

The reasons for the existence of fundamentalism in Afghanistan

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Abstract: After the Soviet war in Afghanistan, fundamentalists, issues were raised by the global media due to certain reasons, becoming known and important to the world. The way of presenting, explaining, and expanding this matter which has become “The first issue in the world politics” relates to the motivation and aim of politicians whose aims and benefits were linked to those of Afghanistan’s. It has been said that a majority of 99% of people adhere to Islamic law. Consequently, the atmosphere and growth circumstances are quite appropriate for religious theories to propagate, although they may be considered extremist. On the other hand, as discussed in the followings, Russia’s invasion to Afghanistan and the formation of communist governments with their anti-religious reforms saddened the Muslims of Afghanistan greatly, in a way that every individual or group propagating the Islamic theory or promising the religious reign would be welcomed. Especially, Mujahidin groups raised a flag against Russian invaders, as well as promoting the religious theory, and sought a war with them for the independence of Afghanistan practically.

[Fatemeh Rajabi. **The reasons for the existence of fundamentalism in Afghanistan.** *Academ Arena* 2013;5(5):63-67] (ISSN 1553-992X). <http://www.sciencepub.net/academia>. 12

Key words: Afghanistan, fundamentalism, the reasons for the formation of fundamentalism, Islamic theory

1. Introduction

One of the significant problems involved in the geographical politics of Afghanistan is the issue of Pakistan. Afghanistan is a neighbor of Pakistan from North, South, and East. Hence, three border lines of Afghanistan are surrounded by Pakistan. Pakistan is a potential threat and even a practical one to Afghanistan in the acute circumstances of political or military importance. The most notable matter in this case is to protect and empower fundamentalists and send them to Afghanistan from Pakistan. A problem which is even shown by the documents of training and arming Afghan and Arab fundamentalist who have been sent to Afghanistan with the centrality of Pakistan. The Afghan writer of the book “My banned face” considered Pakistan obviously involved in the chaos, difficulties, and military hardships of Afghanistan. For instance, he writes, “According to Mujahidin’s agreement, Pakistan is not willing to have a powerful nation right in front of her borders. They want to tear us apart because of their lack of unity. While our country is unstable due to ethnic wars, Pakistan can happily continue to pose her invasive politics against India and benefits from financial support by the US.” The other problem is the existence of China on the East side of Afghanistan. The neighborhood of these two countries can’t mean any harm to Afghanistan in political and civilized wars brought by the superpowers. It must be emphasized that such a country is going to be globalized. China possesses factors like power, population, and land. Not only does China’s present economic power own almost all of the markets in the region, but also the world capitalists are afraid of the fact that the global markets get to the hand of China. After the disappearance of the

Soviet Union as one of the two poles of the world system and incapability of the European Union to maintain a political balance in the international order, China can play a major role in the balance with her economic power. On the other hand, China jeopardizes the West, having a “non-western civilization” as a superior hegemonic civilization. This peril encloses the entire western civilization. China’s nuclear power adds up to the other factors and makes her a threat to the future of the west. Therefore, Samuel Huntington, in his book “The Clash of Civilizations”, describes China as a threat to the future of the west because of having a “Confucian Civilization” while benefiting from the nuclear weapon and a geography which is near the Islamic world in the area. The whole matters of China are problematic for Afghanistan which has common border with it, because China’s rivals will have plans in order to prevent and obstruct this country’s power, so Afghanistan is won’t be immune to them. Afghanistan’s neighborhood with Iran is another problem. Being upset of Iran’s Islamic revolution, the West has been trying constantly to practice the theory of Islamic revolution in the area and the world for three decades, applying various methods of inaction, failure, or prevention (Chater, David.2009). On the other hand, the progresses made by the Islamic Republic in different realms especially the nuclear issue have been considered worries for the West. Therefore, Iran is a determinative problem for the West in terms of geography and politics. This matter was of high importance to the Communist System at the time of the Soviet Union. So, it is obvious that the western powers to interfere in Afghanistan’s affairs in order to use the advantage of having borders with Iran. Even occupying Afghanistan by the western

forces and their prolonged presence in this land could be an important step in order to control and monitor the Islamic Iran directly. The fact that Afghanistan's nation is Muslim, along with Persian race and language in that country and many interests and cultural intersections between the two nations of Iran and Afghanistan can't be hidden to the eyes of world powers. These matters could be the reasons for direct and indirect interference in Afghanistan, making the independence, peace, and security of that country unstable. Given the poverty and deprivations which have been caused through decades of war and struggle in Afghanistan, the country is fertile and rich in terms of resources and mines. The mines of gold, silver, copper, iron, and even emerald and lazuli are fortunes drawing avaricious attentions of others to this country (Rizivi, N. 1988).

Undoubtedly, the stability and safety of Afghanistan with the existence of a national, powerful government could exploit the resources and mines to the advantage of the nation. However, will the greedy foreigners who always try plunder other countries in the world politics allow this? Looking at Asian countries, Samuel Huntington considers their economic growth as a reason for their self-confidence to increase amongst Asian societies, believing this matter causes the world political order to shatter. The result of this western doctrine is that it is necessary to block the way Asian countries seek to grow economically in order to prevent or deter their imminent victory over the West especially the US. Hence, it can be understood how the West is trying to prevent Afghanistan as an Asian country possessing an important geopolitical position from benefiting from the available resources and mines. A researcher has evaluated the geopolitical position of Afghanistan in this way: The Soviet Union's military attack on Afghanistan was made in the framework of geopolitical features. When the armed forces of the Soviet Union entered the geographical territories of Afghanistan, the possibility of gaining access to the economic resources of the Persian Gulf increased, adding up as much as 1500 kilometers to the geo-economic resources of the Persian Gulf.

2. The reasons for fundamentalists to be present in Afghanistan

It has been clarified in the previous discussions that the fundamentalism ideology and fundamentalists entered the political and military grounds the years before the emergence of Taliban. As a result of such studies, it can be easily understood that Taliban and Al-Qaeda were firstly the followers of the fundamentalists, who were active in Afghanistan from the early 70s, in terms of ideology and belief. Secondly, their victory and progress until the formation of a government was not only a strange fact, but it was also the result of different factors, especially the war of

power between fundamentalist groups (Davidson, Lawrence (1998) . A war in which the Mujahidin groups take part before the emergence of Taliban, but Taliban became the only powerful group in the country by defeating them. Therefore, the existence of Taliban and studying the reasons and the quality of their existence do not need intellectual and ideological roots. What need to be precisely followed are the quality, reasons, and factors of the military-political presence of Taliban and their progress. The financial, reinforcing factors and military, political supports require discussion on both Mujahidin and Taliban. Thus, the reasons get reviews as follows:

2.1. The first reason: Foreigners' interests

Ahmed Rashid, the Pakistani reporter, writes:

Taliban's wounds are constant reminders of the 20-year wars which left over 1.5 million dead people and destroyed the country. The Soviet Union spent 5 billion dollars in Afghanistan only in one year, out of an overall amount which was 45 billion dollars, to annihilate the Mujahidin. The US helped the Mujahidin around 4 to 5 billion dollars between the years 1980 and 1992. America, the European, and the Islamic countries helped the farmers mostly with lethal weapons, and they used these weapons for destructive purposes. This was a totality of foreigners' intervention because of their interests. However, the Saudi Arabia's intervention can be considered for ideological purposes (war against communism). The initial bankroll of the fundamentalists outside Afghanistan was the government of Pakistan. This government has clearly supported the political activists and party leaders to commencing the parties, as well as harboring those who were wanted. A more important point in this regard is providing the facilities for armed rebellions inside Afghanistan. It has been written on this matter, "Although the fundamentalists had been repeatedly suppressed, they continue to exist as underground movements until 1973 and most of them immigrated to Pakistan after Davood took over the poser. There, they got closer to the Pakistani fundamentalist groups and the intelligence agencies which became more and more important during the conflicts in Afghanistan."

Pakistan's supports of fundamentalist groups are a lot, before coming to Afghanistan for the war. It has been said, "In early 1975, the first groups trained by I.S.I attacked the military bases of Davood's regime in the valley of Panj-Sheer. They were led by the Islamic community, the majority of Tajiks. The Islamic community and party were the largest fundamentalist group which later received America's aid."

Thus, in the following years in which the fundamentalists fought against the Soviet army, a war which was meant to save the country from the hands of occupiers, the Central Intelligence Agency of America

(CIA) encouraged the military regime of Zia Al-Haq, who was the president of Pakistan at the time, to commence the military supporting plan to help the rebels. David Newsom, deputy of the US secretary of foreign affairs at the time, said in this regard, "CIA and ISI (Inter-Services Intelligence of Pakistan) cooperated on the military training plan of the rebels and collaborating newly received helps from China, the Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Kuwait." A specialist of Afghanistan's affairs has found out that the major strategic aim of Pakistan is to weaken the national capabilities through civil wars which destroy the warfare, industrial plants, and communicative paths. Achieving this purpose has been initiated since the presence of Russians in Afghanistan. Establishing a weak and cooperative government in Afghanistan, turning Afghanistan to a market for Pakistani goods, disconnecting or diminishing Afghanistan's political-economic relationships with India and Iran, taking control of communication paths of Central Asia and the Indian Ocean, transforming Afghanistan to a retaining country, diffusion barrier of Russia and India, and making Afghanistan a field for military training maneuvers. Therefore, the Islamic fundamentalists have benefited from Pakistan's support during their armed conflicts. Hence, it must be said, "Pakistan's government have been supporting and arming the fundamentalist since 1970s and the presidency of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. Then, the strategy of financial and weaponry supports continued in the following years, and the ideological educations of fundamentalists were conducted in Pakistan's schools."

The US state took actions after the communist governments which were dependent on the Soviet Union emerged in Afghanistan. America helped the fundamentalists through Pakistan. China helped the fundamentalists on account of neighbors' interests. Arab countries like the Saudi Arabia gradually affected the fundamentalists with ideological educations as well as financial supports.

Huntington has written, "Most of the financial supports given to Afghans were done by the Saudi Arabia. The Saudis gave the Afghan resistance a 525-million-dollar help from 1984 to 1986. They agreed to afford 61% of a total of 715 million dollars, which means 436 million dollars, to cover the war expenses while the rest was supposed to be covered by the United States of America. The Saudis gave Afghanistan's government 193 million dollars in 1993. The Saudi Arabia's assistance was at least equal to or perhaps more than 3 to 3.3 billion dollars which the US spent in this war. Almost 25 thousands volunteers of Islamic countries, mostly the Arab ones, participated in this war. Most of these volunteers who had been recruited in Jordan were hired and trained by Pakistan's securities agencies. Also, Pakistan was the distributing

operator of Americans' money, allocating 75% of these financial supports to the Islamic fundamentalist groups." Generally, foreign intervention in Afghanistan can be considered beyond financial, military, and political supports. This means that fundamentalist manpower entering Afghanistan has been one of the main factors of the foreign intervention. For example, it has been said, "Many Muslims came to Afghanistan from other countries in order to take part in the war in the mid-1980s. The reason for some of them to participate in the war was Jihad or the sacred war. Rescuing Afghanistan from the hands of occupiers was a sacred aim which pleased God and brought worldly honor to the participators of the war."

It is clear that sending such armed forces to Afghanistan was not possible without the approval and support of the mentioned governments. A research has considered Pakistan's interests leading to intervention in Afghanistan like this, "To Afghan Mujahidin and the national forces of this country, the Jihad was ended after the Soviet forces exit the country, and forming a government to run the country was the major objective, however, this policy was against Pakistan's aims. Therefore, Arab Salafists and non-Afghan fighters who had come to Afghanistan to fight a Jihad against infidels became highly important in the security and intelligence system of Pakistan and formed a shadow government."

2.2. The second reason: The US and its interests in Afghanistan

A question is raised that what was so important about Afghanistan for the US to bind the highly great expenses of helping the fundamentalists in war with the Soviet Union? In other words, what were the objectives and interests of the US by intervening in Afghanistan? What would the reasons be? To answer, some reasons pointed out by an analyst can be taken into account:

The first reason is in regard of Afghanistan's geo-politic position. Because this country is near India, China, Russia, and Iran, which can easily be monitored through Afghanistan. Valentine Prosokov writes, "Some practitioners of political geography affairs consider the possibility that Russia and Iran contemplate creating a military-economic-political block based on their common interests and mutual respect, aiming to achieve a regional stability. A block in which India and China can step in certain circumstances as a consequence. It may turn to a powerful barrier in the way of hegemonic affairs of the United States of America which declares every nook and cranny on earth with a slight smell of oil to be inside its own perimeter of vital interests."

The second reason is that Afghanistan is rich in mineral resources, like other Middle-Eastern countries.

The third reason concerns the agricultural fields in Afghanistan. Around 90% of the world poppy is provided in these fields. Taking control of the trade of this ominous material, the US makes a large benefit and achieves its interests.

The fourth reason is that turning Afghanistan to the center of crisis makes the world forget about other issues including Israel and Palestine. The US plays the role of world leader very well.

The policy of inhibiting America explains the important purpose and incentive of the US by staying in Afghanistan while supporting and intervening in fundamentalists' affairs. What is discussed as a dual inhibition considers Iran and Iraq. Ravidov has written, "It was Washington's policy to control Iran and Iraq, which Clinton's government called a dual inhibition."

A Russian researcher believes, "Our country was called the axis of the world in ancient times, and Iran may now want to take over her former role. It is not wondrous that some practitioners of the political geography affairs consider the likelihood that that Russia and Iran contemplate creating a military-economic-political block based on their common interests and mutual respect, aiming to achieve a regional stability. A block in which India and China can step in certain circumstances as a consequence." This belief is on the same page with Huntington's Clash of the Civilizations theory, so it makes the policy of inhibiting America in the interventions feasible (Hopkins, B. D. 2008).

3.2. The third reason: The socialist governments

The record of fundamentalism fighting in Afghanistan indicates that the religious beliefs of most people have mad the political leaders and activists emerge. The parties and their famous leaders, who were later known as Mujahidin, had been the fundamentalists who were in bottleneck due to the political activities during the time of Davood Khan. Their departure to Pakistan during the time of Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto was a way for the continuity of the political campaigns with the purpose of "Establishing a religious government." "The Islamic state" and "The Islamic republic" which was mentioned by Mujahidin at the time meant the religious authority with the law enforcement.

The images remained of communist governments in Afghanistan indicates that the social reforms were against the religious appetite of Afghani people and made them to conflict and struggle. For instance, it has been said, "The committed Marxists and supporters of the Soviet Union who were in power took steps in the government after Davood Khan. An example is the land reforms saying anyone owing more than 214 acres of agricultural land was supposed to give in the extra acres."

These reforms made a lot of Afghans angry. Plus, another factor causing anger amongst Afghans was the fact that communism is associated with atheism. According to communistic beliefs, the social progress can't be achieved as long as people give prayers credit and trust in God in order to solve the problems in life. Therefore, this worry dawned on Afghans that the trust in God and getting guidance from the Quran became lower in importance.

It became obvious that the religious beliefs of Afghani people, most of whom believing in them, didn't approved of the "Atheistic communist government." Hence, the social reforms based on communistic thoughts changed the belief disagreements to conflicts and then uprising and rebellion (Maley, William (2009).

The party leaders and political activists who were of religious fundamentalists gain more power in this period than before and the time of Davood Khan's presidency. Generally, fundamentalism grew against the ruling ideology, having been accepted by people in large scale. This problem had another reason, apart from the conflict between religious beliefs and the atheistic communism. That reason was "The existence of a dependent government on the Soviet Union in Afghanistan," which gradually led to the invasive raid of the Soviet army. Therefore, the rebellion and riot of fundamentalist people of Afghanistan and their political efforts in parties and communities were done to 2 ends which are firstly, fighting against the atheism of communism in order to remove this government and set up a religious one, and secondly, fighting the occupiers to achieve political and geographical independence of Afghanistan which was lost (Graham Fulle. 1991).

It is obvious that the leaders of fundamentalist parties take the lead in such circumstances. Speaking of the religious laws and picturing the future in the religious reign, these leaders stated the people's desires and sought to implement it. The writer of "My banned face", who is of serious opponents of fundamentalism and Afghan fundamentalists, pays attention to different problems indicating "The practical fundamentalist beliefs amongst people of Afghanistan." He writes on one subject, "My mother examined the neighbor women for free every other day. The women whose husbands were so strict that didn't let them go to the hospital and be placed under the care of male doctors. That's why many doctors in Kabul, especially the women specialists, are female."

The female Afghan writer talks about Kabul, the capital city of Afghanistan. A city which she had named modern before the reign of fundamentalists. Hence, it can be concluded that the religious culture of Afghan people required religious saviors to encounter communism, those who could replace communists and execute Islamic laws the reason for Noor Muhammad

Torki to be less powerful compared to Abdul-Rahman was that he placed the purpose in destroying the basics of social interaction fundamentally.

The communist government stated that marriage portion had to be abolished. Marriage did not need to be based on family. Women possessed the same writes as men, and education was mandatory for girls.”

3. Discussion

The significant matter on fundamentalists in Afghanistan is that these Islamic fundamentalist were at foreigners’ service as a tool in the first place. They became an instrument to promote the interferers’ incentives and aims without their own knowledge. Thus, although they tried to achieve two goals of “Fighting for the belief” and “Fighting for independence,” their efforts were actually made for the intervention, penetration, and progress of the West in Afghanistan. Hence, the US was the last winner of war in Afghanistan, instead of the fundamentalists and the people. Peter Marsedon clarified this matter and wrote, “The US government tried to establish a government in Afghanistan with roots in small fundamentalists groups and academic circles of the elites in an effort to make the Soviet Union unstable. This “Viable tool” was later followed in the behaviors of Taliban and Al-Qaeda.”

4/25/2013

Acknowledgement:

Author is grateful to p to carry out this work.

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