creating a federal structure that meets the demands and goals of all ethnic groups, religious communities, and political tendencies, the crisis in Afghanistan will not be resolved (Danish 2024, 50).

Two major shortcomings often characterize existing literature on federalism and governance in Afghanistan. First, many works are grounded in ethnic partisanship, aiming to reinforce and legitimize specific ethnic hegemonies rather than seeking inclusive or balanced governance models. Second, a significant portion of the discourse lacks a robust conceptual framework and rigorous academic analysis, often leading to conclusions that are politically motivated rather than empirically substantiated. This study seeks to address these gaps by providing a systematic and academically grounded examination of federalism as a potential model for Afghanistan. Through a comparative analysis of federal systems in diverse societies, combined with theoretical insights and empirical data, this research aims to offer a nuanced understanding of federalism's applicability in Afghanistan. Furthermore, the study tries to explore and respond to some of the key paradoxes and criticisms surrounding federalism, such as its potential to unify versus divide, particularly within the unique socio-political and ethnic context of Afghanistan.

Literature Review

There are different perspectives on federalism in Afghanistan. A group of scholars cast doubt on the idea of federalism. They believe that decentralization and self-autonomy pave the way for secessionism and more instability. Omar Zakhilwal, in his article *Federalism in Afghanistan: A recipe for disintegration*, states that many who know the ground reality in Afghanistan would agree that federalism is not only unnecessary under the circumstances, but it also would serve as a recipe for deeper divisions among diverse ethnic groups in Afghanistan and would lead to a subsequent disintegration of the country (Zakhilwal 2001). Additionally, Farhad Sultani, in his article, "Does Federalism Work in Afghanistan, articulated the cons of federalism. He states that the opponents of federalism claim that a highly centralized government is required for nation-building and is essential to meld Afghanistan into a unified nation. Currently, the governmental apparatus is fragile and susceptible to disintegration. Armed groups of rebels have control of several parts of the country. Hence, Afghanistan needs a strong, centralized government to enhance political stability, socio-economic progress, and public service delivery. Furthermore, advocates of a centralized set-up argue that federalism can cause the balkanization of the country, linguistic and cultural fragmentation, and a weakening of Afghans' faith in unity. Federalism would create new sub-national identities and border conflicts between ethnic minorities. Thus, it poses a threat to the country's unity and would hamper reunification (Social Science Works 2023). Also, Mohammad Haron Abasin, in his article, "Federal Government: Sweet Dream and Bitter Fate for Afghanistan," states that the federal system is neither relevant to Afghanistan's problems nor a solution to the country's issues, nor does it have a place in Afghanistan. This system, like poison, is harmful to Afghan society (Abasin 2024).

At the same time, the literature warns of serious risks associated with federalism. Roeder, in his article, "Ethnofederalism and the Mismanagement of Conflicting Nationalism", argues that ethnofederalism often empowers regional elites with the institutional tools to mobilize secessionist movements, fostering ethnic outbidding and undermining national unity (Roeder 2009). Cameron cautions that, in the absence of strong democratic norms, federalism can reproduce instability and lead to governance paralysis, while Sorens in *The Partisan Logic of Decentralization* shows that decentralization is often driven by partisan self-interest rather than conflict resolution

(Sorens 2009). Bakke's findings in, *State, Society, and Separatism in Punjab* indicate that in wealthy and ethnically homogeneous regions, autonomy can have the unintended consequence of intensifying separatist sentiment, as local elites leverage economic resources and cultural unity to push for greater independence (Bakke 2009). Similarly, Jenne, in, *The Paradox of Ethnic Partition: Lessons from de facto Partition in Bosnia and Kosovo*, warns that federal structures which closely resemble partition risk entrenching the authority of local warlords, thereby weakening the central government's capacity to govern effectively and obstructing processes of reintegration and interethnic cooperation (Jenne 2009).

On the other hand, Sarwar Danish, in his book, *Federalism: A Path Toward Justice and Stability in Afghanistan*, substantiates that federalism allows each local governance to govern according to its people's beliefs and values, helping to resolve political and cultural differences peacefully. By recognizing diverse perspectives, it prevents national conflict and reduces the risk of division or collapse (Danish 2024). In addition, Farhad Sultani argues that in countries like Afghanistan, where there are important ethnic, cultural, and linguistic divergencies, a unitary system of government is always a great source of hostility and bitterness on the part of minority groups. Consequently, if a federal system of government were introduced in which all minorities would be recognized and accorded local autonomy, then ethnic conflicts, socio-economic strains, and security issues could be reduced (Social Science Works 2023). Ali Ahmadi, in his article, "Diversity, Human Rights, and Federalism: The Case of Afghanistan," states that from a human rights perspective, a unitary government system has proven to be a failure in Afghanistan. To promote and maintain human rights in Afghanistan, a system is needed that addresses the most fundamental conflict: diversity. Federalism is a widely accepted and exercised system in diverse countries (Ahmadi 2021, 275).

In a broader context, there is also a great support of decentralization for managing political power in a diverse society. In their comparative policy analysis on self-governance, Thomas O. Hueglin and Alan Fenna (2006, 40) argue that in a large and complex modern polity, decisions should be made at the level of government that possesses the best knowledge. Not all matters are most effectively managed from the centre. Moreover, citizens tend to have greater control over governments that are closer to them, which enhances democratic accountability. Ulrich Schneckener, in his article, "Models of Ethnic Conflict Regulation," discusses three models of conflict

management: control, assimilation, and the politics of recognition. He argues that the politics of recognition can lead to more sustainable and constructive conflict management. Within this model, he identifies territorial solutions such as federalism and autonomy as key mechanisms for accommodating identity groups through negotiated power-sharing and self-governance (Schneckener 2004, 18–39). The UN Secretary General also said that, as a general rule, solutions to minority problems must be found within the framework of existing states. Weight should not be placed on external self-determination. Instead, the focus must be on the creation and pragmatic development of flexible forms of internal self-determination, which give all social groups—majorities and minorities, ethnic and others, a fair chance at political autonomy and other forms of self-realization (UN Secretary-General 1995, 14). Several scholars have also highlighted the potential benefits of federalism in ethnically diverse and post-conflict societies. According to Gagnon in, "The Challenges of Multinational Federalism", a federal system that embraces the politics of recognition can balance self-rule with shared rule, providing minority nations with genuine autonomy while preserving the integrity of the state (Gagnon 2020). Cameron, in "The Paradox of Federalism", views federalism as a pragmatic compromise between unity and secession, particularly in contexts where trust and democratic norms exist. Jenne (The Paradox of Ethnic Partition) also notes that integrated federal arrangements can be preferable to rigid partition, as they maintain shared institutions and channels for interethnic cooperation (Jenne 2009).

Also, there is a third group arguing that neither of these works for Afghanistan permanently and suggests a constitutional sequencing. Lombardi and Pasarlay (2018) analyze Afghanistan since 2001 to determine which system functions more effectively for societies with multiple groups between Consociationalism (guaranteed power-sharing between groups) and incentivism (rules that encourage cooperation without fixed quotas). The 2004 Constitution of Afghanistan adopted incentivism as its approach to encourage political leaders to establish alliances between different ethnic groups. In reality, people still voted for their own ethnic group, and informal power-sharing developed anyway. After a major election crisis in 2014, the country moved to an official power-sharing deal, which gave all groups a place in government but caused deadlock. The authors demonstrate that both systems will eventually stop functioning at optimal levels. The authors recommend starting with consociationalism to build trust

between groups before using incentivism through a systematic method, which will lead to long-term stability (Lombardi and Pasarlay 2018).

This research does not consider the aforementioned stance. Instead, it looks at whether a power-sharing model of government can help Afghanistan's politics stay stable. The study employs a comparative methodology to evaluate the presence and absence of criteria linked to effective power-sharing arrangements within the Afghan context.

Key Concepts

This section establishes the conceptual foundation for analyzing federalism's applicability in Afghanistan by defining key terms that structure the comparative analysis.

Constitutionalism

Constitutionalism is based on the idea that the government should only have certain powers and be bound by the law, not by arbitrary rule (Waluchow 2023; Tushnet and Bugarič 2022, 12). It functions on two levels: descriptively alluding to historical conflicts for citizens' rights, and prescriptively integrating elements considered vital for constitutional order, such as methods for constraining governmental authority and safeguarding individual rights (Bellamy 2007, 3-5).

Federalism

The political system of federalism divides national authority between the central government and local jurisdictions, which retain their constitutional power to self-governance (Watts 2008, 8; Fenna and Schnabel 2024, 181). According to Volden (2004), federalism "refers to a political setup in which the functions of government are divided between regional governments and a central government in such a way that each kind of government has some activities on which it makes final decisions. The system unites two elements which include self-rule that allows units to govern independently and shared rule that enables units to join central decision-making processes (Elazar 1987, 12).

Federal systems exist in two forms which include symmetric arrangements where all units have equal constitutional power (United States) and asymmetric arrangements

which grant special privileges to particular regions (India, Canada, and Spain) (Riker 2007).

Subsidiarity

Subsidiarity holds that decision-making authority should be placed at the level closest to the actions producing outcomes, ensuring accountability matches responsibility (Drew and Grant 2017, 524). Higher-level authorities should perform only tasks that cannot be performed effectively at more local levels (Calabresi and Bickford 2011, 3).

Consociational Democracy

Consociational democracy represents a form of democratic governance designed to maintain stability in societies with deep ethnic, religious, linguistic, or ideological cleavages (Lijphart 1977, 1984, 2012). Lijphart (1977, 25) identifies four core characteristics: (1) a grand coalition of leaders from all significant segments; (2) mutual veto allowing each segment to block decisions threatening vital interests; (3) proportionality in political representation and resource allocation; and (4) segmental autonomy allowing groups to manage their own affairs. The system operates differently from majoritarian democracy because it creates institutional frameworks which enable different social groups to work together while blocking any group from gaining complete control. The system of consociationalism according to critics maintains elite control while decreasing public oversight and preventing social change which would lead to ethnic identity stagnation instead of promoting unity (Barry 1975; Horowitz 2014, 8-12; Bogaards 2019, 375-378).

Fiscal Federalism

Fiscal federalism concerns the division of taxing powers and expenditure responsibilities among different government levels (Oates 1999, 1122; Boadway and Shah 2009, 3-5). Traditional theory divides government responsibilities into stabilization (managing unemployment, inflation, growth), distribution (income redistribution), and allocation (provision of public goods), generally assigning the first two to the central government and allocation functions to lower levels (Musgrave 1959, 5-27).

Decentralization vs. Federalism

The process of decentralization involves transferring power from the central government to lower administrative levels through three separate aspects which include fiscal authority for revenue and expenditure management and administrative responsibility for service delivery and political power for local citizen empowerment through council elections (World Bank 2013; Yuliani 2004). The core distinction between federalism and decentralization exists because federal systems distribute constitutional authority through established power blocks for each government level but unitary states implement decentralization by giving power to local authorities without losing central control (Volden 2004). The Unitary framework lets governments choose decentralization as their policy but federalism needs states to change their constitutional framework for structure implementation.

Thesis outline

This thesis will be organized into six main chapters. The first chapter will discuss the Conceptual Framework. It will provide an overview of existing theoretical approaches to managing diversity in divided societies. The second chapter will focus on different methods of powering the sharing model in a divided society. This section will introduce the key methods relevant to the study, including federalism, Consociationalism, and other power-sharing mechanisms. The third chapter will cover federalism in Switzerland. This chapter will examine Switzerland as a successful example of federalism and consociational democracy. It will analyze the historical development, institutional design, and factors contributing to the stability and effectiveness of Switzerland's federal system. The fourth chapter will study federalism and state disintegration in Yugoslavia. The design and implementation of Yugoslavia's federal system, the impact of ethnic divisions, and the elements that ultimately resulted in state failure and violent disintegration will all be covered in this chapter. Afghanistan will be discussed in the fifth chapter. The applicability and relevance of federalism to Afghanistan will be evaluated in this chapter. It will look at the nation's ethnic and linguistic diversity, its current system of government, and the main institutional or societal gaps as well as the current components required for a successful federal system. The last section will be allocated to the discussion and conclusion. The final chapter will provide a comparative discussion of the three cases, drawing lessons from

Switzerland and Yugoslavia for Afghanistan. It will summarize the main findings, reflect on the research questions, and outline potential policy recommendations.

Chapter1 : Theoretical Approaches to Managing Diversity

This section reviews three essential theoretical frameworks that help plural societies handle their diverse ethnic, linguistic, and religious diversity: Lijphart's consociationalism, Stepan's comparative federalism, and Horowitz's centripetalism. Each approach emphasizes different institutional mechanisms and offers distinct perspectives on how divided societies can achieve stability. The first two approaches of power-sharing through consociationalism and federalism function to handle diversity by providing ethnic, religious, and linguistic groups with established political influence and decision-making authority (Lijphart 1977, 25; McGarry and O'Leary 2009, 4). The essence of consociationalism encompasses elite collaboration and center-based proportional representation, which create frameworks for the distribution of executive power among groups and their collective capacity to obstruct decisions (Lijphart 2008, 3). Stepan's comparative federalism looks at how different parts of the country share power through systems that let ethnic and linguistic groups in certain areas keep their self-governance through subnational entities that have constitutional powers (Stepan 1999, 19-20). The power-sharing system faces challenges due to Horowitz's centripetalism, which compels politicians to seek support from various ethnic groups rather than solely relying on their own group base. This dynamic leads to moderate political strategies and coalitions among diverse ethnic groups (Horowitz 1985, 365-395; Reilly 2001, 11-12). These fundamentally divergent approaches—facilitating diversity via institutional guarantees versus overcoming it through integrative incentives—illustrate differing analyses of ethnic conflict and advocate opposing institutional solutions for the governance of pluralistic societies.

1.1 Lijphart's Consociational Theory

Arend Lijphart formulated consociational theory to examine how fragmented societies can attain democratic stability via specific institutional frameworks (Lijphart 1969, 1977, 1984, 2012). Lijphart (1969, 207-225) defines consociational democracy as a political framework that permits elite factions to form a cartel, thereby preserving democratic stability in societies characterized by diverse cultural groups. To keep one group from controlling the others, the system gives power to several leaders who represent different social groups.

1.1.1 Four Pillars of Consociational Democracy

The four core institutions of consociationalism work together to prevent majoritarian domination and ensure inclusive governance:

1.1.1.1 Grand Coalition

The grand coalition lets all the big groups have a say in decisions, which gives them a voice at the highest levels of government. The system works differently than winner-take-all majoritarianism because it allows groups with different interests to work together. Governments are structured as expansive multiparty cabinets, frequently oversized, to ensure the inclusion of all significant groups (Lijphart 1977, 25).

1.1.1.2 Mutual veto

With mutual veto, each part can stop decisions that they think are bad for their own important interests. In practice, this means that rules for consensus or qualified majorities are needed to protect minorities from being forced to do things by the majority. According to Lijphart (1969, 220-221), each group has the right to say no to policies that affect its most important interests.

1.1.1.3 Proportionality

With proportional allocation, proportionality makes sure that public resources are shared fairly and that everyone is represented. The number of seats in parliament, civil service jobs, public funds, and other resources is roughly proportional to the number of people in each group. Elections with proportional representation and quotas make sure that minorities are always represented (Lijphart 1977, 25).

1.1.1.4 Segmental autonomy

Self-governance is a form of segmental autonomy that lets groups take care of their own business, such as education or religion. This allows each group to keep its own identity while still keeping the whole group together. Federalism or cultural councils are often used to do this (Lijphart 1969, 220-221).

1.1.2 Favorable Conditions for Consociationalism

Lijphart (1977, 53-103) identifies nine conditions making consociational democracy more likely to succeed:

- Absence of a majority segment (no group exceeds ~50%)
- Segments of roughly equal size
- Small number of segments (typically 3-4 major groups)
- Small overall population size
- External threats create incentives for unity
- Overarching loyalties transcending segmental divisions
- Socioeconomic equality among segments
- Geographical concentration of segments allowing territorial autonomy
- Traditions of elite accommodation and compromise

While these conditions increase success probability, Lijphart argues they are neither strictly necessary nor sufficient—elite willingness to cooperate can overcome unfavorable structural conditions (Lijphart 1977, 53-54).

1.2 Stepan's Comparative Federalism

Alfred Stepan's theory of comparative federalism offers analytical frameworks for evaluating the relevance of federalism in heterogeneous societies, especially through his categorizations of various federal structures and their democratic implications (Stepan 1999).

1.2.1 Demos-Constraining vs. Demos-Enabling Federalism

Stepans (1999 19-34) makes a key distinction by looking at how the federal structures affect how the government works. The demos-constraining federalism limits the majority rule by putting veto points in place by creating the overrepresentation of small units in the upper chambers and by setting strict constitutional provisions that stop the democratic majorities from carrying out their preferences. The United States is a good example of a demos-constraining design because each state has the same number of senators, no matter how many people live there. This makes it hard for national majorities to get past opposition from overrepresented groups. Demos-enabling

federalism makes it easier for different communities to have a say in how the government works without making it too hard for the majority to rule. India displays the demos-enabling design. India has a government that is roughly proportional, allowing democratic majorities to work while keeping state autonomy in certain areas (Stepan 1999, 22–24).

1.2.2 Relevance for Ethnically Diverse Societies

Stepan's framework posits that asymmetric, flexible, and democracy-enhancing models, exemplified by those in India or Belgium, may provide more pertinent insights for heterogeneous societies than rigid, symmetrical models such as that of the United States (Stepan 1999). Stepan's analysis is very useful because there are big social divides between ethnic groups, language speakers, and different parts of Afghanistan. Afghanistan has been a single country since it was founded, so any federal project needs to be a holding-together model that needs support from within the country instead of uniting separate nations. Stepan's framework shows that an Afghan federation needs to have two important things in order to work: demos-enabling and asymmetrical structures. The framework says that the federation should help Afghan ethnolinguistic communities by giving them more power instead of putting too many restrictions on them.

1.2.3 Asymmetric Federalism as an Accommodation Mechanism

Pashtuns, Tajiks, Hazaras, and Uzbeks should have special autonomy arrangements (asymmetric design) that take into account their unique cultural backgrounds and the fact that they live in different parts of the country. This would help them become part of the state. Federalism that is forced on people (a "putting-together" model) or that puts too many restrictions on groups would make it more likely that the state would break up (Stepan 1999). Jammu and Kashmir and the North-Eastern tribal states have a special status in India because of asymmetric arrangements. This shows how different treatment methods can keep diversity alive while still keeping the country together. After 1978, the Spanish constitution created "historical nationalities," which gave the Basque Country and Catalonia more power than other regions (Stepan 1999).

1.3 Horowitz's Centripetal Approach

Donald Horowitz offers a contrasting framework that highlights electoral and territorial design to encourage cross-group integration rather than consociational power-sharing (Horowitz 1994, 2014).

1.3.1 Electoral Engineering for Cross-Ethnic Cooperation

Horowitz (2014, 5-20) critiques pure consociational arrangements for producing "immobilism" under group vetoes, and proposes centripetalism-institutions that induce politicians to build interethnic coalitions and moderate their appeals. Examples include:

Majoritarian or alternative-vote electoral systems require candidates to win votes beyond their ethnic base

- Candidate or district rules that reward cross-cutting votes
- Multiethnic electoral districts forcing politicians to appeal across group lines
- Distribution requirements mandating the geographic spread of support for presidential candidates

The Second Republic of Nigeria, which lasted from 1979 to 1983, used centripetal design by requiring presidential candidates to get 25% support in two-thirds of the states. This meant that they had to form alliances between different ethnic groups (Horowitz 1994).

Horowitz's analysis demonstrates that the timing and structure of decentralization are critical. Excessive downward devolution of power along ethnic lines in devolutionary federalism may lead to secession and "political balkanization" (Horowitz 1994). If done early, carefully structured federal units can help avoid conflict. But if power is given up too late into "separate compartments," federalism becomes "a substitute for partition" (Horowitz 1994, 18).

1.4 Synthesis of Theoretical Framework

This conceptual framework employs the theories of Lijphart, Stepan, and Horowitz to elucidate various institutional mechanisms of inclusion and stability. Lijphart provides a list of ways to share power that can help include minorities, such as grand coalitions, mutual vetoes, proportionality, and segmental autonomy. Stepan stresses the

territorial-constitutional choice of federalism in different democracies. He talks about the difference between demos-constraining and demos-enabling designs and the potential of asymmetric arrangements. Horowitz examines the interplay between devolution and cross-group integration, cautioning against excessive ethnic devolution and advocating for electoral engineering to foster centripetal cooperation.

Looking at Switzerland, Yugoslavia, and Afghanistan through these lenses helps us figure out which arrangements-like electoral rules, coalition requirements, province creation, and power-sharing mechanisms-have made it easier for people to get involved in politics or made things worse. The theories collectively inform the assessment of the feasibility of a power-sharing model in Afghanistan that addresses its ethnic pluralism while fostering inter-group collaboration.

1.5 Research question

To what extent can federalism, as a decentralized governance model, effectively manage ethnic diversity and promote political stability in Afghanistan, considering the successes and failures of federal systems in Switzerland and Yugoslavia?

1.6 Hypothesis

Certain forms of federalism, when combined with elite accommodation or embedded within a consociational framework, are more likely to lead to a stable political system.

1.7 Research method

The research uses qualitative comparative case study methodology to study how federalism works in Afghanistan. Scientists use comparative case studies as their research method to study complex political events across different settings, which helps them identify the elements that produce different results (Yin 2014). The research establishes the conditions for federal systems to handle ethnic diversity effectively through its systematic evaluation of cases that resulted in federal success or failure or potential federal application.

The research design follows Lijphart's (1971) comparative method, which uses focused comparison of a small number of cases to generate and test hypotheses about

causal relationships. The research method works best for institutional system analysis between communities because it deals with a few cases by studying specific circumstances that affect research results (Ragin 1987). The research investigates three instances which include Switzerland as a successful federal system, Yugoslavia as a failed federal state, and Afghanistan as a potential federal system, to study their differences in institutional design and economic and cultural elements, providing variation in both independent variables (institutional design, economic conditions, cultural factors) and dependent variables (political stability, accommodation of diversity).

1.7.1 Justification for Case Selection

The selection of Switzerland, Yugoslavia, and Afghanistan follows the logic of "most different systems design" combined with theoretical sampling (Przeworski and Teune 1970). The three cases present identical fundamental characteristics through their deep ethnic, linguistic, and religious diversity, yet they developed opposing political results. This variation on the dependent variable (success vs. failure in managing diversity), while sharing the key independent variable (plural society composition) allows for identification of the conditions that distinguish successful from failed federal arrangements.

This case selection strategy provides both theoretical leverage and policy relevance. Theoretically, it enables testing of propositions about federal success conditions developed by Lijphart, Stepan, and Horowitz. The framework offers evidence-based direction for Afghan governance dialogues because it shows which proven international methods should apply to this particular case.

1.8 Data Collection Methods

The research design uses qualitative methods to study federal systems through comparative case study evaluation and systematic documentary material analysis to understand why different ethnic population management results occur. The research uses four main categories of sources to build an extensive analytical framework.

Official documents from federal and cantonal/republican and provincial governments contain data about how policies are executed and how money is distributed and how different levels of government work together. The collection

includes budget documents together with administrative reports and official statistics, which present data about ethnic demographics, economic growth, and public spending patterns.

International organizations such as the United States Institute of Peace (USIP), World Bank, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), European Union Agency for Asylum (EUAA), and other international organizations conduct independent evaluations of governance systems and conflict patterns and economic performance and population statistics. The research needs these particular sources because Afghanistan faces a lack of domestic data collection due to its ongoing conflict.

Third, scholarly literature provides theoretical frameworks, empirical analyses, and historical context. Key sources include:

- Comparative federalism literature (Watts 2008; Stepan 1999; Elazar 1987)
- Consociational democracy studies (Lijphart 1977, 1984, 2012)
- Swiss political system analyses (Linder and Mueller 2021; Vatter 2018; Kriesi and Trechsel 2008)
- Yugoslav dissolution studies (Ramet 1992; Woodward 1995; Jović 2009)
- Afghanistan governance and conflict analyses (Rubin 2003; Kakar 1979; Ibrahimi 2023)

1.9 Analytical Framework

This study examines five categories of variables across the three cases in order to identify the institutional, political, socio-cultural, economic, and historical conditions that shape the success or failure of federal arrangements.

The first set of variables consists of institutional and constitutional elements which include the constitutional organization of government (unitary or federal or confederal) and the distribution of authority between national and subnational entities and the number of chambers in the legislature and voting systems and direct democratic procedures and judicial review capabilities and financial distribution systems that determine taxation authority and revenue distribution and equalization programs.

Second, political and elite-level variables look at how elites work together or compete with each other; the structure of the party system (ethnic-based versus cross-

ethnic parties); power-sharing methods like grand coalitions and proportional representation; veto rights and consensus requirements; civil-military relations; and the role of international actors and outside forces.

Third, socio-cultural variables include linguistic diversity and language policy (territorial versus personality principles); religious composition and church–state relations; the existence or nonexistence of cross-cutting social cleavages; the comparative strength of national versus subnational identities; and the degree of civil society development.

Fourth, economic variables include levels of economic development (measured by GDP per capita); regional economic disparities; resource distribution; trade patterns; fiscal capacity at both central and subnational levels; the effectiveness of fiscal equalization transfers; and the impact of economic crises.

The final set of variables in this framework studies how state development patterns between uniting states and maintaining their unity as federations emerged through time. The research investigates how colonial and imperial systems from the past together with past conflicts and constitutional development and democratic transition timing and essential institutional development points have influenced institutional development.

These variables are analyzed across all three cases to find successful and failed federal arrangements while determining which enabling or constraining factors exist or not in Afghanistan.

1.10 Limitations and Challenges.

The first problem is that there hasn't been a modern census since 1979. Different sources give different numbers for ethnic groups because these numbers are often based on political goals. Researchers have only found the overall patterns of ethnic distribution, so they don't know the exact numbers of different population groups.

Second, Possible Researcher Bias: The study of federalism in Afghanistan is affected by two main biases: selection bias, which means picking cases that support certain conclusions, and confirmation bias, which means interpreting evidence in ways that support what you already believe. The structured comparative method, along with

the evaluation of alternative hypotheses, mitigates these risks, although it does not entirely eliminate their occurrence.

Third, Generalizability: The research findings from three cases do not offer enough evidence to support using these results for all federal systems that operate in all divided societies. The research findings from this study will be most relevant to communities that demonstrate similar elements to the studied cases, including multiple ethnic groups and past conflicts and current discussions about government organization.

Chapter2 : Power-Sharing Models

2.1 Federalism

Federalism is a constitutional system that splits power between a national government and smaller regional governments. In a federation, the constitution gives each level of government its powers. This means that regional governments have constitutionally guaranteed independence over some policy areas and share others with the central government. Federations are a mix of "partial self-government and partial shared government," since citizens are governed by both a general (federal) legislature and their own directly elected provincial or state legislatures (Kandel 2025, 57–64). Federations are different from just decentralizing administration because the constitution protects the powers of regional units in a federal state and the center can't take them away without permission.

Countries that are big or have a lot of different cultures are the most likely to have federal systems. In fact, federalism has often been used to bring together people from different ethnic, linguistic, or regional backgrounds in one state. There are many modern federal countries on all of the continents where people live. The United States and Canada are examples of federations or quasi-federations in the Americas. Germany, Belgium, Spain, and Switzerland are examples in Europe. India, Malaysia, and Pakistan are examples in Asia. Nigeria, Ethiopia, and South Africa are examples in Africa. India became a federation in 1950, Pakistan in 1956, Malaysia in 1963, and Nigeria in 1963 (Watts 2008, 1–4). Many of these cases were formed after World War II or decolonization. In each instance, federalism aimed to ensure stability by allowing separate communities a degree of self-governance while maintaining a unified entity.

Researchers identify two archetypal pathways to the establishment of a federation. In a "coming together" (aggregate) federation, states that were once independent agree to work together under a single constitution. The United States (1789), Switzerland (1848), and Australia (1901) are examples of countries that were formed by such negotiated unions of independent territories. nepjol.infoqueensu.ca. A "holding together" (devolutionary) federation, on the other hand, is made when a state that was once unitary changes its structure to give power to smaller units of government. Modernizing states like Belgium or Spain, where historic regions got unequal powers under a new constitution, or the UK giving Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland more

power are two examples. In practice, many federations show traits of both models. For instance, Canada and Australia were "coming together," but they also used central legislation to ratify the union, which made it hard to tell the difference between a negotiated union and a parliamentary enactment.

Another important difference is between symmetric and asymmetric federalism. In symmetric federations, all of the parts have the same constitutional rights and powers. For example, the law treats the states or cantons in the United States and Switzerland the same. In asymmetric federations, some regions have their own rules that make them different from the rest. When some provinces or states are given more freedom or representation, this is called constitutional asymmetry. India is a classic example because it historically gave Jammu and Kashmir a special autonomous status and some North-Eastern tribal states special powers. Canada is another example because Quebec has some unique legislative privileges. Spain's constitution after 1978 also established "historical nationalities" such as the Basque Country and Catalonia, granting them greater authority than other regions. In summary, symmetric federations stress legal equality among units, while many "holding together" federations intentionally include asymmetry to meet the needs of different communities (Riker 2007).

2.2 Decentralization

Decentralization generally refers to the transfer of power from a central government to subordinate levels. Researchers usually talk about three kinds of decentralization: fiscal, administrative, and political. Fiscal decentralization means giving local governments real power over their income and spending. For example, they might be able to set certain taxes or keep user fees. This way, local governments can connect their spending to their income (Decentralization.net 2022). Administrative decentralization means giving subnational units the power to run public services and the bureaucracy. This can mean anything from deconcentration (moving central government offices to the regions) to delegation (giving tasks to semi-autonomous agencies) to full devolution (setting up elected local governments with their own bureaucracies). Political decentralization means giving power to local people and their representatives, usually by setting up directly elected local councils or mayors who can make real decisions about policy. In practice, this means that there must be clear local jurisdictions, real elections, and clear powers so that citizens can hold local officials

accountable (World Bank 2013). Each dimension supports the others. For instance, elected local councils (political) need enough administrative staff and money to carry out their policies. When done right, decentralization can make services better and include more people by making decisions that are more in line with local needs. On the other hand, when decentralization is uneven or not complete (for example, when local elections are held without budgets), it can lead to inefficiency or local (Yuliani 2004). For instance, Indonesia decentralized its districts in a "big bang" way after Suharto fell. Laws gave districts a lot of freedom over their own budgets and services. The goal was to calm down separatist areas and make sure people were held accountable. In the short term, this gave power to local communities, but it also made things worse: local patronage and corruption grew as many inexperienced or corrupt officials took over the devolved system. For instance, field studies demonstrate that clientelist practices and inadequate capacity diminish the expected efficiency improvements of decentralization. Indonesia's experience shows that decentralization can be both good and bad. For example, districts got a share of oil taxes and control over local schools, but political decentralization gave local elites more power, which sometimes hurt governance (Bennet, Makgetla, and Mukherjee 2010).

2.2.1 Decentralization vs. Federalism

Federalism and decentralization differ in how much they change the Constitution. In a federal system, the constitution divides sovereignty between the national and regional governments. Each government has its own powers and often its own representatives. Volden (2004) says that federalism is "a political system in which the functions of government are split between regional governments and a central government in such a way that each type of government has some activities on which it makes final decisions." Federalism is frequently praised as a mechanism for addressing ethnic diversity by fostering "inter-group solidarity" and safeguarding minority rights through local autonomy (Sultani 2023). In a unitary state, on the other hand, decentralization usually gives local governments more power or resources while keeping the central government in charge. For instance, a unitary state might set up elected local councils and give them some powers and money, but provinces can't change their status on their own. In a unitary system, decentralization can be seen as a

policy choice, while federalism is a formal change to the state (Decentralization.net 2022).

2.3 Quasi-Federalism

Quasi-federalism is a type of government that has parts of both federal and unitary systems. In this kind of system, the central government and the regional or state governments share power. However, the central government usually has a lot more power than it does in a fully federal system. In a real federation, states have a lot of freedom and often their own constitutions. In a quasi-federal system, on the other hand, there is usually only one constitution, and the central government can still get involved in regional issues. This makes the balance of power unequal because the central government can change or affect decisions made by regional governments. India is a good example of quasi-federalism because the Constitution says that the country is a federation, but the central government has a lot of power over the states, such as the ability to impose President's Rule in certain situations. The United Kingdom has some quasi-federal characteristics as well. For example, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland each have their own legislatures, but they are still ultimately subject to the UK Parliament. So, quasi-federalism can be thought of as a middle ground or a mix of different types of government that lets regions be free while still keeping the center in charge (LotusArise 2024).

Quasi-federalism is different from both federalism and decentralization in important ways. In a federal system, the constitution divides power between a central government and regional governments. Each of these governments has a lot of freedom and sometimes its own constitution, which makes them co-sovereign entities within the state. The United States is a federal country, which means that the states have powers that are guaranteed by the Constitution and are not dependent on the federal government. Decentralization, on the other hand, means giving powers from a central government to local or regional governments without any constitutional guarantees. The central government still has ultimate control and can take back powers that have been given to them at any time. France is a good example of decentralization because it is a unitary state by law but gives many administrative tasks to local governments. Quasi-federalism is in the middle of these two. It has some constitutional separation of powers, like federalism, but it also has strong central control, like a unitary state. In a

quasi-federal system, the central government can often overrule regional governments, which is different from federalism. However, the regional governments have a clear constitutional status, which is different from simple decentralization. India is an example of quasi-federalism because states have constitutional powers, but the central government can step in and change how they work in some cases.

2.4 Consociationalism

Consociationalism is a type of democracy that works best in societies that are very divided, where politics is based on religion, language, or ethnicity. Lijphart and others say that for a consociational democracy to work, elites from different groups must work together and each group must have institutional protections. In practice, it involves a large coalition of leaders from all important communities, proportional representation and resource sharing by group, segmental autonomy (for example, federal or communal self-rule), and a mutual veto or minority veto over important interests (Lijphart 1969, 220–221). Reut's policy concept paper, for instance, sums up the four main points: executive power sharing (a broad multiparty coalition), group veto rights, proportionality in positions, and self-rule for communities (“Consociationalism” Reut Group 2006). These characteristics together make sure that no one group can control the government and that all major groups have a say in how it is run.

Consociational arrangements are usually used when there is a deep divide between groups or after a conflict. Scholars assert that consociationalism has been advocated for post-conflict and pluralistic societies to preserve peace and order. International mediators frequently impose power-sharing agreements to facilitate a settlement, particularly following civil wars or partition crises (e.g., Bosnia Herzegovina 1995, Northern Ireland 1998, Macedonia 2001, Iraq 2005). The premise is that by ensuring representation and veto power for each group, elites are motivated to collaborate rather than return to conflict (Ali and Mushtaq 2017, pp. 63-72). In conclusion, consociational power sharing is regarded as a "accommodationist" alternative to majoritarian rule in societies where plural identities hold political significance.

Main features: Lijphart's seminal definition identifies four fundamental institutions of Consociationalism (Lijphart 1969):

2.4.1 Grand coalition

All-important segmental elites have a say in how the government works. Governments are made up of big, multiparty cabinets so that no one group is left out.

2.4.2 Mutual veto

Each part has the power to stop (veto) decisions that it thinks could hurt its important interests. In practice, this means that rules for consensus or a qualified majority are needed, which gives minorities real peace of mind.

2.4.3 Proportionality

Seats in parliament, jobs in the civil service, public money, and other resources are given out in a way that is roughly equal to the number of people in each group. Elections with proportional representation and quotas make sure that minorities are always represented.

2.4.4 Segmental autonomy

Communities still have some control over cultural, educational, or local issues (for example, through federalism or cultural councils). This lets each group keep its own identity while still keeping the group as a whole together.

Chapter3 : Switzerland

Switzerland is one of the most successful examples in history of how to manage diversity through federal structures. The contemporary Swiss federal state was established in 1848 after a brief civil war lasting 27 days and resulting in fewer than 100 fatalities (Church and Dardanelli 2005, 8; Schmid and Stojanović 2022, 2). This fight between Catholic, conservative, mostly rural cantons and Protestant, liberal, mostly urban cantons ended the Swiss Confederacy, which had lasted for a hundred years. It also led to the creation of a federal system that would be very stable.

The foundation of Swiss federalism rests on a crucial historical reality: the cantons existed as independent, sovereign entities long before the federal state. The 25 cantons which joined together to form the Swiss federal state in 1848 were already states in their own right (some of them for several centuries) and were already linked with one another in a loose alliance of states (Linder and Mueller 2021, 17). This pre-existing sovereignty fundamentally shaped the federal compact. The victors in the struggle for federal unity were wise enough to leave the cantons considerable autonomy, equality and effective participation in the forming of federal policy (Koller 2002, 3).

The 1848 Constitution provided "a formidable set of guarantees to the cantons - especially, it goes without saying, those on the losing side of the 1847-8 confrontation - that the minority would not be trampled on in the new federal state (Church and Dardanelli 2005, 12). This dedication to safeguarding minority rights likely elucidates the endorsement of the new order and the extraordinary stability of the contemporary Swiss political system (Church and Dardanelli 2005, 12).

Since 1848, Swiss federalism has changed a lot. Scholars call this "dynamic de/centralization" (Bochsler and Hug 2019, 138). The federation evolved progressively from a highly decentralized structure to a relatively centralized one; however, this centralization was predominantly in legislative aspects, while cantons retained considerable implementing authority and fiscal independence (Bochsler and Hug 2019, 138). Recent research demonstrates that although there has been a wide-ranging process of legislative centralization since the 1848 foundation of the Swiss federal state, the 26 Swiss cantons have retained considerable administrative and, especially, fiscal autonomy (Freiburghaus 2023, 498).

3.1 Constitutional Structure and Distribution of Powers

The Swiss constitutional framework embodies the basic federal norm: The Cantons are sovereign insofar as their sovereignty is not limited by the Federal Constitution; they shall exercise all rights which are not transferred to the Confederation (Koller 2002, 4; Focus Swiss 2025). This principle, found in Article 3 of both the old and new constitutions, says that cantonal sovereignty is the default and that federal authority only exists where it is specifically given.

This residual powers clause has very important real-world effects. The Swiss Federal Assembly has been hesitant to grant the federation additional powers and has interpreted Article 3 of the Constitution in a strict manner, in contrast to the United States, where "implied powers" doctrines facilitated federal expansion through constitutional interpretation (Linder and Mueller 2021, 29). Consequently, even seemingly straightforward federal initiatives - including the establishment of a national bank, any form of federal taxes, the creation of a social security system, the construction of federal highways, subsidies to the cantonal universities and the introduction of environmental policies - required formal constitutional amendments and ratification (Linder and Mueller 2021, 29).

Contemporary Switzerland features three levels of government: the federation, 26 cantons, and approximately 2,400 communes (Focus Swiss 2025). The cantons as well as the communes are characterised by a full political organisation with the separation of powers, by a constitutionally guaranteed political autonomy and by their right to impose taxes for their responsibilities (Linder 2016, 2). Crucially, the central government is controlling only about 30% of the overall public budget, making Switzerland one of the most decentralised countries globally (Linder 2016, 2). More specifically, two-thirds of the state's income and spending are decided by cantons and municipalities (Forum of Federations 2022).

This decentralization encompasses various policy domains. Studies indicate that culture, education, language, and law enforcement have predominantly remained decentralized, whereas defense and currency were centralized initially and continue to be so (Bochsler and Hug 2019, 155). The cantons are still in charge of most of the education, police, health care, and taxes, and they are also in charge of about 70% of all government spending (Linder 2016, 3).

3.2 Fiscal Federalism and Economic Performance

Swiss fiscal federalism is a good example of how decentralized government can work. The 26 Swiss cantons have a lot of freedom when it comes to their finances. They can handle almost 25% of their total tax revenue, which includes social insurance (Avenir Suisse 2018). Only Canada (35%) and the USA (19.3%) have similarly high ratios for their provinces or states, while Germany's Bundesländer control only 0.7% of fiscal revenues and France's regions 0% (Avenir Suisse 2018).

The Swiss tax system operates on federal principles wherein the Confederation is only allowed to levy those taxes whose imposition is expressly allowed for in the Federal Constitution, while the cantons are generally free to choose their taxes (Swiss Federal Department of Finance 2024). This leads to a lot of differences: in 2024, the prices for one kilowatt hour in the basic supply range from 10.22 to 57.48 centimes in different regions. This shows that each canton has its own rules for how to run the economy (Avenir Suisse 2024).

Recent empirical research on fiscal federalism and economic performance has yielded significant findings. A thorough 2022 study of Swiss cantons revealed that the interplay between fiscal federalism and economic performance is intricate, contingent upon the measurement of federalism, with competitive fiscal federalism demonstrating specific advantages (Köppel-Turyna, Lorenz, and Pitlik 2022). Research demonstrates that in periods of prosperous economic development, the architecture of state structure has no impact on debt, but crucially, in phases of economic recession, administratively decentralized cantons implement a more economical budgetary policy than centralized Swiss member states (Feld and Kirchgässner 2008, 272).

Switzerland has developed financial equalization schemes to prevent excessive inequality while maintaining cantonal autonomy. The fiscal equalization system ensures that each canton (including the weakest in financial resources), after equalisation, has financial resources amounting to at least at 85% of the cantonal Swiss average (Avenir Suisse 2018). This solidarity-based correction mechanism balances competitive federalism with national cohesion (Avenir Suisse 2018).

3.3 Managing Linguistic and Cultural Diversity

Switzerland's ability to handle diversity is especially impressive given the fact that it has a lot of different languages. The country has four official languages: German (about 62%), French (23%), Italian (8%), and Romansh (0.5%). (Stojanovic 2018, 1; Swiss Federalism 2025). Recent data from the Federal Statistical Office confirms that "86% of the population considers it essential to know multiple national languages to strengthen the country's unity," with "nearly two out of three Swiss people regularly use more than one language" (Swiss Federalism 2025).

The Swiss way of dealing with linguistic diversity is based on three ideas: freedom of language use, territorial monolingualism, and federal promotion measures (Stojanovic 2018, 3). The principle of territorial monolingualism means that each canton is linguistically independent. Most cantons are monolingual, but some are officially bilingual or trilingual (Schmid 2001, 582). This approach to territory creates language regions where certain languages are more common than others. For example, there are sixteen German-speaking cantons, four French-speaking cantons, and several officially multilingual cantons, such as Bern, Fribourg, Valais (German/French), and Graubünden (German/Italian/Romansh) (Schmid 2001, 583).

The 1848 Constitution established German, French, and Italian as national languages, with Romansh achieving official recognition in 1938 (Schmid 2001, 584). This linguistic accommodation was crucial to state formation: respect for local autonomy and linguistic diversity was a crucial factor in attracting the allegiance of the French, Italian, and Romansch-speaking subordinate areas that joined the original German-speaking core (Schmid 2001, 584).

Switzerland has successfully averted significant linguistic conflict through various mechanisms. First, religious and socioeconomic divisions that cut across each other stop linguistic divisions from lining up with other social divisions (Schmid 2001, 595). Second, the federal government recognizes language equality, which means that all language groups get official status (Schmid 2001, 595). Third, decentralized federalism and cantonal autonomy let each language region keep its own unique character (Schmid 2001, 595). Fourth, political accommodation and power-sharing make it easier for different language groups to work together (Schmid 2001, 595).

Recent studies show that multilingualism begins early: 38% of kids under 15 grow up with at least two languages in the family, and 21% speak more than one language with their parents (Swiss Federalism 2025). The federal government works in many languages. For example, federal institutions publish in all of the official languages, and parliament meetings are held with simultaneous translation to and from German, French, and Italian (Stojanovic 2018, 6).

3.4 Religious Diversity and Accommodation

Switzerland's religious landscape has changed a lot, but people of different faiths still get along peacefully. According to data from the Federal Statistical Office for 2023, Christians make up 56% of the population aged 15 and older. This includes 30.7% Catholics, 19.5% Swiss Protestants, and 5.8% other Christian denominations. 31% of people say they have no religious affiliation, and 6% are Muslim (About Switzerland 2024; Sociology of Religion 2025).

This is a huge change from how things used to be. In 1920, Protestants made up 57.5% of the population and Catholics made up 40.9%. By 2023, these numbers had dropped significantly, while the number of people with no religion had risen from 1% in 1970 to 34% by 2024 (FSSPX News 2025; About Switzerland 2024). International migration and globalization are the main reasons for the rise in religious diversity. Muslims now make up 5–6% of the population, most of whom come from the Balkans and Turkey (Swiss Partner 2025).

The religious divisions in Switzerland's past had a big effect on how its government was set up. In the 16th century, the Protestant Reformation spread across the country, making a geographic divide between Protestant and Catholic cantons (Springer 2021). Protestants and Catholics fought with each other, and even had civil wars, until the Sonderbund War in 1847. After that, the law guaranteed freedom of conscience (Springer 2021). Recent research shows that "Switzerland has achieved well-recognised political, economic, and social stability despite this religious diversity" (Springer 2021). This is true even though the two main denominations have not always gotten along.

Article 15 of the Swiss Constitution protects "freedom of conscience and religion," and modern Switzerland shows how to accommodate different religions in a smart way

(Swiss Partner 2025). A new law on religious groups went into effect in 2024. It gives smaller groups more freedom, making it easier for them to register and get help from the state at the cantonal level (Swiss Partner 2025). In 2024, the National Commission for Interreligious Cooperation was also set up. This group includes representatives from all of the country's major religious groups and works to promote understanding and fight discrimination (Swiss Partner 2025).

The Roman Catholic and Protestant Reformed churches are seen as public corporations in most cantons. They have different levels of independence and are funded by church taxes collected by the state (About Switzerland 2024). But this is not always the case. For example, Geneva and Neuchatel do not give churches public corporation status, which shows that each canton has its own rules about religion (About Switzerland 2024).

3.5 Bicameral Legislature and Territorial Representation

The Federal Assembly (Bundesversammlung) is made up of two chambers: the National Council (Nationalrat), which has 200 members elected for four years and represents the population proportionally, and the Council of States (Ständerat), which has two representatives from each canton, regardless of population size (half-cantons get one) (Vatter 2018; Mueller and Vatter 2020). This way, small cantons have an equal voice in federal legislation. This two-chamber system gives both popular and territorial representation. It strikes a balance between democratic and federal principles, making sure that smaller cantons are not outvoted by larger ones.

In most legislative matters, both chambers have the same powers (symmetrical bicameralism). Federal laws must be approved by majorities in both houses, which gives cantons a lot of power over federal policy through their representatives in the Council of States (Mueller and Vatter 2020; Watts 2008). This equal bicameralism makes federalism stronger by stopping the federal government from using simple majority rule to override cantonal interests. The need for both chambers to agree means that there are many points where a veto can happen, which means that consensus must be reached across both population and territorial lines.

The Council of States also acts as a link between cantonal governments and federal policymaking. Many of its members have worked in cantonal governments before or

have strong ties to them (Mueller 2014). This link makes sure that federal laws are based on what the cantons think and that federal policies take into account the problems that arise when they are put into action in the cantons (Schnabel 2018).

3.6 Consociational Democracy and Power-Sharing

Switzerland is an example of consociational democracy, which is a system where power is shared and elites work together in divided societies (Lijphart 1969; Linder and Mueller 2021, 41). Switzerland is one of the classic examples of consociationalism, along with Austria, Belgium, and the Netherlands. However, recent research questions whether Switzerland is still a good example because of rising polarization (McGarry and Moore 2019, 23; Vatter 2016, 1).

The Swiss system has some of the most important features of consociationalism. The first thing to know is that the executive is made up of a grand coalition that includes all the major political parties in the government and shares political responsibilities with them (Linder and Mueller 2021, 41; Springer 2021 Consensus chapter). Second, making decisions in a grand coalition means always negotiating and trying to reach a compromise (Linder and Mueller 2021, 41).

The magic formula (*Zauberformel*), which was set up in 1959, was how Switzerland shared power in the past. It made sure that the Federal Council had seats for all major political parties (Vatter 2016, 3). The idea of broad inclusion is still there, even though this formula has changed. The Federal Council is a group of ministers who work together as equals. The president is only the "first among equals" and has limited special powers (Linder and Mueller 2021, 43).

Recent developments, however, put traditional consociationalism to the test. The Swiss People's Party (SVP) is a right-wing conservative group that has grown a lot since the 1990s. This has made the Swiss party system more polarized, pluralized, and unstable (Vatter 2016, 2). The SVP received 27.9% of the vote in the 2023 federal elections, which was their third-best showing. This made them the largest radical right-wing populist party in Europe today (Freiburghaus 2024a). Analysis shows that elites are becoming more hostile to each other and that there is more division in parliament and government. This suggests that democracy is moving in a more centrifugal direction (Vatter 2016, 2).

Even with these problems, research shows that Swiss-style consensus democracy still has some benefits. A 2023 study found that Swiss-style consensus democracy is better at handling crises than majoritarianism. However, the way the Federal Council is set up and how the federation and the cantons work together need a lot of work (Freiburghaus 2023, 498; Freiburghaus, Vatter, and Stadelmann-Steffen 2023).

The Council of States (the upper house) makes sure that each canton is equally represented at the federal level, no matter how many people live there. This is true even though the 26 cantons are different sizes, cultures, and religions (Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs 2024). Also, all 26 cantons can start a popular referendum on a federal law if at least eight of them support it. This gives cantonal minorities a way to stop the law from going into effect (Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs 2024).

3.7 Direct Democracy and Consensus Building

Switzerland's direct democracy mechanisms serve as a strong corrective to elitist consociationalism (Linder and Mueller 2021, 44; PMC 2021). The system allows citizens to challenge legislation through optional referendums and to propose constitutional amendments through initiatives. These instruments, introduced gradually from the late 19th century, have profoundly shaped Swiss federalism (Church and Dardanelli 2005, 12).

In Switzerland the people play a large part in the decision-making process at all political levels, with Swiss electorate called upon approximately four times a year to vote on an average of fifteen issues (EDA 2024). Between 1848 and 2023, Switzerland held hundreds of referendums and initiatives (Emmenegger et al. 2025; Swissvotes 2025). Recent data shows that between January 1995 and June 2005, Swiss citizens voted 31 times, to answer 103 federal questions, besides many more cantonal and municipal questions (SWI Swissinfo 2025).

Direct democracy reinforces federalism in multiple ways. First, it provides minorities with veto power over federal legislation, preventing majoritarian imposition. Every political party and its leaders have to regularly defend their decisions before a people's vote, ensuring democratic accountability beyond elections (Linder and Mueller 2021, 44). Second, referendums require broad consensus-building, as narrow majorities

can be overturned by popular vote. Third, the "double majority" requirement for constitutional changes - requiring both popular and cantonal majorities - provides additional protection for cantonal interests (Church and Dardanelli 2005, 11; SWI Swissinfo 2025).

Three main instruments exist: mandatory referendums (required for constitutional amendments), optional referendums (challenging laws with 50,000 signatures within 100 days), and popular initiatives (proposing constitutional amendments with 100,000 signatures within 18 months) (EDA 2024; Politics Teaching 2024). Research reveals that most mandatory referendums have been approved at the ballot box, while optional referendums have a success rate of about 58% (Emmenegger et al. 2025). Between 1891 and 2024, only 26 popular initiatives were accepted, 14 of which took place in the 21st century, though initiatives effectively bring issues to the forefront of political agenda (SWI Swissinfo 2025).

Recent examples demonstrate direct democracy's continued relevance. In 2024, a referendum took place on awarding pensioners an extra month's pension each year, which passed by 58.2% to 41.7%" (Politics Teaching 2024). In 2023, a referendum on the Federal Act on Climate Protection Targets was agreed by 59.07% of voters (Politics Teaching 2024; Freiburghaus 2024a).

Research on referendum campaigns reveals sophisticated dynamics. A study of Swiss energy policy votes found that one in four left-wing voters who had initially been in favor of the popular initiative but were exposed to strongly negative coverage about it during the 'hot' campaign phase changed their initial voting intention (Springer 2019). Analysis of party positioning in referendums between 2015-2019 shows that Swiss parties' positioning in referendums is not as strongly dominated by policy as one could expect, reflecting complex strategic considerations (Hornig 2024).

3.8 Federalism as Laboratory of Democracy

Swiss federalism enables what scholars call laboratories of democracy, where cantons serve as experimental sites for policy innovation (Linder and Mueller 2021, 33; Emmenegger et al. 2022). This aspect has gained renewed attention in recent research. A 2025 study emphasizes that while Swiss federalism allows for plenty of exciting research, there is another institutional feature of the Swiss political system, which may

offer even more potential for research - the combination of federalism with direct democracy (Emmenegger et al. 2025).

Recent examples illustrate this dynamic. The concept of "digital integrity" as a constitutional right demonstrates how federalism gives a certain autonomy to cantons; direct democracy means citizens can decide how to use it (SWI Swissinfo 2025). Citizens in Geneva (June 2023) and Neuchâtel (November 2024) voted with whopping majorities of over 90% to add digital integrity to their cantonal constitutions, with other cantons now considering similar measures (SWI Swissinfo 2025). Ideas blocked at the national level can find success at a lower level, as demonstrated by minimum wage proposals: while rejected nationally, cantons like Vaud have implemented cantonal minimum wages (SWI Swissinfo 2025).

3.9 Contemporary Challenges and Adaptations

Despite its successes, Swiss federalism faces ongoing challenges. Recent scholarship questions whether Switzerland is still a prime example of consociational democracy, given increasing political polarization and the rise of the right-wing Swiss People's Party (SVP) (Vatter 2016, 1). The traditional "magic formula" for executive power-sharing has weakened, with increasingly adversarial elite behaviour and a growing polarization within parliament and government suggesting a growing shift toward centrifugal democracy (Vatter 2016, 2).

Switzerland's relationship with the European Union presents persistent difficulties. In 2024, Switzerland remained engaged in exploratory talks with the EU, with signs that a new compromise could be in sight regarding framework agreements (Freiburghaus 2024a). However, Switzerland has continued to seek opt-outs of some of the single market rules, while Brussels is not keen to concede too much, and Switzerland's loss of participation in the 'Horizon Europe' research program is a heavy blow for Swiss universities (Freiburghaus 2023, 498).

The 2023 Credit Suisse collapse revealed institutional weaknesses. A Parliamentary Commission of Inquiry found inadequate coordination and crisis-management capacity within Switzerland's non-parliamentary, non-presidential government structure, limited authority of the FINMA to monitor and sanction failing bank management, and problematic influence of vested interests within the semi-professionalised Federal

Assembly (Freiburghaus 2025). As one analysis notes, Swiss-style consensus democracy requires reforms to handle polycrisis conditions (Freiburghaus 2024a).

Climate policy presents another challenge. In June 2023, the people accepted a target of net-zero CO2 emissions by 2050, but implementation faces political obstacles, requiring reforms in a popular vote (Freiburghaus 2024a). Pension reform similarly requires ongoing adjustments as demographic change strains the system (Freiburghaus 2024a).

Despite these challenges, Switzerland's federal system demonstrates remarkable resilience (Church and Dardanelli 2005, 29). As one scholar notes, it is not a fixed quantity but an evolving matter marked by constitutional change and political dynamics. The system's flexibility - its capacity to adapt through constitutional amendments, cantonal experimentation, and elite learning - has enabled it to manage diversity successfully across different historical periods.

3.10 Conclusion

Switzerland's ability to handle diversity through federalism is due to a number of factors that work together across historical, institutional, and cultural levels. A recent in-depth study shows that Switzerland has achieved the ideal of government by the people and for the people better than almost any other country in the world. The political system works very well, and there are many ways for people to get involved in making decisions.

First, the timing of history was very important: federalism came from the existing cantonal sovereignty, not from centralized states. The cantons' long history of independence built strong political identities and institutions that the federal structure respected and included.

Second, the way the constitution is written strikes a good balance between unity and diversity. For example, residual powers clauses favor cantons, equal representation for all cantons in the Council of States protects small cantons, and strict amendment procedures stop centralization from happening too quickly. The Confederation, the Cantons, and the Communes must all take the economic situation into account when making decisions about how to spend and earn money. This gives them some freedom while still being fiscally responsible.

Third, linguistic accommodation combines federal multilingualism with territorial monolingualism to strike a balance between local autonomy and national unity. This lets different groups make their own decisions about things that are important to them while keeping national institutions strong.

Fourth, consociational mechanisms make sure that everyone has a say in government. Power-sharing, grand coalitions, and proportional representation keep one ethnic or linguistic group from taking over. The basic structure of elite cooperation is still there, even though polarization has made things harder in the past few years.

Fifth, direct democracy gives minorities the power to veto decisions and makes sure that everyone agrees on things. This is a strong counter to elitist consociationalism. Swiss institutions make sure that minorities can have a say in or stop decisions that could hurt them. This keeps trust and stability in societies with many different groups.

Sixth, fiscal federalism encourages competition, while equalization stops too much inequality. The combination of cantonal tax autonomy and solidarity mechanisms strikes a balance between efficiency and fairness. Recent studies show that competitive fiscal federalism is especially good for the economy when the economy is in a downturn.

At its core, Swiss federalism works because it turns diversity from a problem that needs to be controlled into an asset that needs to be protected. The system protected linguistic and regional minorities, the cultural heritage and diversity of the cantons, and helped to bring together the different parts of Swiss society through nation-building as a bottom-up process. This bottom-up approach, which respects existing identities while building shared institutions, leads to what scholars call "practical stability." Switzerland has maintained political stability and economic prosperity despite its diversity, which supports the idea that power-sharing and proportionality work for governance in a variety of situations.

Chapter4 : Yugoslav

4.1 The Constitutional Evolution Toward Confederalism

The Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia went through four constitutions (1946, 1953, 1963, and 1974), each of which showed how the government dealt with ethnic tensions and different ideas about how the state should be organized. The 1946 Constitution, which was based on the Soviet Constitution of 1936, set up a very centralized federal system even though it was formally a federal system. The Constitution was "strongly centralist," and the republics were so weak that "lack of compliance was unthinkable" (Frankel 1955, 420). The central government had control over all mineral wealth, power sources, communication systems, and foreign trade. The Yugoslav Communist Party, on the other hand, had complete political control through its vertical hierarchy (Shoup 1968, 87-92).

After Yugoslavia broke away from the Soviet Union in 1948, the government led by Josip Broz Tito started a unique form of "self-management socialism" that involved gradually giving up both political and economic power. This process accelerated through successive reforms culminating in the 1974 Constitution, which represented the zenith of Yugoslav decentralization. With 406 articles, the 1974 Constitution transformed the country into what many scholars describe as a de facto confederation (Ramet 1992, 198). The Constitution "practically defined not only real federalism, but also confederalism" and reduced vertical links between federal and republican levels, defining Yugoslavia as a "voluntary union of peoples" rather than a unified state (Vranić and Vukojević 2023, 115).

The 1974 Constitution established that "sovereign rights were exercised by the federal units, and that the federation had only the authority specifically transferred to it by the constitution" (Ramet 1992, 199). Republics gained control over their economies, education systems, health services, and aspects of defense. Kosovo and Vojvodina, the two autonomous provinces within Serbia, "received substantially increased autonomy, including de facto veto power in the Serbian parliament" (Ramet 1992, 201). The Constitution required consensus among republics on major issues, effectively granting each republic veto power and creating conditions for governmental paralysis.

This "centrifugal federalism" had effects that were the opposite of what its creators wanted (Jović 2009, 156–178). The Constitution set up structural incentives for

republican competition instead of cooperation by giving republics more power as quasi-sovereign entities and taking away power from federal institutions. In the 1970s, economic integration fell apart, and trade between republics fell as they tried to be self-sufficient (Malešević 2000, 158). The federal system created "a noncentralized federalism in which the constituent units exercised a large degree of control and authority," which "codified political decentralization by removing centralized control and stimulating the growth of nonparty interest groups" (Ramet 1992, 203).

4.2 Economic Disparities and Regional Resentment

The most damaging thing that hurt cooperation between different ethnic groups was probably the fact that regional economic differences kept getting worse. These differences, which mostly came from the imperial divisions that existed before Yugoslavia, were very similar to ethnic lines, turning economic complaints into ethnic grievances. The difference in development between the most and least developed regions was very clear: by 1989, Slovenia's GDP per capita was about \$12,000, while Kosovo's was only about \$1,600, which is almost 8:1 (Pleština 1992, 134-137).

This was a huge failure of development policy. Economic inequality was "to the greatest extent determined by large regional income disparities, with the ratio of 7 to 1 between the most developed Slovenia and the least developed Kosovo" (Milanović 1990, 42). The Fund for Underdeveloped Regions was a federal program that tried to fix these differences by moving money from rich republics to poor ones. But these transfers often didn't work and made both sides angry. Slovenes were "especially irritated by the requirement to pay as much as 20% of the republic's income to subsidize nonproductive enterprises in other republics" (Woodward 1995, 78). On the other hand, poorer southern republics thought that northern exploitation kept them from developing.

Recent quantitative analysis demonstrates that "increased ethnic diversity, as indicated by an ethnic fractionalization index, correlates with diminished economic growth in Yugoslav municipalities," implying that the federal system did not effectively convert ethnic diversity into economic advantage (Štiblar, Novokmet, and Čokorilo 2024, 587). The economic crisis of the 1980s made these tensions much worse. After shocks to the world economy, Yugoslavia saw hyperinflation, unemployment rise

above 15%, and foreign debt rise above \$20 billion. GDP growth, which had been 5.5% per year on average from 1971 to 1979, stopped (Woodward 1995, 73–76).

4.3 Ethnic Diversity and the Failure of Integration

Yugoslavia had a very complicated ethnic makeup, with six republics (Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Serbia, Montenegro, and Macedonia) and two autonomous provinces (Vojvodina and Kosovo). A survey from 1987 found that 36% of the people in Yugoslavia were Orthodox Christians, 24% were Catholics, and 16% were Muslims (Henkel 2009, 52). This diversity was not evenly spread out; instead, it was focused in certain areas. For example, Serbia and Montenegro were mostly Orthodox, Slovenia and Croatia were mostly Catholic, and Bosnia-Herzegovina had a mix of Muslim, Orthodox, and Catholic people (Henkel 2009, 53).

Also, ethnic groups were often spread out across republican borders. About 14% of Croatia's population was ethnically Serbian. There were also large Albanian populations in Kosovo, Macedonia, and other places. These communities would play important roles during the conflicts of the 1990s (Ramet 1992, 47-48). Because of this demographic reality, ethnic and republican boundaries rarely lined up. This meant that there was always a chance of conflict between republics when ethnic nationalism Tito's government pushed for "brotherhood and unity" as the main idea for bringing people together across ethnic lines. This approach, however, had some basic contradictions: "it recognized ethnic diversity while also promoting a supranational Yugoslavism" (Mandelc and Učakar 2011, 12). The Yugoslav identity continued to be tenuous, especially in regions marked by inter-ethnic violence during World War II. Empirical research indicates that "ethnic intermarriage is the key mechanism through which ethnic diversity influenced the adoption of a shared Yugoslav identity," although intermarriage rates varied significantly across regions (Cepić, Petrović, and Stanković 2022, 110914).

The regime's strategy for handling ethnic diversity included severe suppression of nationalist sentiments. The Croatian Spring from 1967 to 1971 showed that republican nationalism was still strong and that Tito was willing to use force to stop it. He did this by getting rid of Croatian Communist leaders who were seen as allowing nationalist sentiment (Ramet 1992, 164–168). This oppressive strategy impeded the establishment

of institutional frameworks for the resolution of ethnic conflicts via democratic processes.

4.4 Religious Divisions and Political Mobilization

The religious geography of Yugoslavia showed how different empires fought for control over the area for hundreds of years. The historical split between Western Roman Catholicism and Eastern Orthodoxy kept Slovenes and Croats apart from Serbs, Macedonians, and Montenegrins. The Ottoman conquest brought Islam to the region, where it took hold, especially in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo. This led to a three-part religious structure (Mojzes 1984, 8–10). In Yugoslavia, religious identity was both a sign of ethnic identity and a way to get people involved in politics. Religion was "a precious form of identification" when political identities were being challenged (Mojzes 1984, 12).

In the years right after the war, the Communist regime was hostile and repressive toward religious institutions. By the 1960s, however, they had become more accommodating. The 1974 Constitution said that "citizens shall be guaranteed freedom of conscience and religious belief," which meant that people were supposed to be free to practice their religion (Constitution of SFRY 1974, Article 174). The Constitution of SFRY 1974, Article 174, said that freedoms could not be used to "disrupt the prescribed social system." This meant that religious freedom had some limits.

The regime's relative success in managing religious diversity during Tito's lifetime relied on the suppression of the political aspects of religious identity. But when the communist system started to fall apart in the 1980s, religious groups became ways for nationalists to get people to join their cause. The Serbian Orthodox Church became very close to Serbian nationalist groups, seeing itself as the "cultural guardian" of the Serbian nation (Ramet 2005, 242). After 1987, Slobodan Milošević embraced Serbian nationalism and strategically cultivated the Serbian Orthodox Church. This was "the first time since the communists had taken power" that the church "found itself coddled by the communists" (Ramet 1992, 245).

4.5 Linguistic Policy and National Identity

Language policy in Yugoslavia was hard to understand and had a lot of problems. The Yugoslav approach recognized Serbo-Croatian, Macedonian, and Slovenian as

official languages, along with minority languages, and accepted both Latin and Cyrillic scripts (Požgaj Hadži 2014, 385). The idea of "Serbo-Croatian" as a single language, on the other hand, hid a lot of political problems. Scholarly research shows that "language issues have long been both a reflection of inter-ethnic tensions and a catalyst for deepening inter-ethnic animosities" in Yugoslavia (Greenberg 2000, 3).

Constitutional provisions ostensibly guaranteed linguistic rights, with all Yugoslav constitutions affirming "the rights of every Yugoslav citizen to use freely his/her national language and the equality of the languages and characters of all officially recognized Yugoslav nations" (Bugarski 1987, 4). However, language policy failures made ethnic tensions worse, especially when it came to the Albanian language in Kosovo, Macedonia, and the Preševo Valley. "Structural violence" was caused by language policies that were unfair to certain groups, which is why "conflict remains intractable in Kosovo, where discriminatory language policies have been applied first to Albanians and then to Serbs" (Vronti 2008, 138).

The breakup of Yugoslavia showed how fragile linguistic unity really was. After gaining independence, the successor states quickly made their languages different from each other. Croatia engaged in vigorous linguistic purification, implementing neologisms and resurrecting archaic forms to differentiate Croatian from Serbian (Kordić 2010, 67-89). These differences in language were examples of what scholars call the "politicization of language." This is when real or made-up differences in language were used to show national identity and get people to support nationalism (Bugarski 1992, 175).

4.6 The Post-Tito Crisis and Institutional Paralysis

International observers called Tito "Yugoslavia's main unifying force" (Ramet 1992, 208) when he died on May 4, 1980. The 1974 Constitution's idea of a collective presidency didn't work to solve the growing political and economic problems. The rotating one-year terms were "highly ineffective," leaving "a power vacuum which was left open for most of the 1980s" (Ramet 1992, 209). This institutional weakness happened at the same time as a serious economic downturn that made regional inequalities worse and caused a lot of social unrest.

The rise of Slobodan Milošević as the leader of Serbia in 1987 was a turning point. Milošević's nationalist mobilization focused on Kosovo, where he painted the Serbian minority as victims of Albanian oppression. The 1986 Memorandum of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts gave Serbian nationalists a reason to be angry by saying that Serbs were a "embattled nation" because of the 1974 Constitution's rules (Pešić 1996, 12–15).

Milošević's 1989 constitutional changes that limited Kosovo and Vojvodina's independence led to other republics taking action against him. In 1990, Slovenia and Croatia stopped giving money to the federal government, which "deepened economic fractures and escalated toward armed conflict" (Cohen 1993, 134). The 14th Extraordinary Congress of the League of Communists in January 1990 ended with Slovenian and Croatian walkouts, which effectively ended the party that had been Yugoslavia's main way of bringing people together.

Free elections in 1990 and 1991 across the republics led to the rise of ethnically-based parties and governments. This changed what scholars call the "demand for democracy" into a "ethnic census" that "killed off Yugoslav federalism" (Snyder 2000, 198). In the December 1990 referendum on Slovenia's independence, 88.5% of voters were in favor of it. Croatia and Macedonia did the same thing, and Bosnia-Herzegovina's referendum in 1992 led to the start of war.

4.7 Conclusion

The violent dissolution of Yugoslavia represents a failure overdetermined by multiple, interconnected factors embedded within the federal system itself. The analysis reveals three critical structural failures:

First, the progressive decentralization culminating in the 1974 Constitution created a contradictory system that empowered republics as quasi-sovereign entities while maintaining the fiction of federal unity. This constitutional architecture incentivized republican competition rather than cooperation, particularly as economic stagnation intensified conflicts over resource distribution. As one scholar notes, "the contradictory institutional structures of the Yugoslav state" lacked "the integrative potential necessary to create institutional frameworks and workable procedures of democratic rule that

could accommodate the conflictual relations among its different national groups" (Pešić 1996, 8).

Second, long-lasting and growing economic differences between regions that are based on ethnic groups turn economic problems into ethnic problems. Wealthy republics that didn't want to pay for poorer ones and poor republics that thought the current economic system was unfair were both unhappy with federal redistribution policies. The inability to attain equitable regional development weakened the economic underpinnings essential for sustaining political cohesion.

Third, instead of being successfully integrated into a pluralistic framework, religious and linguistic diversity became tools for nationalist mobilization after the communist party lost its grip on political discourse. The federation's idea of "brotherhood and unity" was not strong enough to survive the legitimacy crisis of communist rule. Yugoslav nationalism has failed because it is "uneven, underdeveloped, or misdirected," and "structural unevenness" has led to "the relatively continuous proliferation of much better-grounded ethnic nationalisms" (Malić 2024, 586).

Finally, the federal system lacked robust mechanisms for managing inter-republican conflicts or adapting to changing circumstances without unanimous consent. The consensus-based decision-making of the 1974 Constitution, combined with the weakness of federal institutions relative to republican governments, created conditions for governmental paralysis when cooperation broke down. Yugoslav federalism thus failed not because diversity itself was unmanageable, but because the specific institutional arrangements designed to manage diversity contained internal contradictions that, under conditions of economic stress and political transition, amplified rather than ameliorated ethnic tensions.

Chapter5 : Afghanistan

Afghanistan presents a distinct case for examining the relationship between state structure, ethnic diversity, and political stability. Afghanistan has had a centralized government since Amir Abdul Rahman Khan built the modern state in 1880-1901. This chapter looks at the most important parts of Afghanistan's political system, including its ethnic and religious makeup, its linguistic diversity, its constitutional framework, its economic patterns, and the current debates about how to run the country. The analysis shows which structural features are present or missing in Afghanistan's political system, giving us real-world data for comparison.

5.1 Historical Development of State Centralization

Afghanistan's formation of a modern state under Amir Abdul Rahman Khan created long-lasting patterns of government (1880s–1890s). The Amir established direct governance over his nation through a centralized authority and created a vast bureaucracy on an unprecedented scale, centered around his own persona (Kakar 1979, 118). Incentives, threats, forced mass migrations, and several brutal internal wars were used to achieve this centralization (Kakar 1979, 119). Abdul Rahman systematically eradicated local autonomy, particularly by relocating nearly all the Muhammadzais to Kabul, thereby severing their tribal affiliations and rendering them reliant on state subsidies (Rubin 2003, 8).

This tradition of centralization carried on through later governments. The 1964 Constitution, which was one of the most progressive in Afghanistan, called for elected provincial councils. However, these provisions were never put into action because the law needed to create the councils was never passed and the councils were never elected (USIP 2020, 1). During the monarchy period (1747-1973), the republic period (1973-1978), the communist era (1978-1992), and the Taliban's first emirate (1996-2001), centralized control remained the consistent governance model.

The 2004 Constitution maintained this system by making provincial governors, police officials, and schoolteachers subject to presidential appointment in Kabul (Hashim 2021). The central authority used provincial and district administrations to extend its power instead of granting them independent status. The centralization process

has its roots in ethnic and ideological reasons, together with Kabul's efforts to establish control over the nation (USIP 2020, 1).

Afghanistan thus demonstrates continuity in centralized state structure across diverse regime types over more than a century. The provinces of Afghanistan operate as administrative areas which never gained political self-rule or ability to collect taxes during their entire history.

5.2 Ethnic Composition and Distribution

Afghanistan is made up of different major ethnic groups with distinct languages, historical experiences, and geographic concentrations. Population estimates vary due to the absence of reliable recent census data, but scholarly sources provide the following approximations:

- Pashtuns: 38-45% of the population, primarily concentrated in southern and eastern provinces (Kandahar, Helmand, Nangarhar, Paktia), with significant populations in northern provinces
- Tajiks: 25-30%, concentrated in northeastern provinces (Badakhshan, Takhar, Panjshir) and western urban centers (Herat)
- Hazaras: 9-24%, primarily in central highlands (Bamyan, Daykundi, Ghazni)
- Uzbeks: 6-15%, concentrated in northern provinces (Balkh, Faryab, Jowzjan, Kunduz)
- Smaller groups: Turkmen, Aimaq, Baloch, Nuristani, Pashai, and others comprising the remaining population (Ibrahimi 2023; EUAA 2024)

These groups do not live in separate areas with clear borders; instead, they make up majorities in some provinces and minorities in others. Ibrahimi points out that Afghanistan has a very diverse population in terms of ethnicity, culture, and language. Social boundaries change over time and can be very different for different groups (Ibrahimi 2023, 3).

The way political power is divided has always favored Pashtun elites. Pashtun dynasties have been in charge of the country since 1747, and some people call this a controversial right to rule (Ibrahimi 2023, 5). During Abdul Rahman's rule, Afghanistan was established as a state where Pashtuns held exclusive power and a stringent interpretation of Sunni Islam constituted the sole legal framework (Conciliation

Resources 2017). However, this dominance did not lead to cohesion; it did not result in a unified state, as evidenced by the notion that although Afghanistan was established as a nation, the Afghans had yet to be formed as a people (Conciliation Resources 2017).

During the Islamic Republic (2004-2021), even though the constitution said that different ethnic groups should be included, there were still ethnic tensions that were seen in the government as a whole. Research indicates that both President Ghani and Chief Executive Abdullah seemed to prefer ethnic constituents when making appointments to high-level positions (ETH Zurich 2020, 16). After the Taliban came back in 2021, there were more ethnic groups in the government. In the interim government, 34 of the 44 ministerial positions were held by Pashtun Taliban. The other positions were held by Tajiks (5), Uzbeks (2), Hazaras (2), and Nuristani (1) (CSCR 2024).

Political culture concerning ethnic relations illustrates what scholars characterize as centralized power vested in a singular ruler who formulates policy and allocates resources, thereby precluding non-violent dissent (Conciliation Resources 2018). This pattern has continued to exist in different types of governments and groups of leaders from different ethnic backgrounds.

5.3 Religious Composition and Sectarian Dynamics

Afghanistan's population is overwhelmingly Muslim, estimated at over 99% (EUAA 2024). Within this Muslim majority, the population divides between:

- Sunni Muslims: Approximately 85% of the population, primarily following Hanafi jurisprudence
- Shia Muslims: Approximately 10-15%, predominantly Twelver Shia, with most being ethnic Hazaras
- Other religious minorities: Small populations of Sikhs, Hindus, and other faiths, drastically reduced through emigration (EUAA 2024)

Religious affiliation correlates significantly with ethnicity. Most Pashtuns, Tajiks, and Uzbeks are Sunni, while most Hazaras are Shia. This overlap between religious and ethnic identity has produced various conflicts. The Hazara people faced extreme

discrimination and violent treatment throughout history when some researchers identified the 1890s campaign as a genocidal event (Ibrahimi 2017).

The 2004 Constitution addressed religious diversity by recognizing the Ja'fari school of jurisprudence (Shia Islam) for the first time in Afghan constitutional history. Article 131 stated: "In cases under consideration, the courts shall apply provisions of this constitution as well as other laws. If there is no provision in the Constitution or other laws about a case, the courts shall, in pursuance of Hanafi jurisprudence, and, within the limits set by this Constitution, rule in a way that attains justice in the best manner" (Constitution of Afghanistan 2004). For Shia personal matters, courts could apply Ja'fari jurisprudence.

The situation of the Hazara exacerbated with the resurgence of the Taliban. Many documents show that in land disputes where "the Taliban favour Kuchis, who are ethnically Pashtuns, against Hazaras and forced Hazaras to compensate for Kuchis' missing livestock cases dating back twenty years" (CSCR 2024). The Hazara population faces intentional attacks which have led to the destruction of their educational facilities and their places of religious worship.

The connection between religious identity and political power shows that religious authority has become more centralized, just like political power. Religious scholars (ulema) hold influence, yet operate within parameters regulated by the central government. The Taliban's view of Islamic governance does away with any distinction between religious and political power.

5.4 Linguistic Diversity and Language Policy

The Islamic Republic of Afghanistan has recognized multiple languages constitutionally. The 2004 Constitution designated Pashto and Dari as official languages, stating: "Pashto and Dari shall be the official languages of the state" (Constitution of Afghanistan 2004, Article 16). Additionally, Article 16 recognized six other languages-Uzbeki, Turkmeni, Pachaie, Nuristani, Baluchi, and Pamiri-as third official languages "in areas where the majority speaks them."

The Constitution further stated: "The state shall design and apply effective programs for fostering and developing all languages of Afghanistan" and "Usage of all

current languages in the country shall be free in press publications and mass media" (Constitution of Afghanistan 2004, Article 16).

However, linguistic policy contained asymmetries. It was required that the national anthem be "in Pashto with the words 'God is Great' and the names of the tribes of Afghanistan" (Constitution of Afghanistan 2004, Article 20). This preference for Pashto in national symbols was a sign of the larger trend of Pashtun cultural dominance.

In practice, Dari serves as the main administrative language for the government, and it connects different ethnic groups throughout northern and central Afghanistan. Pashto dominates in the southern and eastern regions. The educational system operates through both languages based on local population characteristics, but maintains central control for curriculum development and textbook production.

Linguistic diversity reflects ethnic diversity, with each major ethnic group maintaining its language:

- Pashtuns speak Pashto (Eastern Iranian language)
- Tajiks speak Dari (Persian/Farsi dialect)
- Hazaras speak Hazaragi (Dari dialect with Mongolic influences)
- Uzbeks speak Uzbeki (Turkic language)
- Turkmen speak Turkmeni (Turkic language) (UNESCO, "Afghanistan -Languages").

The linguistic policy of Afghanistan operates differently from multilingual federal systems because it gives official status and national institution representation to Pashto and Dari while making limited space for other languages in specific regions.

5.5 Constitutional Structure and Institutional Framework

The 2004 Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan established Afghanistan's governance framework during the Republic. The Constitution defined Afghanistan as an "Islamic Republic" with a "presidential system" featuring strong executive authority (Constitution of Afghanistan 2004, Article 1, 60).

5.5.1 Executive Authority

Presidential powers under the 2004 Constitution included:

- Appointment and dismissal of ministers (subject to parliamentary approval for appointment)
- Appointment of provincial governors, the Attorney General, and heads of the central bank and intelligence services
- Appointment of Supreme Court Chief Justice and justices (subject to Wolesi Jirga approval)
- Command of armed forces as Commander-in-Chief
- Declaration of states of emergency (subject to National Assembly endorsement)
- Legislative decree power during parliamentary recess (subject to approval when parliament reconvenes)

Analysis of this structure notes that the Constitution granted "the president excessive executive, legislative, and judicial powers, effectively concentrating power in the executive branch" (Mojaddadi 2022, 15). The President's appointment of provincial governors centralized territorial administration, with governors serving as presidential representatives rather than locally accountable officials.

5.6 Legislative Structure

The Constitution established a bicameral National Assembly:

5.6.1 Wolesi Jirga (House of People)

250 members elected through a single non-transferable vote system from provincial constituencies for five-year terms. Constitutional mandates required that at least 64 seats be held by women (two from each province) and ten seats be reserved for Kuchi nomads (Constitution of Afghanistan 2004, Article 83).

5.6.2 Meshrano Jirga (House of Elders)

102 members, one-third appointed by the President and two-thirds selected by provincial and district councils. Presidential appointees included two representatives of the disabled and impaired, two representatives of nomads, and others (Constitution of Afghanistan 2004, Article 84).

Parliamentary authority included legislation, budgetary approval, and oversight of executive performance. However, parliamentary effectiveness was limited by presidential decree power and appointment authorities.

5.7 Provincial and Local Government

The Constitution provided for three subnational levels: provinces, districts, and villages. Article 137 stated: "The government, while preserving the principles of centralism, shall delegate certain authorities to local administration units for the purpose of expediting and promoting economic, social as well as cultural affairs, and increasing the participation of people in developing the nation" (Constitution of Afghanistan 2004).

5.7.1 Provincial structures included

Provincial Councils: Elected bodies with members determined by population size, serving four-year terms (Constitution of Afghanistan 2004, Article 138-140). Constitutional functions were limited to "attaining the development objectives of the state," "participation of the people in the development of the country," and "advising provincial administrations on related issues" (Constitution of Afghanistan 2004, Article 139).

5.7.2 District Councils:

Similarly structured elected advisory bodies at the district level (Constitution of Afghanistan 2004, Article 141).

5.7.3 Village Councils:

Traditional assemblies for local affairs at the village level (Constitution of Afghanistan 2004, Article 140). Critically, these councils lacked legislative authority, taxation powers, or independent budgets. Provincial governors, appointed by the President, held executive authority at the provincial level. This structure meant that "only large municipalities and the central government have the authority to collect and spend revenue," which "disempowers the subnational entities like provinces and districts because they cannot control what gets spent locally without lobbying central ministries" (USIP 2020, 4).

Implementation of constitutional provisions for local governance faced significant delays. Provincial councils were not elected until 2006, and "functioned extra-constitutionally for several years" without proper legal frameworks (Mojaddadi 2022, 8). District councils, despite constitutional mandate, were never established during the Islamic Republic period.

5.8 Judicial Structure

The Constitution established an independent judiciary headed by the Supreme Court, with lower courts organized hierarchically (Constitution of Afghanistan 2004, Articles 116-131). Judicial appointments were controlled by the President with parliamentary approval for Supreme Court justices. The judicial system was explicitly Islamic, required to apply Sharia law where constitutional and statutory law was silent.

5.9 Economic Structure and Regional Development

Afghanistan's economy has been characterized by:

5.9.1 Economic Dependence

Afghanistan has historically functioned as a rentier state, relying "far more on foreign subsidies and export taxes than on internal taxes to finance its limited scope of activities" (Britannica 1999). During the Islamic Republic period (2004-2021), the government budget depended heavily on international aid, with domestic revenue covering only a fraction of expenditures. This external dependence meant "National government institutions didn't have to be very effective, since there was little policy to implement" (Britannica 1999).

5.9.2 Regional Disparities

Most of the economic growth has happened in Kabul and a few provincial centers, especially Herat, Mazar-i-Sharif, and Kandahar. The World Bank says that rural areas, which make up most of the country, are still very underdeveloped (World Bank, 2024). Infrastructure like roads, electricity, water systems, and telecommunications has mostly been built up in cities, with only a little bit of it reaching rural areas (World Bank 2017).

These differences don't fit neatly into racial groups. The southern provinces with a lot of Pashtuns, like Helmand and Zabul, are still not very developed, just like the

central highlands with a lot of Hazaras (UNHCR, 2023). Some people think that some ethnic groups have been given an unfair advantage. For example, "In many parts of Afghanistan (especially northern and western), Pashtuns have widely believed that the central government after 2001 has kept them out of power and that they have been the victims of discrimination and violence." (ETH Zurich 2020, 16).

5.9.3 Resource Control

Due to conflict and a lack of infrastructure, natural resource extraction (minerals, hydrocarbons) has been very low. Agricultural production, encompassing both legitimate crops and opium poppy cultivation, has been geographically distributed (UNODC 2023). Historically, trade patterns linked Afghan regions more significantly with neighboring countries (Pakistan, Iran, and Central Asian states) than with one another (Chaghaty and Bagramwal 2025).

The central government has been in charge of both making money and spending it. Provincial governments haven't been able to collect taxes or share money with other provinces. All important financial choices have been made in Kabul, and central ministries have been in charge of distributing resources. Because of this centralized fiscal system, "the provinces have to lobby the center to receive a share from the national budget" (AREU 2011, 15).

5.10 Brief Overview of the Taliban Government System

The Taliban government, which established itself as the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (IEA) after its August 15, 2021, takeover, functions as a religious state that gives absolute authority to its supreme leader and religious council members (Freedom House 2024; USIP 2022). The system operates without a constitution and conducts no elections because it makes decisions through decrees, which the Taliban uses to enforce their Sharia law interpretation, and functions through decrees based on the Taliban's interpretation of Sharia law.

5.10.1 Structure of Authority

Supreme Leader (Amir al-Mu'minin): Mawlawi Haibatullah Akhundzada serves as absolute ruler with unlimited authority over all political, religious, and military affairs (Freedom House 2024). Based in Kandahar, he exercises final decision-making power

on all government appointments and policies through decrees (Freedom House 2024). The reclusive religious scholar Akhundzada maintains a minimal online presence because he uses written letters instead of digital communication to express himself (Reuters 2021).

Leadership Council (Rahbari Shura): The supreme leader of the Taliban maintains official leadership, but research shows that Hibatullah Akhundzada, along with his Kandahar-based group of clerics and senior commanders, now control most decision-making processes since 2021 (Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2022). The Leadership Council (Rahbari Shura) operates with unknown members and operating methods, but experts believe Akhundzada and his inner circle make all important political and administrative choices without following standard procedures (USIP 2021).

The Taliban's top deputies include Sirajuddin Haqqani, leader of the Haqqani network and acting Interior Minister; Mullah Yaqoob, son of Taliban founder Mullah Omar and acting Defense Minister; and Abdul Ghani Baradar, a senior political figure who previously headed the movement's political office in Doha. These figures have played prominent roles in communicating Akhundzada's directives to the rest of the movement since 2021 (Al Jazeera 2021a).

The September 2021 interim cabinet selected Mohammad Hasan Akhund to serve as acting Prime Minister while he led a government that included mostly senior Taliban members who belonged to the movement's established leadership structure. The cabinet operates with limited autonomy because Akhundzada, together with his inner circle of advisors, makes all crucial strategic decisions (USIP 2021; Al Jazeera 2021b). The cabinet remains unrepresentative of different ethnic groups because Pashtun Taliban members hold all available positions (USIP 2021; Al Jazeera 2021b).

5.10.2 Governing Principles

The Taliban governs without a formal constitution, though they claimed in January 2022 to be forming a constitutional commission (Freedom House 2024). Instead, they apply their interpretation of Hanafi school Sharia law and have stated they enacted parts of the 1964 monarchy constitution, not in conflict with Sharia, as an interim governance framework. The religious scholars created a fundamental law (dastur) in 1998 which

received authorization again during 2005 to establish a limited framework. The law establishes the supreme leader as the top authority while requiring him to be a male Sunni Muslim who follows Hanafi jurisprudence (Wikipedia 2025).

Key Characteristics

- No separation of powers: All authority vests in the supreme leader and religious leadership
- No legislative assembly: Decrees from the supreme leader and ministerial orders replace legislation
- No elections: Electoral commissions were abolished in late 2021
- No political parties: All political parties banned or forced into exile
- Judiciary: Supreme Court and hierarchical court system with all judges appointed by the supreme leader; courts apply Sharia law exclusively
- Centralized fiscal control: Security ministries (Interior, Defense, Intelligence) consume 41% of the \$3.5 billion budget; provincial and local authorities lack independent revenue (Tandfonline 2024)

5.10.3 International Status

Until mid, 2025, no country formally recognised the Taliban led government; however, in July 2025, Russia became the first state to grant formal recognition to the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (Al Jazeera 2025). The international community maintains its distance from the regime but the country has established growing diplomatic and economic ties with its neighboring nations and other international partners.

On 8 July 2025, the International Criminal Court issued arrest warrants for Taliban Supreme Leader Haibatullah Akhundzada and Chief Justice Abdul Hakim Haqqani for crimes against humanity - specifically for gender based persecution of women, girls, and persons the Taliban deem non-conforming with its ideological gender norms (GlobalSecurity.org 2025). The international legal community now strongly opposes the way the regime conducts its governance activities.

The governance system continues to feature extreme centralization of power in religious authority, suppression of democratic institutions, and rule by religious decree

rather than through a constitutional or democratically legitimized framework (UK House of Commons Library 2025).

5.11 Contemporary Governance Debates

Since the Taliban's return to power in August 2021, political debates about Afghanistan's future governance structure have intensified, particularly regarding centralization versus decentralization.

During the 2003-2004 constitutional drafting process, many non-Pashtun ethnic leaders advocated for federalism, but "those exercising power in Kabul and the Pashtun elites, who see Afghanistan primarily as a Pashtun-led state, as well as some of the Western-educated Afghan technocrats preferred a strong, centralized government" (USIP 2020, 1). Yunus Qanooni, a prominent Tajik leader, stated at the time: "the debate should not be on either an all-powerful central state or a federal system. The current situation makes this approach impossible according to USIP 2020 (1).

After the Taliban took over, a new political group formed. The "Federalist Assembly of Afghanistan" was formed in 2023-2024. It was led by Sarwar Danesh, a Hazara who had been Vice President, and included politicians from many different ethnic groups. The Assembly calls federalism "the only way to solve political problems and power struggles in Afghanistan" (Hasht-e Subh 2024).

Scholarly analysis shows that "the idea of federalism has sparked intense and controversial debate among Afghan activists and intellectuals since the Taliban's return to power," especially since "persistent and systematic discrimination against ethnic and religious minorities under the Taliban has intensified calls for political decentralization and proposals for regional autonomy" (Yousefi 2025, 1).

Researchers who look at the ethnic aspects of the debate say that "Pashtun writers often reject or downplay the importance of federalism, while non-Pashtun writers tend to support it, sometimes in very strong or exclusive terms" (Yousefi 2025, 11). Mohammad Nazif Shahrani, a scholar of Tajik descent, contended that federalism would more effectively address Afghanistan's diversity (Shahrani 2002). On the other hand, Pashtun critic Omar Zakhilwal says that "federalism is not only unnecessary under the circumstances, but it also would serve as a recipe for deeper divisions among

diverse ethnic groups in Afghanistan and would lead to a subsequent disintegration of the country" (Zakhilwal 2001, cited in Yousefi 2025, 13).

Chapter6 : Discussion

This chapter integrates data from Switzerland, Yugoslavia, and Afghanistan with the theoretical frameworks of Lijphart's consociationalism, Stepan's comparative federalism, and Horowitz's centripetalism to ascertain Afghanistan's existing and deficient diversity management requirements. The analysis shows that Afghanistan doesn't have most of the things that helped Switzerland's federal system work, but it does have most of the things that caused Yugoslavia's federal system to fail. The evaluation process goes beyond a basic institutional assessment because Afghanistan has to deal with a number of problems that have come up because of its history, political leaders' actions, economic structure, and social groups that will affect the success of federal governance.

6.1 Historical Foundations and Pathways to Federalism

6.1.1 Stepan's Framework: Coming-Together vs. Holding-Together vs. Putting-Together

Stepan's (1999, 21–22) typology of federal formation pathways is an important way to look at Afghanistan's history. Switzerland is an example of "coming-together federalism," in which cantons that had been separate before voluntarily joined forces in 1848 while keeping a lot of their own power. This path led to strong constituent units with hundreds of years of institutional growth, which made the federal compact a union of equals instead of a hierarchy under central authority (Linder and Mueller 2021, 17).

Yugoslavia is a case that isn't clear-cut. The 1918 Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes seemed to bring together South Slavic people, but the 1946 Communist Constitution forced federalism on them from the top down, like "putting-together federalism" through coercive authority (Frankel 1955, 420). Republics didn't really have autonomy until the 1974 Constitution, but this happened without creating ways for the republics to work together, which is what scholars call "centrifugal federalism" (Jović 2009, 156–178).

Afghanistan's path is very different from both of these. Afghanistan has stayed very centralized since Amir Abdul Rahman Khan took control (1880–1901). This was done through "incentives, intimidation, forced mass migrations, and multiple internal wars

of extreme brutality" (Kakar 1979, 118–119). The Iron Amir systematically destroyed local autonomy instead of adding to it. He brought tribal leaders "to Kabul, separating them from their tribal base" and made them dependent on state subsidies (Rubin 2003, 8). Any federal project in Afghanistan would have to follow a "holding-together" path, which means that the central government would have to give up some of its power on its own to keep the country from falling apart.

Stepan believes that holding-together federalism needs a wide agreement among elites and careful planning so that it doesn't look like a coercive imposition (Stepan 1999, 22). Afghanistan doesn't have this elite consensus; people's views on decentralization are directly related to their ethnic identity and their access to central power. Researchers have found that "authors of Pashtun background often reject or downplay the importance of federalism, while non-Pashtun writers tend to support it" (Yousefi 2025, 11). Even more telling, people who support federalism now, like former Vice President Sarwar Danesh, were against it when they were in charge, showing that their positions are based on power calculations rather than moral principles (Yousefi 2025, 5).

6.2 Lijphart's Condition: Traditions of Elite Accommodation

Elite cooperation is a basic requirement for federalism to work in societies with a lot of different groups. Lijphart (1977, 99-103) posits that traditions of elite accommodation and compromise constitute conducive conditions for consociational success. This analysis investigates the reasons behind the existence of such traditions in Switzerland, their failure to emerge in Yugoslavia, and their significant absence in Afghanistan.

Over the years, Switzerland has built up elite cooperation traditions through certain historical events and institutional systems. The Protestant-Catholic conflict, which led to the Sonderbund War of 1847, was a turning point when the Protestant cantons that won chose to work together instead of trying to take over (Springer 2021). This choice set a precedent: "victors wise enough to leave the cantons considerable autonomy, equality, and effective participation" in the making of federal policy (Koller 2002, 3).

There are a few reasons why Swiss elites acted more cooperatively than competitively. First, the fact that the cantons were already sovereign meant that no

central authority could impose unilateral solutions. The only way to solve common problems was through cooperation (Linder and Mueller 2021, 17). Second, the small size of the Swiss cantons made them dependent on each other; no canton had enough people or resources to take over another or become independent (Linder 2016, 2). Third, crosscutting cleavages stopped the formation of permanent majority-minority blocs. For example, German-speaking cantons had both Protestant and Catholic populations, and French-speaking areas were divided in the same way. This forced elites to build coalitions that changed across language and religion (Schmid 2001, 595).

The institutional structure supported these behaviors of cooperation. The Federal Council's collegial structure, where "equality between ministers in cabinet" prevails and the president serves merely as "primus inter pares," prevents any one group from taking over (Linder and Mueller 2021, 43). The "magic formula" set up in 1959 made it official that major political groups would share power, which made people expect that all important groups would be involved in running the country (Vatter 2016, 3). Direct democracy mechanisms granted minorities veto power over federal legislation, compelling majority factions to address minority concerns proactively to avoid potential referendum losses (Linder and Mueller 2021, 44).

These institutions did not fabricate elite cooperation *ex nihilo*; rather, they originated from and bolstered pre-existing cooperative practices cultivated over centuries of cantonal interaction (Church and Dardanelli 2005, 12). Even when modern polarization puts these traditions to the test, they are still "deeply embedded in Swiss political culture" (Vatter 2016). This means that once elite cooperation is established through institutional learning and cultural transmission across generations, it becomes self-reinforcing (Linder and Mueller 2021, 44).

Yugoslavia's elite cooperation was primarily contingent upon authoritarian control rather than voluntary consensus-building (Frankel 1955, 420). The Communist Party's monopoly necessitated collaboration among ethnic elites within party frameworks, while Tito's regime advocated for brotherhood and unity as a unifying ideology (Mandelc and Učakar 2011, 12). This approach, however, involved harsh repression of nationalist expressions instead of creating institutional mechanisms for managing ethnic conflicts in a democratic way (Ramet 1992, 164–168). The Croatian Spring of

1967-1971 exemplified enduring republican nationalism and Tito's readiness to suppress it with force (Ramet 1992, 164-168).

There are a few structural reasons why voluntary elite cooperation never happened in Yugoslavia. First, Yugoslavia imposed federal structures from the top down, while Switzerland's bottom-up federalism built on existing cantonal sovereignty. This is different from how local autonomy traditions evolved over time (Frankel 1955, 420). Republican elites did not have the same experience with negotiations that Swiss cantonal leaders did, which taught them how important it is to find a middle ground (Linder and Mueller 2021, 17). Second, the federal units in Yugoslavia were much bigger and had more people than the Swiss cantons. The republics had enough people and resources to want to be independent, which made it less necessary for the Swiss to work together (Jović 2009, 156-178).

Third, and most importantly, Yugoslavia didn't have any crosscutting cleavages. Religious identity was intertwined with ethnic identity: being Croat signified being Catholic, while being Serb denoted being Orthodox, establishing enduring majority-minority dynamics within republics instead of transient coalitions (Mojzes 1984, 12). This alignment caused conflicts over any issue-language rights, historical memory, or economic policy-to bring up the same ethnic divisions. This made it impossible for Swiss federalism to build coalitions across these divisions (Schmid 2001, 595).

Fourth, the way the institutions were set up made elites more competitive than cooperative. The 1974 Constitution gave republics a lot of freedom and required agreement on important issues, but these rules didn't have any ways for the public to hold them accountable (Ramet 1992, 198-201). Republican elites could use nationalist feelings to get people to vote for them without having to deal with cross-ethnic electoral coalitions or civil society pressure to work together. The collective presidency with rotating one-year terms didn't work well after Tito died in 1980, leaving a power vacuum that lasted for most of the 1980s (Ramet 1992, 209).

When the Communist Party's control weakened in the 1980s, elites used nationalist feelings to gain political power instead of looking for ways to work together (Ramet 1992, 245). The rise of Slobodan Milošević is a good example of this pattern: he used the tensions in Kosovo to gain power and then switched from communist ideology to open nationalism (Pešić 1996, 12-15). Elections in 1990 and 1991 led to the formation

of parties and governments based on ethnicity. This turned the demand for democracy into an ethnic census that ended Yugoslav federalism (Snyder 2000, 198). Elite cooperation disintegrated completely, supplanted by nationalist rivalry (Ramet 1992, 245).

The experience in Yugoslavia shows that authoritarian enforcement alone can't keep elite cooperation going (Frankel 1955, 420). Without democratic institutions guiding competition into cooperative frameworks, without crosscutting cleavages forcing coalition-building (Schmid 2001, 595), and without generations of learning the value of compromise (Linder and Mueller 2021, 44), elite accommodation stayed shallow and fell apart when authoritarian control weakened (Ramet 1992, 209).

Afghanistan exhibits even less robust traditions of elite cooperation compared to Yugoslavia (Yousefi 2025, 11). Comprehending the reasons necessitates an analysis of the structural, institutional, and cultural factors that inhibit cooperative elite behavior, rather than merely acknowledging its absence.

First, a political culture where the winner takes all. The political culture in Afghanistan shows that power is concentrated in a single ruler who makes decisions and gives out resources, leaving no room for peaceful opposition (Conciliation Resources 2018). This pattern continued through monarchy, republic, communist rule, and Taliban emirate, which suggests that there are deeper structural issues at play, not just choices made by leaders (Conciliation Resources 2018).

There are a few reasons for this winner-take-all culture. Amir Abdul Rahman Khan's rule over Afghanistan from 1880 to 1901 made the country more centralized through violence and coercion instead of negotiation (Kakar 1979, 118-119). Abdul Rahman methodically dismantled local autonomy, relocated “nearly all the Muhammadzais to Kabul, severing their ties to their tribal base,” and rendered them reliant on state subsidies (Rubin 2003, 8). This method taught the powerful that being in charge of the state meant having access to resources, while being left out meant being weak. This led to a zero-sum view of power-sharing, where it looked like a sign of weakness instead of wisdom (Conciliation Resources 2018).

Additionally, the fact that Afghanistan is a rentier state makes elites more likely to compete with each other than to work together. The country has relied on foreign subsidies and export taxes much more than on taxes from within the country to pay for

its small number of activities (Britannica 1999). This means that if you control the central government, you can get money from outside sources without needing the cooperation of the elite to use domestic resources (Britannica 1999). In Switzerland, the elites of the cantons learned to work together in part because they had to coordinate taxes and getting resources from their own people (Feld and Kirchgässner 2008, 272). In Afghanistan, however, the country's reliance on outside resources takes away this reason for cooperation.

Furthermore, Afghanistan doesn't have the institutions that could turn elite competition into cooperative structures. The Constitution of 2004 gave the presidency too much power by giving it too much executive, legislative, and judicial power without requiring power-sharing or consensus-building (Mojaddadi 2022, 15). Provincial councils didn't have the power to make laws or collect taxes, so regional elites had no real way to participate in government other than lobbying the president (Mojaddadi 2022, 8). This constitutional structure made it more appealing for ethnic elites to take the presidency than to work out power-sharing deals (Hashim 2021).

Second, there are no crosscutting cleavages. Afghanistan's ethnic, religious, and linguistic identities line up with each other instead of cutting across them. Most Pashtuns, Tajiks, and Uzbeks are Sunni, and most Hazaras are Shia. This means that religious and ethnic identities support each other instead of crossing over (EUAA 2024). Pashtuns speak Pashto, Tajiks speak Dari, and Uzbeks speak Uzbeki, which is similar to how linguistic identity is linked to ethnicity. This alignment means that any conflict over resources, cultural recognition, or political power activates the same ethnic divisions. This makes it impossible to build coalitions across these divisions, which is what Swiss federalism needs (Schmid 2001, 595).

Lijphart calls this pattern "segmental isolation," which means that social, economic, and political interactions happen mostly within ethnic communities instead of between them (Lijphart 1977, 99–103). Historically, urban centers like Kabul offered some mixing, but even there, social networks, marriage patterns, and where people live mostly follow ethnic lines (ETH Zurich 2020, 16). Afghan elites don't have to build cross-ethnic coalitions because there aren't any crosscutting cleavages. Instead, they need to get their ethnic constituencies to vote for them (ETH Zurich 2020, 16).

Third, size and fragmentation make it hard for people to work together. Afghanistan's ethnic groups are both too big and too divided to work together. Afghanistan's major ethnic groups (Pashtuns 40%, Tajiks 25-30%, Hazaras 10-15%, Uzbeks 8-10%) are large enough to want to be in charge but not large enough to do so without forming coalitions (ETH Zurich 2020, 16). This is different from Swiss cantons, which are small enough that none can be in charge but interdependent enough that they need to work together (Linder 2016, 2). However, tribal, regional, and sectarian divisions make it hard to build stable cross-ethnic coalitions within each group (Rubin 2003, 8).

For example, Pashtun elites have to deal with divisions between the southern Durrani and eastern Ghilzai tribes, between tribal leaders in rural areas and educated people in cities, and between religious conservatives and modernists (Rubin 2003, 8). This internal fragmentation makes it hard for even the most powerful groups to work together, which makes it harder for them to make credible promises to minority groups (Conciliation Resources 2018). In the same way, Tajik elites are split between those who support Panjshiri dominance in security services and those who don't, and Hazara elites are split between religious leaders and educated secular classes (ETH Zurich 2020, 16).

Fourth, outside help and patronage. Afghanistan's ongoing external intervention fundamentally alters elite incentive structures. Since the Soviet invasion in 1979, outside powers like Pakistan, Iran, Russia, the United States, and others have backed different ethnic and political groups (USIP 2020, 4). This outside support lets Afghan elites use competitive strategies by getting outside supporters instead of building coalitions within the country (USIP 2020, 4).

During the anti-Soviet jihad, outside countries backed different groups of mujahideen, mostly based on ethnicity. For example, Pakistan mostly backed Pashtun groups, while other countries backed different Tajik, Hazara, and Uzbek commanders (Rubin 2003, 8). This pattern showed powerful people that getting help from outside sources was more important than building coalitions within their own country (Britannica 1999). This dynamic continued after 2001, with international aid moving through ethnic networks and regional powers backing different political actors (AREU 2011, 15).

Fifth, there is a lack of democratic learning. Switzerland's elite cooperation traditions evolved over centuries of democratic practices at the cantonal level before federal unification (Linder and Mueller 2021, 17). Through generations of democratic rule in their own areas, the elites of the cantons learned how to negotiate, make deals, and share power (Koller 2002, 3). When federal structures came about, these elites brought with them the skills they already had for working together and the democratic norms they had learned (Church and Dardanelli 2005, 12).

Afghanistan doesn't have this history of learning how to be democratic. The country has never had long periods of democratic rule where the powerful learned the value of sharing power and making compromises (Conciliation Resources 2018). The constitutional monarchy period, the implementation of the 1964 Constitution, and the Islamic Republic were all too short-lived or too controlled by the executive branch for people to learn how to be democratic (Hashim 2021). Afghan elites don't follow the rules of loyal opposition, don't accept losing elections gracefully, or see power-sharing as making governance stronger instead of weaker (Conciliation Resources 2018).

Under the Islamic Republic (2004-2021), there were still ethnic tensions, even though the constitution said that President Ghani and Chief Executive Abdullah (2014-2021) should share power. This was seen in the government as a whole, as both leaders favored ethnic constituents when making appointments to high-level positions (ETH Zurich 2020, 16). This power-sharing deal was not in the Constitution, was not stable, and did not work out in the end because neither leader had experience with institutionalized power-sharing and their constituencies expected ethnic favoritism instead of merit-based governance (Mojaddadi 2022, 8).

6.3 Constitutional Design and Power Distribution

6.3.1 Stepan's Framework: Demos-Constraining vs. Demos-Enabling

Stepan's (1999, 19-34) differentiation between demos-constraining and demos-enabling federalism elucidates essential constitutional design decisions. Switzerland is somewhat demos-constraining because cantonal equality in the Council of States and direct democracy requirements limit federal majorities. However, cantons only control 30% of the federal budget, and constitutional amendments only need double majorities (popular and cantonal), not state-by-state ratification (Linder 2016, 2). This balance

keeps the cantons free to make their own decisions while still allowing for good governance.

The 1974 Constitution of Yugoslavia established highly constraining arrangements for democracy: consensus requirements granted each republic veto power, Kosovo and Vojvodina obtained "de facto veto power in the Serbian parliament," and decision-making necessitated negotiation among all republics (Ramet 1992, 201). When elite cooperation broke down, these arrangements caused the government to stop working. Ramet said that the Constitution "codified political decentralization by removing centralized control and stimulating the growth of nonparty interest groups" (Ramet 1992, 203).

The 2004 Constitution of Afghanistan exemplifies extreme executive centralization rather than federalism. The President has too much power over the executive, legislative, and judicial branches, which means that most of the power is in the executive branch (Mojaddadi 2022, 15). Provincial councils don't have the power to make laws, collect taxes, or set budgets. They can only "advise provincial administrations" (Constitution of Afghanistan 2004, Article 139). At the moment, "only large municipalities and the central government have the authority to collect and spend revenue," which "disempowers the subnational entities" (USIP 2020, 4).

Stepan contends that demos-enabling, adaptable federalism presents superior opportunities for heterogeneous societies compared to inflexible, demos-restrictive frameworks (Stepan 1999, 32-33). Afghanistan's situation is a paradox: to go from very centralized to demos-enabling federalism, the country would need to build subnational institutional capacity that doesn't exist. However, making demos-constraining arrangements (giving provinces a lot of veto power) could lead to the same kind of paralysis that happened in Yugoslavia.

6.3.2 Lijphart's Pillars: Grand Coalition and Proportionality

Lijphart's four pillars of consociationalism (1977, 25–44) give us more ways to think about things. The "magic formula" makes sure that the Federal Council of Switzerland represents all the major political parties, regardless of language or ideology. Proportionality rules who gets to speak for whom, how resources are distributed, and who gets to work in the civil service. These systems work with

federalism to show that territorial autonomy alone isn't enough without power-sharing at the center.

At first, Yugoslavia tried to form a grand coalition by giving the Communist Party a monopoly, which forced ethnic elites to work together within party structures. But this cooperation was based on authoritarian control instead of voluntary power-sharing. The consensus requirements in the 1974 Constitution made it so that both sides could veto each other, but there was no real grand coalition at the executive level. After Tito died, the rotating eight-member collective presidency was "very ineffective," leaving "a power vacuum that was open for most of the 1980s" (Ramet 1992, 209).

The Islamic Republic of Afghanistan tried to share power between 2004 and 2021 through the President-Chief Executive arrangement (2014–2021), but this was unconstitutional and unstable. The arrangement came about because of elections that were not fair, not because of the Constitution, and it didn't have any real ways for coalition governance. The Taliban's current Islamic Emirate takes away even the appearance of power-sharing. The Supreme Leader has all the power (Freedom House 2024).

Afghanistan doesn't have any federal territorial structures or consociational power-sharing systems at the center. This lack of both sets it apart from Switzerland, which has both, and Yugoslavia, which has territorial federalism but not effective central power-sharing after the fall of communism.

6.4 Economic Integration and Fiscal Federalism

6.4.1 Switzerland's Competitive Federalism with Equalization

Swiss fiscal federalism shows how having economic freedom can help both efficiency and unity. Cantons have the power to set tax rates and control "nearly 25% of their total fiscal income," which makes federalism competitive (Avenir Suisse 2018). Research substantiates that "during periods of economic recession, administratively decentralized cantons adopt a more frugal budgetary policy compared to centralized Swiss member states" (Feld and Kirchgässner 2008, 272). But financial equalization makes sure that "each canton (even the one with the least money) should have at least 85% of the cantonal Swiss average in financial resources after equalization" (Avenir Suisse 2018).

6.4.2 Yugoslavia's Failed Economic Integration

The republics of Yugoslavia became more independent economically, especially after 1974, but this independence did not lead to integration. Trade between republics went down in the 1970s, and four-fifths of production either stayed in the place where it was made or was sent abroad (Malešević 2000, 158). There were economic differences between ethnic groups: Slovenia's GDP per capita was about \$12,000, while Kosovo's was only \$1,600 (Pleština 1992, 134-137).

The Fund for Underdeveloped Regions' federal redistribution caused anger instead of unity. Recent analysis corroborates that "increased ethnic diversity, as assessed by an ethnic fractionalization index, correlates with diminished economic growth in Yugoslav municipalities" (Štiblar, Novokmet, and Čokorilo 2024, 587). Economic fragmentation undermined the material foundation for political cohesion.

6.4.3 Afghanistan's Rentier State and Fiscal Centralization

Afghanistan has a very centralized government and is a rentier state. The country has depended "far more on foreign subsidies and export taxes than on internal taxes to finance its limited scope of activities" (Britannica 1999). During the Islamic Republic, Kabul was the main place where international aid came in, which helped the central government stay in power. Britannica (1999) says that "External dependence" meant that "National government institutions didn't have to be very effective, since there was little policy to implement."

Provincial governments do not have the power to tax or share money. "To get a piece of the national budget, the provinces have to lobby the center" (AREU 2011, 15). This means that there is no chance of competitive federalism or fiscal independence. Afghanistan also has very little economic integration between its regions. Instead, regions are more connected to countries next door than to each other.

6.5 Managing Diversity: Accommodation vs. Integration

6.5.1 Lijphart vs. Horowitz: Fundamental Tension

The theoretical framework shows that there is a basic conflict between approaches that focus on accommodation and those that focus on integration. Lijphart's

consociationalism acknowledges ethnic segmentation as a fact, creating institutions to handle it via power-sharing, proportionality, and autonomy. Horowitz's centripetalism tries to get rid of ethnic divisions by giving people reasons to work together across ethnic lines in elections. He warns that making ethnicity a part of the system will keep divisions going (Horowitz 2014, 5–7).

Switzerland's success shows that these methods work well together instead of against each other. Swiss federalism allows for linguistic diversity by giving each region its own government (Lijphart's segmental autonomy). At the same time, direct democracy makes it necessary for constitutional changes to get support from a majority of people in each region (Horowitz's integration mechanisms). Religious divisions are very important because they cut across language ones. For example, German-speaking cantons have both Protestants and Catholics, which stops cleavages from getting stronger.

Yugoslavia's failure shows that not enough attention was paid to both accommodation and integration. Federal structures allowed for ethnic concentration in certain areas, but they didn't really share power at the center. There were no incentives for people of different ethnicities to work together politically; instead, republican boundaries made it easier for people of the same ethnicity to vote. Most importantly, religious and ethnic identities aligned: Serb-Orthodox, Croat-Catholic, Bosniak-Muslim. This made the divisions stronger instead of weaker.

6.5.2 Afghanistan's Reinforcing Cleavages

The cleavage structure of Afghanistan is more like that of Yugoslavia than that of Switzerland. There is a link between religion and ethnicity: most Pashtuns, Tajiks, and Uzbeks are Sunni, while most Hazaras are Shia. This alignment makes ethnic tensions worse by adding sectarian elements. The way Shia Hazaras have been treated unfairly in the past shows how religious and ethnic differences can make conflict worse (Ibrahimi 2017).

There are no crosscutting linguistic identities because Pashtuns speak Pashto, Tajiks speak Dari, and Uzbeks speak Uzbeki. Economic differences, even if they don't perfectly match up with race, make people think that some races are getting more help than others.

Lijphart (1977, 87–88) and Horowitz (1985, 348–364) both say that crosscutting cleavages make it easier for people to work together because they stop ethnic polarization from happening completely. A person might speak the same language as one group, follow the same religion as another, and have the same economic interests as a third. This means that they could work with more than one group. Afghanistan's reinforcing cleavages, where ethnic, religious, and linguistic identities intersect, optimize the potential for polarization.

6.6 Direct Democracy and Popular Participation

6.6.1 Switzerland's Integrative Referendums

Swiss direct democracy has a lot of different roles to play in managing diversity. The people of Switzerland have a lot of say in politics at all levels. For example, they vote on an average of fifteen issues four times a year (EDA 2024). The "double majority" requirement for constitutional changes-requiring both popular and cantonal majorities-gives minorities the power to stop majorities from taking over (Church and Dardanelli 2005, 11).

Theoretical Consequence: Direct democracy is a mix of Lijphart's "mutual veto" (which lets minorities stop changes) and Horowitz's "centripetal incentives" (which require broad coalitions). It is what Linder and Mueller (2021, 44) call "a strong corrective to elitist consociationalism," which means that it makes sure that elites share power while still being accountable to the people.

6.6.2 Absence in Yugoslavia and Afghanistan

Yugoslavia had no direct democracy systems at all. The Communist Party's democratic centralism made it impossible to hold referendums or popular initiatives. Yugoslavia's referendums in 1990 on keeping the federation were too late, after nationalist mobilization had broken up political debate. Without institutional avenues for public engagement, grievances could not be resolved through democratic mechanisms.

Afghanistan also doesn't have a history or ways of doing direct democracy. The Constitution of 2004 allowed for elected representative bodies but not for referendums or popular initiatives. Provincial councils had no power to make laws and only served

as advisory bodies (Constitution of Afghanistan 2004, Article 139). The Taliban's Islamic Emirate does away with even representative democracy. The Supreme Leader and religious advisors have all the power (Freedom House 2024).

6.7 National Identity and Civic Integration

6.7.1 Switzerland's Civic Nationalism

Switzerland effectively fostered a civic national identity alongside robust cantonal and linguistic identities. This identity is based on shared institutions, democratic practices, and political values, not on being of the same ethnicity or language. "Multilingualism is an important part of Swiss identity" and "the very foundation of the country" (Stojanovic 2018, 2). Recent data shows that "86% of the population thinks it is important to know more than one national language to make the country more united" (Swiss Federalism 2025).

"Protected regional and linguistic minorities, the cultural heritage and diversity of the cantons, and helped to integrate the different segments of Swiss society" (Linder 2016, 3) show how Swiss identity is built from the ground up. This lets people have more than one identity that doesn't conflict with others. For example, a person can be Genevan, French-speaking, Catholic, and Swiss all at the same time.

6.7.2 Yugoslavia's Failed Yugoslav Identity

Yugoslavia sought to forge a supra-ethnic Yugoslav identity through Tito's ideology of "brotherhood and unity." Nonetheless, this "recognized ethnic diversity while simultaneously advocating for a supranational Yugoslavism" in conflicting manners (Mandelc and Učakar 2011, 12). Research indicates that "ethnic intermarriage is the key mechanism through which ethnic diversity influenced the adoption of a shared Yugoslav identity," yet intermarriage rates exhibited significant regional variation (Cepić, Petrović, and Stanković 2022).

Yugoslav identity continued to be tenuous, especially in regions with legacies of inter-ethnic violence during World War II. The failure is due to "its uneven, underdeveloped, or misdirected grounding," and "structural unevenness" is to blame for "the relatively continuous proliferation of much better-grounded ethnic nationalisms"

(Malić 2024, 586). When the communist government lost power, ethnic identities became stronger than Yugoslav identity.

6.7.3 Afghanistan's Weak National Identity

Afghanistan has had a hard time forming an identity that goes beyond ethnic, tribal, and sectarian lines. As seen during Abdul Rahman's rule, the country was "made," but the people were not "fashioned" into a single nation (Conciliation Resources 2017). Even after more than a hundred years of trying to build a strong Afghan state, the country's identity is still weak and disputed. People mostly identify as Pashtun, Tajik, Hazara, or Uzbek instead of as Afghan.

The Constitution of Afghanistan 2004, Article 4, recognized fourteen ethnic groups as constituent peoples by name. However, this recognition did not help create a unified national identity. Afghanistan does not have the institutional experience that Switzerland has built up over hundreds of years, nor does it have the decades of "brotherhood and unity" that Yugoslavia promoted through intermarriage and socialist ideas.

Lijphart (1977, 91–93) identifies "overarching loyalties transcending segmental divisions" as conducive to consociational success. Civic nationalism gives Switzerland this kind of loyalty. Yugoslavia tried but failed to make it happen. Afghanistan has never been able to create a national identity that brings people together, not even for a short time. This lack of a shared national identity means that federal structures might not be able to handle diversity, which could lead to fragmentation like what happened in Yugoslavia.

6.8 Synthesis: Present and Absent Success Factors

6.8.1 Comparative Matrix

Success Factor	Switzerland	Yugoslavia	Afghanistan
Historical Foundation	Pre-existing cantonal sovereignty (centuries)	Top-down imposition without historical legitimacy	Extreme centralization is

Success Factor	Switzerland	Yugoslavia	Afghanistan
			destroying local autonomy
Elite Cooperation	Strong traditions of accommodation	Failed after the communist collapse	Absent-winner-take-all politics
Constitutional Design	Moderately demos-constraining with cantonal autonomy	Initially centralized, later excessively demos-constraining	Extreme executive centralization
Fiscal Autonomy	High-cantons control 70% expenditure	Moderate-republican control without integration	Absent, complete central fiscal control
Economic Integration	Highly integrated economy with equalization	Low-autarkic republics	Very low-minimal inter-regional trade, rentier state
Power-Sharing Mechanisms	Grand coalition Federal Council	Failed after the communist party collapse	Absent-no genuine power-sharing
Direct Democracy	Strong referendums, initiatives, and double majorities	Absent	Absent
Cleavage Structure	Crosscutting-religion crosscuts language	Reinforcing-ethnic-religious alignment	Reinforcing-ethnic-religious-linguistic alignment

Success Factor	Switzerland	Yugoslavia	Afghanistan
National Identity	Strong civic nationalism	Weak Yugoslav identity failed	Very weak national identity
Electoral Incentives	Centripetal-cantonal majorities required	None-ethnic constituencies	Non-plurality nationwide or no elections

6.9 Theoretical Assessment Through Lijphart's Conditions

Examining Afghanistan through Lijphart's (1977, 53-103) nine favorable conditions for consociationalism:

6.9.1.1 Absent in Afghanistan:

- Traditions of elite accommodation (completely absent)
- Overarching loyalties transcending divisions (very weak national identity)
- Socioeconomic equality among segments (significant disparities)
- Small overall population size (38+ million, quite large)

6.9.1.2 Partially Present:

- No majority segment (Pashtuns estimated 38-45%, not a clear majority)
- Geographical concentration allowing territorial autonomy (groups regionally concentrated)

6.9.2 Unfavorable:

- External threats (persistent external intervention exacerbates rather than unites)
- Segments of equal size (significant imbalance with Pashtun plurality)
- Small number of segments (four major plus numerous smaller groups)

Afghanistan possesses only two of the nine favorable conditions, both partially. Most critically, it lacks elite cooperation traditions and overarching national identity-factors Lijphart emphasizes as crucial for overcoming unfavorable structural conditions (Lijphart 1977, 53-54).

6.10 Assessment Through Stepan's Framework

The "holding-together" pathway, which Stepan describes, would guide all Afghan federal projects to achieve their goals through voluntary center devolution. This necessitates a consensus among the elite, which Afghanistan evidently lacks, as perspectives on federalism are influenced by ethnic identity and access to power. The debate shows that federalism "has sparked intense and controversial debate," especially since "persistent and systematic discrimination against ethnic and religious minorities under the Taliban has intensified calls for political decentralization" (Yousefi 2025, 1).

Stepan's differentiation between demos-constraining and demos-enabling is essential: Afghanistan needs systems that allow for good government while also protecting minorities. But to build demos-enabling federalism, we need institutions and trust that aren't there yet. Making arrangements that limit demos could cause Yugoslavia's paralysis to happen again.

6.11 Assessment Through Horowitz's Warnings

Horowitz's warnings about "devolutionary federalism" are very important. Afghanistan is moving toward federalism late, after ethnic mobilization has grown stronger and in the middle of a war. Horowitz (1994, 18) says that federalism introduced too late becomes "a substitute for partition," giving ethnic groups government structures that help them become independent instead of integrating.

Afghanistan also doesn't have any systems in place to encourage cross-ethnic cooperation through elections. Presidential elections were held across the country, and candidates could win by getting support from people of different ethnic groups. There were no distribution requirements that made support spread out over a wide area. If provinces were divided up based on ethnicity, it would probably make ethnic politics even stronger, as Horowitz warns happens with ethnic federalism (Horowitz 1985, 601–624).

6.12 Conclusion

This comparative analysis, integrating theoretical frameworks with empirical evidence, reveals that Afghanistan lacks virtually all prerequisites for successful federal diversity management. The absence extends beyond institutional structures to

encompass historical foundations, elite political culture, economic integration, social cleavage patterns, and national identity formation.

6.12.1 Critical Absences:

- No historical foundation: Unlike Switzerland's centuries of cantonal sovereignty, Afghanistan has 140 years of extreme centralization
- No elite cooperation: Unlike Switzerland's traditions of accommodation, Afghanistan exhibits winner-take-all politics
- No fiscal federalism: Unlike Switzerland's cantonal autonomy, Afghanistan maintains complete central fiscal control
- No economic integration: Unlike Switzerland's integrated economy, Afghanistan has minimal inter-regional trade
- No crosscutting cleavages: Unlike Switzerland's Protestant-Catholic division crosscutting language, Afghanistan's religious-ethnic-linguistic identities align
- No consociational mechanisms: Unlike Switzerland's grand coalition and proportionality, Afghanistan lacks power-sharing institutions
- No direct democracy: Unlike Switzerland's referendums providing minority veto power, Afghanistan has no participatory mechanisms
- No civic identity: Unlike Switzerland's strong national identity, Afghanistan has weak contested nationalism

6.12.2 Present Failure Factors:

Afghanistan exhibits characteristics that contributed to Yugoslavia's failure: reinforcing cleavages, failed elite cooperation, ethnic-territorial alignment, weak integrative identity, economic fragmentation, and late federalism consideration after ethnic mobilization. However, Afghanistan's situation is more severe: Yugoslavia at least attempted federal structures and achieved temporary ethnic cooperation under communism, while Afghanistan has never implemented federalism or developed power-sharing mechanisms.

6.12.3 Theoretical Verdict:

From Lijphart's perspective, Afghanistan lacks favorable conditions and possesses unfavorable ones, particularly absent elite cooperation traditions. From Stepan's

perspective, holding-together federalism in Afghanistan faces insurmountable consensus challenges given ethnic polarization around governance structures. From Horowitz's perspective, late devolutionary federalism in Afghanistan risks providing institutional framework for partition rather than integration.

The synthesis shows that federalism by itself is not enough to handle diversity. Switzerland's success comes from a mix of territorial federalism and consociational power-sharing, direct democracy mechanisms that create centripetal incentives, economic integration, crosscutting cleavages, and a strong sense of civic national identity. Yugoslavia failed because it had federal structures but not these other systems that worked well with them. Afghanistan does not have federal structures or any other systems that work with them.

This does not imply that centralization is the sole alternative. There are also middle-ground options, such as more autonomy for provinces within a unitary state, asymmetric autonomy for certain regions, or confederal arrangements that keep nominal unity while giving local governments a lot of power. But any successful approach requires building the whole system of institutions, practices, and incentives that support diversity management. This includes traditions of elite cooperation, economic interdependence, power-sharing mechanisms, electoral incentives for moderation, and a national identity that brings people together. If we just copied Yugoslavia's federal constitutional structures without these foundations, we would probably end up with Yugoslavia's fragmentation instead of Switzerland's stability.

Chapter7

Chapter8 : References

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