



Obstacles to modernization in Afghanistan

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ABSTRACT: For more than a century, modernization theory has been on the path of transformation and evolution, and many theorists from various schools of thought have accepted that there is a connection between economic transformations and coherent and predictable patterns of cultural and political transformation. The fundamental debate however concerns the possibility of a cause-and-effect relationship between them, that is to say: does economic change cause cultural change or vice versa? Therefore, this will also be the subject of our discussion: according to the cause-and-effect relationship of economic transformation and cultural pattern changes, what is the relationship between these elements in the Afghan society, why the Afghan society always been facing the obstacles of modernization and social changes and has never been able to go beyond the traditional stages. This research, has tried to provide an answer in line with this main question: what are the main obstacles to modernization in Afghanistan? The research hypothesises that the social structure in the form of ethnic and religious divisions is a serious and fundamental obstacle to modernization in this country. Therefore, we are going to examine the analysis models of modernization first. Then, we explore these barriers in the framework of David Apter's theory, which is a structural-functional approach to modernization.

KEYWORDS: Modernization, social transformation, obstacles to modernization, social gaps, Afghanistan

INTRODUCTION

The main and central claim of the modernization theory is that there is a correlation between industrialization and specific social-political transformation processes, which took place on a wide scale; economic development brings also signs of transformation, such as industrialization together with urbanization. Modernization includes public education, specialization of jobs, expansion of bureaucracy and development of communication, and these phenomena in turn are linked with wider cultural, social and political transformations (Inglehart, 1991, p.3).

Considering the close relationships between the elements of economy, culture and politics and giving importance to the effects of each of the economic or cultural-political levels of the societies, theorists have produced different viewpoints, and here we will discuss the most important of them in brief. Then, we examine the obstacles to modernization in Afghanistan according to the framework of Apter's theory.



MARX'S POINT OF VIEW

Emphasizing on the effects of economics Marx considers the level of technical progress of the society as determining the shape of the economic system of that society, and believes that the economic system in turn determines the cultural and economic characteristics of the society (Inglehart, 1991, p.7).

In this sense, according to Marx, what is important is the relationship between production and labour in society, whose special work lies in the economy. Thus, in Marx's view, modernization is provided by the transformation in production relations and changes in the foundation of society (Inglehart, 1991, p.9).

MAX WEBER'S POINT OF VIEW

Max Weber emphasizes the influence of culture; he believes indeed that culture is not a mere phenomenon of the economic system, but it can be considered alone as a major cause, in the sense that culture shapes economic behaviour and is affected by it at the same time. Weber believes that Protestant ethics provides the basis for the emergence of capitalism and the latter phenomenon in turn helped to establish the industrial revolution and the democratic revolution. In general, this attitude is based on the fact that all kinds of belief systems affect both economic and political life and are affected by them.

THE VIEW OF THE MOST RECENT MARXISTS

Most recent Marxists have transferred the priority from economic feasibility to ideology and culture. Lenin believed that the working class could never achieve the class consciousness necessary for a victorious revolution by itself, therefore he said that the workers should be led by professional revolutionaries who have ideological awareness and insight (Inglehart, 1991, p.4).

Mao also emphasized the power of revolutionary thinking and said that it is not necessary to wait for China to undergo transformation with the expansion of urbanization and industrialization. He believed that if an ideologically coherent group can stir up the feelings of the Chinese masses, even in a peasant society, it can be done. He started the communist revolution (Inglehart, 1991, p.7).

Rostow (1960) and Organski (1965), among other modernization theorists, believe that social transformation is a linear process and includes the transformation of traditional agricultural societies into modern industrial societies¹. From their point of view, modernization includes a series of successive steps (Rush, 1998, p. 205).



HUNTINGTON'S POINT OF VIEW

Huntington believes that political modernization requires the rationalization of authority, the differentiation of structures and the expansion of political participation. (Huntington, 1991, p. 139). In this sense, he believes that the flow of economic and social modernization in the developing society causes the emergence of new social groups that want to participate in the political arena, but the slow pace of political modernization in these societies does not provide the necessary opportunities and institutions for the participation of these groups in the political scenario. This situation causes violent political conflicts in these societies. Thus, Huntington considers the main problem of developing societies to be the lack of stable governments and institutionalized political systems (Huntington, 1991, p.150).

David Apter, who has chosen a structural-functional approach to the issue of modernization, has tried to clarify the conditions of modernization that different societies can achieve. These are the conditions:

1. A political system that can adapt to changing conditions.
2. Flexible social structures including extensive division of labour or structural differentiation.
3. A social framework that can provide the necessary skills and knowledge to face technological upheaval (Rush, 1998, p. 248).

According to different theories about modernization, it is possible to examine the obstacles to modernization in Afghanistan concerning its social structure in terms of ethnic and religious divisions, and show that ethnic and religious conflicts are always the main cause of the national identity crisis and the main obstacle in the matter. Therefore, we will follow this discussion in the framework of the Apter theory of modernization, which is a structural-functional model and is more compatible with the mechanism of this discussion, and we will avoid discussing other theories.

SOCIAL STRUCTURE

In a common definition for construction or structure, it can be said as follows: whenever there is a relatively constant relationship between the elements of a set, whose totality is desired, we reach the concept of construction. Therefore, the structure has two aspects: one is the constituent elements and the other is the fixed relationships that connect the structural elements to each other (Tavassoli, 1998, p. 125). In this way, the social structure can be considered as a network of social communication, whose bases and roles are its main basis. If we understand the national structure of a society (a set of sustainable criteria and values that citizens believe in and strive to maintain, regardless of the type of government and policies of the day), we will reach the demographic and human framework in terms of social structure. That regardless of the political structure



of power within it, the members of the society try to establish mutual relations based on certain beliefs, values and criteria, which in turn determine the bases and social roles of individuals and human groups (Sajjadi, 2008, p. 32). Therefore, the meaning of social structure in this research is the demographic and biological mechanism of people who establish mutual social relations based on their own beliefs and standards, and these relations are based on tribal and religious structures in a relatively stable manner based on ethnic and religious standards and beliefs. Therefore, the category of social gaps and especially the conflicts caused by the phenomenon of ethnicity and religion in Afghanistan, that people live based on different and heterogeneous objective criteria, are also very important (Pahlavan, 1993, p. 43).

This research has tried to discuss social conflicts from the perspective of ethnic and religious divides in Afghanistan, which is considered a big obstacle on the path of modernization. In any case, the projection of the effects and reflection of ethnic and religious conflicts among the set of influencing factors in social conflicts and shaping internal strife does not mean that we have to ignore other factors involved in this matter. The idea of this short article is to pay attention to the ethnic and religious heterogeneity as the factors causing the crisis in the process of modernization in Afghanistan, which is tried to be intensively investigated.

ETHNIC DIVIDES

Afghanistan is one of the few countries in the world due to the multitude of ethnic groups and nationalities in which different and sometimes heterogeneous ethnic groups live.

The same diversity and heterogeneity of ethnic groups, due to the lack of a unifying factor, has caused the (nation-building) process in this country not to be able to overcome the relevant crisis successfully. Therefore, even though many years have passed since the independence of this country, a common national identity has not yet been defined and accepted by all ethnic groups and nationalities, but scattered ethnic identities have replaced the national identity (Arbab Shirani, 1997, p. 47).

If identity includes the concept of existence and the set of individual virtues and behavioural characteristics based on which a person is recognized in a social group and is distinguished from others, it is specially referred to the feeling of solidarity with the great national and ethnic community and awareness, and the feeling of loyalty and sacrifice is recognized in its way. In Afghanistan, however, due to the ethnic structure of the society, this feeling about tribe, clan and descent is more intense than the feeling of solidarity with the national community. Therefore, what has been concrete in this country so far has been scattered ethnic and tribal identities instead of national identity (Sajjadi, 2008, p.52). Since Afghan society has an ethnic and tribal structure, it is natural that the interactions and reactions of the social structure and the circulation of



political power take place only within a particular tribe and tribe. And it is on this basis that the political system in this country, instead of being related to the social system, has been more related to the population sub-systems in the form of tribes and races. And this, in turn, has blocked the political participation of all citizens and ethnic groups, and finally, the non-ruling ethnic groups (non-Pashtuns) have always had a deviant attitude towards the power structure. (Ashraf, 1993, p. 9).

This situation has caused a permanent conflict between the non-ruling ethnic groups and the holders of political power. It is precisely because of this point that the political history of Afghanistan has witnessed violent conflicts and conflicts between ethnic groups and tribes over political sovereignty. Therefore, these tensions are observed not only at the level of ethnic groups but even within a tribe, among its related branches (Sajjadi, 2008, p.52). In a classification, social gaps are divided into active and influential or inactive and dormant groups, based on which, social gaps may be inactive and dormant under certain conditions and do not affect political life and the formation of social forces. But under other conditions, they become active and influential and affect political life (Bashiriyeh, 1995, p. 101). According to this classification of gaps, the ethnic gap in Afghanistan is sometimes active and influential, and sometimes inactive, depending on the time conditions and the structure of political power, which is considered one of the most important conditions affecting the activeness or inactivity of social gaps. But even in inactive and dormant conditions, this gap has been erupting like a volcano, which has led to violent conflicts in the social arena by preparing the least ground. And if it has been dormant at some points, it is not because of the existence of a suitable and controlling solution, but rather it has been influenced by the temporary solution of coercion and physical force. (Sajjadi, 2008, p.58). According to Durkheim, the condition of coercion is capable of creating solidarity to some extent, but such solidarity is incomplete and poses a problem because it threatens its final pressure and then collapses. In such a system, the good of society and most of the citizens are subject to the selfish goals of a limited number of people (Grabb, 1993, p. 108). It is for this reason that with the collapse of the central government or the weakening of the political structure of power, ethnic and group wars and political conflicts occur in this country at various times in the contemporary history of Afghanistan. Therefore, if the power structure in Afghanistan has provided grounds for the intensification of this gap due to the unhealthy and disproportionate stance and treatment of non-ruling (non-Pashtun) ethnic groups, it is because in this structure, while trying to preserve the ethnic identity, social control is based on coercion and there has been no reasonable solution to control, adjust and organize it. Thus, the political power structure in Afghanistan, due to its ethnocentric characteristics, not only has never been able to control and guide the social, ethnic and political conflicts of the ethnic groups and their hostile attitude towards the ruling people and those in power. Rather, it has been the effective factor and foundation of these tensions and conflicts. Of course, this centrality of the element of ethnicity in the political structure of power comes from the belief that those in power, believing that



only the Pashtuns and especially the Mohammadzai family have the competence and ability to manage the country's politics, always marginalize other ethnic groups or they even prevented their presence in the offices. The application of this method, and the dominance of this type of attitude in the administration of the country, apart from being an obstacle to economic, political and social growth and development, has never been able to create a system that, according to David Apter, can cope with the changing conditions and heterogeneous social structure. And in this vein, it has always put other tribes in a hostile and negative position. Thus, as Sajjadi says, the political structure of power has always been in the hands of a certain ethnicity, and the ruling people (Pashtuns), instead of thinking about forming a nation-state composed of all ethnic groups, have always been concerned about the sovereignty and imposition of the Pashtun people over other nationalities, and its efforts have been to make the Afghan nationality in the special sense of the word which means Pashtun. For those reasons, the political structure of power has always been hated and suspected by other ethnic groups (Sajjadi, 2008, p. 58).

From here we come to the second point of David Apter: that the social structure in Afghanistan is not only inflexible, but it has always been rigid, fragile and ethnocentric, and the application of ethnocentric politics in various forms has made deeper negative attitudes towards the society, creating more ethnic conflicts. Therefore, the ethnocentric nature of political power in Afghanistan does not allow the power holders to easily recognize and evaluate the dimensions and importance of different ways of life, knowledge and other diverse values with their ethnicity and descent. And this causes ethnicities never be able to reach the common principles of peaceful life because when a racial or ethnic group believes that its ways of life are superior and its members are more intelligent than other groups, they can't easily recognize and evaluate the dimensions and importance of lifestyles different from its group. Thus, the third principle is meaningful from the point of view of David Apter, who said that a social framework should be able to provide the necessary skills and knowledge to face social transformations and cultural diversity. Unfortunately, in Afghanistan, due to ethnic prejudices and the dominance of ethnocentric attitudes in political governance, the social structure does not produce the necessary skills and knowledge to improve, organize and modernize the country. Rather, it is structured in such a way that even social knowledge and skills are under the influence of strong ethnic tendencies and remain in the hands of the ruling group (Pashtuns). Therefore, such a rigid and patriarchal structure, due to its inflexibility, fragility and dogmatic nature, and due to the weakness of its intellectual foundations, will never give the knowledge and skills of others, and other ethnic groups a chance to emerge. While it is necessary otherwise for every dominant and powerful discourse to open the door to dialogue and interaction with others due to its ability. Therefore, not paying attention to this matter and also persistent ethnocentrism, which, according to Bruce Koen, often does not allow the dominant and minority groups to reach an understanding and have a peaceful



coexistence with each other (Cohen, 1372, p. 306). This type of attitude has caused Afghanistan to be always deprived, never to achieve modernization, and if modernization takes place, as it is called today in the form of democracy, there will be no actual modernization except a fake form of it, which on the face of the coin is Pashtunization but in the form of democracy a hidden Pashtunism, in whose structure the rest of the ethnic groups are still deprived of most of their social rights and political benefits. A clear example of this modernization in the form of democracy can be called the decade of democracy during the time of Hamid Karzai and Ashraf Ghani, in which although other ethnic groups were present in the government, they were never given the opportunity to make decisions and their participation was ineffective (Grape, 1993, p. 108).

RELIGIOUS DIVIDE

Although the vast majority of the people of Afghanistan are Muslims, in terms of religion and religious practices, the Muslim population of this country is not uniform, and there are many and various religions in this country. Although it is possible to identify the followers of Shia and Sunni in this country, it should not be overlooked that this classification is only acceptable at a general level. While the followers of Sunnis, unlike the Shias, are divided into branches and subgroups in other countries, in Afghanistan they can also be divided into different Hanafi, Hanbali, Shafi'i and Maliki schools of thought. Especially if we put the different perceptions and divisions of shari'a, manifestations and religious orders next to these subgroups, we will witness a great diversity of religious and religious thoughts in Afghan society. But if we pay attention to the religious divide, there has been a historical and active divide between the followers of the two main branches of religion in Afghanistan, Sunni and Shia, and it has always had a tremendous impact on the political life of the society, especially the social divide and the lack of national unity (Saei, 1999, p. 74)

The Shiites of Afghanistan, who have long been known as second-class citizens and even lower than that, have never felt aligned with the country's political government due to religious discrimination and the government's support for the Sunni religion while putting Shiites under pressure (Sajjadi, 2008, p. 94). Therefore, the bigoted and humiliating behaviour towards the Shiites and the followers of the Jafari religion has always played an effective and important role in the destruction of practical cohesion and social unity as a factor that aggravates the religious divide.

The religious conflict in Afghanistan, which has been a reflection of the religious discrimination and nervousness of the society and especially the ruling system, has resulted in the social deprivation of the followers of non-ruling religions, especially the Shiites, which consists of:

Religious imposition policy in Afghanistan in the form of:



- 1 Religious annihilation (Shia religion).
- 2 Prohibition of Shiite religious practices.
- 3 Imprisonment, execution and detention of Shia religious leaders.
- 4 Deporting and settling Shia people, especially the Hazaras, in undesirable areas.
- 5 Separation of Shiite and Sunni areas from each other and depriving Shiites of their rights.
- 6 Imposing economic pressures on the Shia people and especially the Hazaras (Sajjadi, 2008, p. 104).

Thus, in addition to the ethnic and tribal elements in Afghanistan, Hanafi Islam is another tool that has been used to stabilize the political power of the rulers. Naturally, due to Afghanistan rulers' special approach to religion, the followers of other religions, especially the Shiites, have been neglected, and they have been discriminated against to gain the support of the Sunni Hanafi followers. This in itself has intensified the conflict and religious divide between Shia and Sunni. In this way, we can see that the ethnic-tribal conflict of the people and the religious discrimination of the rulers of Afghanistan have kept the Shiites of this country away from the political and social scenes, and this has always increased the existing conflict in the historical process of the country.

Religion-based political participation, which in most cases was accompanied by ethnocentrism and the policy of ethnic discrimination, deprived non-Pashtun Sunnis as well as Shiites and Hazaras of Afghanistan from all the basic rights of citizenship, participation in political affairs and community administration, and participation in political governance (Sharabi, 2001, p. 102). In this sense, it can be said that ethnic and religious conflicts and the resulting divisions are the most important influencing factors on the vision of leaders and rulers, especially the vision of the dominant rulers of Afghanistan (Pashtun). And in fact, it is this attitude that even now, after the fundamental change and transformation in Afghanistan, has not created yet grounds for understanding a peaceful coexistence among all the citizens of the country from different ethnic groups, nationalities and religious sects. Therefore, modernization in Afghanistan has always faced two major and serious obstacles, namely religious and ethnic-tribal conflicts, which have never given the opportunity for constructive change and transformation in accordance with the social, economic and cultural status of all peoples and ethnic groups. If there has been modernization in some historical periods, by the way, this has always been carried out within the structure and relations of domination that was not more than a non-original form of modernization and transformation. And according to Hisham Sharabi, this type of modernization is only a (renovated) dominance (Sharabi, 2001, p. 105): as it was said, in Afghanistan this modernization has always been a hidden Pashtunism.

Even now, the modernization that took place in the form of democracy in Afghanistan during the "decade of democracy under Hamid Karzai and Ashraf Ghani" is worth pondering. But in my opinion, this political system is still caught in the trap of a hidden hegemony due to the existence of ethnic prejudices and the dominance of rigid



religious attitudes and the lack of flexibility of the ruling political power structure in relation to other non-ruling ethnic groups. Still, the rest of the non-ruling tribes are deprived of many of their social rights and political benefits.

SOLUTIONS

The studies that have been carried out so far in the field of modernization and development of countries indicate that a specific theory for modernization and development in third-world countries cannot be found. But some theorists have proposed theories for development and modernization in these countries, which are:

A- Theory of modernization

This theory is derived from the experience of western countries. In this theory, change and transformation from traditional culture to modern culture is a basic step for political development and modernization. In this theory, political development requires a specific cultural attitude to social and political life, and as long as the indicators of modern culture such as the principle of equality in the law, civil liberty, the originality of the individual, the principle of citizenship rights, the principle of tolerance and civility, flexibility and universality within the culture are not institutionalized, it would be more useless to talk about political modernization and development.

Proponents of this theory limit the only way to achieve modernization and political development in the western experience, and in this case, there would not be any other way except changing from traditional culture to modernization. Although this theory has serious criticisms and flaws, we can point out the one-line nature of modernization and development both from the theoretical and scientific point of view and from the behavioural and practical point of view, but with a little tolerance, it can be considered as A solution in a society like Afghanistan.

The main problem that exists in this theory from the scientific point of view is that, except for the western society, the social conditions and contexts of other societies are not taken into consideration, while western societies in terms of culture and social characteristics generally have very serious differences with the societies of the third world, including Afghanistan. so how will it be possible for this model to be responsive in the Afghan society, the history also shows that during the time of Shah Amanullah Khan, reforms and modernization in Afghanistan led to failure regardless of the social and cultural conditions of the society.

From a practical point of view, the stabilization of modernization and development in Southeast Asian countries shows that modernization based on western models is not the only way to achieve development and the rule of law. Therefore, it can be concluded that modernization and political development and the rule of law need the social contexts of a society more than anything else. If there are no social contexts for



modernization and political development, it will be very difficult to achieve modernization.

B. The theory of dependence

This theory is inspired by the theories of neo-Marxist revolution, which sees the modernization and development of third-world countries in contrast to the first theory in reducing the link of these countries with the centre, i.e. western and colonial countries, and believes that western countries exploit third world countries in pursuit of their interests. It evaluates third-world countries based on the external cause and considers the realization of development and modernization to require the occurrence of a socialist and labour revolution (Sue, 2013, p. 109).

C- All-round development model

Since different models of modernization and dependence could not solve the problem of backwardness and underdevelopment of third-world countries, development sociologists sought to find an all-around solution for development. In recent years, in the framework of this new approach, three models of sustainable development, integrated development, and human development have been proposed. When it comes to comprehensive development, it means that development should include all parts of society and be simultaneous (Lehsaizadeh, 2010, p.87)

Among the three mentioned theories, although each one has its own weaknesses and strengths, but at the same time, the modernization model, in addition to its shortcomings, is considered a superior and feasible model even in third-world societies.

Therefore, the modernization theory is acceptable to everyone, which has become a hegemonic discourse. But this point does not mean that a country like Afghanistan can achieve political modernization and development by completely following this western model. Because third world countries, including Afghanistan, have serious and fundamental differences from western societies in terms of culture and social structure, and to achieve political modernization and development while using the great and valuable achievements of western societies, attention should be paid to the objective conditions of Afghan society and considering the cultural and Islamic characteristics of this country.

THE SOLUTION FOR MODERNIZATION IN AFGHANISTAN

Political modernization and development in third-world countries, including Afghanistan, is one of the most important and fundamental issues, and the basic question that exists, in this case, is how to overcome this difficult path and create areas for political modernization and development?



The important issue in the discussion of political modernization and development is to provide grounds for political modernization and development. For this purpose, the theorists of the modernization school for the development of third-world countries have each addressed a specific aspect of the social contexts of political development.

According to the theories of modernization and accuracy in David Apter's criteria for modernization and political development, the solution to modernization and political development of Afghanistan can be narrated as follows.

THE TRANSITION FROM TRADITIONAL CULTURE AND THE CREATION OF A CONVERGENT SOCIAL STRUCTURE

The social structure of Afghanistan due to the traditional and tribal culture and the lack of understanding and flexibility has been one of the main obstacles to political modernization and development and a serious obstacle to the institutionalization of democracy and rule of law.

Naturally, in order to follow the path of modernization and political development and legalism, cultural change and transformation must be done first. Because the nature of tribal society based on tribal culture is an obstacle to political modernization and development. Traditional and tribal culture is in fact absolutist and dogmatic and the acceptance of distinctions and differences in this kind of culture is very weak. Usually, in tribal culture, there is either absolute friendship or absolute enmity. In the field of politics, positions are drawn between absolute friendship and enmity, cooperation and convergence, and competition and criticism are not acceptable in such a culture.

In fact, dogmatic thinking and absolutism towards issues destroys the possibility of interaction, understanding, convergence and respect for others' point of view and gradually becomes the basis of monopoly.

Therefore, in order to take a step towards modernization and political development in society, a flexible culture is needed which, according to David Apter, can adjust and adapt to environmental and social changes, because maybe everyone can agree that in modernization, cultural changes are very fundamental.

Anyway, transitioning from traditional and tribal society and creating a transformation in people's beliefs and behaviour is a prerequisite for walking the difficult path of political and law-based modernization and development in society.

Of course, we should not forget that cultural, political, social and economic transformation is one of the important tasks of intellectuals. Considering this strategy to overcome the traditional and tribal culture of Afghan society, as well as to create a rule-based structure and achieve modernization, it is definitely important to promote the culture of tolerance and expand civil institutions. Promoting such a culture in society will surely reduce religious conflicts and ethnic-tribal conflicts, and by reducing these



conflicts, all the ethnic groups, according to the opportunities they have, can use their positions and dignities according to their capacities and potentials.

RESULT

According to David Apter's structural-functional theory, we saw that the social structure and political power in Afghanistan, due to the basic ethnic and religious divide, has always been persistently hegemonic and in the hands of only one ethnic group (Pashtuns). Therefore, this social structure, due to the inflexibility and neglect of other tribes and ethnicities alongside the ruling tribe, has always been a source of tension and crisis, and this has caused chaos and conflict in this country. In this sense, the social structure of Afghanistan, according to David Apter's theoretical model, has not been able to reach the three basic principles that are a prerequisite for modernization:

1. it has not been able to have a flexible structure that includes a wide division of work among all ethnic groups and tribes.
2. it has not been able to create a political system that adapts to the changing and changeable conditions and the diverse cultures of Afghanistan.
3. it has not been able to create a social framework that can provide the necessary social skills and knowledge for all groups and communities in Afghanistan for social transformation and changes.

Thus, as long as the social structure has not been changed and the ethnic and religious divisions within it have not been resolved, modernization in this country will never exist in its original and natural form; and if modernization takes place, it will be a different form of original modernization.

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