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# EVOLUTION OF AFGHAN-TURKISH RELATIONS IN THE FIRST HALF OF THE 20TH CENTURY

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## Abstract

The initiatives of Atatürk and Amonullah Khan, the first charismatic leaders of these countries, played a major role in the establishment of hundred-year-old warm relations between Afghanistan and Turkey. This article shows the importance of the Turkish model in the modernization of Afghanistan, the role of Turkish specialists in the development of the education, health and military sectors in Afghanistan. Turkey's participation and initiatives in Afghanistan's membership of international agreements are highlighted.

**Keywords** Mahmoud Tarzi, friendship treaty, Saadabad Treaty, Afghan modernization, young Turks, young Afghans, Amonullah Khan.

## INTRODUCTION

The 20th century was a time when the ideas of national liberation spread widely in different regions of the world, and the processes of striving for independence intensified. As a result, the colonial system weakened and national states began to form. In Muslim countries, in the first quarter of this century, several countries reached a new stage in the processes of statehood. Great Britain, which was considered the most powerful empire during this period, began to separate from its colonies and colonial influence due to the First World War. The issue of his sphere of influence in Afghanistan was also resolved. In this situation, social thought developed in Turkey and advanced views spread widely. People of the Eastern world, especially Turkestan and neighboring Afghanistan, accepted their ideas of modernism with the help of the "Young Turks" organization and government established in this country[1;498]. It was this movement that became the ideological force of national liberation movements in Central and South Asia and North Africa. In this way, the

cooperation relations between Afghanistan and Turkey, which are in similar situations in the conditions of complex, conflicting and rapidly changing international relations, began to develop in a new way.

In 1921, Turkey-Afghanistan friendship and cooperation agreement was signed in Moscow[2;103]. The Afghan people have taken a special place in the heart of the Turkish nation as a brotherly country due to their support for the Turkish War of Independence, which has not yet ended. In the same way, Afghanistan took a model of the Turkish modernization model during the reign of Amonullah Khan, and Mustafa Kemal Atatürk became the true inspiration of the new Afghan state[3;153]. During this period, the Turkish model of development was the most attractive program for many Muslim countries in the East. In addition, the Russian government led by the Bolsheviks did not object to Turkestan educators studying young people from foreign countries only in Turkey. This was one of the main

reasons for the development of relations with Turkey.

## **METHODS**

It is obvious that the relations between Afghanistan and Turkey intensified at the beginning of the 20th century. At the invitation of the king of that time, Habibullah Khan (1901-1919), Turkish delegations consisting of healthcare and education experts visited Afghanistan and made a great contribution to the organization of work in these areas. A number of educational and medical institutions were built, repaired and commissioned by Turkish specialists. For example, the first modern state hospital in the history of Afghanistan was built in 1912 with the help of Turkish specialists[4;126].

Official diplomatic relations between the two countries were established on March 1, 1921 on the basis of the Afghanistan-Turkey Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation. The relations between these two countries have always been friendly due to the common culture, historical proximity, and especially the presence of a large number of Turkic tribes in Afghanistan. These close relations started during Atatürk's foreign policy, when he paid special attention to Afghanistan.

The sending of Fakri Pasha, the famous defender of Medina, as the first ambassador to Afghanistan during the First World War is a vivid example of Turkey's high level of attention to bilateral relations[5]. The first diplomatic mission established in Afghanistan belonged to Turkey. On June 10, 1921, Mustafa Kemal personally attended the opening ceremony of the Afghan embassy in Ankara and raised the flag at the entrance of the embassy. Members of the Council of Ministers, deputies and employees of the Embassy of Soviet Russia also took part in the ceremony. By participating in this ceremony, Mustafa Kemal Pasha demonstrated once again that he attaches great importance to Turkish-Afghan relations. On March 1, 1922, in order to further strengthen the relations between the two countries, such an important person as Fahrettin Pasha (Lieutenant-General Fahrettin Turkkhan) was appointed as ambassador and extraordinary representative in Kabul[6;16].

The victory of the Turkish army in a decisive battle with the Greeks on August 30, 1922 was warmly welcomed in Afghanistan. This success was greeted as a national holiday in the country, and King Amonullah Khan celebrated the Turkish victory with a banquet in his palace on the evening of October 10, 1922. The announcement of the Republic in Turkey caused great satisfaction in Afghanistan as well. Describing this independence, Amonullah Khan said: "The star of the republic, born for the first time in the Islamic world, will enlighten all the Islamic nations on earth."

## **RESULTS**

As mentioned above, at the beginning of the 20th century, national liberation movements began in the Eastern world. In the relations between Afghanistan and Turkey during this period, the issue of the people of Turkestan under the oppression of the Soviet state was also on the agenda. Against the harsh treatment of the Central Asian immigrants who went to Afghanistan in the 1920s and 1930s, under the pressure of the Soviet state, Mustafa Kemal invited the Afghan ambassador to the Republic of Turkey, Faiz Muhammad Khan, to his presence and said: "If there is a place for Muslim immigrants from Turkestan in your country, "if not, hand them over to us!", it is not for nothing. This shows that Turkey has strong positions on the integration of Turkic nations in the early years of the Republic's administration. The above thoughts were also reflected in the book "Memories" of our late compatriot Said Mubashshirkhan Kosani, an immigrant Uzbek. Or, on the initiative of Mustafa Kemal, in the 1930s, "the Turkish government invited Turkish-speaking peoples living in many countries to their country and gave them property and livestock at a low price." shows.

Although there were no drastic changes in the dynamics of relations between the two countries between 1923 and 1928, the modernization steps of the Turks had a close impact on Afghanistan, and Amonullah Khan and his wife Queen Suraiya visited Turkey in May 1928 and were the guests of President Mustafa Kemal. This visit is the first state visit to the Republic of Turkey. According to Turkish historian Seljuk Jolakoğlu, Mustafa Kemal

never visited foreign countries during his presidency. In turn, no state president came to Ankara. King of Afghanistan Amonullah Khan was specially welcomed as the first and only head of state who officially visited Turkey during Ataturk's time[7;76]. At that time, as the only independent Muslim countries, Afghan-Turkish relations played an important role in the system of international relations of that time.

During Amonullah Khan's visit to Turkey, on May 25, 1928, the "Turkish-Afghanistan Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation" was signed in Ankara. This agreement aims to bring the relations between the two countries to a higher level[8;191,192]. The first concrete result of the agreement was the elevation of the representative offices in the two countries to the level of embassies. On May 20, 1928, the Vakit newspaper reported about Amonullah Khan's arrival in Istanbul: "Yesterday, the brother ruler of Afghanistan came to our city. And the people of Istanbul welcomed them with surprise. His Highness Emanullah Khan: "O Turks, you are the apple of our eye. I am very happy to be here, in the country of our brotherly people. I greet you with respect and love. Afghans are your brothers. "I send you greetings from all my people[9]" The Afghan ruler was greatly impressed by the reforms being carried out in modern Turkey, and he wanted to implement them in his country. Amonullah Khan's visit to support and contribute to Afghanistan's efforts to develop and modernize the education system was met with great interest and friendship, and relations between the two countries rose to the highest level. But Amonullah Khan did not have enough funds for qualified personnel and reforms. He tried to buy a lot of planes and build factories for his country, and made an already troubled Afghanistan even worse financially. Also, the fact that the situation in Afghanistan and Turkey is different and the situation in Afghanistan is not sufficiently positive was not taken into account, which caused the above negative events. When embarking on reforms, Amonullah Khan ignored Atatürk's friendly advice to be careful, forgot the great gap between the reforms he wanted to implement and the opportunities he had, and did things that could lead to big problems in a tense

situation. increased. To make things even more difficult, he tried practices that were not practiced even in Turkey, such as removing women's burqas.

Finally, on the initiative of mullahs and foreign emissaries, a tribal uprising broke out in Afghanistan in mid-November 1928. The goal was to overthrow the king, who was declared a "heretic". Turkey sent an important delegation led by Kazim Pasha (Orbay) to Afghanistan to protect Omanullah Khan[10;93]. A day after the arrival of the delegation, Amonullah Khan fled to Kandahar. Bacha-e Saqo (Habibulla Qalaqani) took power. Turkey did not recognize this government, but during this period Turkey was one of the few countries that maintained its mandate and embassy in Kabul. However, during this period, Afghan students were sent back from Turkey, and in turn, Turkish military advisers were forced to leave Afghanistan. Habibullah's successor, Nadirshah Amonullah, tried to restore the level of Afghan-Turkish relations that had been achieved during the reign of Amonullah. Turkey continued to send specialists in various fields to Afghanistan.

## **DISCUSSION**

Zahirshah, who ascended the throne at the age of 18, remained in power for 40 years between 1933 and 1973. Atatürk congratulated the new king, who expressed his desire to develop friendly relations with Afghanistan. Also, Turkey continued to actively support Afghanistan's actions in the regional and international arena. For example, Turkey acted as a mediator in regulating relations between Iran and Afghanistan. For a long time, the border problems in Hashtadan and Seistan, which are the borders of Iran and Afghanistan, have been unresolved. In May 1934, it was decided to submit the long-standing border dispute between Afghanistan and Iran to arbitration, and Turkey was chosen as the arbitrator for both countries. According to Atatürk's order, as a result of Fahrettin Altai Pasha's arbitration and investigation, the 300 km border between Iran and Afghanistan, which had not been marked for more than 1000 years, was demarcated. This event clearly shows the degree to which Turkey began to show interest in this region in the context of international relations in the 30s of the 20th

century. Under these conditions, Afghanistan joined the League of Nations on September 27, 1934 at the initiative and invitation of Turkey, and now Afghanistan has become a full-fledged subject of international relations. Also, in 1937, a pact was signed between Turkey, Iraq, Iran and Afghanistan to establish an international organization, and Atatürk and Zahirshah warmly congratulated each other on this occasion. Thus, the Saadabad Pact was the first experience of Afghanistan's participation in a regional organization. This pact aims to ensure security in the Middle East in addition to the guarantees provided for in the League of Nations agreement. In a word, Turkey has made a great contribution to the activity of Afghanistan as an equal member in international and regional processes.

Turkey continued to increase its aid to Afghanistan in the 1930s, giving particular priority to the development of the training and education system. Many young Afghans were given scholarships and studied at Turkish lyceums and faculties. In addition, educational institutions were established in Afghanistan, teachers and professors were sent, and Afghans began teaching in their own countries. Meanwhile, Afghan students who graduated from high school preferred to continue their studies in military, medical, law and construction departments in Turkey.

Ataturk's death in 1938 caused deep grief in Afghanistan. Turkish historian Bilal Shimshir in his book "Atatürk and Afghanistan" quotes the following about this: "During nearly twenty years of Turkish-Afghan relations, kings, dynasties and governments have changed in Afghanistan, but Turkey's relations with Afghanistan the policy of friendship and fraternity has not changed. No matter how the kings and rulers of Afghanistan observed mutual conflicts and struggles for the throne, they believed in Atatürk's Turkey and had high hopes for it. "Turkey fought for Afghanistan to remain independent and free, to develop and rise, and to take a place among civilized countries"[11;350].

The biggest event in the international relations of this period was the Second World War, and Afghanistan declared its neutrality in this conflict

situation as in the First World War and did not come close to any of the warring parties. The changed political conditions after the Second World War forced Turkey to conclude new international agreements, and relations between the two countries weakened considerably, as Afghanistan followed a policy of neutrality during this period[12;82]. At the end of the war, the greatest heroism was performed by the USSR, but in the background of the events, the United States of America began to appear as a new world leader. This country's assistance to developing countries has attracted the attention of Afghan officials and intellectuals. The rulers of Afghanistan wanted to improve their relations with this new great country and benefit from it, and they achieved it in a short time. Turkey, becoming the only member of NATO, began to provide a lot of support to Afghanistan in international affairs. As a result, Afghanistan received a very good loan from America. With this loan, a new economic development began in the country through American firms and technicians.

However, this movement of development, which started in Afghanistan, stopped after the British realized that they could no longer take away the independence and freedom of the various peoples under their rule, and decided to recognize the independence of these peoples. On February 20, 1947, after three centuries of exploitation, the British decided to withdraw from India and announced in a declaration that they would allow the Muslim population to form a state. After that, the Afghan government appealed to the British to allow the remaining Afghan tribes on the Indian side of the Durand Line to unite with their brothers in Afghanistan. However, this demand was rejected at first, and then, on the basis of a plebiscite, the people of the region announced that they had chosen Pakistan, which had just emerged as a Muslim state. This situation and the subsequent events caused great unrest between Afghanistan and Pakistan. America offered to mediate between these two anti-Soviet governments. However, this proposal was rejected by Pakistan. America offered mediation to Turkey, which is a friend of both sides and has resolved the Afghanistan-Iran and Iran-Iraq conflicts in the past.

## **CONCLUSION**

In conclusion, it can be said that the formation and development of cooperation relations between Afghanistan and Turkey coincided with the period of unique historical processes. The Republic of Turkey became an ideological and cultural leader for the modernism of the first independent state of Afghanistan. During this period, the specialists sent from Turkey paved the way for the guidance of Afghanistan in technological, military, healthcare, education and other fields.

Turkey has a great contribution in Afghanistan signing a number of regional and international documents and becoming a full-fledged subject of international relations. Afghanistan's accession to the League of Nations in 1934 or Afghanistan's invitation to the Saadabad Pact for the Middle East in 1937 was a direct result of Turkey's invitations. In a word, Turkey played the role of a gateway to Afghanistan's integration into the world community.

After World War II, due to changes in Turkey's foreign policy, Afghanistan became closer to the USSR, and this rapprochement ended with the intervention of Soviet troops in Afghanistan in 1979. Turkey expressed its dissatisfaction with these events. During the years when the Soviet troops were in Afghanistan, the relations between the two countries stopped growing. However, Turkey continued to use ethnic Turkic nationalities in Afghanistan. General Abdurashid Dostum appeared as one such person.

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