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Third Anglo-Afghan war 1839

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Abstract

Afghanistan and Great Britain have fought three wars. Each war had its own causes and repercussions. In the first two Anglo-Afghan wars, the Great Britain imposed war on Afghanistan to achieve its colonial aims. It is commonly believed that third Anglo-Afghan war was result of Great rivalry between the Britain and Russia. However the third Anglo-Afghan war was started by King Amanullah to achieve independence in its external and internal affairs. It aimed to liberate

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Afghanistan from the yoke of colonial power i.e. Great Britain. This article tries to prove that King Amanullah was responsible for third Anglo-Afghan war. This article is descriptive and analytical secondary sources have been consulted to substantiate this argument. The first two Anglo-Afghan wars were fought because of Great Game. The British Government wanted to halt the advancement of Russia into India. To achieve this aim, British wanted submissive government in Afghanistan Rulers. Who did not conform to British policies were considered enemy. However the third AngloAfghan war resulted due to Amanullah's quest to create sovereign and independent Afghanistan

Background and Introduction

Afghanistan being a landlocked country is 41st largest country with regard to territories size. It is at the cross road of South Asia, Central Asia and Middle East. It comprises of 25,000 square mile or 647500 square kilometers. Afghanistan is bounded by Pakistan in its South East, Iran on its West, Central Asian Countries on its North and China is its North East. Moreover Afghanistan is only country where 99% Muslims live including 50% Pashtun, 25% Tajik and 9% Hazara.

History testifies the fact that Afghanistan has been ruled by many Afghan rulers who fought one another on behalf of Super-Powers like Russia and Great Britain. Both Powers used Afghanistan as buffer zone to advance their colonial objectives. Resultantly different tribes took allegiance either to the Britain or Russia. This resulted Civil War between Sodozai tribe and Muhammadzai tribe. Muhammadzai tribe headed by Dost Muhammad Khan received help from Russia and defeated Sodozai tribe. This act of Muhammadzai tribe infuriated the British government. Hence the British government instigated Shah-Shuja to invade Afghanistan. The British government aimed at halting the advancement of Russia into India. This rivalry between Russian and Great Britain is termed as "Great Game". It commonly believed that three AngloAfghan wars have been fought under the cloud of Great Game. However this article argues that third AngloAfghan war was launched by King Amanullah to liberal Afghanistan from colonial power. Moreover it is very shocking to know that the rivalry among different local groups and international powers abused the human rights in Afghanistan. The common people of Afghanistan including women and children were badly affected due to these wars. These local and international powers adopted policy of apathy for the human rights in Afghanistan.

How Amanullah can be held responsible for Anglo-Afghan war

King Amanullah wanted an independent and sovereign Afghanistan. Foreign interference in the internal affairs of Afghanistan infuriated him. He kept a balanced policy between Russian and Great Britain. Following were reasons why King Amanullah launched.

Third Anglo-Afghan war, Foreign interference infuriated King Amanullah

It was an era of great game between Russia and Great Britain. The British feared about the involvement of Russia into affairs of Afghans. She felt that the Russian would strengthen its position into the Territory of the British Indian and would control the region. So the British got serious threats from the Afghanistan and tried to influence the internal and external affairs of Afghanistan. The British tried several attempts to influence afghan policy. So this interference of British into afghan affair enabled King Amanullah to take strong action against the British imperialism. (Dupree Louis. Afghanistan. p 441).

King Amanullah Rejected Past Treaties

King Amanullah rejected the treaties that had been signed by the Amir Abdul-Rehman and Habibullah. King Amanullah was ambitious ruler who wanted to liberate the Afghans from yoke of British Government. He rejected the treaties, in order to regain Peshawar, Quetta, Zhob, Noshki and Tribal Areas. King Amanullah took strict decision that created tension between Afghanistan and British India. "King Amanullah delivered a letter to Lord Chelmsford who was the viceroy of India, informing him about his new reforms and policies. He delivered that Afghanistan was independent state comprising all Lost territories." (Martin Ewans, Afghanistan (a new History) Routledge, Curzon Taylor and Francis group London, New York P 87).

Ant-British sentiments

Amanullah, the King of Afghanistan, provoked the people of Afghanistan against the imperial of British government which frequently used resources to sabotage the peace process across British Indian border. King Amanullah feared, if he could not hold consultative Jirga, British would occupy the land of Afghanistan indirectly. He issued an invitation card to tribal leaders who had eminent status in order to hold a Jirga where he would consult with the leaders and would ask for their support in his new policies and reforms, at Kabul. King Amanullah delivered series of speech to convince the tribal for the war against British across the border. King Amanullah diverged the policy against the interest of British while the British were busy in First World War in Europe. King Amanullah ensured tribal leaders Jirga at Kabul that they would not agree with the acts of previous treaties that had been signed by Amir Abdul-Rehman and Sir Hennesy Martimore Durand. He told tribal leaders that Amir Abdul-Rehman signed the pacts in duress. Furthermore, he never consulted Jirga for border agreement that consumed the territory of Afghanistan into small territory. King Amanullah announced a great Darbar at Kabul. "Where he told the nation that Afghanistan was now entirely free, autonomous and independent both internally and externally" (British Agent to Gov, 14th April, 1919. BL 324. No, 2 London 1919 p 5)

Anarchism in India

The people of India specially the Muslims who showed their objections on the destruction of mosque at Kanpur which is known as Kanpur mosque tragedy. The tragedy of Kanpur mosque compelled Muslims to take some violent action against the British statesmanship in India. Moreover, the British government passed Rowlett acts that provided unlimited power to the administration and police. The British government did not cut the wings of accused person who neither presented his appeal before court nor he had right to keep a lawyer through this act. The people of India, who took part in defiance of British in world war in Europe, expected from British that they would grant self-government in reward of their sacrifices. The Indian started a storm of protest against the Rowlett act in India. On other hand King Amanullah wanted to use this anarchism against British. He hoped the Muslims and Hindus would assist him to drive the British out of this South Asian Region. "King Amanullah issued a decree which explained the unrest in India and showed his intentions to take advantage of anarchism in India and sent army toward British Indian border". (Ewans, Martin, Afghanistan (a new History) p 87)

Influence of King Amanullah nobles

There were nobility who insisted King Amanullah to wage a war against British. Mahmoud Tarzai, General Nadir Khan, Mualana Abdul Bari, Obaidullah sindi were the eminent personalities in court of King Amanullah who insisted to wage war against British. These personalities supported King Amanullah in his aggressive policy towards British imperialism in the South Asian region in order to obtain their own interest in Afghanistan. Hence they shouted slogan that get martyrdom or freedom from British.

"Amanullah at urging of Mahmoud Tarzai, General Nadir Khan and others, launched month long third Afghan war on 5th May, 1919. (Dupree Louis, Afghanistan, Oxford University Press p.442)"

The killing of late Amir Habibullah and King Amanullahs reaction

Amir Habibullah who was king of Afghanistan was assassinated while he was on hunt trip near Jalalabad. The assassination of Habibullah created anxiety among the people of Afghanistan. Moreover King Amanullah blamed British involvement in the murder of late king and provoked feelings of nationalism against British. The people of Afghanistan were ready to take revenge of their late king from British. Hence the Afghan government supported the people who decided to become a part of this war.

“British doubted that king Amanullah, motives in provoking the war, it cleared from the report from our agent in Kabul, and Chelmsford reported to montage that Amir Enquiry into the circumstances of murder of late

Amir has caused deep dissatisfactions among people. (Martin, Ewan. Afghanistan. P.88) **King Amanullah pursue war to unify the people**

King Amanullah was cunning king who concluded the situation that would be out of control, if he didn't manage the time to deal with situation. Until recently, historians had generally approved the British illustration of the causes of the war, which aimed that King Amanullah's rule over Afghanistan was weakened because war of succession after the murder of Amir Habibullah. King Amanullah jailed his uncle and rival to the throne, Nasrallah Khan and freed members of the Mosaheban family from arrest for suspected participation in the assassination plot. In this view, when King Amanullah notices his position in trouble, he pursued war with his neighbor as a device for unifying the people. However, recent research has shown that King Amanullah resorted to war to safeguard Afghanistan's independence, which had been unofficially secured at the end of World War 1. (Marshall Sardar Shah wali, My Memories, Kabul 1970. P.734)

Events of the war

King Amanullah divided his army into three groups. The first group was led by Nadir Khan who ordered to march against British forces at para chinar. Nadir khan was a warrior who defeated the British forces in para chinar and strengthened its position in Northern Pakistan. Furthermore, the second group under command of Saleh Muhammad Khan intended to take the Forts from British army at Dakah. Saleh Muhammad was ambitious general who did not succeed in his plan. The British forces stopped him near Khaibar Pass and defeated Saleh Muhammad near Peshawar. In the same way, third group was led by Sardar Qadoos who remained at province of Kandahar and succeeded to drive out English forces from Kandahar province.” (Dupree Louis, Afghanistan p.443)

Consequences of the third Anglo-Afghan war

After one month long war ended in Armistice Treaty. There was difference of opinion among the scholars that British forces defeated Afghan forces because they drove out the Afghan army from the territory of India and took position on front line near Afghanistan Boarder. Similarly some scholars argued that Afghan forces were superior to British forces in war because Afghanistan secured strategic gains of its boundary and remained independent from British interference. So the war brought causalities of forces treaty of Rawalpindi Afghan independence will full sovereignty in foreign affair and re-consider Durand line.

Results

1000 Afghan killed in action

1751 British soldiers were killed some of them died due to disease.

Treaty of Rawalpindi

Afghanistan and British were agreed to avoid form war because British forces fed off from war which was fought them in Europe in 1914 to 1918. Thy both agreed to sit-down for settlement. They signed a Treaty on 21st June 1919.

“the delegation headed by Sardar Ali Ahmed khan with other Diplomats, came to Rawalpindi where he met there counter-parts Sir Hamilton Grant, both agreed to leave war zone and established mutual relation and corporation and both signed in armistice treaty of Rawalpindi.” (Suleiman Azam History Modern Afghanistan Iran and Turkey 1919 p 16)

It was concluded in the peace treaty that Afghanistan would free to run its affairs without interference of British and the British would cut off payment of Afghan subsidy.

Independent Sovereignty

The Treaty of Rawalpindi secure Afghanistan as sovereign state. It secured its regional position in central Asia, Middle East and South Asia. “Immediately after signing of the treaty of Rawalpindi, an Afghan Mission headed by General Muhammad Wali Khan departed Kabul and arrived at Masco and informed Russian Federation about new Afghan independent policy. The Masco provide Military Equipment to administration of King Amanullah for improving its military power in South Asian region”(Dupree Louis, Afghanistan p 443)

Conclusions

It is concluded from above statement that King Amanullah is held responsible for launching third AngloAfghan war. He aimed to gain sovereign and independent states for Afghanistan. King Amanullah was WesternEducated. He knew very well the high values of independence and sovereignty. He wanted to unity the people of Afghanistan under his own kingship. For this purpose, he provoked the feelings of nationalism among the people of Afghanistan against the colonial powers. Moreover the nobility class including Mahmoud Tarazai, Nadir khan, Moalana Abdul Bari and Obaidullah Sindi wanted an independent and sovereign Afghanistan.

King Amanullah therefore, rejected all the past treaties concluded by the previous King with British. Furthermore, King Amanullah kept a keen view in the political development in India. The British government was under pressure from Indian Politicians for right of self-government. Hence King Amanullah exploited the Muslim Nationalism of Indian Muslims in order to weaken the British government. In short King Amanullah left no stone unturned to weaken British government and realize his long-standing aim to gain an independent and sovereign Afghanistan. Furthermore it is very sad to know that human rights to Afghan people were completely ignored. The people of Afghanistan were exploited by local Kings and International Super-Powers to advance their own interests. The human values were brushed aside by the SuperPowers for their vested interests. It is further concluded that Afghan people have always rejected the supremacy of external powers in Afghanistan. The natives of Afghanistan are peace loving by nature. But they are forced to resort to violence due to incessant interference by super-power. Moreover it is concluded from the article that Afghan people have depended on external powers to keep their independence intact. They lacked knowledge in science and technology that is the reason, Afghan have always depended on foreign powers for

war equipment“s. In order to shun foreign dominance, Afghan people have to be educated in the field of science and technology.

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