

The Historical Relationship Between Afghanistan and Turkey vis-à-vis Modernization

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1. Introduction

In the first three decades of the twentieth century, Afghanistan emerged from isolation and inaugurated a formative period of modernization. In tandem with this development, the country became a unique space for the grand Muslim experiment of reform called *tajaddud* or renewal. As a multiplicity of transnational and ideological investors descended on Afghanistan to implement their particular brand of reformism, it was ultimately the historical experience of Ottoman Turkish modernism that shaped the course of Afghan development. Prior to this period, Afghanistan was largely cut off from the outside world and the only external influence permeating the country emanated from British India. The beginning of modernization in Afghanistan altered this pattern as Ottoman technocrats were invited by Afghan leaders to guide state sponsored reforms. By the same token, Afghanistan was viewed by Turkish reformers as an ideal and pristine laboratory in which their vision of modernism could be extended beyond the borders of the Sublime Porte.

Ottoman Turkish technocrats played a significant role in launching the process of modernization in Afghanistan during the first decade of the twentieth century. Nevertheless, the country has largely been a postscript in Ottoman historiography. Apart from a monograph on the history of Turkish-Afghan relations and another related to Mustafa Kemal Atatürk's relationship with Afghanistan, and a study of the connections between Indian Muslims and the

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Ottoman Empire in this period, Afghanistan is merely a footnote with no corpus of literature on the momentous history of Turkish activity related to Afghan developmentalism and modernism.¹ Ottoman Turkish technocrats first arrived in Kabul in 1907-1908 by invitation of the Afghan government and were personal guests at the Kabul royal court of Amir Habibullah (1901-1919). They led efforts to educate, inform and raise awareness about the outside world in an effort to lift Afghanistan out of isolation. They wrote informative articles in the country's only newspaper at the time, *Siraj al-Akhbar Afghaniyah*, and carried out reformist projects to introduce modern medicine, improve education, create effective administration as well as other modernizing activities. Their contributions to the modernization of Afghanistan were significant and enduring. This resulted in the formation of a unique bilateral relationship that spanned decades of Turkish guidance in steering the course of Afghanistan's development. Turkish technocrats not only participated in implementing various reform measures but were involved in what has been referred to as technocratic governance. Techno-politics represents the body of institutional and infrastructural practices carried out by the experts of the modern state.² In this respect, Turkish reformers in Afghanistan became domestic policymakers which elevated their status far beyond that of foreign experts and consultants.

On the other hand, Afghanistan was envisioned by members of the Committee of Union and Progress as an immaculate laboratory in which to expand and renew Ottoman prestige through the enlightenment of an underdeveloped country disconnected from the world. In fact, Afghanistan was in some ways viewed as a detached periphery of the Ottoman Empire. This particular concept gained impetus as Ottoman Turkish technocrats acquired extraordinary latitude to set internal policy while garnering personal leverage with Afghan rulers. As a result, the nature and scope of the Turco-Afghan relationship in the early decades of the twentieth century represents a rare case of what Michael O'Sullivan refers to as

¹ Mehmet Saray, *Afganistan ve Türkler (Afghanistan and the Turks)*, (İstanbul: Edebiyat Fakültesi Basımevi, 1987); Bilal N.Şimşir, *Atatürk ve Afganistan (Ataturk and Afghanistan)*, (Ankara: ASEM, 2002); Azmi Özcan, *Pan-Islamism: Indian Muslims, the Ottomans and Britain, 1877-1924* (Leiden; New York: Brill, 1997).

² Timothy Mitchell, *Rule of Experts: Egypt, Techno-Politics, Modernity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 15.

“informal empire” whereby through the activities of Ottoman Turkish technocrats in Kabul, Afghanistan took on the status of a removed appendage of the Sublime Porte.³ As an extraterritorial sphere for informal Ottoman empire, Afghanistan’s experience was rather unique from other parts of the world where the Ottomans sought to exercise influence in their final decades. Like the outlying regions of the Ottoman Empire, Afghanistan was conceived as a backward space desperately in need of a program of reform carried out by self-styled Ottoman Turkish experts. Afghanistan’s most notable modernist intellectual of the twentieth century, Mahmud Tarzi, whose own experience of exile in the Ottoman Empire inspired the decision to invite Ottoman experts to Kabul, ensured that the course of Afghan developmentalism would be firmly based on the Turkish model. This opened a productive and cordial relationship between Afghanistan and Turkey with long-lasting impact.

This paper focuses on the historical relationship between Afghanistan and Turkey vis-à-vis modernization. First, it traces the roots of how the model of Ottoman modernism became an archetype for Afghanistan beginning in the late nineteenth century. Second, it depicts the scope of Ottoman and post-Ottoman Turkish technical assistance in a number of key sectors in the early decades of the twentieth century. Third, it highlights the considerable and long lasting influence of Turkish military training in the genesis of the modern Afghan army. Finally, it asserts that in contrast to the prevailing historical trajectory of Afghanistan as a country often ensnared by predatory neighbors and meddlesome regional interventions, Turkish promotion of Afghan developmentalism during a constructive phase in the country’s history presents a distinctive and positive diversion from a narrative dominated by foreign aggression. In this regard, Turkey holds an exceptional position vis-à-vis Afghanistan as a state within its surrounding region that is the bearer of a positive legacy rather than the typical predatory neighbor. For a country like Afghanistan which is frequently defined by instability often wrought by outside forces, Turkey’s distinctively constructive historical legacy puts it in a unique position. This has the potential to allow Turkey to revive

³ Michael B. O’Sullivan, “The Little Brother of the Ottoman State: Ottoman technocrats in Kabul and Afghanistan’s development in the Ottoman imagination, 1908–23” *Modern Asian Studies* 50, no. 6, (2016): 1846-1887.

its influential role in the current context of peacebuilding efforts in Afghanistan.

2. Foundation of Turco-Afghan Nexus 1901-1919

Afghanistan's contacts with Europe and the Muslim Mediterranean world between the sixteenth century and the early nineteenth century were exceptionally limited in scope and impact. Unlike Iran, the Ottoman Empire, India and Central Asia, Afghanistan did not undergo any major European penetration during much of the history of its first independent existence as a distinct political entity (1747-1838).⁴ This meant that in contrast to neighboring regions and states Afghanistan began the process of modernization and political reform significantly later and remained a cultural backwater until the beginning of the twentieth century. A contemporary account from the early twentieth century described Afghanistan as "untouched by civilization in one of the last forbidden countries in the world, the peasants gained their knowledge only through the mouths of the local priests."⁵ Despite this relative isolation, there was some external contact in the late nineteenth century via visiting foreign delegations to Kabul and Afghan curiosity regarding the Ottoman Turkish model of statecraft and reform. However, for the most part, the imperialistic policies of the British, who controlled Afghan foreign relations from 1879-1919 after two Anglo-Afghan Wars prevented any other type of outside influence from impacting the society of Afghanistan. On the other hand, the draconian leadership of the Afghan Amir Abdur Rahman (1880-1901), who spent his entire reign pacifying the unruly decentralized provincial kingdoms within Afghanistan in order to bring them under a centralized state authority, neither allowed Afghans to travel abroad nor permitted foreign expertise to enter the country. In addition, the iron fisted Amir exiled prominent Afghan families in an effort to dislodge perceived threats to his position. Nevertheless, Amir Abdur Rahman did introduce administrative, military, legal and social reforms and was inspired by the Ottoman model of modernism in devising his own reform program in the late nineteenth century.

⁴ Vartan Gregorian, *The Emergence of Modern Afghanistan*, (Redwood: Stanford University Press, 1969), 61.

⁵ Roland Wild, *Amanullah: Ex-King of Afghanistan*, (Quetta: Nisa Traders, 1932), 65.

The Ottoman model of modernization became an archetype in Afghanistan during the final decades of the nineteenth century. This was facilitated in part by the sizable number of Ottoman officers who trained Prince Yaqub Beg's army in neighboring Kashgar in the 1870s and a series of other informal diplomatic exchanges between Kabul and Istanbul.⁶ The first Ottoman Turkish mission to Afghanistan in 1877 has been cited as a catalyst for introducing the concept of a constitution and legal modernism to the country.⁷ Afghanistan was also exposed to the efforts of the Ottoman Sultan Abdül Hamid II in promoting Pan-Islamic solidarity in Afghanistan. The sending of a high-level diplomatic mission by the Sultan Abdül Hamid II to Afghanistan in 1877 to garner assistance and sympathy in the fight against the common enemy, Russia, after the start of the Russo-Turkish war in April 1877, was consistent with the Sultan's other endeavors to capitalize on his status as Caliph to create an international Islamic 'lobby' to help defend the Ottoman Empire which was subjected to powerful external threats. By resorting to Pan-Islamism (the name given to organized efforts to promote unity among all Muslims), Sultan, Abdül Hamid II hoped to mobilize support for his cause. The Turkish historical assessment of the 1877 mission to Afghanistan is that it provided useful first-hand information on prevailing political conditions in Afghanistan, but did not fulfill its immediate political objective. Although little came of the Ottoman mission to the Kabul in 1877, Turkish interest in good relations with Afghanistan, continued during the reign of Sultan Abdül Hamid and afterwards.⁸

From the 1880s, Amir Abdur Rahman had commissioned works on the composition of the Ottoman State that served as blueprints for administrative and juridical reforms during his reign.⁹

It was, however, at the turn of the twentieth century with the ascension of the liberal leaning Amir Habibullah and return of

⁶ B. O'Sullivan, "The Little Brother of the Ottoman State," 1846-1887.

⁷ Faiz Ahmed, *Afghanistan Rising: Islamic Law and Statecraft between the Ottoman and British Empires*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2017), 5.

⁸ S. Tanvir Wasti, "The 1877 Ottoman Mission to Afghanistan", *Middle Eastern Studies* 30, no.4, (1994): 956-962.

⁹ Faiz Ahmed, "Istanbul and Kabul in Courtly Contact: The Question of Exchange between the Ottoman Empire and Afghanistan in the Late Nineteenth Century", *Osmanlı Araştırmaları* 45, no. 45 (2015): 265-296.

Afghan political exiles from the Ottoman Empire that the policy of enlisting Turkish expertise became part of a broader strategy to develop Afghanistan's military and infrastructure capacity for the purpose of expanding the writ of the central government which had only recently been extended over areas outside of Kabul.¹⁰ Afghanistan's isolation at the beginning of the twentieth century prompted a Turkish journalist to make the following characterization of the country:

A geographical area so separated from the world that it is not even within the postal service union ... a forbidden land in the middle of the huge Asian continent, like an unknown island in the middle of the ocean.¹¹

Despite this global seclusion, Afghanistan's leaders and reformers were highly conscious of the need to initiate modernization and a sweeping program of reform was launched from 1919-1929 which was preceded by two decades of reformist activity and introduction of foreign technical assistance. Moreover, Afghans were a discerning audience of modernity and revised and transcended prior identities as they envisioned the future of Afghanistan. On another level, it was precisely Afghanistan's distinctive status as a regionally isolated state that made it so alluring for reformists as an unsullied site in which to implement diverse versions of modernism. Foreign experts from a number of countries traveled to Afghanistan in the reign of Amir Habibullah (1901-1919) to render services to the Afghan government. Consultants from Europe, the United States, and India were also employed by the Afghan royal court. However, Turkish reformers sought to pull Afghanistan deeper into an Ottoman orbit. In 1904, the Ottoman government attempted to award Amir Habibullah with the prestigious Mecidiye Nişanı and its efforts were only obstructed by British interference. In the same year, Amir Habibullah began displaying strong pro-Ottoman tendencies as manifested by his introduction of the fez in Kabul, his support for the Hijaz Railway, and his recruitment of Ottoman teachers and mullahs. There is also evidence of sporadic contacts between the Afghan Amir and the Porte in this period as

¹⁰ B. O'Sullivan, "The Little Brother of the Ottoman State: ", 1849-1850.

¹¹ Holly Edwards, "Photography and Afghan Diplomacy in the Early Twentieth Century", *Ars Orientalis* 43 (2013), 48.

prominent members of the *ulama* (religious scholars) were scattered throughout the Ottoman Empire and received stipends from the Ottoman government.¹²

The catalyst for recruitment of Turkish advisors to provide technical assistance in the project of Afghan developmentalism was Mahmud Tarzi. A member of the Afghan nobility, Tarzi lived in exile in the Ottoman Empire as a political refugee for 25 years settling in Damascus with frequent visits to Istanbul. His family was banished from Afghanistan as part of Amir Abdur Rahman's policy of expelling prominent families of the royal Muhammadzai clan who were perceived to be a threat to his power. The Tarzi family moved to the Ottoman Empire where they were granted asylum by Sultan Abdül Hamid II and were personal guests of the Ottoman State. It was in the Ottoman Empire, where Mahmud Tarzi was educated and where his ideas and views on reform were cultivated. In the schools he attended in Damascus and Istanbul, he came into contact with European culture and institutions and he was exposed as well to the Ottoman nationalist-revivalist movement and the Pan-Islamic views of Sayyid Jamal al-Din al-Afghani. In addition, he gained administrative experience abroad, serving in the secretariat of the Ottoman provincial administration in Damascus. Tarzi not only felt a special bond with the Young Turk movement in the Ottoman Empire but he himself was reportedly widely read among the Young Turks. Tarzi was, thus, raised in the manner of an Ottoman modernist intellectual.¹³

Tarzi was one of the first Afghans to argue that European predominance should not be attributed exclusively to European military might but also to Western cultural, economic and industrial achievements and was an admirer of Europe's progress. At the same time, however, he was a firm believer and champion of Islam, and believed that the decline of the Muslim world at the hands of the West had nothing to do with anything inherently deficient in Islam, but in the interpretation and often abuse of Islamic tenets. He advocated for the need to adopt science and technology as a means

¹² B. O'Sullivan, "The Little Brother of the Ottoman State: ", 1852-1853.

¹³ Rhea Talley Stewart, *Fire in Afghanistan: 1919-1929, Faith, Hope and the British Empire*. (Garden City: Doubleday, 1973), 719.

to reform internal weaknesses within the Muslim world while countering Western aggression through advanced mechanisms.¹⁴ In this manner, he promoted the synthesis of Western progress and Islamic precepts.

In 1902, the Tarzi family was granted amnesty by the liberal leaning and more open-minded Amir Habibullah. Upon returning to Afghanistan, Tarzi immediately initiated a reform program for the country based on his own experiences of exile in the Ottoman Empire. He began by pointing out Afghanistan's stark backwardness to Amir Habibullah. In particular, Tarzi identified the country's deficiencies in education, communications, and industry. He also pinpointed the detrimental effects of political, cultural, and intellectual isolation. Tarzi was duly appointed chief of the Bureau of Translation for the royal court, where his main task was keeping the Amir informed of current events in the Muslim world and Europe. Through his tireless efforts, the first major newspaper in Afghanistan, *Siraj al-Akhbar Afghaniyah*, (The Lamp of News of Afghanistan) resumed publication.¹⁵ Under Tarzi's editorship, *Siraj al Akhbar Afghaniyah* played a central role in the rise of an Afghan modernist movement by serving as a medium for an enlightened group of Young Afghans, who advocated the cause of Afghan nationalism and modernism. Mahmud Tarzi was the journal's editor and chief contributor, and his immediate aim was to provide Afghanistan with a newspaper through which to promote an awakening among the Afghan elite and raise awareness on the need for Afghanistan to emerge from isolation and become a developed society via reform and modernization.¹⁶ Published from 1911-1918, *Siraj al Akhbar Afghaniyah* espoused the cause of modernization and undertook the political and social education of the Afghan ruling

¹⁴ May Schinasi, *Afghanistan at the Beginning of the Twentieth Century, Nationalism and Journalism in Afghanistan, A Study of Seraj ul-Akhbar (1911-1918)*, (Naples: Instituto universitario orientale, 1979), 196.

¹⁵ *Siraj al-Akhbar* was first published in 1906 by the pioneering intellectual movement in Afghanistan known as the Association of *Siraj al-Akhbar*. In 1905, the first group of Afghan intellectuals spearheaded a drive to publish a modern newspaper advocating social and political change. The leader of this association was Maulavi Abdul Rauf Khan Qandahari, who was head of the *Madrasa-yi Shahi* and his deputy, was Maulavi Muhammad Sarwar Khan Wasif. The main objective of this group of intellectuals was to enlighten the Afghan people by introducing them to modernity, and educating them about global events and developments.

¹⁶ Schnasi, *Afghanistan at the Beginning of the Twentieth Century*, 72.

class and in turn, the public.¹⁷ In Tarzi's view, the first concrete step toward social change and reform should be the establishment of cultural contacts with the outside world. To this end, he assigned *Siraj al Akhbar Afghaniyah* the task of bridging the gap between Afghanistan and the rest of the world, and of informing the Afghans of intellectual, scientific, and technological achievements in Europe, and advancing their understanding of the nature of Western institutions. In order to generate popular interest in science and learning, Tarzi translated a number of European novels into Persian. He published many articles in *Siraj al Akhbar Afghaniyah* criticizing the lack of modern educational facilities in Afghanistan. Some of the Turkish technocrats resident in Afghanistan contributed educational pieces in the pages of *Siraj al Akhbar Afghaniyah*.¹⁸

Mahmud Tarzi quickly impressed upon Amir Habibullah the need to accept a Turkish delegation to assist in reforming the country.¹⁹ Tarzi gained royal permission to bring to Afghanistan five or six individuals including a doctor, engineer, financier, artist and printer. The first group of Ottoman Turkish technocrats to be invited by Tarzi to Kabul were Mehmed Fazlı, Husayn Hüsnü, Ali Server, Mehmed Efendi, Ali Munir, and Izzet Bey.²⁰ It was this first group of Turkish technocrats, all members of the Committee of Union and Progress, who introduced Turkey to Afghanistan and established an affection for the Turks among Afghans.²¹ Among this group was an Ottoman cartoonist and printer, Mehmed Fazlı, whose travelogue, *Resimli Afgan Seyahatı* (Illustrated Afghan Journey) was printed in Istanbul in 1909.²² This work illustrates the conditions and status of Afghanistan's army, education, and industry and the feeling of proximity its people nurtured towards the Ottomans. For Fazlı, enabling the Afghans' self-awareness of their own national spirit stood out as among the greatest services imparted by the Ottomans.²³

Mehmed Fazlı hoped that his account of what he called "Asia's young and vigorous government" would serve as a counter

¹⁷ Gregorian, *The Emergence of Modern Afghanistan*, 185-186.

¹⁸ Gregorian, *The Emergence of Modern Afghanistan*, 172-180.

¹⁹ Saray, *Afganistan ve Türkler*, 25.

²⁰ Saray, *Afganistan ve Türkler*, 189.

²¹ O'Sullivan, "The Little Brother of the Ottoman State: ", 1847.

²² Mehmed Fazlı, *Resimli Afgan Seyahatı* (Trip to Afghanistan with Pictures) (Istanbul: Matbaa-i Ahmed Ihsan), 1909.

²³ O'Sullivan, "The Little Brother of the Ottoman State," 1876.

narrative to prevailing accounts on Afghanistan as an undeveloped and myopic state. More importantly, he envisioned that his accounts and images of Afghanistan's military and political situation would stimulate interest in the country and foster an amicable bond. His appeal was successful and between 1908 and 1923, Fazlı and his companions were joined in Kabul by Ottoman printers, soldiers, engineers, doctors, and *ulama* (religious scholars). The arrival of these Turkish technocrats at the Afghan royal court led to a series of state-building initiatives based on the specifically Ottoman historical experience of reform and modernization. Central to this initiative was the formulation of a theory of Afghanistan as a disconnected appendage of the Ottoman state. Afghanistan was envisioned as a space equivalent to a detached periphery of the Porte.²⁴

In fact, as a number of Ottoman, Afghan, German, and British sources have established, Afghanistan represented a pristine land for imperial resurgence within the Committee of Union and Progress. Thus, the Turco-Afghan nexus presents a unique case in late Ottoman history in which Ottoman Muslims gained excessive influence in a country beyond the borders of the Porte. Before and after the First World War, some members of the Committee of Union and Progress even saw Afghanistan as the only place where the Ottomans could initiate a global restructuring of power. Developing Afghanistan was viewed as enhancing the image of the Ottoman state among Muslims around the world. In addition, it would provide the Ottomans with an ally whose frontiers bordered Russian Central Asia and British India²⁵, which would serve as a base for the dissemination of pro-Ottoman propaganda. Ottoman technocrats were sensitive to the negative consequences foreign meddling had had on Afghanistan's development, and they thus sought to distinguish their own endeavors from the pernicious influence of European powers.

While the Russians and British had interfered in Afghanistan's internal affairs and reduced it to a weak entity, these Ottoman advisers saw their work as a patriotic duty that would help

²⁴ Ussama Makdisi, "Ottoman Orientalism", *American Historical Review* 107, no.3 (2002): 788.

²⁵ Selim Deringil, *The Well-Protected Domains: Ideology and the Legitimation of Power in the Ottoman Empire, 1876–1909* (London; New York: I.B. Tauris, 2011), 135.

Afghanistan emerge out of economic and political desolation.²⁶ For the Pan-Turkist writer Celal Nuri and Mehmed Fazlı, Afghanistan was simply several steps behind on the path of development, and now needed help to attain political maturity. They were partially aware of the fact that in the 19th century Afghanistan had experienced its own internal processes of state-building that introduced the extensive range of administrative and technical structures associated with modernity.²⁷

Through the efforts of Tarzi to modernize Afghanistan based on the Ottoman Turkish model, and the mutual Ottoman interest in developing Afghanistan for purposes of shoring up its regional and global prestige while gaining a strategically located ally, made Afghanistan a unique space for Turkish modernizing activity in the first three decades of the twentieth century. Given that both the Afghan Amir and the Ottoman residents referred to Afghanistan as a 'disconnected appendage' of the Ottoman state suggests that the pattern of cooperation extended beyond customary diplomatic relations.²⁸

3. Turkish Reformist Activity in Afghanistan: 1907-1929

The arrival of successive waves of technocrats from the Ottoman Empire to Afghanistan immediately triggered a flurry of efforts to promote developmental activity. Turkish technical assistance in the first decades of the twentieth century was most visible in education, military and administration. Reforms in education were seen as the foundation for a modern and developed society. In 1904, the first modern school in Afghanistan, Habibya Lycee, was established by Amir Habibullah. Prior to this, the only form of education available in Afghanistan was a *madrassa* (religious school). Turkish teachers from the Ottoman Empire taught at Habibya. It rapidly became a hub for debates on political reform and the merits of a constitutional government. The first Constitutional movement in Afghanistan (*Mashrutah-i Awwal*), which was established in 1907, had close links

²⁶ Celal Nuri, *İttihad-ı İslam ve Almanya* (Istanbul: Yeni Osmanlı Matbaa ve Kütüphanesi, 1917), 54.

²⁷ Hasan Kawun Kakar, *Government and Society in Afghanistan: The Reign of Amir Abd al-Rahman Khan* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1979); Christine Noelle-Karimi, *State and Tribe in Nineteenth-Century Afghanistan: The Reign of Amir Dost Muhammad Khan*, (Richmond: Curzon Press, 1997).

²⁸ O'Sullivan, "The Little Brother of the Ottoman State:", 1854.

to the Turkish wave of reform and Indian independence movement. It was one of similar currents in Russia, the Ottoman Empire, and Iran in the beginning of the twentieth century.²⁹ Ottoman influence on the Afghan Constitutionalists and nationalists has long been recognized as a salient feature of Turkish reformist influence in Afghanistan.³⁰

Among Ottoman expatriates in Kabul, Mehmed Fazlı established a school of zincography, installed typographic machines for use by Mahmud Tarzi and the Afghan government. In addition, he contributed articles to *Siraj al Akhbar Afghaniyah*. His most notable writing was a piece in *Siraj al Akhbar Afghaniyah* on the subject of aeronautics, where he outlined a brief history of flight from the time of the Montgolfier brothers in 1783. In this piece, Fazlı gave a detailed explanation of motors, air resistance, and gasoline, but also explained German zeppelins and the Italians' use of airplanes against Ottoman troops at Trablusgarb. These pieces exemplify how the Ottoman expatriates in Kabul sanctified themselves as the educators of an Afghan readership on industrial and political modernity. Tarzi's paper became the voice of this new technocratic governance. Among Fazlı's other endeavors in Kabul was his membership on the Educational Council, chaired by Prince Enayatullah and staffed by himself, an Ottoman subject named Hasan Hilmi Efendi, Ali Khan, four Indians, and two Afghans. In 1913, the Council prepared and published regulations for Habibya School, founded a teacher training college, and inaugurated five primary schools. The composition of both religious and secular education in the reformed Afghan school system had clear similarities with the Ottoman educational establishment.³¹

According to Fazlı, an Ottoman subject from Trabzon, Hasan Hilmi Efendi, organized Afghanistan's national post office. The quality of this undertaking was of such a high caliber that it was almost identical with Ottoman regulations.³² Other members of the Turkish mission held prominent posts at the Afghan court. The doctor

²⁹ Abdul Hay Habibi. *Junbish-i Mashrutiyat Dar Afghanistan*. (Peshawar, Sazman-i Mahajirin-i Musulman-i Afghanistan. 1999), 5-6.

³⁰ O'Sullivan, "The Little Brother of the Ottoman State," 1855.

³¹ O'Sullivan, "The Little Brother of the Ottoman State," 1873.

³² Ludwig Adamec, *Historical and Political Who's Who of Afghanistan* (Graz: Akademische Druck- u. Verlagsanstalt, 1975), 159. He was a dye manufacturer and a printer of stamps.

Münir İzzet Beg was reportedly a favorite of Amir Habibullah. He was sent to Istanbul in 1912 to report on the progress of the war in the Balkans and upon his return to Kabul became the chief agent in cultivating Pan-Islamic feeling in Afghanistan. He was promoted to Mulki colonel in 1917, and appointed head of the civil and military hospitals in December 1919. His assistant was another Ottoman citizen, Ahmed Fahima, who had trained in Istanbul and been recruited by İzzet Beg while in Egypt. He became royal physician in 1919.³³ İzzet Beg, who had earlier graduated from the Medical School of Istanbul and studied in Paris, substantially reformed the public health system in Kabul by initiating a large-scale vaccination program for smallpox and even produced a vaccine for the disease himself. He sent extensive medical reports to Mahmud Tarzi which detailed the medical operations he and his assistants performed at the hospital. When a cholera epidemic swept through Kabul in 1915, he imposed a quarantine regulation on the country in close cooperation with Prince Enayutallah.³⁴ *Siraj al-Akhbar Afghaniyah* held photos of the medical procedures conducted by İzzet Beg. This included the rectification of the cleft palate, the setting of broken bones, the removal of tumors, and the provisioning of prosthetic limbs. These depictions in *Siraj al-Akhbar Afghaniyah* illustrated to readers the full scope of Ottoman modern medicine and its implications for the health of Afghanistan's citizens.³⁵

In his work, "The Little Brother of the Ottoman State: Ottoman Technocrats in Kabul and Afghanistan's Development in the Ottoman Imagination, 1908-1923," Michael O'Sullivan has provided a detailed account of the activities of Ottoman technocrats in Afghanistan and how the country became a distinctive territory for projecting Ottoman influence through developmental programs aimed at elevating the country from backwardness. After 1908, Afghanistan's march towards modernization and triumph over underdevelopment and obscurity became something of a trope in the Ottoman press. O'Sullivan points out that Fazlı's publication in 1909 may have influenced this. Fazlı had returned to Istanbul sometime in 1909 and over a series of ten issues printed excerpts

³³ Adamec, *Historical and Political Who's Who of Afghanistan*, 119.

³⁴ Schinasi, *Afghanistan at the Beginning of the Twentieth Century*, 145.

³⁵ *Siraj al-Akhbar-i Afghaniyah*: yr. 4, no. 10, 6, 11.

from his travelogue in his newspaper, *Laklak*³⁶. Fazlı's death under mysterious circumstances prompted several theories regarding his ultimate fate.³⁷ Irrespective of the cause of his demise, many subsequent Committee of Union and Progress writings and policies echo his visions for Afghanistan's future. Pan-Islamist journals such as *Beyanülhak* and *Sebil-ür-Reşad* included a number of articles on Afghanistan, related to everything from Afghanistan's revival to 'The Ottomans and Amir Habibullah. *Servet-i Fünun* ran its own short piece in 1911 on Afghanistan's progress and education. In a memorandum dedicated in part to a discussion of British and Russian imperialism and presented to the Committee of Union and Progress from Salonika in 1912, Celal Nuri noted Afghanistan's strategic location in between the two empires. In similar fashion, Ismail Naci wrote in *Muharebeden sonra: Hilafet siyaseti ve Türklük siyaseti* (*After the war: The caliphate politics and Turkishness politics*) after the conclusion of the Balkan wars in 1915 on the need for the Ottoman Empire to develop Afghanistan. Naci harangued the Ottoman elite's preoccupation with European affairs and beseeched his readers to disregard Europe and strive to build relations with the Muslims of Asia. In particular, Naci viewed Afghanistan as an integral part of Ottoman foreign policy and he yearned to see the country evolve into an 'industrial and neutral Belgium of Asia.'³⁸ He elaborated that British and Russian interference in Afghanistan had served to the detriment of the Afghan people who "remained under the debris of archaic civilization."³⁹ It was argued that only through closer ties with the Ottoman Turks could Afghanistan escape the depths of regression and have hope of a progressive future. This outlook regarding Afghanistan developed as a covert policy in the years before and during World War I. The Committee of Union and Progress government sent additional agents to

³⁶ O'Sullivan, "The Little Brother of the Ottoman State" 1881

³⁷ There are considerable discrepancies surrounding his ultimate fate, with one author conjecturing that he was possibly murdered or unexpectedly carried away by an illness after his return to Istanbul. Alternatively, May Schinasi has remarked that Fazlı became stranded in Paris with the outbreak of war in 1914. See Michael O'Sullivan, "The Little Brother of the Ottoman State': Ottoman technocrats in Kabul and Afghanistan's development in the Ottoman imagination, 1908–23."

³⁸ Cemil Aydın, *The Politics of Anti-Westernism in Asia Visions of World Order in Pan-Islamic and Pan-Asian Thought* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 105-106

³⁹ Habil Adem [pseud.], *Muharebeden sonra: Hilafet Siyaseti ve Türklük Siyaseti* (*After the war: The caliphate politics and Turkishness politics*) (Istanbul: İkbâl Kütüphanesi, 1331 [1915]), 125.

Afghanistan throughout this period. In fact, the *Teşkilat-ı Mahsus*, which was the secret service branch of the Committee of Union and Progress, carried out extensive operations in Afghanistan.⁴⁰ In 1910, the Committee of Union and Progress sent three more agents to Afghanistan and dispatched emissaries to Amir Habibullah as well as the Amir of Bukhara. At the end of the Balkan wars in 1913, Enver Paşa sent more men to Kabul, bringing their total number to 15.⁴¹ In 1913, another Ottoman soldier, Ali Khan, and his two assistants, a professor of artillery and inspector of higher military studies, joined the staff at the military college in Kabul. Ali Efendi, an original member of Fazlî's trip, was promoted in 1917 to the school commandant and left Afghanistan in 1919 for Karachi and later Damascus.⁴²

The Community of Union and Progress also facilitated the famous German-Turkish delegation to Kabul known as the Hentig-Niedermeyer mission in 1915. The purpose of this diplomatic mission was to encourage Afghanistan to declare full independence from the British Empire⁴³, enter World War I on the side of the Central Powers, and attack British India. In August 1914, Amir Habibullah

⁴⁰ Jacob Landau, *Pan-Turkism: From Irredentism to Cooperation* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995), 52; Polat Safi, "History in the Trench: The Ottoman Special Organization—Teşkilat-ı Mahsusa Literature", *Middle Eastern Studies* 48, no.1, (2012): 89–106; reference to Afghanistan on 93.

⁴¹ Landau, *Pan-Turkism*, 50–52.

⁴² Adamec, *Who's Who of Afghanistan*, 116.

⁴³ From 1879–1919, the British controlled Afghanistan's foreign relations. The Treaty of Gandamak signed in 1879 by Amir Yakub Beg with Sir Louis Cavagnari formally ceded control of Afghanistan's foreign relations to the British. Under the provisions of the treaty the Afghan Amir surrendered control to the British over the foreign relations of Afghanistan and allowed for a British Mission, with European members, to reside in Kabul. Afghan territory was also ceded to the British. Jurisdiction over the Korram and Pishin valleys, the Sibi district, and the Khaybar pass was transferred to the British. The treaty provided for increased commercial contacts and the establishment of a telegraph line between Kabul and British India. Muhammad Yaqub was to receive an annual subsidy of 600,000 rupees and to issue amnesty to all those who had collaborated with the British occupying forces. The British Mission led by Sir Louis Cavagnari arrived in Kabul on 24 July 1879. On 3 September 1879, a dissatisfied regiment of the Amir's army from Herat stormed the mission compound and massacred all its members, including Cavagnari. The event set the stage for another British invasion of Afghanistan, the expulsion of Muhammad Yaqub to India, and the Second Anglo-Afghan War, which culminated in the British appointment of Abdur Rahman (ruled 22 July 1880 - 1 October 1901), patrilineal parallel cousin of Yaqub, as Amir of Afghanistan. Abdur Rahman accepted, in principle, the provisions of the Treaty of Gandamak with the modification that the British agent and his staff in Kabul would be Indian Muslims.

had declared Afghan neutrality at the outbreak of the European war, but he was seriously concerned when the Ottomans joined it in October. For the next three years he repeatedly told the British agent in Kabul that he was “anxious about Turkey’s great religious attraction for Afghans in particular”. The influence of Turkey on his subjects was a matter of supreme importance to him.⁴⁴ As Vartan Gregorian points out:

The entry of the Ottoman Empire into the conflict aroused widespread Pan-Islamic and nationalist sentiment in Afghanistan. The overwhelming majority of the Afghan nationalists and modernists were sympathetic to the Turkish cause. In general, public opinion in Afghanistan was on the (Turkish-German) side, as it was in Persia, where even the peasants and tribesmen seem to have been anti-British and anti-Russian.⁴⁵

In an August 1914 telegram to the German Ambassador in Istanbul, Baron von Wangenheim, Enver Paşa stated that Ottoman officers in Kabul had contact with Indian Muslims, and he even sent Ubeydullah Efendi, a parliamentary deputy from Smyrna, and Basra’s governor, General Süleyman Paşa, to the court of the Afghan Amir.⁴⁶ This served as the precursor for the well-known Hentig-Niedermeyer expedition, which has conventionally been viewed as an isolated incident. Evidence to the contrary is indicated by the events surrounding the delegation’s arrival on the outskirts of Kabul in September 1915, when ten men from the Turkish community in Kabul rode out to meet them.⁴⁷ The Turkish colony had probably did not exceed two dozen men, but their influence at court was considerable.⁴⁸ In their memoirs both Oskar von Niedermeyer and Emil Rybitschka mention the role played by Ottoman technocrats in Kabul’s political life, and in fact were treated for illnesses by Dr. Münir İzzet Beg.⁴⁹ Despite the mission’s ultimate failure,

⁴⁴ Thomas L. Hughes, “The German Mission to Afghanistan, 1915-1916” *German Studies Review*, 25, no. 3, (2002): 450-451

⁴⁵ Gregorian, *The Emergence of Modern Afghanistan*, 217-20.

⁴⁶ Ludwig Adamec, *Afghanistan’s Foreign Affairs to the Mid-Twentieth Century: Relations with the USSR, Germany, and Britain* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1974), 16, 21; Ömer Hakan Özalp, *Mehmed Ubeydullah Efendi’nin Malta, Afganistan ve İran Hatıraları* (Memoirs of Mehmed Ubeydullah Effendi from Malta, Afghanistan and Iran) (Istanbul: Dergah, 2002), 204–23, 238–9.

⁴⁷ Adamec, *Afghanistan’s Foreign Affairs*, 31.

⁴⁸ Adamec, *Afghanistan’s Foreign Affairs*, 31; Adamec, *Who’s Who of Afghanistan*, 176.

⁴⁹ O’Sullivan, “*The Little Brother of the Ottoman State*,” 1884.

Ottoman actors continued to engage in propaganda activities within Afghanistan, and in time Herat became the most important base of operations for Ottoman agents. In Kabul, underground operations in support of the Ottoman war effort continued. The Afghan modernists led by Mahmud Tarzi and his son-in-law Prince Amanullah were dismayed by Amir Habibullah's adherence to a policy of neutrality and refusal to enter the war as an ally of the Ottomans. From 1914, *Siraj al-Akhbar Afghaniyah* closely followed the Ottoman war effort and printed flattering articles on the Ottoman defense of the Dardanelles and Enver Paşa. In 1916, the professor of Turkish at Habibiya College and the Military College, Muhammad Nazif, printed a two-volume Ottoman Turkish grammar and reader.⁵⁰ Concurrently in Istanbul, works were published by the military press on the political geography of Afghanistan and Iran.⁵¹

Ottoman defeat in World War I heightened Afghanistan's attraction as a getaway for many Committee of Union and Progress loyalists, especially Cemal Paşa and Enver Paşa. Enver Paşa ultimately fled to Turkmenistan in 1921 and became head of the Basmacı movement, where he hoped to create a Pan-Turkish confederation comprising Chinese Turkestan, Afghanistan, and Turkey, and was supplied with weapons by the pro-Turkish Afghan King Amanullah, who considered himself the union's potential leader.⁵² This relationship arose from a series of contacts which had been established by Afghans and Ottoman technocrats in previous years. With the assassination of Amir Habibullah in 1919 and the accession of King Amanullah, the pro-Turkish orientation in Kabul was elevated to official government policy. This was particularly the case after Afghanistan gained independence in the wake of the Third Anglo-Afghan War. It has been speculated that Ottoman military training may have played an instrumental role in Afghan successes in the war.⁵³

⁵⁰ Muhammad Nazif, *Sarf-i Turki [Ottoman Turkish Grammar]* (Kabul: Matbaah-i Inayat, 1336 [1917]); Muhammad Nazif *Qiraat-i Zaban-i Turki [Reading Exercises in Ottoman Turkish]* (Kabul: Matbaa-i Inayat, 1336 [1917]).

⁵¹ O'Sullivan, "The Little Brother of the Ottoman State," 1885.

⁵² Martha B. Olcott, "The Basmachi or Freeman's Revolt in Turkestan 1918-24", *Soviet Studies* 33, no.3, (1981):358-9.

⁵³ Adamec, *Who's Who of Afghanistan*, 176. There is scant evidence but there exists the possibility that Ottoman military training aided Afghan army efforts in the Third Anglo-Afghan War. For instance, Hayrettin, the professor of Turkish at Habibiya College, was sent in April 1919 as head of a mission to Turkey with orders to secure experts for the Afghan army. In fact, a file on the Anglo-Afghan war was prepared by the Turkish military press in Istanbul in 1925, complete with maps of the major fighting. See also *1919 Afgan-İngiliz Harbi (Dersâadet: Matbaa-i Askeri, 1341 [1925])*.

Throughout the period of the Allied occupation of Anatolia, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk had regular contact with the Afghan royal court. Delegations were recurrently exchanged between Ankara and Kabul. The Turkish–Afghan treaty of 1921, signed in Moscow, reiterated many of the assertions long made by Ottoman Turkish technocrats resident in Afghanistan from the early twentieth century onwards with respect to Turkey’s need to have a share in Asiatic policy. This was perceived to have been a hitherto neglected area. A month after the signing of the Turkish-Afghan Treaty at the Embassy of Afghanistan in Ankara, the Afghan Ambassador and Mustafa Kemal Atatürk delivered speeches by calling attention to the fraternal ties between the two nations and the necessity of continued cooperation against imperialism.⁵⁴

The publication of an Ottoman Turkish textbook in Kabul in 1920, illustrated with Amanullah’s portrait on the cover page, was a graphical depiction of Turco-Afghan affinity. This special bilateral relationship, whose origins can be dated to Fazlis’s mission, had been cultivated throughout the previous dozen years by the continued presence of Ottoman advisers in Afghanistan. The conclusion of a formal treaty between the Republic of Turkey and Afghanistan in 1921 thus formalized a diplomatic relationship between two newly sovereign nation-states which had informally collaborated against imperial rivals for years. In turn, the state-driven reform projects pursued by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk and Amanullah in the 1920s shared a common link which drew inspiration initially from Ottoman precedents implemented in both countries.

4. Intensive Modernization and Afghan-Turkish Relations 1919-1929

As already noted, the ascension of Amanullah to the throne raised the prominence of Turkish influence and participation in the modernization of Afghanistan. Through the 1921 Treaty of Friendship, Afghanistan was the second country, after the Soviet Union, to recognize the new Turkish Republic, even as Turkey’s war of independence was ongoing. In 1923, the Turkish Embassy in Kabul was the first diplomatic mission inaugurated in Afghanistan. Unlike his father, Amir Habibullah, who was a gradual modernizer, Amanullah sought to radically reform Afghanistan. To emphasize

⁵⁴ O’Sullivan, “The Little Brother of the Ottoman State,” 1886.

his commitment to drastic change, he assumed the title King rather than Amir.⁵⁵ As the son-in-law of Mahmud Tarzi, he shared the vision of a modern and independent Afghanistan. His wife, Queen Soraya, was one of the first Muslim women to appear unveiled in a Western country. King Amanullah emerged from the Third Anglo-Afghan War a national hero and the most respected leader in the recent history of Afghanistan. He secured the full independence of Afghanistan at the time that the British Empire was still a global power with colonies throughout the world. He moved to pull his country out of international isolation by establishing diplomatic relations with major European powers, including Britain and the Soviet Union, as well as with the countries in the region. He received foreign envoys in Kabul and sent ambassadors to other capitals. Using his influence, based on his early popularity within Afghanistan, King Amanullah introduced fundamental modernization programs through institutional reforms in governance, social and economic affairs.

As an ardent and impatient modernizer, King Amanullah implemented a program of shock therapy. Like his father-in-law, Mahmud Tarzi, he held pro-Turkish inclinations and was an avid admirer of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, whose reforms he sought to emulate in Afghanistan. He supported secular education, economic and administrative reform, developing a modern army, new technologies such as photography, emancipation of women from onerous customs, and a total restructuring of Afghan society along modern lines. Among his notable achievements was the promulgation of the first Afghan constitution in 1923, establishment of female education and the opening of the first girls' schools in Afghanistan, and sweeping economic, political, social, military, and administrative reforms.

King Amanullah's most dearly held reforms were in the realm of education. For purposes of reorganizing and strengthening the educational system, he continued the practice of hiring Turkish teachers begun in the reign of his father, Amir Habibullah. He established a number of modern schools which added to Habibya College. In 1924 he established a four-year school of administration with emphasis on arithmetic and accounting. Turkish was taught as

⁵⁵ Wild, *Amanullah: Ex King of Afghanistan*, 77.

a second language since Amanullah intended to pattern the Afghan administrative apparatus along the Turkish model. When the Afghan government obtained its first airplanes and sent Afghans for flight training abroad, Amanullah considered establishing an Afghan civil aviation agency and discussed the project with the Turks, who had such an agency.⁵⁶

When King Amanullah married Soraya, daughter of Mahmud Tarzi who was half Syrian, it became a union and partnership dedicated to uplifting Afghans from the shackles of backwardness and steering them into the modern world. Tarzi, Amanullah, and Soraya engaged in conversation about reform in Afghanistan and enacting new norms of behavior within the restricted milieu of the Kabul elite. As the first monogamous ruler of Afghanistan, King Amanullah and Queen Soraya publicly upheld the exclusivity of their marriage as the new standard for Afghan family life. Beyond role modeling and public displays which was in itself a novelty in 1920s Afghanistan, King Amanullah and Queen Soraya sought to alter the status of women in society through formal legislation (Family Code of 1921) as well as publishing the first Women's Magazine, *Irshad-i Niswan* in 1921. Compulsory secular primary education and sending girls to Turkey for higher education was part of this larger campaign. By 1928, there were about 800 girls attending schools in Kabul and there were even some Afghan women studying abroad, notably in Turkey, France, and Switzerland. Inspired by a small group of unveiled Turkish feminists resident in Kabul, a number of Afghan women also doffed the veil publicly.⁵⁷ At that time Amanullah had plans to build more schools for girls and intended to apply his compulsory education system to girls as well.⁵⁸ Queen Soraya was openly vocal about changing the status of Afghan women and she did so with the full and public support of her husband.⁵⁹ It was in this manner, that Amanullah and Soraya envisioned a modern Afghanistan when they embarked on a lengthy diplomatic tour in 1927 and 1928.

⁵⁶ Gregorian, *The Emergence of Modern Afghanistan*, 247.

⁵⁷ Leon Poullada, *Reform and Rebellion in Afghanistan 1919-1929*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973).

⁵⁸ Gregorian, *The Emergence of Modern Afghanistan*, 243.

⁵⁹ Edwards, "Photography and Afghan Diplomacy," 50.

King Amanullah arrived in Turkey on May 19, 1928. He saluted the friendship between Afghanistan and Turkey, referring to the Turks as elder brothers and guides. In response, Atatürk extolled the fearless Afghan spirit of independence and pointed out that the Turks and the Afghans had a common goal and could consider themselves the heirs of the same nation. Atatürk declared that King Amanullah was just the leader that Afghanistan needed.⁶⁰ The June 1928 issue of *Resimli Ay*, Turkey's only monthly magazine, was entirely devoted to Afghanistan and the European tour. The magazine showered Amanullah with praise and esteem with the caption, "The Afghans venerable, young, courageous King Amanullah Khan, who is visiting our country today." Throughout the issue, Amanullah and Afghanistan are mentioned in glowing terms with specific reference to Afghan independence and its significance for the Middle East in general as well as the King's modernization efforts. Moreover, political opinions about Amanullah and the emergence of Afghanistan in the international arena are clearly stated: "Afghanistan's active and determined ruler, Amanullah Khan, is a star who is bringing the good news of a grand civilized, economic and national future for the Middle East and the Asian continent." Particular effort was made to underscore connections between Afghanistan and Turkey – "Afghanistan can be considered a Turkish state: Today Turks make up half of the population of Afghanistan".⁶¹ The personal intimacy between the Turkish and Afghan rulers in a tone of camaraderie and shared values was also displayed. The magazine described the relationship between Amanullah and Atatürk fraternally:

The person which the Afghan King Amanullah Khan had chosen as a guide for modernizing the country was the Ghazi Atatürk. Amanullah Khan loves Atatürk like his brother and shows him extraordinary respect. He even has pictures of Atatürk in honored places in his palace. At any opportunity he proudly talks about the sword that Atatürk has given him as a present.⁶²

King Amanullah and his reform program suffered backlash leading to his ultimate downfall from power and exile to Italy in 1929. However, his reforms have historical significance and laid the

⁶⁰ Gregorian, *The Emergence of Modern Afghanistan*, 258.

⁶¹ Edwards, "Photography and Afghan Diplomacy", 52.

⁶² Edwards, "Photography and Afghan Diplomacy", 53.

foundation for the more gradual reforms adopted by his successors. He created an Afghan national identity, and many of the reformist measures he called for survived. He was responsible for opening Afghanistan to the outside world diplomatically, reorganizing the national bureaucracy along Western lines, overhauling the economy, and introducing order and discipline into the military. His educational reforms produced an educated middle class that played an important role in the future development of the country, and despite the apparent failure of his drive to emancipate women, the effort had long-range effects on the condition of women in Afghanistan. The opportunity for education was eventually extended to women, and mandatory veiling ended in 1958. Many of his reforms were later reintroduced with slight changes in name and context by the regimes that succeeded him. One of the lasting legacies of King Amanullah's modernization program was the role of Turkish military advisors in training a modern Afghan army. In this area, the influence of Turkey on Afghanistan remained for decades long after King Amanullah's fall from power.

5. The Relationship between Afghanistan and Turkey vis-à-vis Military Reform

The role of Turkish military advisors and trainers in the development of a modern Afghan army was far-reaching. From 1909, the organizational aspects of the Afghan army began to bear a marked likeness to that of the Ottoman army. Kabul's military academy, similar to its counterpart in the Ottoman Empire, worked to cultivate a new generation of educated men who could subsequently enlighten their respective kin and tribes. Afghan officers and their Ottoman colleagues sought to mold their troops into devout Muslims, loyal citizens, and disciplined soldiers. In this manner, it was envisioned that peasant soldiers could be exposed to the elite's vision of progress and primary identity with the state. Mahmud Sami, an Ottoman battalion commander and head of the newly established military college produced works on military tactics, drilling, cookery, arithmetic, and weights and measures, each of them drawing from the customs of the Ottoman military.⁶³

Roland Wild, a British journalist who observed King Amanullah's reforms firsthand presents a vivid account of Turkish interest in

⁶³ O'Sullivan, "The Little Brother of the Ottoman State," 1874.

building a modern Afghan army. Although the work is saturated with Orientalist undertones, it nonetheless provides a rare look into the events of the era. In reference to the arrival of Turkish technocrats during the reign of Amir Habibullah, Wild made the following observation.

“The Turks are in Kabul too. Fine soldierly men, wearing very prominently star and the crescent, very religious always, to impress the religious Afghan. They seem particularly interested in the Army, and if the truth be told, Amanullah is secretly flattered by their attention, and consumes eagerly the crumbs of praise which are often thrown to him from these impressive, upright men from a martial race of the same religion.”⁶⁴

King Amanullah had intended to remodel his army and hired the services of a Turkish military mission headed by Cemal Paşa who had fought in Egypt and Palestine during the Great War (1914-1918). Cemal Paşa arrived in October 1920 in Kabul. The Turkish mission worked out an elaborate reorganization plan but Cemal Paşa met several obstacles in its implementation. He was suspected of having a hidden agenda to stir up troubles for the British in the Northwest Frontier. This produced visible results and created resistance to his military reform. The Commander-in-Chief, General Nader Khan, and Mahmud Sami, the aforementioned Ottoman Arab advisor who was commander of the Military College (Harbia), were among the obstacles in Cemal Paşa’s way. Nevertheless, Cemal Paşa raised and trained a model formation (*qeta-i-namoona*) as a prototype for professional military units. This formation was the equivalent of a combined infantry battalion and a cavalry regiment. The unit was later disbanded after Cemal Paşa lost hope in remodeling the Afghan military and left the country in 1921. However, the organization of the army he had designed remained for another seventy years. They included *Qol-i-Ordu* (army corps), *Firqa* (division), *Lewa* (brigade), *Ghond* (regiment), *Kandak* (battalion), *Tolay* (company), *Bolook* (platoon) and *Delgay* (squad). After the departure of Cemal Paşa from Afghanistan, King Amanullah relied on the Turkish military advisors, Fakhri Paşa and finally by General Kazim Bey.

Beginning in 1926, new efforts were made to reorganize the army and build a well-trained strike force. Fifteen Afghan officers were

⁶⁴ Wild, *Amanullah: Ex-King of Afghanistan*, 25.

sent to Turkey and 40 more in 1927 for military training while nine were sent to Moscow. In 1927 and 1929, two Turkish military missions coached and trained Afghan military units with visible improvements, but the outbreak of rebellions interrupted military development. The army as a whole took little part in quelling the rebellion of 1928-29 as many troops defected to the rebels. By November 1928, the army ceased to exist as a cohesive institution.⁶⁵

After being virtually disintegrated during 1928- 1929, the army was re-built during the 1930s, under the leadership of King Nadir Shah. The military academy, in charge of educating the lower ranks of the officer corps, was established in 1932, while the top brass was trained in Turkey. Personifying the new type of officer was the politically active and ambitious future Afghan leader, Muhammad Daud (1953-1963, 1973-1978), who prioritized military reform and continued to enlist Turkish expertise in the training of the Afghan army. In 1939, Daud was given command of the Kabul Army Corps and he began to gather round him the younger, professionally-trained officers, who were increasingly impatient for radical change. With the support of the Turkish Military Mission, Daud consolidated an officer corps which shared his own state-building, centralizing and secularizing agenda. Although conditions of service, pay and prospects for the troops changed little, if at all, between the early 1930s and the early 1950s, the officer corps, or at any rate that of the Kabul Army Corps, changed rapidly and profoundly.⁶⁶

Until the 1960s, Afghanistan maintained a special relationship with the Turkish military. Turkish military doctors helped Afghan army's health institutions while other Turkish officers helped military education in the Afghan Military Academy in Kabul. Meanwhile hundreds of Afghan officers were trained in Turkish military institutions such as the Turkish Military Academy in Ankara, the Command and General Staff College in Istanbul, the Infantry Branch School in Çankırı, the Artillery School in Polatlı and others. Until late 1970, most of the top Afghanistan military leaders were educated at different times in Turkey. The bi-lateral military relationship was so peculiar that Turkish officers serving in Afghanistan donned the Afghan Army uniform and Afghan officers

⁶⁵ Ali Ahmad Jalali, *A Military History of Afghanistan: From the Great Game to the Global War on Terror* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas , 2017), 316.

⁶⁶ Author's interview with former Afghan Army Officers. Kabul, May-June 2017.

training in Turkey dressed in Turkish army uniform. Further, many Turkish Army educational literature including army field manuals and pamphlets were translated into Dari Persian and were used as standard training references in the Afghan military institutions. It is no surprise that several Turkish military terminologies in their original or literal translated forms came into usage in the Afghan army. Words like *ordu* (army), *yoklama* (roll call), *qaghosh* (barack), *qarawana* (ration), *qarawol* (patrol), *bayrak* (flag) and many others entered the Afghan army lexicon.⁶⁷

Turkey was the main provider of security force training into the 1950s, and it continued to play a role well into the 1970s. But while the Soviet Union had supplanted Turkey as Afghanistan's top military aid provider by 1960, Ankara continued to send aid and train Afghan personnel. Despite the fact that by 1977 approximately 3,700 Afghan officers and non-commissioned officers had been trained in Eastern Europe or the Soviet Union, the senior military leadership in Afghanistan remained dominated by Turkish trained personnel. According to one Soviet specialist, this was due to the fact that people who had come up through the ranks when Turkey was Afghanistan's dominant security partner occupied senior leadership positions and they in turn promoted those with similar education.⁶⁸

6. Conclusion

The inauguration of modernization in Afghanistan is coterminous with the arrival of the first Turkish advisors to the royal court in Kabul at the invitation of Amir Habibullah in the first decade of the twentieth century. Ottoman Turkish technocrats were coveted mentors whose expertise in the project of developing Afghanistan encompassed many fields and entailed a number of unprecedented activities. In the military sphere, Turkish leadership in training the modern Afghan army was formative. In the same manner, Afghanistan was not viewed as a typical recipient of foreign technical assistance, but rather a distinct space in which to project Ottoman Turkish influence and carry out extraterritorial political activities. In the 1920s, Turkish leadership in steering the course

⁶⁷ Author's interview with former Afghan Army Officers, Kabul, April 2017.

⁶⁸ Olga Olikier, *Building Afghanistan's Security Forces in Wartime*, (Arlington: RAND Corporation, 2011), 3-18.

of Afghan modernism was elevated to the status of official policy under King Amanullah via close relations with Kemalist Turkey. Until 1960, Turkey remained Afghanistan's closest security partner.

The activities of Turkish technocrats in the project of modernizing Afghanistan stands out as a rare episode of constructive external influence in the annals of Afghanistan's turbulent history. Recurrent wars, conflicts, and upheavals imposed by great powers and regional actors stoking internal divisions have been part and parcel of the history of Afghanistan. However, in the early decades of the twentieth century an exceptional example of positive foreign engagement in the internal affairs of Afghanistan manifested itself through the activities of Turkish technocrats who spearheaded development and reform. The legacy of that era proved to be durable and endured the vicissitudes of subsequent Afghan history.

The close bi-lateral relationship between Afghanistan and Turkey was revived in 2001 after the launch of the global war on terror when Turkish military units made significant contributions to the international forces helping Afghanistan's security and peacebuilding efforts. In November 2003, prominent Turkish politician Hikmet Çetin was appointed as the NATO Senior Civilian Representative for Afghanistan. Another Turkish diplomat, Ismail Aramaz, served as the alliance's top civilian representative in 2015 and 2016. Turkey set up its own civilian-led Provincial Reconstruction Team in Wardak province in November 2006, and a second team was opened at Jowzjan in July 2010. Turkish assistance in post-2001 Afghanistan has entailed the building and renovation of numerous schools and hospitals, the awarding of hundreds of scholarships, and restoration of roads and bridges.⁶⁹ The Afghan-Turk schools located throughout Afghanistan epitomize elite educational institutions in the contemporary context of Afghanistan. In 2015, Afghanistan's Ambassador to Turkey, Amanullah Jayhoon, remarked that "Afghan people love Turkish soldiers in Afghanistan like their sons".⁷⁰ Such amicable sentiments regarding a foreign

⁶⁹ Vinay Kaura, "Turkey Sees Expanding Role in Afghanistan", *Middle East Institute*, September 26, 2017. <https://www.mei.edu/publications/turkey-sees-expanding-role-afghanistan>

⁷⁰ Satuk Bugra Kutlugun, "Afghan Envoy to Turkey, Turkish Soldiers are Loved in Afghanistan", *Anadolu Agency*, February 26, 2015.

nation are uncommon given Afghanistan's long history of forced entanglement in wars frequently brought on by the ambitions of regional actors and superpowers.

Undoubtedly, the overwhelmingly positive and productive scope of Turkish-Afghan relations vis-à-vis modernization remains vivid in the Afghan imagination and psyche. In this regard, Turkey's historical legacy in Afghanistan marks a sharp departure from the dominant narrative of unwelcome foreign interference leading to internal instability that persists to the present. The profound role of Ottoman and post-Ottoman Turkish technocrats in developing Afghanistan in the early decades of the twentieth century is a rare example of constructive activity carried out inside Afghanistan by a foreign power. Unlike Afghanistan's immediate neighbors and other regional countries, Turkey can claim a unique status regarding its historical involvement in internal Afghan development. This fact can enable contemporary Turkey to build upon its historically positive legacy to once again play a prominent role in contributing to stabilization and peacebuilding efforts in Afghanistan. It is hoped that further research on the relationship between Afghanistan and Turkey vis-à-vis modernization will be carried out in order to shed more light on this pivotal but understudied historical period.

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