

Relationship of religion and afghanistan politics essay



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Historically, religion has a strong influence in every aspect of life, especially politics, in Afghanistan. The relationship between these two entities has been established for long time. The religion of Islam has been always integrated into the political and educational system of the country. Afghanistan's constitution is derived from Islamic Sharia laws, which has combined religious and secular systems. The amalgamation of religion and politics in Afghanistan has caused decades of instability and in order to stabilize the country the politics and education system should be separated from the religion.

We believe that Islam is the superior religion, and we appreciate the Islamic laws. However, religious leaders who are in the politics are misusing Islamic decrees. Therefore, it is not only defaming Islam, but also creating misunderstanding between nations, slowing down the economy and becoming a reason for conflicts in the county. To stabilize the country, apply human rights, and bring overall peace in Afghanistan, there should be compatibility between religion and politics. This can be possible through a secular system to fragment the religious elite powers from the state or in Islamic point of view Ijtihad (General acceptance of new concepts and privileges in to Islamic Sharia law) in the religion.

For the first time in the history of Afghanistan, King Amanullah Khan brought magnificent reforms in the political and education systems of the country during 1928 after his state visit from Europe. King Amanuallah Khan struggled to apply European norms in Afghanistan. He realized that a secular system is the best solution to overcome dilemmas in the country. Europe could not stop their internal political problems for many decades due to <https://assignbuster.com/relationship-of-religion-and-afghanistan-politics-essay/>

religion influences between the sects of Christianity. After years of quarrels Europeans realized that beside religion, which directs spiritual life, government should control secular life. Europeans achieved their goals and created a strong union by their novel idea of separation of religion from state. The king chose the same strategy, but the strong bonds of religious parties and their extremist movements failed him. The religious leaders with public furor turned down the system and ousted the king from the throne(Riza).

The newborn secular system was devastated by religious bodies, which changed government's systems. The secular schools, including girl's schools, closed. Women divorce rights ended. They abolished the secular courts and replaced them by Sharia law courts, which are still applicable. Overall, Afghanistan relinquished a huge opportunity and faced challenges that led the country to the current instability in every aspect of life, especially politics, education, and social integrity (Riza).

The state system was already mixing with strong Sharia law, so that the country faced a dark age of obstacles, three decades of war and Soviet invasion. After the collapse of communist regime, Mujahedeen took over the power and civil war started in the country. It was not long that the fundamentalist Taliban captured Afghanistan. These extremists not only were deprived from global modernity, but also neglect of the real Islamic knowledge. They were claiming on applying pure Islamic Sharia law. In actuality, they applied a system that was anti-Islamic and anti-human means. After the collapse of the Taliban regime, the world supported

Afghans and changed the government system of the country. Afghanistan's
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new constitution ratified, an amalgamate government formed. Yet religious parties are strongly involved in the system. They interfere in every component of the government. Indeed, they are a strong barrier against application of democracy in the country and people are still suffering.

On the other hand, the legal system is a mixture of devout and customs that mostly religious leaders are practicing customary ideas inside the Islamic laws. It contradicts both Sharia law and human rights. Because of the less and primitive cultural and madrasas knowledge most religious leaders cannot distinguish between Sharia laws and old practiced customs. For example, in the rural regions they are applying a customary concept called “Baad”. In Baad case when, there is a conflict between two families or relatives, if anyone is killed from any side, to resolve this dispute, the murderer’s side usually gives his daughter or a girl to the victim’s family. It is opposite to any Islamic and state laws in the world. This custom is completely against human rights, even not acceptable in the Islamic law, yet it is practiced in many parts of the country. If there were a secular state legal system established in the country, the state would resolve the issue and people would not suffer.

Likewise, religion influences has strongly affected globalization and the national interest of Afghanistan. The world market is so diverse now, globalization interconnects the world, and countries have close business relationship in most cases without consideration of differences in ethnicity, language, and religion. Nevertheless, in a country like Afghanistan the devout leaders and their wrong interpretation of Islam have severely damaged the national interest of the country. As an example, a few months

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ago the Ministry of Work and Social interaction presented a draft of new law for two days of national holiday in a week to the parliament. The ministry clearly pointed the reasons behind its appeal. They calculated the saving of total cost of government employees during the one day off. In broader prospect, Afghanistan's official days has a serious problem with global market. Many businesses are suffering from global transactions, because of the clashes between the holidays in Afghanistan and the rest of world. We have one and half-day holiday during a week, half day off on Thursdays and one day off on Friday. Conversely, most countries especially the Europe and market-oriented countries such as US and China are off on Saturday and Sunday. There is a delay of any business activity at least for two days, which can create huge financial damages for businesses in the country.

Besides the strong reasons of the Ministry, the parliament of Afghanistan rejected this draft of law. Because, the parliament is consists of many religious leaders they strongly refused to ratify this law. Their only reason behind was that it is an infidel movement and Afghanistan is an Islamic country. Parliament declared that never want to copy the Christian and Jewish customs and refused the draft. They have forgotten that the Saudi Arabia, which is believe to be the center of Islam, has accepted the two days of holiday because of its compatibility with global market and other political issues. I strongly believe that Afghanistan will never triumph over its economic and political struggles, unless the religious leaders are removed from politics and the separation of the state from the religion.

Similarly, ignorant religious leaders deprive women of education. We accept that there are certain rights for women in Islam. However, we cannot
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compare the current modern area with 1, 400 years ago. Moreover, a secular system to stabilize the society and apply the human rights should be compatible with the religion and modernity. Sociologist Steve Bruce argues that: “ Modernity undermines religion, except when it finds some major social role to play other than mediating the natural and supernatural worlds.”(Bruce) In the broader view “ if religion steps outside of its traditional roles and takes on tasks or identities that are useful on a broader social scale, then it is possible for religion to maintain itself into modernity”(Barker). In Islam, it is possible through “ Ijtihad”, which Muslims scholars come to gather and introduce new contemporary concepts and privileges into Islamic Sharia law.

The concept of Steve Bruce is acceptable in Islam via Ijtihad. They can include further women’s rights inside Islamic laws including education, divorce, and gender equality. Unfortunately, considering Afghanistan’s situation and its religious and political leaders, it is impossible to apply Ijtihad. Therefore, the only proper way to bring prosperity to the people and the country is to set the religious leaders aside from politics. Let them to practice their religion and the government to do its job, like Turkey, another Islamic country.

At the same time, education in Afghanistan like other Muslim countries has a long history. Islam had a major role on Afghan education for centuries. Today, education consists of three different categories: traditional or indigenous (pre-Islamic), modern, and Islamic education. Within the last category, there are four types of Islamic schools in Afghanistan: mosque schools; traditional madrasa, first level; second level; and the modern <https://assignbuster.com/relationship-of-religion-and-afghanistan-politics-essay/>

madrassa or in other words Islamic studies in university level. In addition, Arabic schools have appeared from the eighties and onwards.

Moreover, Islam has been a dominant religion in most parts of the country for more than 1200 years and Islamic education has reached many parts of the population including rural people living in remote areas. The Koranic education not only teaches Koran but also writing, reading and counting to rural villagers, -i. e. boys and men. Islam also includes Sharia law, which infers that legal regulations and documents used among illiterate people.

During the early twentieth century, the leaders tried to modernize the country, and were influenced by the developments in Turkey. The first constitution was approved on 1923 and more opportunities were given to education, and girls were also allowed to go to school. During the supremacy of King Zahir Shah (1933-1973) the government adopted new constitution and there was a significant growth in modern sector. An Islamist movement was crushed in 1975 and its leaders fled to Pakistan (Karlsson and Mansory).

Throughout the 20th century there have been excessive waves of both liberal reform and traditionalist movements in Afghanistan. In the meantime, struggles over control of the education system have become a major competition between democratic and Islamist parties. The democratic and Islamist parties of the Mujahedeen have all tried to shape the political and ideological landscape of Afghanistan by carrying out reforms and religious decrees through education institutions.

Afghanistan suffered immensely from the struggles for secular and religious control of educational institutions. Control of the education system has been <https://assignbuster.com/relationship-of-religion-and-afghanistan-politics-essay/>

a mobilizing force for the Mujahedeen movement, the socialists, and the overthrow of the Soviet-made government and the rise of the Taliban. There have been Links between the radical madrassas and the formation of the Taliban and involvement of such institutions of education in breeding Islamic extremism and have been a considerable factor on the security of the Afghan state (“Afghanistan and Education”).

The struggles between secular and religious control of educational has almost totally collapsed the social sector. “The literacy rate, for men 45 per cent and for women 11 per cent, among the lowest in the world.” (Carlson and Mansory) Gender discrimination has been strengthened in the last decades. Over gender issues there have been many insurrections and battles in Afghanistan. Often, when women’s participation in education has been enhanced, it has provoked counteractions.

It is an empirical fact that education is a component of human security and one of the most important cornerstones of a society. Every society in the world has known the importance of secular education system and replicates each other’s experiences in peace-building and conflict prevention. A great example could be Turkey, which is one of the most developed Islamic countries in the world. Afghan government can imitate the Turkey experience and build a prosperous state.

Education is a key component in creating communities and grantees their stability. However, the institutional aspects of education can also function as a root cause and source of conflict. This dual nature of education implies both the positive, or peace building and the negative, or conflict enhancing

potential. Decades of instability in Afghanistan shows the linkage between institutional education and conflict, which has inadvertently helped to create the conditions for further conflict instead of building a foundation for reconciliation and sustainable peace.

Education has a very essential but too often ignored role in relation to conflict prevention, reconciliation, resolution, and reconstruction. In fact, education had been known as a basis for investment in human capital, economic growth and mitigation of conflict. This rationale implies that education should be considered as a non-traditional instrument for building security. Brad Hayes and Jeffrey Sands authors of “ Non-traditional Military Responses to End Wars: Considerations for Policymakers,” state:

One, final and perhaps surprising, security area is education. Opening schools and

getting children (particularly teenagers) off the streets reduces one source of potential instability, and frees their parents to go to work. School attendance also

gives children hope for the future and provides them an alternative to joining factional militias.(Chesterman)

By providing a civic curriculum and enhancing opportunities for students, education can act as a unifying factor in nation-building and stability.

Education is also known as an essential component of peace-building. The

global peace building means to empower the society to manage conflicts without violence and achieve sustainable human security.

In brief, I would like to conclude that integration of political and educational system with religion has always been a chaos for countries like Afghanistan. Decades of instability and violence in Afghanistan are a good example to cite here. Afghanistan has faced many challenges with religious leaders who have used the religion as a tool to gain power and use the country for their own favors. Afghanistan political situation will never improve until the Afghan citizens identify the place of religion and politics. Since religion is a fate and politics is a game played to gain power. Afghan people should not trust anyone who uses the religion and play with people's sentiments and gain power. In order to change the political situation in Afghanistan and lead the country to prosperity it is very important to disintegrate the political system from religion and establish a liberal and secular platform for educational system. As a Muslim I am pretty sure that Islam never contradicts modern education and democracy.

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