The Emergence of Internal and External Conflicts During the Reign of Shah Zaman

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ABSTRACT

This research paper is devoted to the emergence of internal and external conflicts in Afghanistan during the reign of Shah Zaman. After the death of Temur Shah, competition to reach the throne of power among many of his sons paved the way for domestic wars throughout the reign of Shah Zaman. Wazir Fateh Khan, who originally belonged to the Barakzai tribe, wanted to put an end to Sadozai’s rule by authorizing his father, Sardar Payanda Mohammad Khan. So, he encouraged Prince Mahmud, who was Shah Zaman’s brother and a weak person, to oppose Shah Zaman. On the other hand, progress of British in the east and south led to the emergence of external conflicts to Shah Zaman alongside to domestic problems. This academic article will assist students of the history department to upgrade of their academic knowledge, gain information about the facts, which are still unknown to them. The research aims to uncover the British conspiracy against Shah Zaman’s rule and their interference in Afghanistan’s internal affairs to readers. The writing was done in a librarian manner and we have covered all the topics that was relevant to conflicts and problems throughout Shah Zaman’s reign. It concluded that the conspiracies of British weakened and overthrow Shah Zaman, and even caused to blind Shah Zaman and Humayun.

Keywords: British, uprising, Fateh Khan, intervention, Mahmud, Humayun

1. Introduction

During the reign of Shah Zaman, our country was confronted with the development policies of major colonial powers such as Russia and Britain. British were worried the Russian threat, because they were concerned about the Russian invasion of Afghanistan and domination of India, that is why they decided control domestic and foreign policies of Afghanistan. After defeating the interior forces in India, the British moved easily from the south to the east and north of India. At north, they found Suduzai Empire and Shah Zaman as their political rival and were worried about his power. That is why they tried to weaken and overthrow the Afghan Empire. The British were not capable to defying Shah Zaman militarily, but they defeated Shah Zaman politically, and they were able to produce problems against Shah Zaman to prevent him to reach his goals. The internal conflicts of Saduzai government, competition of the Saduzai Princes to gain power, and the intervention of Sikhs and Iranians assisted British in the war against Shah Zaman. Shah Zaman, who was known as East’s Napoleon, was defeated by the British, with the help of Wazir Fateh Khan and Shah Mahmud. Afghanistan gradually weakened after the First and Second Afghan-Anglo Wars. Consequently, Afghanistan lost most of its territory as a result of Gandumag and Durand unjust treaties, and some parts of our beloved country were occupied by foreigners.

2. Research Methodology

In the light of purposes and theoretical frameworks of the research, this study is designed to employ a qualitative research method in order to help interpret, or explain the results gained from various sources. In this research, the researchers used librarian research data collection method, and the data was collected from various first handed books and articles.
3. Objectives of the Study

The present study has the following objectives:
1. Explaining the impact of British intervention in Afghanistan during the reign of Shah Zaman.
2. The actions and Activities carried out by British to fall Shah Zaman

4. Research Questions

1. Did the British interfere in Afghanistan to achieve their goals?
2. Did the British manage to overthrow the Shah Zaman regime with the policy of keeping India?

5. Internal Disputes during the reign of Shah Zaman

After the death of Timur Shah, his sons fought for throne, and each prince want to govern the country. Among the sons of Timur Shah, the viceroy of Kabul, Shah Zaman was very clever, and he convened a Jirga in Kabul to elect the king. The other sons of Timur Shah relied on their mother’s tribes, in order to reach to the throne. Moreover, tribal elders and influential seek their own interests, and they were supporting the prince who was in their favor.

Prince Shah Zaman, the fifth son of Timur Shah, was able to ascend the throne of Kabul with the help and cooperation of Barakzai and Qizilbash tribes. The ascendency of Shah Zaman led to a family dispute between Prince Shah Zaman and his brothers. As a result, Prince Mahmud and Prince Hamayun began to oppose the reign of Shah Zaman and became an annoyance for him inside. During the reign of Shah Zaman, the east, west and south of Afghanistan were being threaten by the British, and the British forces were developing and wanted to occupy Punjab, which as their first objective. Shah Zaman tried to discontinue these developments, but the disputes inside did not allow him to prevent these developments. Consequently these developments caused foreign interventions in Afghanistan. (Munib, 2010)

6. The revolt of Prince Humayun against Shah Zaman

The elder brother of Shah Zaman, Prince Humayun, considered himself worthy of the throne due to his bigness. He moved to Kabul from Kandahar to overthrow Prince Shah Zaman and reach to throne, but he failed and he was defeated by Prince Shah Zaman's army in Qalat province. A battle broke out between the two sides, which was resulted in Shah Zaman’s victory. After this defeat, Humayun fled to Baluchistan and seek asylum there. Later, he attacked for the second time and captured Kandahar, but was defeated again. In this battle, Prince Humayun was arrested by Shah Zaman's army and imprisoned in Bala Hissa. Consequently, Shah Zaman blinded Prince Humayon and Humanyon lost his both eyes. (Hadad, 2004)

7. Revolt of Shah Mahmud against Shah Zaman

After Humayun’s arrestment, another problem arose against Shah Zaman in Afghanistan. Shah Zaman’s younger brother, Prince Mahmud, who was also the governor of Herat revolted against him. Shah Zaman equipped an army to conquest Mahmud, and marched toward Herat. Before Shah Zaman’s arrival to Herat, he suggested peaceful and kinship relations to Mahmud. Nonetheless, Mahmud expressed his hostility to Shah Zaman and continued his revolt. Finally, he was defeated by Shah Zaman, and took asylum in Iran. At this time Fateh Khan, who was imprisoned by Shah Zaman, escaped from the prison and joined Mahmud and started revolts against Shah Zaman. (Reshtia, 2010)

8. The arrival of British in India

Europeans entered India many years ago. Discoverer Vasco da Gama stopped his boat on the southern seashore of the Indian Ocean via Africa in 1498 AD, and called it Galigat, which was named Calcutta later.

Thereinafter Portuguese, Dutch, British and French entered India and obtained trade licenses and privileges from Mughal kings. Dutch controlled the trade until 17th century, owned the East India Company and almost kicked out the Portuguese out of India. East Indian companies of colonial powers such as England, France and Holland entered to the race and competition with each other.

The East India Company of France was formed in 1599, and was a flourished company for forty years and could occupy some parts of Madras and Hyderabad. Nevertheless, the establishment and influence of British company in Bombay and Calcutta reduced the power of the French East India’s Company. (Niazai, 2005).

Britain established the East India Company and acquired trade and formed its headquarters in India license in 1600 AD. The King of England, James I, sent his representative, Sir Thomas Rowe, to the court of Indian Emperor, and requested for trade license in
1614. The British set up a company in India, which was called the East India United Company, and this company took the control of all trade in India. Shahzad Begum, wife of Shah Jahan, was burnt in 1640 AD, and the East India’s Company treated her. The Britain handed the area of (Hooghly) that was near the Ganges as well as Calcutta in return of this treatment. Mumbai was still controlled by Portuguese, but after Charles II’s marriage with the daughter of Portugal’s king, the king handed Mumbai as bride's dowry to Charles II in 1662.

The East India Company opened a business center in Calcutta in 1640, and the company was attacked for interfering in the internal affairs of India in 1689 the. Some British were died, and some arrested alive. The East Indian Company then promised not to interfere in India's internal affairs, and only focus on trade. The company built a building in St. William's in Calcutta, and paid annual leases to governments in exchange for commercial centers in Bengal, in the following year. (Ghubar, 1967).

The Dutch also had trading centers in India, and the French had centers in Poonchri and Chandranaga alongside the Britain, and they were all competing with each other. Madras was conquered by France, when the war began between France and England in Europe and India in 1744. In the end, the parties reached to peace in 1748 and Madras was ceded to the British back, however the competition continued until English won. The domination on trade in India took 213 years and finally the East India Company remained unbeatable. (Ghubar, 1967)

The Dutch withdrew from India under the Treaty of Versailles in 1783. The British moved from east and south to the north after the Battle of Plessy in 1756, and deployed their forces in Punjab, Sindh and Abasind. The movement that was centered in Bengal, quickly spread to northern India. At the same time, Afghan Empire, Ahmad Shah Durrani, continued to rule in north of India, and that caused that colonial powers think of war with Afghans. The colonial state that had taken over India, did not let other power to enter India. British policy, had a negative impact on the situation in Afghanistan directly and indirectly. As the British Empire expanded in India, their wars with Marathas, Afghans, Sikhs and others were increased as well. The British Indian Company expanded to all over India except the north, after the downfall of local governments of India. (Niazai, 2005)

Shah Zaman was the fifth son of Timur Shah and ascended the throne of Afghanistan after the death of his father. He was intelligent, courageous, active and strong-willed person. He faced internal and external problems in a very short time after being chosen as a king, and he was always engaged in the wars and conflicts. It is very common about him that he didn't even get a chance to ride off his horse. Britain, Iran, Russia and the Sikhs defeated Shah Zaman and they gained more achievements in the war against him, because his brothers revolt against him, and these revolts paved the ways for success of the Britain, Iran, Russia and Sikhs. (Khalifin, 2012).

Even Shah Zaman's military progresses and victories were of a great concern to the British, because Shah Zaman wanted to liberate Indian Muslims from British colonial rule. In order to divert the attention of Shah Zaman from India, the Britain turned to Iran and persuade the King to invade Afghanistan's southern parts, and it prevented Shah Zaman from attacking India.

The British felt threatened from three enemies (Napoleon, Russia, and Shah Zaman) to capture and keep India, however their main concern was Shah Zaman. As the British Ambassador to Iran (Captain McCallum) writes: "I consider the Afghan Sultan Shah Zaman to be one of the strongest enemies of British in India. There is nothing that can stop him from expanding his territory and advancing his policy, except the domestic disunity in his country" (Niazai, 2005).

Shah Zaman wanted to attack and invade India to stop influence of the British and to strengthen the empire of his grandfather, as Indian Muslims and Hindus were hopeful for Shah Zaman. Shah Zaman moved to Peshawar in the first year of his reign in 1793, and after resolving the civil strife in Peshawar he wanted to cross the Indus. He was on the way to India and was crossing the Indus, when Humayun invaded Kandahar, and he returned to Kandahar forcibly. While in 1794 he wanted to attack India, but his other brother, Shah Mahmud, revolted in Herat. Again he was not able to cross the border and returned. Shah Zaman abled to establish monarchy in (Multan, Kashmir, Sindh, Punjab) and other areas of south India in 1795. Later, he moved to occupy the other parts of India, but he was forced to return to Kandahar, because the Iranian Shah attacked Mashhad and Nishapur on the behest of British. (Niazai, 2005)

9. The Activities of British against Shah Zaman

In order to keep Shah Zaman busy, the British would always encourage Iran to attack Herat. Because, British were very worried about Shah Zaman's attacks, and to avert this danger British used every single chance and resource. British were worried about Shah Zaman due to many reasons; Afghan king was a Muslim and the Muslims of India supported him, On the other hand, most parts of India were under their control since the reign of Ahmad Shah Durrani, and they had influenced these areas. More importantly, Shah Zaman had a strong army at that time, as the English captain McCullum admits this fact and says: "Shah Zaman is the greatest enemy of the British empire. He can capture India only by his own strength and power without the help of foreign powers." Besides this he says: Internal hypocrisy is the only way to stop Shah Zaman. (Niazai, 2005)
The British proved in practice that attacking from back on Shah Zaman was a useful measure to prevent his attacks towards British India. The British launched a secret and open conspiracy to weaken Afghanistan and destroy Shah Zaman’s army by using this tactic. (Zadran, 1981)

The British sent their ambassador, Sir John McCallum, to Iran to strengthen ties with Iran against Afghanistan. The Ambassador signed an agreement with Iran as well, the provisions of which are as follows.

1. If the King of Afghanistan intends to invade British India, the King of Iran will send troops to Afghan border to conquer Afghans.
2. If the king of Afghanistan wants to establish friendly relations with the king of Iran, the king of Iran will assure him that he will not invade India.
3. If the King of Afghanistan or anyone from France intends to invade Iran, the British government will send weaponries, arms and experienced military officers to Iran in nearby Iranian ports to help the King of Iran.
4. If the French intend to capture any of the Iranian islands, Iranian and British troops will work together to stop them.
5. Britain will not intervene if a war breaks out between the kings of Afghanistan and Iran unless both sides ask for mediation. (Niazai, 2005)

According to the British Scholars and Historians, British India used every single opportunity and way to defeat Shah Zaman's activities and keep India. They were more concerned about Shah Zaman's power and policy, and they considered it as major obstacle for conquering and keeping India. The British achieved their goal by ending the rule of Shah Zaman through Wazir Fateh Khan and Shah Mahmood, and they launched secret and evident activities against Shah Zaman to weaken the his government. Sending an Indian Muslim, named Ghulam Muhammad, to Kandahar in a religious suit. Ghulam Mohammad built a large port in Kandahar that attracted tribal elders, priests and the general public. (Atae, 2004)

When Shah Zaman stayed for a while in Kandahar with his army in 1799. He got the news that the tribal elders had decided to overthrow Shah Zaman from throne, assassinate Prime Minister (Rahmatullah Khan), and bring Shah Shuja to the throne. The Sardars met at Ghulam Mohammad’s house, who was an Indian priest. The priest, who was sent by British, lived in Kandahar and attracted a lot of influencers in a very short time. He established contacts with influential and Sardars of Kandahar, and then motivated them against Shah Zaman, to remove Shah Zaman from the reign and execute the prime minister. This priest, Ghulam Mohammad Hindi, who was an English representative and had entered Afghanistan from the address of religion, decided at the meeting:

“Shah Zaman should be overthrown and be replaced by Shah Shuja, and the next king should be appointed in the interest of the tribes.” (Niazai, 2005).

Including the Barakzai leader, Payenda Mohammad Khan, Shah Zaman hanged 13 influential leaders. Fatakh Khan opposed Shah Zaman After this incident, and the British got a committed person like Fatakh Khan to achieve their goals in Afghanistan. Moreover, one of the expectant to kingdom of Afghanistan, Prince Mahmud was currently in Iran. The British were also pleased to empower Prince Mahmud as king of Afghanistan with the support of Iran. A widespread bewilderment was spread at Shah Zaman's court after the reunion of Prince Mahmud and Noor Ahmad Noorzai, and Shah Zaman became suspicious of his courtiers and army. Shah Zaman decided to move to Peshawar, he stayed overnight at Mullah Ashiq Shinwari’s house on the way to Peshawar. Ashiq Shinwari betrayed him, and handed him over to Prince Mahmud. He was first blinded and then imprisoned at Bala Hissar in Kabul, and Shah Mahmud ascended the throne.

10. Conclusion

Shah Zaman, the third king of the Sadozai dynasty, came to power at the age of 22 in Bala Hissar of Kabul, and he thought of capturing India after being chosen as King. That is why he organized a great army. But due to internal conflicts and problem, and the policy of keeping India by British; he failed to adopt his plans, and Afghanistan became the arena of political movements and wars. Shah Zaman was engaged and busy in wars during his reign, and he spent lots of his time in domestic wars. These civil and domestic wars caused separation of a massive parts of Afghanistan and Ahmad Shah Durrani’s Empire from east to west. The short period of Shah Zaman’s reign was concurrent by major political and social events and dealings around the world. The Great French Revolution tremorred Europe four years earlier of Shah Zaman’ reign, Rajput princes in eastern Afghanistan came under British military domination, and the Qajar government was established under the statesmanship of Aqa Muhammad Qajar in the west, who motivated internal conflicts against Shah Zaman and provided asylum to prince Mahmud. Overall, the Saduzi Empire was on the verge of destruction after the death of Temur Shah, and the borders of Ahmad Shah Durrani’s empire were never considered as a part of Afghanistan again. Disagreement over the throne among the princes of Sadduzai was the main reason of all these incidents. By collecting this article, we reach to the conclusion that the mention points be noted, because it has been written in golden lines in the history.
References