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**| RESEARCH ARTICLE**

## **Assessing the Elements of National Unity in the Context of Afghanistan's Contemporary History Subject from the Perspective of Students**

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**| ABSTRACT**

The contemporary History of Afghanistan is included in the curriculum of all fields of studies in university as an inclusive university subject throughout the country to familiarize students with the nation's contemporary history and foster national cohesion and unity among all ethnicities living in Afghanistan. Therefore, the present study assesses the Elements of national unity in the context of Afghanistan's contemporary history subject. However, this subject plays a pale role in cohesion and solidarity. The research used both qualitative and quantitative methods. The data for this study was collected through an appropriate questionnaire. The population of this study included all Samangan university students of education faculty and agriculture faculty. From 2150 students in education and agriculture faculties, 345 were selected and studied using multistage cluster random sampling. The research measurement tools included a researcher-made questionnaire with 21 questions Likert scale, and Cronbach's alpha was 0.825. In addition, the researcher-made questionnaire was based on the results of the data analysis. The findings show that the contents of contemporary Afghan history subject are written with a political and military approach and have no effect on enhancing the students' national unity. The results show that the elements of national unity, such as the place of Islam, common land, common history, and common culture are present in the context of the contemporary history of Afghanistan.

**| KEYWORDS**

Contemporary History, National Unity, Cohesion, Correlation

**| ARTICLE INFORMATION**

**ACCEPTED:** 27 March 2023

**PUBLISHED:** 31 March 2023

**DOI:** 10.32996/jhsss.2023.5.4.1

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### **1. Introduction**

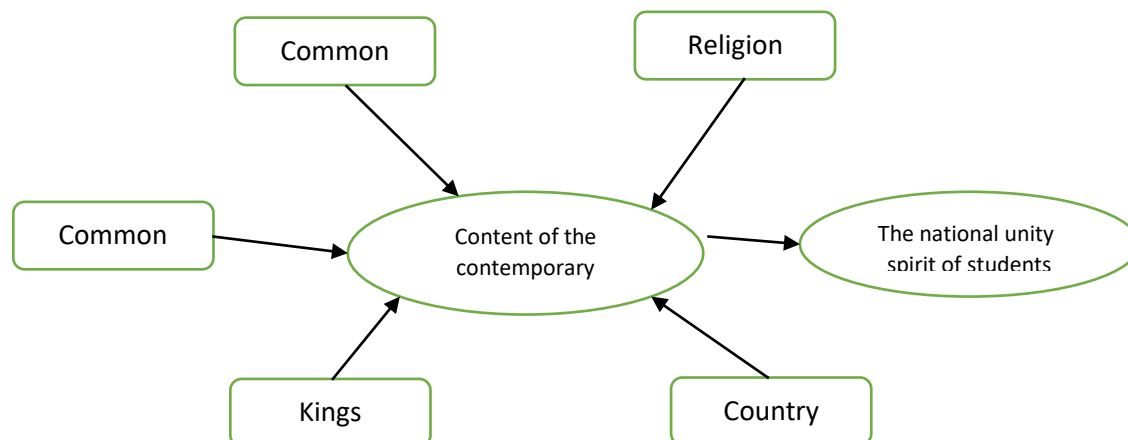
National unity in Afghanistan is one of the fundamental issues (Hyman, 2002), and clear paths to how to create national unity in society to prevent conflict are considered essential for the nations (Türk, 2012). In addition to explaining and describing the place of national unity in Afghan society, ways to achieve national unity through teaching the contemporary history of Afghanistan and achieving cohesion and coordination in Afghan society are identified (Baiza, 2013). Although Afghan society has historically lacked national unity, especially in modern times, it has faced many problems in economic, political, and cultural problems (Misdaq, 1990). (Kafi, 1393), History has two meanings and concepts: 1. History refers to phenomena and events that have happened in the past. 2. History refers to studying, researching, and studying past events (Omriani, 2007). A philosophy was formed for each of the two meanings of history (Khalil, 2016). The philosophy that discusses the first meaning of history is called the theoretical philosophy of history (Barfield, 2012). The philosophy that discusses the second meaning of history is called the critical philosophy of history. (Ahmadi, 1387), In the first sense, history is a collection of cultural, natural, social, economic, and political events that have occurred in the past. But history, in the second sense, is an epistemology that observes the minor events and understands the phenomena mentioned above that are formed in the historian's mind, and it is first-class knowledge. (Atai, 1387), There is disagreement about the origin of the term contemporary history. Historians and writers often choose their countries' great events and happenings as

the source of historical periods. Ancient historians have chosen three stages to classify history: ancient history, the Middle Ages, and the modern age. Contemporary historians have included contemporary history in recent centuries. Most scholars begin contemporary history with the French Revolution because the outbreak of the French Revolution has played a major role in the great events of the West and the East. Afghan historians believe that the contemporary history of Afghanistan begins with the establishment of the empire by Ahmad Shah Abdali in 1747. (Moftakhri, 1394), the world of these events always remains alien and inaccessible because we have not lived with past events. Essentially, the effort to comprehend the past is motivated by the desire to empathize with the people who lived at the time and, ultimately, to guarantee our survival (Newell, 1979). By attempting to comprehend the past, we imagine ourselves in the same situation as those living in that era. Consequently, in his reasoning, history is fundamentally the psychology of the past, and its association with psychology is profound and indivisible. By presenting this theory, Delta introduced the method of intuition to historians. According to Ritters (1389), maintaining national cohesion or unity requires the successful integration of individuals into social groups, guidance and adjustment through religious beliefs and teachings, and the presence of common values, customs, and traditions indicative of a shared culture (Shayegan, 2014). Additionally, common honors and achievements that reflect a shared history and land are important for maintaining national cohesion (Manchanda, 2018). Durkheim compares two types of coherence, mechanical and organic, and relates them to the division of labor. For Durkheim, traditional cultures with little division of labor are mechanically cohesive. Most members of these communities have similar occupations linked by shared experience and beliefs. Mechanical coherence is based on the harmony of ideas. (Haidari, 2005), National unity is not based on religious, cultural imposition, and ethnocentric strategy; on the contrary, these methods lead to social conflict and divergence and activate a transnational identity and centrism; What we have seen in the history of Afghanistan in recent decades (Riphenburg, 2005). Therefore, rulers and statesmen must accept the share of tribes in political power by creating similar political and cultural contexts for all tribes and followers of religions and fair distribution of national facilities and resources for all citizens and regions, regardless of ethnic, religious, and Linguistic (Leake & Leake, 2023). Eliminate the negative mentality of non-ruling ethnic groups about the ruling ethnic group. (Qasimi & Ibrahim Abadi, 2011), Every inclusive and continuous national stability and unity in Iran is preceded by the comprehensive attention of the government and society to the pluralistic identity and the mosaic cultural and social context of Iranian society (Maley, 2012). Experience has shown that whenever Iranian governments deviate from paying attention to the harmonization of different layers of society's identity and respect for the ethnic, linguistic, religious, and, religious subcultures of Iranian society, and have neglected or rejected part of it in designing policies and implementing programs, Iran's national unity has been damaged. (Sadiqi, 2015), Inter-group social capital (inter-group social trust, inter-group social participation), the function of the political institution, the function of the media institution, the function of the family institution, strengthening national-religious rituals, students' understanding of social justice (understanding of procedural and interpersonal justice), significant relationship Showed the national solidarity variable of students. (Hamidi, 2018), The existing content of the contemporary history of Afghanistan has many gaps and does not correspond to what has been introduced to teach this subject (Bahir, 2020). The current society of Afghanistan needs to achieve national identity more than anything else (Dupree, 2002); we can achieve it: by making proper use of the content of contemporary Afghan history to promote national identity (Berger & Reese, 2010). Therefore, national unity and unity of ethnic groups living in Afghanistan are one of the challenges in the country's current situation (Gregorian, 1967). The final solution to this problem requires accurate awareness of the country's history, culture, and historical commonalities (Nawid, 2012). The effects of the content of the contemporary history of Afghanistan in strengthening the spirit of national unity among students have been studied in this research. In this research it is aimed to evaluate the components of the national unity in the context of contemporary history of Afghanistan to address the issues and provide the solutions.

## **2. Method and data**

This research uses the documentary method to write and analyze empirical records, theoretical foundations, and defining concepts. Data obtained from the statistical community have been analyzed in an explanatory manner. The research is Practical in terms of results and is complex (quantitative and qualitative) in modality. Because the data were collected from a sample community through a questionnaire and analyzed, the research is a survey. The statistical population includes 2150 students of the Faculty of Agriculture and Education of Samangan university. The sample population was determined by considering 5% error and 95% confidence based on online calculation (survey monkey) of 327 people. Using the probability multi-stage cluster sampling method (Probability Proportional to Size) method, 23 classes were selected from different classes. Since the number of students in the mentioned classes was almost equal, the sample population was divided over the mentioned classes; 14.2 students were assigned each class's contribution. According to the waste, the contribution of each class was 15 students, and 345 students were included in the research. The data collection tool is a questionnaire that has 21 open-ended questions with a Likert scale. To assess the validity of the questionnaires, the questionnaire was first given to several professors and specialists in the field. After corrective measures, questionnaires were distributed experimentally to more than 30 people to assess their reliability. The results were analyzed using the SPSS program by selecting Cronbach's alpha model based on the questionnaire's validity coefficient (0.825).

2.1 Research model



3. Result and discussion

Variable	Gender		Marital Status		Education degree				Faculty	
	Man	Women	Married	Single	1 Semester	3 Semester	5 Semester	8 Semester	Education	Agriculture
Frequency	238	107	55	290	45	165	120	15	255	90
Percent	69%	31%	16%	84%	13%	48%	35%	4%	74%	26%

According to table (1), 69% of the respondents of this research are men, and 31% of the respondents are women. The number of men in the sample community of this research is more than women. 15% are married, and 85% of the sample community is single. There are more single students than married students. 13% of the respondents are students in the first semester, 48% in the third semester, 39% in the fifth semester, and 4% in the eighth semester. Most of the participants in this research are third-semester students. These percentages have been selected because of the sample population. Most of them are in the middle of their undergraduate studies, and all have studied the contemporary history of Afghanistan. 74% of the participants are students of the University of Education, and 26% are the University of Agriculture students.

3.1 Status of Islam

	Strongly Agree	Agree	undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
To what extent have religious beliefs been discussed in the context of the contemporary history of Afghanistan?	%11.9	%25.5	%41.7	%14.8	%6.1
To what extent does the content of Afghanistan's contemporary history revolve around religious teachings for national cohesion and solidarity?	%11.3	%29	%31	%22.9	%5.8
To what extent has the rule of law been mentioned in the content of the history of Afghanistan?	%22	%29	%30.8	%16.5	%1.7
To what extent has the role of religious scholars and religious schools in strengthening the spirit of national unity been respected in the context of the contemporary history of Afghanistan?	%14.5	%21.7	%30.7	%23.8	%9.3

According to table (2), most respondents believed that religious beliefs, religious teachings, the rule of law in judicial affairs, and the role of scholars and religious schools in the content of the contemporary history of Afghanistan had been relatively expressed.

**3.2 Common land**

	Strongly Agree	Agree	undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
To what extent are the borders of the country reflected in the content of the contemporary history of Afghanistan?	%20.5	%34.2	%29	%12.5	%3.8
To what extent have the historical names of the country (Ariana and Khorasan) been discussed in the content of the contemporary history of Afghanistan?	%31.9	%32.8	%20.3	%11.5	%3.5
To what extent is the independence and territorial integrity of the country included in the content of the contemporary history of Afghanistan?	%19.1	%37.4	%31.9	%10.7	%9

According to table (3), the majority of the participants thought that the country's borders are mentioned in the content of the contemporary history of Afghanistan. The border is one of the indicators of the land, by knowing and obtaining information about the borders of the land gives students the feeling that the land belongs to all the ethnic groups living in it, and they use its resources and soil jointly. Most of the respondents believed that the historical names, independence, and territorial integrity of the country were expressed in the content of the contemporary history of Afghanistan.

**3.3 Common history**

	Strongly Agree	Agree	undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
In the content of the contemporary history of Afghanistan, to what extent has attention been paid to the joint wars of Afghans against the colonialists?	%33.9	%32.5	%16.8	%13.3	%3.5
To what extent has the liberation struggle been discussed in the content of the contemporary history of Afghanistan?	%19.4	%30.4	%27.3	%18	%4.9
To what extent has the national flag been mentioned in the content of the contemporary history of Afghanistan?	%13	%19.4	%20.9	%27	%19.7
To what extent has the participation of ethnic groups living in the country been learned in the context of the contemporary history of Afghanistan for mutual acceptance?	%10.1	%20.3	%32.5	%29	%8.1
In the context of the contemporary history of Afghanistan, to what extent have national figures been considered to strengthen national unity?	%19.7	%31.3	%26.4	%18.3	%4.3

Based on table (4), it can be seen that 40% of the people who choose the most option believe that in the content of the contemporary history of Afghanistan, the joint wars of Afghans against the colonialists have been expressed, all the ethnic groups living in the country because they all follow the religion of Islam and belong to are common land, they stood in a fraternal and unified manner against the colonialists of the contemporary era. 30%, which is the most significant percentage, choosing option many, think that the liberation struggle of the Afghan people against foreign colonialism has been observed in the content of the contemporary history of Afghanistan. The people of Afghanistan have always resisted the aggression of the great powers of the world and the region and fought selflessly for the freedom and independence of the country. The majority of participants believed that the national flag of the country is less mentioned in the content of the contemporary history of Afghanistan in the contemporary period. Also, the majority of the participants believed that during the contemporary period, all the ethnic groups living in the country participated in the governments that were formed, and this issue, on The average level, is considered in the context of the contemporary history of Afghanistan, the functions and biographies of national figures are also stated.

### 3.4 Common culture

	Strongly Agree	Agree	undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
To what extent are historical material works mentioned in the context of the contemporary history of Afghanistan?	%20	%28.7	%27	%17.4	%7
To what extent are written works included in the content of the contemporary history of Afghanistan?	%8.7	%23.8	%30.7	%28.7	%8.1
To what extent are there instructive topics in the content of the contemporary history of Afghanistan?	%21.4	%26.7	%26.1	%18.3	%7.5
To what extent are customs and traditions considered in the context of the contemporary history of Afghanistan to strengthen national unity?	%13	%24.1	%39.2	%18.8	%4.9
To what extent have national values been discussed in the context of Afghanistan's contemporary history?	%22.3	%31.3	%27.8	%15.1	%3.5
To what extent has education been emphasized in the content of the contemporary history of Afghanistan?	%18	%20.5	%30.2	%23.8	%7.5
To what extent has the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of contemporary rulers been reflected in the content of Afghanistan's contemporary history?	%16.2	%30.4	%29.3	%18	%6.1
To what extent are major world events mentioned in the contemporary history of Afghanistan?	%31	%27.2	%19.2	%13.6	%9

According to table (5), most participants believed that there are material and written historical works in the content of the contemporary history of Afghanistan. At the same time, they also confirmed that instructive topics, customs, and traditions are respected in the content of the contemporary history of Afghanistan, and there are national values in the content of the contemporary history of Afghanistan. National values are elements that make up a country's national identity and national interests. Our country, Afghanistan, which has large ethnic populations with standard material and spiritual values, has lived together in the course of history under the leadership of royal, republican and democratic systems, which have a typical race, common religion, common traditions, and customs, and common land, and in all Social, economic, cultural and political affairs have contributed actively to the elevation of the homeland, and these values have brought unity and solidarity to all ethnic groups and social populations of the country.

Also, education in various governmental systems of the country's contemporary history has been a gradual process, and it has been mentioned in the context of the contemporary history of Afghanistan. The practical and ineffective functions of the rulers in the context of the contemporary history of Afghanistan have been explained. Regardless of religious, ethnic, racial, linguistic, and sectional issues, reminding the positive and negative functions of the rulers will make all the ethnic groups unite and integrate, considering them as partners in the benefits and harms of the society. Major world events such as World War I and World War II and domestic events are considered in the context of the contemporary history of Afghanistan. In addition to the causes and results of these events, their effects on Afghanistan's political, social, and economic situation are also examined, which creates motivation to maintain and continue unity and solidarity among all ethnic groups.

### 4. Conclusion

In the current research (examining the components of national unity in the context of the contemporary history of Afghanistan from the student's point of view), the components of national unity that strengthen the spirit of national unity have been studied in four dimensions. In the first dimension (the place of the Islamic religion), the role of scholars and religious schools, the rule of law, religious teachings, and religious beliefs that strengthen the spirit of national unity have been investigated. In the second dimension (common land), significant issues such as borders, names, The country's history, independence, and territorial integrity are discussed. In the third dimension (common history), joint wars against colonialists, people's liberation struggles, remembering

the national flag, participation of ethnic groups living in the country in governments, and national personalities have been examined. In the fourth dimension (common culture), historical material works, written historical works, instructive topics, customs and traditions, national values and education, reminders of the effectiveness and ineffectiveness of the function of rulers, major world events, and domestic events have been examined.

The obtained results show that the components of national unity, such as the place of Islam, common land, shared history, and common culture, are present in the context of the contemporary history of Afghanistan. Islam has a special place as one of the components of national unity in Afghanistan. People not only view Islam as culture and customs but also as their value system and behavioral rules. Also, the religious beliefs of the people of Afghanistan have caused them to join hands as a factor of ethnic unity when there are problems and the aggression of foreigners and to unite and strengthen their ranks to repel the foreign enemy according to the rules and teachings of Sharia. At the same time, religious scholars, as missionaries and leaders of the people, have played a significant role in the lives of the people of Afghanistan in different historical periods.

Also, the findings of the current research show that the borders of the country, which are the most critical factor in distinguishing and separating a country from its neighboring country and creating political unity, the historical names of Afghanistan (Ariana and Khorasan), and the independence and territorial integrity of the country, which are the characteristics of the common land. At the same time, common wars against colonialists, liberation struggles, national flag, participation of ethnic groups living in the country in national governments and personalities, which are the characteristics of common history, and material works, written works, instructive subjects, customs and traditions, national values and education that The indicators of common culture are relatively and generally included in the content of the contemporary history of Afghanistan, but these variables have a relative effect in strengthening the spirit of national unity among students. Based on the findings of the present research, the first hypothesis of the research is partially confirmed.

While the present study provides valuable insights into the elements of national unity in the context of Afghanistan's contemporary history subject, some limitations should be considered in future research. Self-reported data: The data for this study was collected through a questionnaire, which relies on self-reported responses from participants. This method may be subject to response bias or social desirability bias, which may affect the accuracy of the results. Lack of control group: The study needed a control group, which makes it difficult to establish causality or to compare the effects of different approaches to teaching contemporary Afghan history. Single data collection method: The study relied solely on using a questionnaire to collect data. Future research could benefit from using additional forms, such as interviews or focus groups, to gather more nuanced information about students' perceptions of national unity in Afghan history.

**Acknowledgements:** We would like to thank anonymous reviewers for their comments that improved this paper.

**Funding:** This research received no external funding.

**Conflicts of Interest:** The authors declare no conflict of interest.

**Publisher's Note:** All claims expressed in this article are solely those of the authors and do not necessarily represent those of their affiliated organizations, or those of the publisher, the editors and the reviewers.

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