
**AFGHANISTAN: A TRIBAL CONFEDERATION
TO MODERN STATE SOCIAL
RESPONSES TO MODERNITY**

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The modern state system was evolved in Europe in the mid of seventeenth century, whereas the same system progressed to the rest of the world under colonial and international pressures of the 19th and 20th centuries. Afghanistan emerged as a tribal confederation in the middle of the eighteenth century based upon relational contracts, traditional order, local allegiances and social norms. The tribal heads enjoyed substantial autonomy through *Loya Jargah** as a consultative mechanism to bestow authority on leaders and their policies. In the last quarter of nineteenth century when Russia and Britain advanced through Central Asia and India, Afghanistan managed to keep itself away from the influences of either of the two powers. Both the powerful states wished to establish an indirect hold on Afghan affairs rather than direct presence. After two Anglo-Afghan wars the British were, however, able to get control over Afghanistan's foreign policy. British subsidies in cash and weapons enabled Afghan Amirs to modernize their backward tribal state. In Afghan society tribal authority and religious influence remained a dominant feature and whenever these two factors were ignored by the state in its quest of modernization, the social response was beyond their expectations.

This paper is an attempt to look into the effort of Afghan rulers to make Afghanistan a modern state. It focuses on the periods of Amir Abdul Rehman Khan, King Amanullah Khan and modernization of Afghanistan under Soviet support. The paper revolves around the parameters of education, urbanization, industrialization and democratization. It examines

* *Loya Jargah* is a Pashto word means grand council. The constitution of Afghanistan defines the *Loya Jargah* as the highest manifestation of the people of Afghanistan.

the causes of tribal resistance against modernization policies of the state. It further discusses the dynamics of tribal ascendancy over state policies.

Key words: state, society, confederation, tribal, modernization.

Introduction

Afghanistan was not in a present shape till the mid of eighteenth century. It was a non-existent political entity, a land inhabited by tribes and often tribal confederations linked to neighbouring nations. It was in 1747 when a *jargah* of nine Pushtun tribes elected Ahmed Shah Abdali their *Amir* who laid the foundation of the present state of Afghanistan and continued efforts for extending and consolidating its power.

In the last quarter of the nineteenth century, Afghanistan was caught in the rivalry between two major powers the imperialist Russia and colonial British. British India was eager to extend its influence to Afghanistan an area they had to control to counter Russian expansionist designs, while Russia after exerting its control over Central Asia was also interested in Afghanistan. However, both the empires thought it better to make Afghanistan a buffer state between themselves with delineated boundaries. It was during the reign of Amir Abdur Rahman (1880-1901) when the Anglo-Russian boundary commission demarcated the frontiers of Afghanistan to make it a buffer state between their spheres of influence. After having permanent boundaries, the Amir initiated cautious efforts to transform Afghanistan from tribal confederation to a modern state. Later on King Amanullah Khan, the grandson of Amir Abdul Rahman, was also eager to modernize this backward country through a series of political, economic and social reforms. His imprudent modernization policies alienated the major segments of Afghan society and the social response was further fuelled by the fire by British machination. His reforms could not reduce tribal and religious fervour, owing to the backlash of the masses and King Amanullah was forced to abdicate the throne. The subsequent rulers adopted a prudent course of action to run Afghanistan affairs.

After the World War II, in the bipolar world Afghan rulers, eager to modernize their state, could not receive the US financial and military assistance to cope up with the new realities of the world and they had to turn towards the other super power. The USSR agreed to provide aid and invest in Afghanistan's economy and military but in the Cold War period it was not possible to secure generous Soviet aid without its Communist ideology. The dream of Afghan rulers regarding modernization

of Afghanistan through Soviet military and economic aid became an ordeal in the subsequent years. Afghanistan later came under pro-Communist rulers who wanted to communise Afghanistan rather than modernise under the capitalist system.

Afghanistan on the road of modernity

Western social scientists describe modernization theory that refers to a process a nation passes through, in the transitional phase, from a traditional society to a modern one. As per theory the social variables have been identified which contribute to progress and develop societies. According to these theorists, modernization is a process of urbanization, industrialization, education and democratization.¹ Apart from these four interrelated variables, the process of modernization was quite different in Afghanistan.

The prominent Muslim thinker and advocate of social and political reforms, Sayyid Jamaluddin Afghani (1838-1896) introduced modernist thought in Afghanistan. He found a place in the court of Amir Dost Mohammad Khan in 1857 and followed through the court of Amir Sher Ali Khan. He submitted a programme of comprehensive reforms to Amir Sher Ali. But due to his close relations with the rival of Amir, Sardar Mohammad Azam Khan, he was expelled from Afghanistan.² His modernist ideas could not be implemented owing to the critical phase, Afghanistan was passing through at that time. However, when the boundaries of Afghanistan were delineated by the colonial and imperial powers, foreign policy went into the hands of British and in return regular subsidies were granted to Afghan Amirs, then they turned their focus on modernizing their backward state.³ The process was initiated by Amir Abdul Rahman.

On ascending the throne, Amir Abdul Rahman (1880-1901) found his countrymen in miserable conditions. In education sector Afghanistan had a poor literacy rate despite rich literature in Dari language but they had no idea about the modern Western education system and science.⁴ More than 90 per cent population lived in rural areas.⁵ Industrialization was not introduced to Afghanistan and absolute monarchy was the system of government.⁶ Afghan society was based on tribes and clans who fought relentlessly against each other and the Central government had no such power to exert authority over them. On the other hand, the army of the country was brave enough but not trained. There was a lack of efficiency with very little training amongst the ranks and files of Afghan

troops.⁷ Afghanistan was a political entity but incapable to create broad and effective institutions.

For Amir Abdul Rahman the first step towards modernization was the change in power structure. In the prevalent social setup tribes enjoyed a greater degree of autonomy. The Amir laid down the foundation of a Central administration with “an independent non-tribal power base.” It was first time, when the Central government directly took hold of tribal matters.⁸ The second step was to develop a trained army equipped with Western military weapons, loyal to the central command and free from tribal influence. Although the foundation of a modern Afghan army had been laid by Amir Sher Ali Khan (1863-1878),⁹ it became an effective and viable institution during the rule of Amir Abdul Rahman Khan. He endeavoured to establish state institutions in the Centre whereas in the provinces, each tribe ruled its own territory autonomously under the directions of the Central government. The disruptive tribes were made responsible for their own issues.¹⁰ Amir Abdul Rahman Khan split the provinces into smaller administrative units and appointed governors in each of them. He was particular in the selection of governors, the one who had little tribal backing were chosen for the purpose. The Amir frequently removed and appointed governors in order to maintain the supremacy of the Central government’s authority in the country.¹¹

After him, his son and successor Amir Habibullah Khan (1901-1919) continued the process. The modernization programmes introduced in Turkey and reform Acts of India served as model and source of inspiration for the Amir of Afghanistan.¹² Habibullah Khan established a military academy for the training of Afghan officers’ corps, the first school Habibia was built in Kabul, a power station and a pumping station for irrigation was also set up. Afghanistan’s first printing press and newspaper was published in his reign. However, with the succession of Amanullah Khan, the grandson of Amir Abdul-Rahman Khan, the policies took a new turn due to his determination to make Afghanistan a sovereign state. The third and the last Anglo-Afghan war was fought in 1919 that was concluded on a treaty of Rawalpindi signed in 1923.¹³ Thus the foreign policy of Afghanistan was freed from British influence and the Britain recognized Afghanistan as an independent state. When the first objective was achieved, King Amanullah Khan focused on modernizing his backward country on the lines of Turkish leader Kemal Ataturk and Iranian Reza Shah Pahlavi since he was also inspired by the Western state system and society. He had a comprehensive array covering constitutional, economic and liberal reforms.¹⁴ During ten years of his

rule every segment of Afghan society was affected by his reforms.

As a first step the constitution of Afghanistan was promulgated on April 9, 1923 on the lines of European model having a parliament with quasi-legislative authority. It was originally written in Pashtu called "*Nizam Namah-ye-Asasi-e-Daulat-e-Aliyah-e-Afghanistan*."¹⁵ (Fundamental Principles of the Supreme Government of Afghanistan). The Constitution set directions for modernizing law, governance and society. Contrary to the Western constitutions the *Nizam Namah* did not involve common people in state affairs. It established constitutional monarchy and formed a Western styled ministerial cabinet. As per Article 25 of the Constitution, ministerial cabinet was headed by the King who had all powers and was responsible for administration.¹⁶

King Amanullah also introduced economic reforms to begin the process of industrialisation. He reorganised the taxation system, presented the first national budget in the history of Afghanistan and introduced a new currency named "Afghani." In order to finance industrialisation, Amanullah visualized improvement in agricultural yield that could be only achieved by a policy of land reform. He further worked to lay down the infrastructure i.e. strong communication system such as roads, telegraphic and telephone lines and postal services which was a pre-requisite for industrialised economy. Afghanistan was also connected by air to the U.S.S.R, Iran and India.

To modernize the education system in the mid of 1920s, he appointed Turkish and Egyptian Muslim instructors to initiate a modern education system based on European curriculum. Many English, French, German, and Italian teachers were hired to teach their languages to Afghan students. Such efforts enabled Amanullah to send a small and first batch of students to Europe for further education.

He announced a new series of social reforms in late August 1928. The reforms package was presented before a *Loya Jargah* of about a thousand of Afghan's most influential tribal, ethnic, and religious leaders. The reforms included a nominated Upper House, an elected Lower House, abolition of the *Loya Jargah* concept, a Western style cabinet, the emancipation of women, enforced monogamy, and compulsory education for all Afghans men and women. The *Loya Jargah* rejected most of its proposals; however, two months later, Amanullah convened a smaller *Jargah* having only about one hundred loyal followers to approve the items not passed in the former meeting. He proclaimed himself a revolutionary king. The 1928 reforms were never implemented. It rather led to anti-Amanullah sentiments, both inside and outside Afghanistan.¹⁷

In the quest for modernization he further launched costly projects of about ten million rupees that was one third of the state's annual income. There was little industrial growth mostly restricted to the processing of agricultural products, and manufacturing of consumer's goods, such as textiles, soap, matches and shoes.¹⁸ His entire modernization programme was based on domestic funding with small amount of foreign assistance. For generating revenues he had to increase taxes. Over a decade-long rule of King Amanullah, the land tax increased four fold, while livestock tax increased five fold. The heavy burden of taxes created resentment among the peasantry who were later supported by the tribal and religious rebels. In fact the revolt against Amanullah began when a tax collector of Shinwari tribesmen was attacked by a mob.¹⁹ On November 12, 1928 the tribal chieftains rose in rebellion.²⁰ The rebels were led by a Tajik named Bacha-i-Saqao who on January 17, 1929, managed to take up Kabul, forced Amanullah into exile to Italy.²¹ Amanullah died in Zurich, Switzerland on April 26, 1960.²² He was buried in Jalalabad, at the side of the tomb of his father Amir Habibullah Khan.²³

Social responses to modernisation

In Afghanistan's traditional tribal society modernism was introduced in the last decade of the nineteenth century. It was Amir Abdul Rahman Khan who initiated the process of modernization based upon various reforms which were neither taken from any reformist ideology nor based on Western theories i.e. education, urbanization, industrialization and democracy. However, his concept of modernization was purely pragmatic to rationalize the institutions of the state and make them more efficient, without directly affecting traditional society. He did not interfere in the matters of independent-minded tribes who were allowed to lead their lives according to their traditional norms. The Amir did not succumb to resistance from any tribal, religious and economic group. Even his son Habibullah carried on his modernist policies in a consistent and progressive way being assisted by Mahmoud Tarzi (1865-1933), who was a leading exponent of modernization in Afghanistan within an Islamic context.²⁴ But resentment began in Afghanistan's society when the harmony between state and society, which rested largely upon a mutual indifference, was broken. It was since 1924 when the gap was widening between the people (society) and who held the reign of power (state) owing to the reforms initiated by King Amanullah.

In the reign of Amanullah the traditional and conservative society

became a pole of opposition against the modernist policies of the state. Specifically when in 1928 under a set of social reforms an order asking to give up wearing of veil was perceived as an affront and outright betrayal of Afghanistan's social-tribal norms and constitutional-religious framework.²⁵ As per *Nizam Namah* Article 2: Islam was the sacred religion of Afghanistan and the Article 5 stipulated that the King was the servant and the protector of the true religion of Islam.²⁶ The King perceived wearing veil by the women, an old custom and passed an order to give it up.²⁷ He ignored the fact that the Pushtuns, the largest ethnic group of Afghanistan led their lives under Pukhtunwali which was an unwritten code of conduct. The honour of a women was the most sensitive issue in Pushtun society. After his order women without veil and men without turbans were found in parks and around the royal palace at Kabul.²⁸

For the implementation of social reforms, King Amanullah alienated tribal leaders by revoking their privileges; but his modernist schemes depleted the treasury and he had to increase taxes which were a direct burden on common people. In the absence of British financial support, he could not secure adequate funding from other external sources to support his modernization policies. There was a lack of viable government structure, particularly powerful agencies, to ensure application of his plans in Afghan society.²⁹ When his modernization policies collided with the legal, tribal and religious teachings the social rejection was palpable. The King tried to replace the old social system based upon Afghan customs and traditions with in a decade ignoring the fact that centuries were required to introduce changes in a tribal society by ensuing small, gradual and consistent steps. In his quest for modernization, Amanullah went against the *Ulama* and tribal leaders³⁰ and both were the two strong bases of power in Afghanistan's society.

The fall of the Central government of King Amanullah Khan was the first crisis after the reign of Amir Abdul Rahman Khan. Amanullah could not contain control of tribal and religious leaders over the Afghan society. The tribal strength was far more than the Central government and the Afghan army as evidenced by the fact that the King was forced to abdicate his throne due to the tribes and Nadir Shah his successor, sat to the throne with the backing of not only Afghan tribes but the tribes across the Durand Line also played a decisive role. In between Amanullah and Nadir Shah there was a nine months rule of a Tajik Amir, Habibullah Kalakani known as Bacha-yi Saqao. Nadir Khan (Nadir Shah) toppled his government in October 1929 and established his own dynasty.³¹

In the post-Amanullah period the conservative class of the society was given numerous concessions and high posts in the government. Modern education was reintroduced on a small scale, but female education was intentionally ignored. Some of the many supporters of the reformist King and the smaller group of constitutionalists were suppressed; others were imprisoned, and a few were executed. In November 1933 Nadir Shah was shot dead and his only son Mohammad Zahir, nineteen years old, became the new King.³²

From 1930 to 1946 both mighty neighbours of Afghanistan, the USSR and British India, were compelled to avoid any interference in Afghanistan's internal matters. The USSR was passing through internal developments under Stalin and in British India independence movements were going beyond British control.³³ A stable and neutral Afghanistan was in the favour of regional powers as the former also remained neutral during World War II. The end of the Second World War led to decolonization and change in global political situation. The world entered into a bipolar phase dominated by two super powers the, United States and the USSR. The British left India in 1947 after dividing it into two independent states. Pakistan emerged as a new state on the east of Afghanistan, and Afghanistan had no choice but to reappraise its domestic and foreign policies.

In the history of Afghanistan the next twenty years from 1933-1953 was an avuncular period in which Zahir Shah's paternal uncles Hashim Khan (1933-1946) and Shah Mahmud (1946-1953), conducted state affairs with limited reforms and conservatism.³⁴ On September 7, 1953 Mohammad Dawud Khan became a prime minister of Afghanistan.³⁵ After Amanullah, he was the one who advocated Westernized economic and political system and initiated a plan of modernization.³⁶

Modernization under Communist support

Despite the efforts made by Afghan Amirs regarding modernization, it remained a conservative state till 1953. Although factual figures regarding literacy rate, industrial growth and human development are not available to present authentic account of these sectors but the social conditions indicate low literacy rate, slow industrial growth and a wide gap between the rural-urban population and lack of people's participation in governance of Afghanistan. The then Prime Minister Sardar Dawud Khan, who had a modernist mind-set also wished to transform the conservative tribal society by avoiding the mistakes made by Amanullah. In such quest he

took the same measures taken by Amir Abdul Rahman Khan i.e. strengthen Afghanistan's military to secure the Central government. In order to train and equip the army he needed foreign assistance and advisers.

At the onset of the Cold War period in 1940s two super powers were the promising sources of military and economic aid. However, Afghanistan maintained its neutrality in foreign relations. In the following years it became difficult for Afghanistan to survive without the assistance of a superpower. Since 1950s most of the Muslim countries wished to get military aid from the United States due to the ideological differences with the Soviet Union and the Afghan Prime Minister also desired the same. He led a delegation to the US for this purpose but his request was rejected.³⁷ In order to meet his country's defence and economic needs he had no option but to turn to the other super power, the USSR.³⁸ The Soviet Union, neighbour of Afghanistan, accepted the Afghan request for arms and readily provided generous military aid and took on number of development initiatives to make Afghanistan a modern state. At the end of 1955, Nicholai Bulganin, Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the USSR, and Nikita Khrushchev Secretary of the Council of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR visited Afghanistan at the invitation of Afghan Government.³⁹ The visit resulted in US \$ 100 million long term development loans on soft terms. Between 1956 and 1978 Afghanistan received US \$ 1265 million in Soviet economic assistance.⁴⁰ As compared to the Soviet economic and military aid to Kabul, the US provided only \$540 million that could not match the substantial Soviet support.⁴¹ However, Kabul's leaning towards Moscow paved a way for an Islamic political movement formed in 1958 owing to a sharp conflict between the religious groups in Afghanistan and the Afghan government. The Soviet-US role in Afghanistan, in the long run opened up the space for radical political Islam to rise in and beyond the region.⁴²

Moscow invested in construction of roads, highways, bridges, airports and tunnels. At the north of Kabul, Bagram airport was built and a tunnel through the Hindu Kush Mountains, known as Salang was also constructed. Dawud Khan realized that the modern military weapons would be useless until a skilled workforce for its proper handling and use was trained. He sent a large number of Afghan military personnel and air force officers to the USSR for training.

Moscow gave Kabul more funds than it gave to any other state during 1955-1978.⁴³ There was a great change in the perceptions of Afghan rulers and the USSR as the former was pursuing aid for modernization and the latter for the spread of Communism.

Formation of a Communist Party in Afghanistan

In 1960s, Afghanistan was the only state which bordered the USSR without a Communist Party. Although in other neighbours of the USSR pro-Communist parties had been established during 1918 to 1925 but establishing a Communist Party in Afghanistan was not an easy task due to a tribal, religious, backward and ethnically mixed nature of the society where social acceptance could not be ensured. The USSR after huge investment in Afghanistan's economy became able to exploit its power and influence. Moscow established a political party in Kabul and in the subsequent two decades the Soviet Union strengthened its position in Afghanistan's central government and military.⁴⁴

It was in 1965 when a political party named "People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA)," was established.⁴⁵ The members of the PDPA* were pro-Communist but their affiliations remained concealed. The Islamic Political Movement (IPM) agitated against the formation of PDPA. This anti-state movement of Afghanistan got the backing of Pakistan due to former's support to Pukhtunistan separatist movement. With the passage of time the "IPM" also gained support of other regional Islamic countries. Whereas the PDPA provided a platform to Afghan Marxist to meet the national democratic ends. The party was eager to bring a change in Afghanistan's society through a revolution but the Central government of Afghanistan was pursuing Soviet military and economic aid for modernization rather than Communisation. It is worth noting that the Afghan military also had a soft corner for PDPA. After passing through many crests and troughs on 27 April, 1978 the PDPA, with the help of army over threw Dawud's government.⁴⁶

The new revolutionary or Communist regime was eager to develop a society on the lines of the Soviet Communist system. An economic and social reforms package was introduced by Taraki on 10 May 1978.⁴⁷ The reforms again alienated the rural tribal groups, religious leaders and the urban middle class. The reforms of Taraki infuriated almost all segments of Afghan society as the centuries-old arranged marriage system was changed, dowry was prohibited and women's education was made compulsory. In pursuance of Communist ideology, the PDPA regime also changed the colour of Afghanistan's flag from tricolour black, red and green to a single red a clear association with Communism.⁴⁸

The landlords were unhappy due to land reforms and the traders

* People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) was a pro-communist political party founded on January 1, 1965.

were angry because of state control on commercial activities. For common people abolition of dowry, changed marriage system, and compulsory education specifically for women was not acceptable. The tribes were also against of any attempts to communize tribal society. The Mullahs encouraged people to begin a holy war against the Communists.⁴⁹

Social rejection of pro-Communist regime

The Afghan revolutionary regime was firm that the Saur Revolution* would bring great impact on the lives of Afghan people and successfully built a new society free from every kind of exploitation. A low level resistance began by the Afghan Islamist against the new government over its pro-Communist policies. A large number of pro-Islamist Afghans was forced to migrate to Pakistan where they were organized into seven Afghan Islamic parties which gained prominence and support from the West. To resist Soviet influence in Afghanistan, the Islamic parties were funded by Pakistan, China, Saudi Arabia, Iran the US and Western countries.⁵⁰ On the other hand Moscow, in order to safeguard the pro-Communist government in Kabul had to send massive reinforcement to assist Babrak Karmal, who was installed by the Soviet Union to counter escalating guerrilla war with well-armed Muslim tribal men.⁵¹

The revolutionary regime drafted an interim constitution for Afghanistan in 1980 known as the Fundamental Principles (*Usul-e-Assasi*) of the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan.⁵² The constitution protected the rights of workers, farmers, and professionals. Its claim for strict observance to the religion of Islam however, it did not appear in it.⁵³ Only a small number of PDPA notables drafted the interim Constitution, with no input from other parties. Marxist values were not only unknown to the majority of Afghans, but they were reviled by most who understood them. Finally, the constitution did not utilize deferral as a tool to avoid popular resistance to its provisions. The constitution elaborated a list of Marxist values that the government would pursue.⁵⁴ The Soviet invasion 1979 led many Islamic leaders both modernist and traditionalist to flee the country.

The destruction and disruption of life had reached incredible proportions. The rebels received strong support of the regional countries,

*In 1922 Afghanistan officially adopted Solar or *Jalali* calendar using Arabic names of the zodiac signs. Saur is named after Taurus which is the second month of the calendar. On 27 April 1978, there was a bloody *coup d'etat* in Afghanistan known as Saur Revolution in which the pro-Communist PDPA toppled the Dawud Khan government. Several of his family members were assassinated.

Western capitalist bloc and pro-US Arab countries. The Soviets tried to crush the insurgency by various tactics, but the guerrillas generally eluded their tactics. The Soviets also tried hard to eliminate the civilian support to the insurgents or *Mujahideens* by bombing and depopulating the rural areas. Contrary to all such efforts it was reported that in 1982 only four streets in the capital were considered safe for regime supporters to their Soviet mentors. On the fifth anniversary of Saur Revolution, a Soviet-styled military parade was held in the streets of Kabul on April 27, 1983 but it was merely a denial of ground realities.

The Soviet increased manpower from 85,000 in 1979 to approximately 115,000 in 1984. But the best the USSR and Democratic Republic of Afghanistan (DRA)* were able to manage so far was only daytime control over the main communications links, major cities, and certain fortified strong points. About 80-90 per cent of the country by day and practically 100 per cent after dusk was under actual control of the resistance groups.⁵⁵

Triumph of Afghan society over the state

After five years occupation the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan remained a sick political entity, unable to rule or even survive without Soviet military backing.⁵⁶ The survival of the DRA was depended on Soviet Union and the strength of insurgents rested upon the US and its allies. In such a power game, the DRA could not gain the support of masses.

In 1985 Mikhail Sergeyevich Gorbachev was elected as a General Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Soviet Union (CPSU).⁵⁷ He accepted the reality that the revolution was a failed attempt and recommended a swift return to free capitalism, Afghan Islamic values, and power sharing with the opposition even with the rebels.⁵⁸ Gorbachev advised Karmal to abandon slogans of Socialist construction in his backward country. Gorbachev had no hope that Afghan society would ever defend the Communist revolution.⁵⁹ Such realization was a great triumph of not only Afghan society and insurgents but all foreign elements which supported them. But the state was reluctant to accept the ground realities.

Attempts to Modernize Afghanistan led to Devastation

Afghanistan began to attain many features of modern society since

*During 1978-1992, under communist regime Afghanistan was renamed as "Democratic Republic of Afghanistan (DRA)."

the 1950s and it reached the highest point of modernization in between 1955 to 1975, based upon great Western cultural influence exhibited in dressing, eating and lifestyle. The local Press and media also promoted such ways of modern life⁶⁰ that was basically Western rather than modern. The actual indicators of modernization i.e. rise in education or literacy rate, urbanization, industrial growth, and people's participation in governance and democracy were neglected.

The attempts to modernize Afghanistan's basic social variables which largely contribute to modernization were ignored by the Afghan ruler. The literacy rate of Afghanistan was at the lowest point. As per UNESCO statistics adult illiteracy rate in Central Asia in 1970s was 80-85%⁶¹ and the Federal Research Division, Library of Congress, cites 90 per cent illiteracy rate in Afghanistan in 1979.⁶² Modernism was resisted by those illiterate people. In the same period about 85 per cent of Afghanistan's population was living in rural areas, including 1.5 million nomads. The modernist policies were only affecting 15 per cent of Afghanistan's population. The bulk of the labour force was engaged in agriculture, livestock, and livestock based handicraft.⁶³ The central government could not establish industries in Afghanistan and it remained in the primary stage due to lack of adequate resources, capital, skilled labour and few sources of energy halted the expansion of industrial activity. There were inadequate transformational facilities and accessibilities to both the internal and external markets.⁶⁴ The landlocked feature was another important obstacle in industrial growth and trade activities.⁶⁵ Afghanistan's economy was mainly based on agriculture, animal husbandry and the production of fruits.⁶⁶ The rural class was exploited by landlords (known as malak) with the support of clergy.⁶⁷ The malak usually influenced rural social politics in two ways, first from their own economic position and secondly through their association with conservative mullah or clerics as most of the mullas were on the payroll of their landowners who resisted Modernism.⁶⁸

There was a democratic experiment in Afghanistan during 1963-1973. A new Constitution was adopted by the *Loya Jargah* in 1964 that ensured equality before law, freedom of speech, freedom of expression, right to education, religious freedom for non-Muslims and right to form political party. In fact the constitution was a ground plan to modernize Afghanistan.⁶⁹ The first political party was formed in 1965 named "People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan," and General Elections were held in September 1965.⁷⁰ The democratic experience gradually moved Afghanistan towards the track of Communism rather than modernism.

The process of modernization ceased since the Soviet occupation in December 1979 that led to the vast destruction of Afghanistan in the following twenty two years.

Conclusion

Afghanistan basically emerged as a tribal confederation suitable to its history, geography, and diversity. In the last decade of 19th century Amir Abdul Rahman Khan initiated the process of modernization. The process could take roots in the tribal society had areas for social development been identified earlier. The state remained incapable to inculcate among the citizens a belief in the state system and could not as certain common elements of the society to exert control over heterogeneous population. It was not possible for the state to reduce tribal influence from Afghanistan's society and carry on modernization without education, urbanization, industrialization and democratization. The state initiatives towards modernization only widened the gap between state and society. And in a society between modernist and backward people of Afghanistan. The Central government had been challenged whenever it took decisions against social, traditional and religious practices of the society. The social resistance based upon traditional tribal warfare always received strong support of foreign governments. Modernization without social and political participation of common people in state affairs only results in frustration. It is correlated with socio-economic development.

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