The Relationship between Democracy and War in Afghanistan

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Abstract: Democratic peace theory suggests that promoting democracy lead to peace and avoid war between countries, but does it also hamper war insight a country? Attempts for democratization in Afghanistan has been started from early twenty-century and intensified in ''era of democracy'' in 1960s, but the modern democracy in the country has about two decades age from 2001. Entrance of democracy in the beginning of the twenty-first century in Afghanistan was concurrent with the downfall of Taliban regime. The new government soon after the arrival of foreign troops was established according to the westerns and particularly U.S interests and values. The democracy in the country was largely depend on foreign aids and supports. This dependence placed Afghanistan in a predicament, withdrawal of foreign troops with their military support increased the threat of system collapse as that finally happened a few months ago, while permanent presence of foreign forces in the name of democracy consolidation and fight against terrorism stimulated national and regional backlash. It shows that there is a relationship between type of political system and stability and peace in Afghanistan. The modern democracy with its advantages on various political and social fields in Afghanistan, also led to killing of thousands Afghan, wounded and displaced for keeping up of the past pseudo-democracy, a corrupted and falling regime.

Key words: Afghanistan, Democracy, Democratic Peace, Democratization, War.

I. Introduction:

Democracy which is known as the remedy of fragmental, post-war, and multicultural-ethnic societies, in some countries it may have caused peace, security and progress, but in Afghanistan democracy throughout the history of this country was the cause of instability and in the recent two decades, one of the reasons of the war. Culture, religion, and ethnic partitions of a society make the type of political regime a sensitive issue for the people and groups in the country. In this case, the kind of political system, distribution of political power among the ethnic leaders and inside of the government (centralization or decentralization), and the measure of freedom of the people have been always the pivot of war and peace history of Afghanistan.

At the social level, one of the basic concepts of democracy is the liberty of individuals, normally liberty and freedom are not bad, but if government force people to freeness in the way she wants, it becomes problematic. As this was well experienced in Amanullah Khan government in Afghanistan and then in the governments of Communist parties in 1980s. In "Post-Bonn democracy", however the government did not make the people to

behave in specified manners in their private and social life, but freedom of media in a strongly traditional society of Afghanistan made the people of this country so pessimist towards the democracy and its goals.

Although, the past twenty-year war in Afghanistan had several and various reasons, from local, national, regional, and global causes to the geopolitical, hydro political, historical, and ethnic factors which make the analysis of olden war of Afghanistan so complicate and difficult. Hereon, import and impose of democracy on a society which its people have done nothing for having it, and on the other hand, promoting western values and beliefs by American and European NGOs in a traditional and Islamic country with low level of modern education and Islamic knowledge and understanding, naturally lead to reaction, and the response of a war-torn nation would not be anything else, but fight and war against this invasion.

Based on the ''democratic peace theory'' in this paper, we are going to examine the background of democracy in Afghanistan, whether democracy has had any effect on the ongoing war in Afghanistan? Has it acted as a reducer or promoter of war in the country? Has the type and nature of ruling political system had any effect on the war? A short look to the history of war in Afghanistan, and the lookout of democracy in Afghanistan, are the main issues which are going to discuss through the article.

II. The main objective of the research

To examine the relationship between modern democracy and war in Afghanistan with concentration on the last two decades.

Sub-objectives

1- To understand that past democracy worked as reducer or increaser of the war in the country.
2- To find out the relationship of the type of political system and war in Afghanistan.

1. Background of democracy in Afghanistan

Attempts for modernization of Afghanistan, however, had been started from Habibullah Khan and specially Amanullah Khan periods, but real experience of democracy in Afghanistan goes back to the first ''decade of democracy'' in Zahir Shah Kingdom, and the second ''era of democracy'' in Hamid Karzai presidency in post-Bonn period. Historically, after death of Abdul Raman Khan, his son Habibullah Khan had taken the power. In his kingdom, political suppression and oppression got less, and the establishing of Habibia School and Seraj-u-Akhbar magazine were the most significant socio-cultural activities in his era. However, for the first time, call for constitutionalism has been shut down by the government, but in 1911 Mahhmod Tarzi as editor of Seraj-u-Akhbar started to publish topics against internal suppression, Britain imperialism, on new European literature and particularly on constitutionalism in the country. With collapse of Amanullah Khan, modernization also declined. The new wave of democratization in Afghanistan was began in Zahir Shah period which is known as the ''decade of democracy''. Undoubtedly, constitutionalism thoughts had prominent impact and was the true background of democracy in Afghanistan. Emerge of political parties, approvement of constitution, development of newspapers and magazines, growth of intellectuals and secular educated, freedom of demonstration and gathering were among the most important democratic values and institutions that had been experienced in the ''decade of democracy''.

The second period of democratization of Afghanistan was started from beginning of twenty first century with presidency of Hamid Karzai. United States of America along with international troops, were supporter and promoter of democratic institutions, values and principles. Today, after two decades of experience of democracy in Afghanistan huge successes and achievements have been earned in many fields, particularly in individual and

social freedoms. Against some people's beliefs which think modern democratic institutions and bodies of elected representatives and the polls held to select them are established in Afghanistan for the first time in post-2001, there is a considerable history of attempts to "modernize" politics according to democratic principles: a parliament was established in the late 1920s under Amanullah Khan, sets of consecutive parliaments elections of 1965-1969 and 1969-1971 functioned in a very similar manner to the way in which the current parliament operates, as the Constitution of Afghanistan formed during the post-Taliban Bonn Process was built around the 1964 Constitution of Zahir Shah's "era of democracy.", and elections of a leader were held under the Soviet-backed People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan in the 1980s. (Larson, 2011) Thus, it would be incorrect to assume that the so-called Bonn Process brought democracy in Afghanistan. A large number of the democratic institutions and thoughts that have emerged during the formation of new post-Bonn political system were in fact continuations or developments of much earlier versions.

2. The past of war in Afghanistan

War, according to the Oxford English Dictionary is defined as "Hostile contention by means of armed forces, carried on between nations, states, or rulers, or between parties in the same nation or state; the employment of armed forces against a foreign power, or against an opposing party in the state.". Although, the Afghanistan state was not in war with any country at the last one century based on the first part of the definition, but it has a long history of indoor armed conflicts.

Most democratic peace studies have conceptualized and operationalized war based on the Correlates of War project (COW), which defines war as ''sustained combat involving regular armed forces between two or more independent states and a minimum of 1.000 fatalities in total''. (Bakker, 2018) On which we cannot say that there has been any war in Afghanistan, but if we simply divide war into external and internal conflicts, Afghanistan has experienced four decades of civil war with thousands fatality and millions of injured and displaced around the country. The most reasons of the war in the country were rooted in the attempts of modernization and democratization from the beginning of twenty-century till now. Since, the public opinion and social environment of Afghanistan were not ready to accept modern believes, values, symbols and institutions, as they have been seen against traditional and Islamic believes and values of the people, so any endeavor towards democratization and modernization processes by the government or any other groups had been led to people's reaction and resistance.

When Dawood Khan presidency was ended by People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan in late 1970s, the word 'democratic' or the government of the people had become more common in political talks, but there was not really a democratic regime, beside the lack of political freedom, public and universal elections or existing of opposite political parties, were not created on the base of people's will and wants. As most of political and social activities of the regime were against the beliefs and culture of traditional society of Afghanistan, so the resistance against the political regime so-called 'democratic regime' had been started.

Basically, we can divide civil war of Afghanistan into the following phases: 1- communist phase (1978-1992), in which Mujahideen as the largest opposition popular group started armed conflict against the communist government. After the leftist governments have been overthrown by Mujahideen in early 1990s, the second phase had started. 2- Mujahideen-Taliban phase (1992-2001), in this stage, however, Taliban had control over the most parts of the country, in North part of the country in some regions Mujahideen were ruling. 3-Taliban-U.S-Afghan government phase (2001-2021). However, after U.S-Taliban peace agreement in February 2020, the war was continued between Afghan troops and Taliban's fighters till August 2021.

By the military invasion of U.S and its allies on Afghanistan in 2001, the civil war was ended temporary, it was not the end, a new guerrilla war by Taliban against foreign troops as occupying forces and Afghan military as their supporter stared. United States invaded in Afghanistan to fight against terrorism and to prevent international terrorist groups from establishing secure bases in Afghanistan, after two decades from U.S' ''war on terror'', not only violence and war did not decrease, but also the rate and circle of the war became vaster day by day till the end of Ashraf Ghani's government.

3. Democracy; reducer or increaser of war?

The most often cited classical source of the idea that democracy is an important force for peace is Immanuel Kant's 1795 essay, "Perpetual Peace." Moreover, the multiple streams of arguments and evidence supporting the proposition are highly diverse in character: epistemological (Rummel 1975), philosophical (Doyle 1986), formal (Bueno de Mesquita & Lalman 1992; B Bueno de Mesquita, R Siverson, unpublished data), historical (Weart 1994, Ray 1995, Owen 1994), experimental (Mintz & Geva 1993), anthropological (Ember et al 1992, Crawford 1994), psychological (Kegley & Hermann 1995), economic (Brawley 1993, Weede 1996b), political (Gaubatz 1991), and statistical (Ray & Russett 1996, p. 458). (Lee Ray, 1998) Many of these researches were directed to confirm the "democratic peace theory", but has democracy really led to peace in Afghanistan? There are some reasons that show promoting democracy in Afghanistan due to not regarding of socio-cultural context had negative effects, in some cases have led to more violence in the country.

Firstly, the assumption that democratization breeds stability is indicative of international approaches to post-conflict contexts and represents a recognized doctrine of intervention. Democratization has become global best practice for international state-building interventions, beside of Afghanistan, Iraq and some African countries, other examples of this approach in practice include the Balkans and East Timor, where elections have been instigated by an external mission such as the United Nations soon after the end of civil conflict as a means to bring about power-sharing agreements largely considered legitimate by the populace. Yet, in Afghanistan democracy carries negative connotations for many people. For some Afghans the term is linked to the Soviet narratives of secularism and communist economic policy as implemented under the PDPA in the 1980s; in the post-2001 era, many suspect 'democracy' of being an externally-imposed imperialist project through promoting American and Western values and processes. (Larson, 2011)

Secondly, a common feature of all of the western military interventions over the past decades, in Africa, the former Yugoslavia, Afghanistan, and Iraq that they have brought with them a radical shift in the balance of power between the main local communities. (Beetham, 2009) As the Bonn Process took place, it became increasingly evident that it was being used by members of the largely non-Pashtun Northern Alliance to re-establish their power bases—an opportunity made easier with the exclusion of Taliban representation. (Larson, 2011)

On the other hand, according to the Immanuel Kant's perpetual peace theory if people have to bear the costs of war, they would decide against the war. And in democracy leaders restrained in decision-making on war and peace due to accountability to various social groups, legislatures and media. (Mello, 2016) It is true that leaders cannot act against public opinion, but can manipulate, misled, and misinformed public opinion to obtain their goals and benefits. As we should not forget that democracies are ruled by men just like all other form of governments. And it is possible for a state to have both democratic and autocratic institutes. As Bush's "war on terror" (Plauche, 2005) has led killing of thousand civilians and millions of displaced in Afghanistan and no public opinion in U.S condemned it. This war not only didn't root out the terrorism in the country, but stimulated more revengeful emotions among those who had lost their family members innocently through U.S bombing and failed missions. All these are ended in the name of democracy in the eyes of the public.

This war has not been successful on terror, vice versa it increased and promoted more violence. It has not made Afghanistan a stable state, it has not spread democracy as the invading powers had desired, (Beetham, 2009). In other hand, it has been costly, not only on foreign powers for democratization of Afghanistan, but it was more costly for Afghan people who have paid the cost of a non-wanted process with their bloods.

4. Is there any relationship between war and type of political regime in Afghanistan?

Afghanistan has experienced several types of political system in the last century, from constitutional monarchy to the republic and communist regimes and modern democracy. Albrecht and Schlumberger well expressed the problem of regime change in the Middle East studies today: changing regimes without studying their contexts. What doctor would prescribe a medicine without offering a diagnosis first? (Albrecht and Schlumberger, 2004). The mistakes that U.S and its allies have done in many countries including Afghanistan. Collapse of an existing state apparatus produce a vacuum at three level simultaneously; security, administration, and politics. (Beetham, 2009) The new government, bureaucracy and army was created soon after U.S invasion in Afghanistan, but it was according to the occupying powers or western patterns and values. Answering to the question: what do the changes that have occurred signify? It is simple, now Afghanistan has almost a modern administration, modern military equipment and relatively open political space where multiple political parties, social institutes and groups can freely act and react.

One of the assumptions of democratization is that transition to a democratic state will generate economic growth and development. However, the simple assumption that the promotion of democracy automatically promotes economic growth does not hold true in resource-poor states (Larson, 2011) even Afghanistan is not poor on natural resources, but economy is also related to the rate of skilled and expert people of a country who can encourage the transparency, accountability and trust needed to ensure a more equal distribution of resources in order to develop economy. On the other hand, changing the economic reality in a landlocked state requires economic cooperation with Afghanistan's neighbors. Such cooperation is possible only if the political reality changes. Given Afghanistan's economic and demographic profile – a population that is both poor and young – as well as its linguistic, religious, ethnic and economic links to the populations of the neighboring countries, virtually any neighbor of Afghanistan has the capacity to destabilize the country by offering selective benefits to client groups.

Although, since every one of the great powers (Russian and U.S.A) believe the existing of the rivals or adversaries as a threat to their benefits, so it seems that the type and nature of the political system in Afghanistan is not the matter of issues. As Younus Qanooni one of the post-Bonn famous Afghan politician said that the experience and facts show that the roots of conflict in Afghanistan are mainly external as four decades of conflict have been imposed on Afghanistan on the basis of strategies which Afghans had no hand in designing. (Qanooni, 2018) So, the successful of any negotiation on type and nature of Afghanistan political system depends on meeting the minimal needs and demands of a large number of actors – the U.S, Pakistan, Iran, Russia, China, India, Afghan urban westernized elites, Pashtun nationalists, Afghan Islamists, and non-Pashtun ethnic leaders. And that may be one of the main reasons that why the past peace negotiation of Afghanistan was very complicated and difficult, as dissatisfaction with a peace agreement may emerge from fear about what the peace will bring.

We should not also forget that the democracy in Afghanistan had come after several years of oppression and repression, thus it was more likely to anocracy than democracy. Anocracies, because they possess inherent contradictions as a result of being neither democratic nor autocratic, are partly open yet also moderately repressive, a combination that encourages protest, rebellion, and other forms of intrastate violence. Repression leads to grievances that induce groups to take action, and openness allows for them to organize and engage in activities against the regime. These institutional contradictions point to political incoherence and consequently encourage civil conflict (de Nardo 1985; Francisco 1995; Muller and Weede 1990).

Based on the democratic peace theory, it is claimed that "Decision-makers, born and raised in a consolidated liberal democracy, have internalized liberal norms in contrast to decision-makers who are not born and raised in a liberal democracy", but Bakker after analyzes of data on the hypotheses says that the results show that also within other non-democratic regime-types, such as the hybrid regime in Russia and the autocratic regime in China, liberal norms exist. Thus, whether or not individuals adhere to liberal norms is individually based rather than imposed and socialized by a super-structure of a political regime. (Bakker, 2018)

5. The vision of democracy in Afghanistan

Apparently, by the inability of any Afghan regimes over the past 40 years to survive more than a decade, democracy showed its capability to survive in Afghanistan with twenty years life, however since the people had not struggled for set up it, so still most of people think that the past regime was a puppet government which had governed by occupants to institutionalize their own values and beliefs under the title of democracy in the country. Few numbers of voter in the last presidential election in 2019 which showed a dramatic decrease in political participation of the people, may be a prove of the claim. However, the earlier post-Bonn elections were counted as a great success at the time, with a turnout of almost 80 percent across the country. But, in the last presidential election on 28 September 2019 the turnout was historical low, where from the 9.7 million registered only 1.6 million participated in the election. Although, the low rate of turnout in the previous election apparently was due to security threats, but we cannot ignore increase of disbelief and distrust of Afghanistan people on the democratic processes because of the high rate of electoral frauds in the prior elections.

According to David Beetham at least two preconditions for democracy are more important; the ability of a state to influence throughout the country's territory and a minimum level of agreement on nationhood. (Beetham, 2009). But, after about two decades of modern democracy in Afghanistan not only the government was able to apply its sovereignty throughout the country, but societal gaps also became ethnically deeper. Furthermore, while the people saw that power holders seem richer by acquisition of governmental posts, the positions which had hold through elections, naturally it had made democracy insignificant and ineffective in the eyes of the people.

On the other hand, democracy in Afghanistan was stand up and supported by foreign forces and money specially with U.S aids in military field. It placed Afghanistan in a dilemma, withdrawal of all foreign troops with their military cooperation increased the threat of system collapse which finally happened in August 2021, while permanent presence of foreign forces stimulated national and regional backlash. It also challenged the logic which suggests that democratization processes can bring about security. In Afghanistan, democracy was not associated with security or stability because it has brought few improvements in these fundamental qualities over the last twenty years. (Larson, 2011). Although within a democratizing context, there is a risk that the liberalization of media can lead to the creation of irresponsible media, most of Afghan media have been created on linguistic and ethnical bases which is a fundamental obstacle on the nationhood. At the same time, we should not ignore the fundamental rights and liberties which democracy had brought for the people in the last two

decades. Thus, people may let the political system change, but never give up the freedoms and rights get to know them in democracy era.

6. Conclusion

Several examples can be fined democracies may not have fight with each other, but it does not mean that democracy and attempts for democratization always bring peace, security and stability for all countries. Freedom of speech, civil society, rule of law, political parties, division of power, elections and freedom of demonstration and gathering are all democratic achievements in the last two decades in Afghanistan. As we should see the ''dark side of democracy''--External invasion of a country which led to regime change based on foreign interests-- in situation that even democracy has many benefits, the public would react against it as a foreign process, and Afghanistan is good instance of that. The past democracy in Afghanistan was stand up and is supported by foreign forces and money specially with U.S aids in military field. However, peace, security, stability and development in Afghanistan more relate to the political interests of numerous regional and global actors than the type and essence of political regime, but an overview of the last hundred years history of the country shows that any regime which has been established against people's will and want led to war and instability. The past democracy had great advantages on openness of political and social environment in Afghanistan and people enjoyed that, but it costed killing of thousands Afghan people, wounded and displaced for keeping up of a corrupted and falling system.

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