

In the Name of God, the Most Merciful, the Most Kind


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Amanullah's Reforms Go Down in History

This year marks the centenary of Afghanistan's Independence declared by King Amanullah Khan, who ushered in his regime with a series of reforms, mainly in terms of culture, education, and politics. Afghanistan's first Constitution was endorsed during Amanullah's regime, which put an end to racial, religious, and sexual discrimination.

Afghan men and women were entitled equally in the Constitution. Primary education was declared an obligation and a number of schools were launched in different provinces of Afghanistan, including Kabul. Moreover, a number of Afghan girls were sent to Turkey for education and women were engaged in social, political, and cultural activities.

Amanullah extended his reform through cancelling underage marriage and declaring hijab, women's headscarf, non-obligatory in Paghman Loya Jirga (1928).

However, Amanullah's drastic reforms were proved counterproductive as they sparked off public sentiment. Afghan conservatives, clergy, and tribal elders strongly reacted against Amanullah's iconoclastic movement and found it contrary to religious values, social norms, and cultural standards.

Although the bulk of Amanullah's movement has been conciliatory with Islamic tenets – which supports women's role in social, cultural, and political activities and deems education an "obligation" for both men and women – it jeopardized the benefits of tribal elders and some clerics, who sought their self-interests at the cost of keeping people in dark.

Meanwhile, Amanullah's movement was against the deeply embedded traditions of tribal belts, mainly tribal code of conduct called "Pashtunwali". Afghanistan was, and still is, a highly traditional community. They seek to protect their code of conduct at the cost of their lives, even though they are in conflict with Islamic tenets in most cases. For example, they conduct desert courts to flagellate or even stone men or women suspect of adultery, resolve family issues through tribal council rather than legal courts, and elders impose their warped mind on the villagers and their descendants, to name but a few.

It is believed that the clash between modernism and conservatism has been continuing in Afghanistan. A large number of Afghan people support modern movements of Amanullah Khan and show great tendency in human rights discourse and democratic principles, which have resurfaced after the collapse of the Taliban's regime. The current Constitution is highly influenced by that of Amanullah's period as it leaves no room for racial, religious or sexual discrimination. With such a constitution, Afghan women have been actively engaged in social, political, and economic activities making great strides. They hold high political positions such as MPs, ambassadors, ministers, governors, etc. Nonetheless, conservatives and religious fundamentalists are still opposing modern movements and democratic activities in one way or another. As a result, scores of individuals show sensitivity towards human rights discourse and democratic principles, calling them western products. They are still against women's involvement in social and political life.

Worst of all, the Taliban are also a group of religious fundamentalists and radical ideologues, along with thugs and criminals, who fight against democratic issues. Similar to the past, a number of radical Muf-tis and Mawlawis (clerics) also find their self-interests at stake with the footstep of democracy in Afghanistan and fight against the democratically established government. Some members of the Taliban group are religious ideologues who are unable to reconcile their parochial mindset with democratic discourse. But some others, mainly their leaders, simply seek to hold power. They capitalize on religious issues to pursue their sinister aims.

Afghan nation is highly obliged to Amanullah's services, even if he did not declare Afghanistan's independence, mostly because of his constructive reforms such as entitling men and women equally, ending racial and religious discrimination, launching girls' schools, and pushing for women's social and political role. One can claim with full confidence that the past kings such as Amanullah Khan and Zahir Shah sowed the seeds of democracy in Afghanistan.

As Afghans celebrate the centenary of Independence, they have to pursue Amanullah's reforms and carry his goodwill and patriotic feelings. No single Afghan citizen has to destroy the country or spill the blood of another individual under sacred terms. In short, Afghanistan's history showed that religious radicals and radicalism played highly destructive role.

History should be an eye-opener for each individual. Afghans have to moderate their mindset and adopt reconciliatory approach towards democratic principles. Sensationalism and sentimental approach have been proved destructive. It is recommended that all Afghans have to pursue a peaceful and prosperous country, which can be achieved through exercising religious tolerance and the spirit of brotherhood and respecting the rights and freedoms of all individuals regardless of their caste, color, or creed. We hope all Afghans celebrate the Independence Day in a peaceful and friendly atmosphere this year.

Why The Political Parties Are Marginalized in Afghanistan

By: Mohammad Zahir Akbari

Unfortunately, the Afghan political parties, especially the traditional parties could not play a constructive role in past two decades in the country. Instead of getting stronger, they have been downgrading from its national or semi-national positions towards ethnical position even so far as changing to personal business firm. As opposed to holding internal elections, they became more like a heritable property inherited from fathers to the sons and grandsons. While, according to clause 6, 7, 8 and 9 of the article fourteenth of regulatory bill for establishment and registration of political parties in Ministry of Justice, no political party should be formed on the basis of ethnicity, location, language and religion. It means that all people of Afghanistan, regardless of any ethnical or religious affiliations, should see their own identity in establishment of political parties but none has respected the regulatory principles yet.

According to article nine of the same regulation, each political party should have at least 35 members from each 34 provinces of the country, and also establish provincial level offices. The local party organizations are of particular importance for a stable and active party. Here, members can directly be politically active. At this level, they have the deepest contact with their party and politics in general. Local party organizations should conduct regular membership meetings, and support, promote and integrate (new) members. These should be invited to the party and district meetings and social events, as well as to discussions on local politics issues and local initiatives, for instance, residential redevelopment such as building road, schools, business settlements etc.

The second issue which is considered as a weak point of some political parties is their violent background in Afghanistan. Unfortunately, some of the traditional political parties has had undeniably destructive role in past four decades of civil war, and so neither they are friendly with democratic system and rule of law and nor can attract technocrat members from the new generation. Moreover, they seem to have extreme tendencies towards their belonging group or tribe and unfortunately, do not believe in democratic values. On the other hand, the technocrat groups of society have never succeeded to establish a bigger coordination or unity mechanism on the basis of democratic values beyond their respective tribe. As a result, these political parties neither are able to gain the trust of people and nor able to contribute in state building process in the country.

The third weakness of political parties is the lack of having specific political programs in the course of state building or materialization of meritocratic system in the country. They are more similar to political dealers than being proactive strategy makers with having clear outlook for the future of their parties or country. In

fact, they are some political brokers than real political parties who produce theories, seek solutions or make political programs for present and future of the nation. Meanwhile, some of the political parties do not have clear fiscal resources and it is said that they receive their budget from unknown resources. In that case, it is obvious that they cannot work for interest of the nation.

The fourth weakness of political parties is the lack of having specialized and expert members. Because of not having proficient cadre they are not able to create national level strategic plans instead they are engaged in unimportant and childish agenda such as ethnic, linguistic and religious issues. On the other hand, they avoid holding internal elections to win the leadership on the basis of meritocratic criteria as they are well aware of their low ability and qualification. If the political parties are managed accordance with modern criteria and standards, they can win the heart of people and also attract numerous expert and high qualified members.

Based on these, Afghanistan does not have any standard and regulated political parties to introduce strong candidates, control the government and produce good programs for the future. However, the new Afghanistan's constitution enables the political parties to operate openly and this is for the first time in history that parties are fully legal but they never have performed their role and function as it was expected. In modern political system, they should perform an important function in a democratic system such as bridge between government and people, watchdog the government and act as a political alternative in the future. Parties are also expected to propose views on domestic and foreign policies, economic and social policies, and youth and civil policies etc. In order to meet these requirements, each party should have certain platforms and programs. This way the negative competitions are changed to positive competitions and they can start to play essential roles in democratic system.

Without political parties, our democracy is imperfect and not credible. If it continues like this, there is no hope for democracy to produce constructive results in Afghanistan. Only, the parties ensure that the citizens are permanently capable to act politically. They mobilize voters, raise awareness, facilitate governance and monitor the opposing party in power. They articulate and integrate different interests, visions and opinions. They are also the main source for the recruitment of political elites. On the other hand, political parties are not able to play a constructive role in the country unless they start the reforms from themselves. Political parties should not be formed on the basis of sectarian criteria but merely on the basis of national interest and meritocracy.

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Contemporary Anti-Terror Laws and Structures of America (Part 2)

By: Rajkumar Singh

Increasing importance of network and data

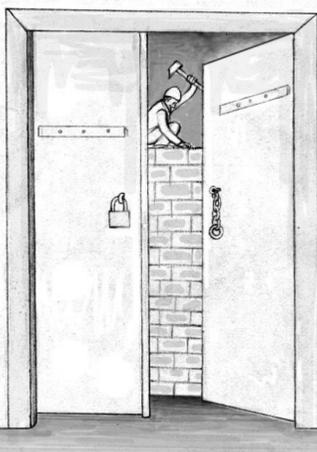
In addition, the event of 9/11 has enhanced the importance of Social Network Analysis (SNA). The basis of social network analysis is that individual nodes, depending on the type of network can be people, event etc, are connected by complex yet understandable relationships that form networks. These networks are ubiquitous, with an underlying order and simple laws. Networks form the structural basis of many natural events, organisations and social processes. Terrorist organisations are well-suited to study using social network analysis, as they consist of networks of individuals, that span countries, continents, and economic status, and form around specific ideology. Terrorist organisations are different from hierarchical, state-sponsored appointments in characteristics such as leadership and organisational structure. At the juncture social network analysis can provide important information on the unique characteristics of terrorist organisations, ranging from issues of network recruitment, network evolution, and the diffusion of radical ideas. After the attack social network expert in academia, the government, and even mainstream media including the Washington Post and the Dallas Morning News began to look explicitly at the use of network methodology in understanding and countering terrorism. It is also to mention here that data collection is difficult for any network analysis because terrorist organisations do not provide information on their members, and the government rarely allows researchers to use their intelligence data. One such social network analysis was published in 2004, namely Understanding Terror Networks by Mare Sageman. Using public sources, Sageman collected biographies of 172 Islamic terrorist operatives affiliated with the global Salafi Jihad, the violent revivalist Islamic movement led by Al-Qaeda. He used social network analysis specifically on Al-Qaeda operatives since 1998. This analysis yields four large terrorist clusters. The first cluster resides in the Pakistan-Afghan border and consists of the central staff of Al-Qaeda and the global Salafist Jihad movement. The second cluster is a group of operatives located in core Arab states such as Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Yemen, and Kuwait. The third cluster is known as the Maghreb Arabs who, although they come from North African nations, currently reside in France and England. The final cluster is centered in Indonesia and Malaysia and is

affiliated with Jemaah Islamiyah. However for the same work and purpose the federal government had used link analysis which Karl Van Meter describes of two types—the village survey method and traffic analysis. The village survey method is used to understand family and community relationships while traffic analysis emphasises the study of the external characteristics of communication in order to get information about the organisation of the communication system. Thus, the large social network analysis can be used to understand terrorist networks, inform US homeland security policy, and form the basis of a more effective counter-measure to net war.

US always moved unanimously on terror

As the national interests need to clearly take precedence over political partisanship, in America's hour of crisis both—the Republicans and the Democrats stood united and speaking in one voice. After September 11, 2001, a new world emerged that was harder, fiercer, less tolerant and more assertive. In that kind of situation a totally different approach to counter terrorism is needed. It was a case of doing what has been done before but doing more of it and doing it more effectively. Now at the heart of countering terrorism is the intelligence and the events of September 11 which have also focussed attention on intelligence work as never before. The US has imposed new border controls along with other anti terror measures. It began to take the fingerprint of those who come to the country and has given the FBI investigative powers which were previously unacceptable—for example, the power to monitor suspected terrorists without prior evidence of criminal activity and rolling back restrictions imposed decades ago to curb anti-communist hysteria. Now it became more acceptable for the government to take more powers to detain or deport those suspected of plotting terrorism in other countries. Before the incident there was greater concern about the quality of the evidence and the nature of the regime alleging terrorist involvement. But on the other hand it is also necessary, especially in countries like the USA to balance the citizens' right to live their lives in freedom with minimum interference with their privacy from the security agencies, against their responsibility to protect their citizens from harm.

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