

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



August 18, 2019

History Should be Eye-Opener for Afghan Nation and State

Soraya Tarzai, the first Queen consort of Afghanistan in the early 20th century and the wife of King Amanullah Khan, played an essential role in Amanullah's modernization program. She became Amanullah's comrade and the first Muslim consort to appear in public with her husband.

Soraya was always by her husband's side at national events, hunting parties, cabinet meetings, wounded soldiers' tents during the war of independence, and even in dangerous provinces.

Queen Saraya worked hard regarding women's rights and education and became an influential figure in the country. She played an active part in the progressive movement of Amanullah, who sought to modernize Afghanistan similar to Turkey and Egypt.

Amanullah, being impressed by the intellectual attitude of his father-in-law Sardar Mahmud Beg Tarzi, tried for women's liberation and paved the ground for women to exercise their fundamental rights and have access to education. Mahmud Tarzai, a modern thinker and the leader of constitutionalist movement who also served as Afghan Minister of Foreign Affairs, supported Amanullah's modernist movement and put great influence on both Amanullah and his daughter Queen Soraya.

Generally speaking, a number of women played very active and constructive role in Afghanistan's social, cultural, and political arenas. Their footprint is felt in many spheres of collective life. Despite the patriarchal system and restrictive traditions of the country, they raised their voice against injustice and violation of their rights and freedoms. In modern days, some female politicians and civil activists echo the feelings of those women.

Although Afghan people celebrate the centenary of the country's Independence, there are still a number of individuals, in the government's machinery, who have played a destructive role in the country. In other words, those who were widely involved in civil unrest and denounced the modernist movement of King Amanullah are also celebrating the country's Independence.

There are two reasons behind the failure of reforms and modernist movements in Afghanistan; First, the reformists did not consider the sensitivity and traditional culture of Afghanistan and pushed their movement at fast pace. But conservative figures and traditionalists were the main drawback before progressive movements. Those individuals denounced Amanullah and his movement and turned their guns against him.

Afghan nation will not forgive those individuals who undid Amanullah's movement through their radical acts. They destroyed the country and spilled the blood of thousands of people under the mask of religion. Moreover, the factions and individuals involved in civil unrest harmed not only Afghanistan's cultural values and social norms but also destroyed the infrastructures and weakened the economy. Taking its independence a century ago, Afghanistan is still a war-torn, poor, and weak state.

Meanwhile, the civil unrest and conservative and radical movements put a highly adverse effect on social issues, mainly women's civil and human rights. The parties involved in civil conflict or the current militant groups, including the Taliban, exercised patriarchal system, in which the women's rights and freedoms has no room. Those misogynistic approaches sacrificed women's rights, dignity, and gradual achievements.

Ironically, Afghan religious fundamentalists showed and are showing strong sensitivity towards women's rights and freedoms but shed the blood of innocent people without a tinge of guilt despite the fact that the Holy Quran says that if one kills an innocent person, s/he kills the entire humanity.

To celebrate the independence, Afghan people have to ponder over history and seek not to repeat the past social and political errors. They have to exercise religious and racial tolerance and respect the rights and freedoms of one another. One should no more hurl vitriol at someone's dress code or way of walking and talking. They should not discriminate women or ethnic minorities on the grounds of their gender, race or color.

Meanwhile, Afghan political and religious figures should not seek their self-interests under the mask of religion. They have to stop capitalizing on public sentiment and jeopardizing national interests simply to pursue power.

It is a great pity that Afghans celebrate the Independence Day in a fearful atmosphere. It is self-evident that Afghans paid heavy sacrifices for independence, human rights discourse, and democratic principles, a vacuum for the spirit of brotherhood and social harmony is strongly felt in collective life. Peace and prosperity still remains elusive.

It is not sufficient if Afghans simply admire the past and the achievements made during the past regimes. We have to ponder what we have achieved so far and ask if we have protected those achievements. What are the achievements of our current leaders and politicians? Both Afghan nation and state have to learn from the history so as to pursue the path of progressive leaders and not repeat the past errors.

Pessimism and Optimism over The US-Taliban Peace Agreement

By: Mohammad Zahir Akbari

The eighth round of US-Taliban peace talks just ended on August 12 in Qatar but it caused a lot of Pessimism and optimism across Afghanistan. It has caused optimism because the two sides have finally drafted an agreement about complicated conflicts of Afghanistan hoping to end the long war. It has also caused some doubts and criticism as why the peace agreement is ambiguous and not shared to the people of Afghanistan. However, the talks probably focused on four main issues including the withdrawal of foreign forces, the Taliban's disconnection with the terrorist groups, in particular the al-Qaeda network and Taliban's commitment for not letting the terrorist groups to use Afghan soil for terrorist operations. In addition, the talks were to initiate intra-Afghan talks and announcement of a general ceasefire in the country. It said that the agreement is under assessment by both parts expected to be completed in a few next days but some changes may occur in some parts of the draft agreement. Therefore, the two sides will need another meeting to discuss the new changes and suggestions about the draft agreement.

But, as abovementioned, the draft agreement has created pessimism and optimism in the country; it gave much hope to end the 18-year war in Afghanistan and pave the way for further political dialogue between the government and the Taliban. Nevertheless, there are also concerns in regard to ambiguity and outcome of the negotiations; seemingly, the content of the draft agreement has not been shared with the government while people are fully unaware about the contents of the agreement. According to the procedure of previous meetings, details of the meetings and descriptions of the negotiations were to be communicated to the Afghan Government after the summit, but this time, the Afghan Government has not been provided any details about the draft agreement.

A number of Afghanistan's prominent former Jihadi leaders stress on avoiding a potential uncertainty or civil war in the country. For example, Mohammad Ismail Khan, a member of the Jamiat-e-Islami party, said to media that a civil war can happen in the country if there isn't a good peace deal in the future. He express concerns about the fragile condition and possibility of war as millions of weapons are among people. Saleh Mohammad Registani, another political analyst says that the Taliban are attempting to enter into the peace process in the political arena of Afghanistan with weapons which could impel him to be prepared alongside other Jihadi leaders to defend the people of Afghanistan against possible threats in the future.

"The Taliban are looking to keep their weapons and their territory both and enter into the political scene of the power. This doesn't mean peace but a fragile ceasefire and such a

move can spark another war. If the Taliban try to enter into peace with weapons, this will not be peace. In that case, of course, we will consider some measures to defend our people," Mr. Registani said pointing at efforts on peace efforts as the Afghans impatiently wait to see what comes out of the recent talks between the US and the Taliban in Doha.

Meanwhile, Mohammad Mohaqiq, another powerful Afghan Jihadi and political figure who has commanded fierce battles against the Taliban in the past says that if the Afghan government fails to form an inclusive peace negotiating team for talking peace with the Taliban, any negotiation with the group will not yield an outcome and instead, this will push the nation towards a new crisis.

In general, it is very important for the people of Afghanistan to know what issues are included and what issues are to be agreed upon. It is true that these are negotiations between the US and Taliban, but any agreement directly affects the future lives and destiny of the Afghan people. The US came to Afghanistan to take revenge on the perpetrators of the 9/11 incident and declared that it has deployed troops in Afghanistan to destroy terrorist networks and want to establish security and support law enforcement agencies in the country. They also wanted to speed up the process of reconstruction and modernization in the country but none has materialized yet.

Therefore, the US should not unilaterally resolve their problems with the enemies of Afghan people and just decide on their own interests, regardless of the collective destiny of the people and the future of governance in the country. In fact, consultation with the government and people of Afghanistan is of the undeniable right of Afghan people and no country should try to ignore it.

Some of the political leaders also try to interrupt the election process. They should know that the main peace talks begin when talks start on fundamental peace issues that have not begun yet. Undoubtedly, the Government and Taliban talks will be the most challenging and time-consuming one. We should note that both sides have been fighting for 18 years and each side has certain goals and considerations which are not resolvable in a short time. The negotiations may last a year or more.

On the other hand, the talks are not only about the ceasefire and withdrawal of foreign troops from Afghanistan, but the main issue of the agreement is on republicanism and emirate. Also the issue of human rights and citizenship, the issue of women rights, essential rights and freedom of people, especially minority groups. This is where the issue becomes critical for the people of Afghanistan. So, delaying the elections will have nothing but failure, political disruption, and the collapse of the system.

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Afghanistan's Independence and Its Importance at International Level

By: Bezhaz Azam

Almost one century ago, Afghanistan gained its independence from British Empire. People at home and abroad reacted to this great historic event. Inside Afghanistan, fellow citizens reacted to this great national epic by celebrations and expression of their support of the Afghan youth regime and King Amanullah Khan. After gaining freedom, an independent, proud and developed Afghanistan was considered as the most important goal of the Afghan government and the nation.

Moreover, the overseas movements of liberation in the region and the Islamic world affected by this important event had abandoned the legend of the invincibility of the British Empire, which was used as a powerful motivator for strengthening and expanding liberation movements in their countries. This event created sparks of hope in other Asian countries at a time when they were under political and economic domination of foreign powers. Indian liberators, especially Indian Muslims, interpreted the independence of Afghanistan as a good omen and demanded the revival of the Islamic caliphate, which was abandoned after the victory of Mustafa Kamal in Turkey, led by King Amanullah Khan. It is worth to mention that the value and importance of Afghanistan's independence at international level was revealed during the six months of King Amanullah's journey to Europe. When King Amanullah arrived in Egypt, the Egyptians and the reputable newspapers recognized the visit of Afghanistan's king to Egypt as a historic event and a great honor for the Egyptian people, and welcomed him as a champion of the Islamic world. All this welcome and respect in reality was a kind of praise and appreciation of the heroism and courage of the poor, the oppressed and the unheard nation who, with all the incapacity rise and broke up the first circle of British colonialism with incredible courage, and moved in line with independent political and economic life. Undoubtedly, this courageous act to other nations of the world was more like a myth than the truth. In many countries, King Amanullah was encouraged and loved by people and their leaders as a mythical hero. For instance, when King

Amanullah arrived in Iran, during the meetings and visits to the Iranian people, they showed so much affection and sincerity on their part that even made Reza Shah jealous and anxious. He wished that king Amanullah Khan should leave his country as soon as possible, so that, these visits would not cause the insurgency and dissatisfaction of the people against him.

Furthermore, the European countries expressed their interest in meeting with King Amanullah and to establish political, economic and cultural relations with the new and independent government of Afghanistan. In particular, British competitors in Europe, which included Germany and France called for widespread political, economic, and cultural relations with Afghanistan.

It is noteworthy that gaining independence from British Empire gave special authority and prestige to Afghanistan at international level. As German President Paul von Hindenburg presented the flag of the country to King Amanullah during the military parade held in honor of the national day of Germany. Further, when King Amanullah visited Paris, he was offered by the Mayor of Paris to sleep on Napoleon Bonaparte's bed on the first night of his stay in the city, and he was given the title Napoleon of the East. On the other hand, the British authorities committed to offer significant grants including economic cooperation to Afghanistan during the visit of King Amanullah from London if the king avoid his travel to Moscow. Nevertheless, King Amanullah refused all these offers to reveal the unconditional independence of Afghanistan and departed to Moscow. During his visits and signing of bilateral agreements with soviet authorities, he succeeded to further strengthen the bilateral ties between the states.

The Afghan youth regime could achieve international trust and credibility by gaining freedom from the British Empire and establishment of an independent state. Protecting the independence of the country and continuing the modernization path of King Amanullah can ensure a peaceful and prosperous Afghanistan.

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