



## THE INTERSECTION OF PAN-ISLAMISM, NATIONALISM, AND MODERNISM IN AFGHANISTAN'S PRESS IN INDEPENDENCE ERA: A THEMATIC CONTENT ANALYSIS OF AMAN-E-AFGHAN WEEKLY

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**Abstract:** This study employed a qualitative thematic content analysis to explore Afghanistan's press coverage in the independence era to examine the interconnectedness of religion, national identity, and progressiveness. Using 80 issues of the Aman-e-Afghan publication, which was the official organ of Amanullah Khan's government 1919-1929, this study found that from the content and publishing policy perspective, this publication continued the path of Siraj-ul-Akhbar advocating pan-Islamism, nationalism, and modernism. This study also shows that pan-Islamism advocating Muslim unity in this publication was motivated by the Muslim countries suffering from imperialism, while nationalism was inspired by the desire to build a cohesive nation, although ethnocentric. Additionally, this publication tried to reconcile tradition and modernity by promoting education, lawfulness, and legislation to lead the country toward modernization.

**Keywords:** Afghanistan's media, Aman-e-Afghan, Pan-Islamism, Nationalism, Modernism.

### INTRODUCTION

Since the beginning of the twentieth century, along with colossal changes and unrest in the world, such as World War I, Afghanistan has also experienced sharp upheavals. The death of Amir Abdurrahman Khan, known as "iron Amir," who did not spare any cruelty and violence in subduing the dissidents, the throning of his son, King Habibullah, in 1901, provided the people with a small bit of free breath (Shir, 2012). Even though he, like his father, was still receiving subsidies from the British Empire at the cost of the country's independence, he somewhat reformulated domestic politics. Declaring political amnesty was one of his outstanding initiatives, which led to public appreciation and dignity of the people who were previously oppressed, forcefully exiled, and sold as enslaved people. The new Amir tried to normalize the domestic situation and modernize the country within the scope of possibilities at that time.<sup>1</sup>

The emergence of modern education can be one of the significant achievements of his era, which was limited to religious and home-based teaching before (Maconachie,

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<sup>1</sup>Maconachie, R, "A *Precis on Afghan Affairs*" (February 1919 - September 1927). Simla: Government of India Press, 1928. Accessed <https://archive.org/details/in.ernet.dli.2015.206217>

1928; Shir, 2012). The founding of the first primary and secondary school of “Habibya Lecce” in 1904 can be marked as one of King Habibullah's prominent achievements. His exchange with Britain and experience made him sternly advocate for modern education. The new wave of modernity, which started with the reformation of domestic politics and the establishment of modern education centers, paved the way for the emergence of the modern press system in the country. Although three decades earlier than his government in 1873, the first publication, Shams-ul-Nahar, was founded in Afghanistan; however, due to a harsh, unfavorable political environment, it could not survive (Ahang). It was during this era that the foundation of modern and sustainable press was laid in Afghanistan.

The history of Afghanistan's media, like any other field in the country, is utterly understudied. Particularly, the media during the war against aggression, the struggle for independence, and the decade of independence afterward have received limited attention. Previous studies<sup>2</sup>, among others, have comprehensively concentrated on this era's historical and political aspects; however, the press and their roles in shaping the country's politics have marginally been addressed. Similarly, another body of research<sup>3</sup> either has studied a specific publication of the independence era or has been published in Persian which has not been observed beyond regional researches and readers. Similarly, Qiang and Pamirzad (2023), illustrating the history of Afghanistan's media during monarchies, have marginally touched upon this era; however, the Aman-e-Afghan publication, the official organ of the Amanullah Khan government, has not been studied as firsthand evidence of the independence era. That being said, the situation of Afghanistan's press in this era, their standpoints in the face of global upheavals, such as World War I, and their role in shaping Afghanistan's modern history in general and Aman-e-Afghan publication, in particular, are issues that yet to be discovered.

Hence, this study wants to review and synthesize the implications of the previous research and the thematic qualitative analysis of the Aman-e-Afghan Weekly, which was the leading and official publication of the independence era, to fill this research gap. This study will address this issue through a systematic and chronological approach to (a) explain the press's role in gaining Afghanistan's independence, (b) explore the dominant themes covered in the publication of this era, particularly Aman-e-Afghan, and (c) make a comprehensive evaluation of their themes in the past to shed light on the critical issue, particularly national-identity which affected Afghanistan's modern history.

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<sup>2</sup>Maconachie, R, "A *Precis on Afghan Affairs*" (February 1919 - September 1927). Simla: Government of India Press, 1928. Accessed (<https://archive.org/details/in.ernet.dli.2015.206217>)

<sup>3</sup>Afghan, A. S. (2011, Sep 15). [A Century after Siraj-ul-Akhbar] *یک قرن بعد از سراج الاخبار*. BBC

*Persian*. [https://www.bbc.com/persian/afghanistan/2011/10/110915\\_109\\_mm\\_century\\_afghan\\_press\\_husainzadah](https://www.bbc.com/persian/afghanistan/2011/10/110915_109_mm_century_afghan_press_husainzadah)



## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Siraj-ul-Akhbar (the Torch of news) and modernism in Afghanistan

After Shams-ul-Nahar, which was the first Afghanistan publication founded in 1873, for three decades, the country did not have any press<sup>4</sup>. When Habibullah Khan was crowned in 1901, a new political system promoting modern literacy was established. He founded the Habibiya Lecce, which laid the foundation of modern education in Afghanistan and became the center of modernist activities at that time. The school had a group of students and teachers who named themselves the Jawanan Afghans (Young Afghans) and national secret organizations (Siri-e-Milli) or Habibiya secret association<sup>5</sup>. As part of their enlightening attempts, this association proposed establishing a publication called Siraj-ul-Akhbar to King Habibullah Khan, which was approved, and its first issue was published in 1906. This association advocated for two main goals: external independence of Afghanistan and internal reforms. Advocating for fast social and political change, the political transformation from a monarchy to a constitutional monarchy and the country's independence were at the top of their agenda.

After the first issue, this association's proposed publication (Siraj-ul-Akhbar) could not be reprinted. Although there is no certain reason why it was stopped, two main arguments exist: The first belongs to the Jawanan-e-Afghan parroted by domestic authors, who argue that the newspaper was stopped because of Britain's pressure on Amir (Ahang). The second argument came from the British Empire, who claimed the publication was stopped because of internal conflict (Sims-Williams, 1980)<sup>6</sup>. Based on historical evidence, the third scenario that this study argues is that the publication might have been seized because of its affiliation with the Habibiya secret association, which advocated for transforming the political system and was considered a threat to the King.

Nonetheless, a few years later, in 1911, Siraj-ul-Akhbar was revived by Mahmood Tarzi, known as the father of Journalism in Afghanistan (Ahang, 1970).<sup>7</sup> Mahmood Tarzi

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<sup>4</sup>Afghan, A. S. (2011, Sep 15). [A Century after Siraj-ul-Akhbar] *یک قرن بعد از سراج الاخبار*. BBC Persian.

[https://www.bbc.com/persian/afghanistan/2011/10/110915\\_109\\_mm\\_century\\_afghan\\_press\\_husainzadah](https://www.bbc.com/persian/afghanistan/2011/10/110915_109_mm_century_afghan_press_husainzadah)

<sup>5</sup>Maconachie, R. "A *Precis on Afghan Affairs*" (February 1919 - September 1927). Simla: Government of India Press, 1928. Accessed (<https://archive.org/details/in.ernet.dli.2015.206217>)

<sup>6</sup>Nizamnama-e-Naqilinba Samt Qataghan. Official Gazette, 1923. <http://old.moj.gov.af/content/files/egov/Nizamnami%20Ha/NN-1302-07-04.pdf>

<sup>7</sup>Shir, J. "Nationalism in Afghanistan: Colonial knowledge, education, symbols, and the World Tour of Amanullah Khan, 1901-1929," *James Madison University (Masters Thesis)*,



had a close familial relationship with the King and a distinct position in the royal family, enabling him to establish a sustained media system in the country. (Ahang, 1970; Maconachie, 1928).<sup>8</sup>Because of being homonymous with another publication in India, after the sixth issue of the first year, it was renamed "Siraj-ul-AkhbarAfghanya." It pursued the same objective as the Habibya secret association: external independence and internal reforms (Maconachie, 1928)<sup>9</sup> and advocated for nationalism, pan-Islamism, and modernism. To reach the goals, education, particularly Western-styled modern science education, was at the center of its attention. This publication advocated that without education and particularly modern science, having a better future and prosperous country is impossible (Ahang, 1970; Maconachie, 1928)<sup>10</sup>. The royal court supported the publication until the advent of World War I, in which the king declared Afghanistan a neutral state. However, since the publication followed a pro-Turkish and anti-British agenda, the King's neutral position did not meet Mahmood Tarazi's and his clique's expectations. The pan-Islamist position of the publication advocated for partaking in the war in support of the Ottoman caliph. Similarly, owing to the British controlling the country's foreign policy, the Tarzi clique earnestly sought an active position in the war (Schinasi, 2008; Gregorian, 1967).<sup>11</sup>

Another mission of this publication was to create a national identity to gather the people around. Therefore, Mahmood Tarzi and other Afghan nationalists coined the term Afghaniyat, which was equal to being Afghan (being Pashtun). However, the term Afghan, having racial and ethnic implications, could not serve as a comprehensive foundation for nation-building in the country. Observing the texts from this era shows that Afghans only referred to the Pashtun people. Even Mahmood Tarzi compares the Pashtu (the Afghani language) to the Persian language (Afghan). Many critics believe that the nation-building process and defining the national identity of that era was an elite and ethnocentric approach emerging from the Pashtun nationalist perspective and lacked comprehensiveness (Lee, 2018; Shir, 2012), which probably can be regarded as one of the fundamental challenges of Afghanistan's national identity crisis right now.

### ***Pan-Islamism, Nationalism, and Modernism in Siraj-ul-Akhbar***

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*JMU Scholarly Commons, 2012, Accessed ( Jan 2024)*

<https://commons.lib.jmu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1337&context=master201019>

<sup>8</sup>Afghanistan Constitution, " Afghanistan Constitution," *Official Gazette, Article 31 (1964)*.

<sup>9</sup>Ahmed, F, "LEARNING FROM AFGHANISTAN'S INDEPENDENCE." *Perspectives on History: The newsmagazine of the American Historical Association*, (2019, Nov 13) Accessed (Nov 2023)

<sup>10</sup>Shir, J. "Nationalism in Afghanistan: Colonial knowledge, education, symbols, and the World Tour of Amanullah Khan, 1901-1929," *James Madison University (Masters Thesis)*, *JMU Scholarly Commons, 2012, Accessed ( Jan 2024)*

<sup>11</sup>Raza, S. A. "Treaty of Rawalpindi of 1919-Hundred Years On" *Cambridge Open Engage*, 2021.



Four concepts were the building blocks of nationalism in Afghanistan, which were promoted through the Siraj-ul-Akhbar newspaper: the fatherland (Watan), nation (Millat), state (Dawlat), and religion (din) (Ruttig, 2011).<sup>12</sup>The chief editor of this publication, Mahmood Tarzi, had living experience in Turkey and Damascus under the Ottoman Empire, having an exchange with Young Turks, and also being familiar with the thoughts of Saeed Jamaluddin Afghani made him a pan-Islamist and a sympathizer of the Ottoman Empire (Maconachie, 1928). Particularly, the Ottoman Empire's involvement in the First World War on the side of central powers (Germany and Austria-Hungary), which were defeated in 1918, made this publication a pro-Turkish and anti-British outlet. Owing to the gradual decline of the Ottoman Empire (Islamic Caliph), this publication used a pan-Islamism religious theme to influence Muslim communities supporting the caliphate (Nawid, 1999).<sup>13</sup>

Mahmood Tarzi believed that the reason behind Afghanistan and other Islamic countries' backwardness was Western imperialism. Hence, this publication used nationalism as a domestic mobilizing approach and pan-Islamism as the religious legitimizing method to advocate for modern Islamic society. Aligned with nationalism, pan-Islamism, and modernism themes, Tarzi wrote articles such as *Chee Bodaim o Chee Shudaim (What Were We and What We Become)* and *Aya Chee Bayad Kard? (What ought to be done)*, not only provided the reader with relevant and inspiring information but also harshly criticized the clerics and the Afghanistan government's shortcomings in being responsible for the situation and induced readers both inside and abroad to uprising (Qiang & Pamirzad, 2023; Shir, 2012).

The first goal of this publication was to defeat imperialism at home. Therefore, this publication's advocacy for claiming the country's independence extensively spread over a decade. It deeply penetrated society, particularly among the Mullahs -who were religiously opposed to being governed by a non-Muslim power- and the royal family and intellectuals alike (Maconachie, 1928; Nawid, 1999).<sup>14</sup>For instance, articles written by Tarzi published in this publication enticed religious scholars to call for national jihad against Britain for internal and external independence in the eastern provinces or praised the zeal and perseverance of the Afghanistan army in the second Anglo-Afghan war. Meanwhile, the notion of independence perforated the royal family, particularly Prince Amanullah Khan, the next Amir. Furthermore, the constitutionalists "Mashruta-Khahan," including Amanullah, perceived the King as a barrier to independence. Even to the degree that in 1918, a plot against King Habibullah was neutralized, and the

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<sup>12</sup>Gregorian, V, "Mahmud Tarzi and Saraj-Ol-Akhbar: Ideology of Nationalism and Modernization in Afghanistan," *JSTOR-Middle East Journal*, vol. 21, no. 3 (1967) 345–68. Accessed 5 Feb. 2024

<sup>13</sup>Saikal, A. F. "*Modern Afghanistan: A History of Struggle and Survival*" I.B. Tauris, ISBN 978-1-84511-316-2, 2006.

<sup>14</sup>Shir, J. "Nationalism in Afghanistan: Colonial knowledge, education, symbols, and the World Tour of Amanullah Khan, 1901-1929," *James Madison University (Masters Thesis), JMU Scholarly Commons*, 2012, Accessed ( Jan 2024)

investigation found that Prince Amanullah Khan and his mother, Olay Hazrat, were involved (Nawid, 1999).<sup>15</sup>

Throughout its long journey, this publication, however, never stopped advocating for the country's independence, pan-Islamism, modernism, and ethnocentric nationalism. Likewise, Mahmood Tarzi, having family relationships and support in the royal court, steadfastly and ceaselessly promoted his thoughts. The Mashruta-Khahan movement, which was circled around the Siraj-ul-Akhbar publication, was stubborn in their desire for the country's independence, a position that was threatening King Habibullah's position, and even might have contributed to his assassination afterward (Shir, 2012; Maconachie, 1928).<sup>16</sup> Independence was the most important element of the charter of the Siraj-ul-Akhabar circle "Mashruta-Khahan," which, regardless of King Habibullah's suggestion to the British Indian viceroy before his death, was not realized. The death of Amir Habibullah Khan made the nationalists a step closer to their dream -the independence of the country (Nawid, 1999). The nationalist and Mashruta-Khahan movement was not only proactively looking for a courageous enough king to realize their demands for independence but also already worked on who could be such a King (Maconachie, 1928).<sup>17</sup> As per the nationalist's plans and Siraj-ul-Akhbar's decade of advocacy, as soon as King Habibullah was assassinated, his son Prince Amanullah Khan was crowned. He declared the country's independence from Britain, and the third Anglo-Afghan war broke out and brought about the country's independence. After signing the Rawalpindi treaty in 1919, Britain admitted the country's full sovereignty (Ahmed, 2019).<sup>18</sup>

Researchers believe that Afghanistan's independence movement started from the theoretical contribution of Habibiya College and its association, was flourished and propelled by the outspoken modernity-oriented Siraj-ul-Akhbar newspaper, and was realized by the determined and courageous King Amanullah Khan (Gregorian, 1967; Nawid, 1999; Maconachie, 1928; Shir, 2012)<sup>19</sup>. In the famous Rawalpindi treaty, King Amanullah Khan asked the British to "abolish the tyrannical laws and recognize the absolute independence, equal rights, and freedom in all respects of the government of

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<sup>15</sup>Ursula Sims-Williams, "The Afghan newspaper Siraj Al-Akhbar," *British Society for Middle Eastern Studies Bulletin*, 1980. 118-122

<sup>16</sup>Ruttig, T, "Afghanistan's Early Reformists: Mahmud Tarzi's ideas and their influence on the Wesh Zalman movement," *Afghanistan Analyst Network*, 2011, Accessed (Jan 2024)

<sup>17</sup>Shir, J. "Nationalism in Afghanistan: Colonial knowledge, education, symbols, and the World Tour of Amanullah Khan, 1901-1929," *James Madison University (Masters Thesis), JMU Scholarly Commons*, 2012, Accessed (Jan 2024)

<sup>18</sup>Qiang, C., & Pamirzad, Q. H. "A Century of Struggle: Afghanistan's Media Development Under Monarchies." ResearchGate, 2023. Accessed (Feb 2024)

<sup>19</sup>Nawid, S. K, "Religious response to social change in Afghanistan, 1919-29: King Aman-Allah and the Afghan Ulama" Costa Mesa, Calif., U.S.A: Mazda Publishers, 1999. Accessed (Jan 2024)



*Afghanistan*" (Raza, 2021).<sup>20</sup>With this extensive historical background, this study wants to find answers to the following questions:

1. What are the achievements of Amanullah's government in terms of the press?
2. How did Pan-Islamism, nationalism, and modernism, the three building blocks of Siraj-ul-Akhbar, infiltrate Amanullah's government, and how was their intersection covered in Aman-e-Afghan weekly?
3. How is the relationship between these three building blocks constructed in Aman-e-Afghan, and what were some potential threats to their implementation?

#### **4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

This study has used the 80 issues from the collection of Aman-e-Afghan as the sample for thematic qualitative content analysis in this study. From 185 issues of this publication that are accessible online and available to the researcher, 80 issues from the first issue of 1920 to the 10<sup>th</sup> issue of 1926 were available and randomly chosen for the purpose of this study. Based on previous research (Gregorian, 1967; Nawid, 1999; Ruttig, 2011; Shir, 2012)<sup>21</sup>, the publication of the independence era in Afghanistan, particularly the Siraj-ul-Akhbar, which was instrumental in the struggle for independence, followed a certain path, promoting three schools of thought: Pan-Islamism, nationalism, modernism. To comprehensively understand the media policy of that era, and the coverage of Aman-e-Afghan in particular, the three mentioned (isms) were used as an analytical framework to explore to what extent these themes remained at the center of the Aman-e-Afghan publication publishing priorities after the achievement of the country's independence throughout the decade of independence 1919-1929. During the open coding process, this information was coded: the issue, the date, whether the issue had a picture, and also which countries were mentioned in the issues. Similarly, three columns for pan-Islamism, nationalism, and modernism were created, and the themes matching were coded under relevant columns. Also, an additional column named special notes, and the author noted the most salient topic per each issue and their relationship with analytical themes of Pan-Islamism, nationalism, and modernism.

#### **5. FINDINGS**

In the aftermath of achieving independence, which fulfilled the goal of external independence, the Amanullah's government concentrated on internal issues. Education, legislation, and reformation were the three main areas the new government pursued in the new era. Legislation at the forefront of founding principled and organized governance was one of the initial steps King Amanullah put forward (Ruttig, 2011).<sup>22</sup> For the first time in the country's history, Afghanistan had its first constitution known

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<sup>20</sup>Ruttig, T, "Afghanistan's Early Reformists: Mahmud Tarzi's ideas and their influence on the Wesh Zalman movement," *Afghanistan Analyst Network*, 2011, Accessed (Jan 2024)

<sup>21</sup>Ahmed, F, "LEARNING FROM AFGHANISTAN'S INDEPENDENCE." *Perspectives on History: The newsmagazine of the American Historical Association*, (2019, Nov 13) Accessed (Nov 2023)

<sup>22</sup>Ruttig, T, "Afghanistan's Early Reformists: Mahmud Tarzi's ideas and their influence on the Wesh Zalman movement," *Afghanistan Analyst Network*, 2011, Accessed (Jan 2024)

as the “Nizamnama-e-Asasi.” This constitution was ratified in the grand assembly held in 1922. The 11<sup>th</sup> article of the constitution endorsed that “ *the domestic press and printings are free according to their special regulation.*” Similarly, in 1924, the first press regulation known as the “Nizamnama-e-Matbohat” was ratified in this era. The 11<sup>th</sup> article of the national constitution has been repeatedly reiterated, and the framework of journalistic activities was also regulated within this regulation (Nizamnama\_Matbohat, 1924).<sup>23</sup> Under the provision of press regulation and the government’s focus on the circulation of news related to the government’s policies, a series of publications that diversified the media landscape in the country was founded. Among them, the founding of the first non-governmental independent publication called Anis and the increase in their numbers afterward were the grand achievements of this era, which paved the way for media to flourish and future conducive press activities in the country (Shadan, 2011). Similarly, the first exclusively women-related publication, called Siraj-ul-Niswan, was established in this era. In addition, the famous instrumental publication in bringing about independence -Siraj-ul-Akhbar- continued its operation under the new name of Aman-e-Afghan. Similar to its precedent, this publication concentrated on nation-building, preserving national independence, and promoting education and lawfulness. Table 1 shows that from 1919 to 1929, the decade of independence, 23 publications existed in the capital and other provinces of the country (Ahang, 1970).<sup>24</sup>

**Table 1 The list of press and publications during the reign of Amir Amanullah Khan**

Number	Name of Publication	Affiliation	Establishment Date
1	Amani-E- Afghan	Governmental official newspaper	1919
2	Etihad-e- Mashriqi	First provincial publication	1919
3	Siraj-ul-Atfal	kids’ exclusive publication in Afghanistan	1919
4	Muhref-e-Mahref	Publication of Ministry of Education	1919
5	Etifaq-e- Islam	Publication of Herat Province Education Directorate	1919
6	Sitara-e-Afghan	Provincial publication in Parwan province	1919
7	Afghan Newspaper	The first newspaper of the country in this era	1919
8	Ghazi	Provincial outlet in Khost	1921
9	Tolo-e-Afghan	Provincial publication in Kandahar	1921
10	Eblagh	Gazette in Kabul	1921
11	Ershad-u-Niswan	The first women's weekly publication of Afghanistan	1921
12	Majmoha-e-Askaria	Ministry of Defense (Ministry of War)	1921
13	Beidar	Provincial publication in Balkh province	1922
14	Eslah	Provincial publication in Kunduz province	1923
15	Surwat	Publication of Ministry of Finance	1924

<sup>23</sup>Maconachie, R, "A *Precis on Afghan Affairs*" (February 1919 - September 1927). Simla: Government of India Press, 1928. Accessed

(<https://archive.org/details/in.ernet.dli.2015.206217>)

<sup>24</sup>AfghanistanConstitution, "AfghanistanConstitution," *Official Gazette, Article 31* (1964). Accessed (Nov 2023)





16	Haqiqat	Publication in Kabul	1924
17	Ayeena-e- Urfan	Affiliated with the ministry of education	1924
18	Majmoha-e-Saya	Affiliated to the healthcare independent directorate	1927
19	Anis	The first independent newspaper in the country	1927
20	Nasim-e-Sahar	Private and Independent publication	1927
21	Pashtun Zhagh	Private and Independent publication	1928
22	Nawrooz	Private and Independent publication	1928
23	Jarida-E-Maktab	Affiliated to the Ministry of Education	1929

Source: Qiang & Pamirzad, 2023

Among the provided lists, this study concentrated on the in-depth study of Aman-e-Afghan Weekly, the official publication of the Amanullah Khan government. In March 1920, this publication was published weekly in Persian under the managerial tenure of Abdul Ahdi Dawi, one member of Mashruta-Khahan. Although the name was different, from the publishing policy perspective, this periodical continued the Siraj-ul-Akhbar publication. It contained news, editorials, articles, commentaries, official statements, official letters, advertisements, novels, etc. The news published in this publication came in two categories, each with sub-categories: domestic and international. The domestic news of the publication was written by the reporters of the periodical or was taken from other publications of the country. Under the international news category, news related to the Islamic world (Jahan-e-Islam), Telegraphic news (Khabar-ah-e-Telegraphi), and Western countries news (Farangustan) were published. The editorial of the publication concentrated on hot topics generally associated with nationalism, pan-Islamism, modernism, and sometimes issues related to the important domestic or international events that directly or indirectly affected Afghanistan's situation were also included in the editorial section (Ahang, 1970).<sup>25</sup>

The first editorial of this publication explained the objectives of this publication as follows: to try to encourage education in the country and enhance awareness, to spread freedom, to respect, sincerely provide support to the state, and to impartially familiarize the nation with the global and particularly Islamic countries politics (Aman-e-Afghan, First issue, March 1920). As the publication publishing policy suggests, it promotes modernism by encouraging education, playing the harbinger of nationalism by spreading freedom, supporting the state, and advocating pan-Islamism by familiarizing the nation with Islamic world politics. Additionally, this publication had special pages on special moments such as Independence Day, Eids, Maharam, etc. Also, for entertainment purposes, this publication had a literature (Adabyat) section, which published poems and novels (Ahang, 1970).<sup>26</sup>

### **5.1 Descriptive statistics**

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<sup>25</sup>Saikal, A. F. "Modern Afghanistan: A History of Struggle and Survival" I.B. Tauris, ISBN 978-1-84511-316-2, 2006.

<sup>26</sup>Ursula Sims-Williams, "The Afghan newspaper Siraj Al-Akhbar," *British Society for Middle Eastern Studies Bulletin*, 1980. 118-122.



As Table 2 shows, 40% of the content covered in this publication was related to modernism. Similarly, 23.7% of the issues of this publication covered issues related to pan-Islamism, and 20% of the issues of this publication also covered topics related to the theme of nationalism. However, this categorization is not mutually exclusive, meaning an article can be classified in multiple categories simultaneously. The dominant topics associated with these themes in the coverage of this publication are shown below.

Table 2 The descriptive details of the sample of this study

Themes	Pan Islamism	Nationalism	Modernism
Number of issues	19 issues	16 issues	33 issues
Topics	-Islamic Awareness -Islamic unity -Islamic caliphate -Islamic history - Islamic Ummah - religious events	- ethnicity - Independence - languages	- education - legislation - relationship building - constructions - reforms

## **5.2 THE THEMATIC ANALYSIS OF AMAN-E-AFGHAN WEEKLY**

### **5.2.1 Pan-Islamism**

The role of precedent Persian publications such as *Hubl-ul-matin* and *Siraj-ul-Akhbar* in the emergence of pan-Islamism was instrumental in Afghanistan and neighboring countries (Nawid, 1999).<sup>27</sup> Similar to the *Siraj-ul-Akhbar*, which advocated Muslim unity, this publication sternly followed the same path. The pan-Islamistic articles in this publication appeared in two main forms: the articles that directly advocated the global unity of Muslims from the editorial points of view and the articles that implicitly conveyed the message of global mobilization of Muslim Ummah. The first category of the pan-Islamic articles in this publication mainly emanated from the author's thinking, while the latter is the author's reflection on the Muslim situation across the globe. This first group article, which explicitly advocates the issue of pan-Islamism, has been motivated by the past glorious Islamic history. Likewise, a self-reproachful, alarming tone can be found in this category of articles. In particular, in the 13<sup>th</sup>, 14<sup>th</sup>, and 15<sup>th</sup> issues of 1921, the author chose specific historical events to connect Islamic history with the current time, to raise people's awareness about the past, and to invite them to act accordingly.

The second category of articles about pan-Islamism in this publication is a reflection of the political situation in which Muslims are living. Specific issues such as the Turkish political conflict, the Hindu-Muslim anti-colonial movement of the Indian sub-continent against Britain, and the British colonization of the Arab countries inspired the author to write about pan-Islamism. Because King Amanullah Khan, under the influence of Mahmood Tarzi- his father-in-law- was deeply infatuated with Turkey,

<sup>27</sup>Saikal, A. F. "*Modern Afghanistan: A History of Struggle and Survival*" I.B. Tauris, ISBN 978-1-84511-316-2, 2006.

and particularly the charismatic features of Mustafa Kamal Atatürk, many articles related to pan-Islamism in this publication are associated with the revolution in Turkey (Maconachie, 1928).<sup>28</sup> Similarly, the Hindu-Muslim anti-colonial movement, and sometimes these two inter-group conflicts, is another topic in which the publication advocates for Muslim unity. Besides, the situation of other Muslim countries such as Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Iran are the inspiring cases of pan-Islamism topics in this publication. The 8th, 9th, and 10th issues of 1920, and the 12th, 13th, 14th, and 15th issues of 1921 pan-Islamistic articles all reflect the situation of Muslims in different countries, particularly in the Middle East.

Except for the two categories that regularly promoted pan-Islamism, another group of articles associated with pan-Islamism is related to the King's speeches. Among the common people of Afghanistan affected by the dominant religious narrative, Amanullah Khan is known as the secular king in Afghanistan, who had pervaded Western and anti-religious reforms. However, observing the firsthand publication of this era, interestingly, it can be argued that he might have been very religious. Even at the time of the Ottoman Caliph's collapse, Amanullah Khan was a potential option to substitute the Islamic caliph in Afghanistan. However, he did not accept the suggestion of India's Caliph movement about this issue (Nawid, 1999).<sup>29</sup> Based on the official speeches of the King being printed in this publication, he would have participated in every Eid congregational prayer and made a public speech aligned with the pan-Islamism theory. He had been the Imam of every congregational prayer he had participated in. From the sample of this study, it was found that on every Eid, the king personally attended the congregational prayer of Eid in Eidgah mosque (masjid Eidgah). For instance, based on the 2nd issue of 1921 and 1923 of Aman-e-Afghan, he had been the Imam of congregational prayer and recited the Khutbah to the people. Similarly, in other events and gatherings, the King was a staunch advocate of Muslim unity and promoted explicit pan-Islamism, which was reflected in the articles of Aman-e-Afghan weekly. The pan-Islamic coverage of this publication after 1923 gradually decreased, and regardless of the King's pan-Islamist policy, which is evident from his official publication, in 1924, a religiously instigated riot broke out in the southern part of the country, which made a new center of attention for this publication. Given the importance of the Pan-Islamic notion in the publishing policy of this publication, from the beginning, this publication had a special column for the Islamic world news; however, from 1924 onward, the publication's Islamic world column was removed or rarely printed. Instead, the Islamic country's news was published either in the editorial or under the international news section.

### **5.2.2 Nationalism**

Nationalism in Afghanistan has been one of the most controversial topics, suspicious of ethnocentricity and authoritarianism, starting from Siraj-ul-Akhbar and the Jawanan

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<sup>28</sup>Wafayezada, M.Q. "Hybrid Extremism: Ethnonationalism and Territorialized Islamic Fundamentalism in Afghanistan," *The Review of Faith & International Affairs*, 21:3 (2023) 7–21

<sup>29</sup>Ursula Sims-Williams, "The Afghan newspaper Siraj Al-Akhbar," *British Society for Middle Eastern Studies Bulletin*, 1980. 118-122.

Afghan era. As Shir (2012) explained, nationalism in Afghanistan has been a hegemonic and state-centered approach. The famous saying of Mahmood Tarzi in *Siraj-ul-Akhbar* and the coining of the term *Afghaniyat* became the basis of nationalism in the country.

*"Saraj-ul-Akhbar Afghaniya is neither British nor Russian nor French nor Italian nor German nor Chinese or Japanese. It is a Muslim newspaper and, in that, it is specifically an Afghan newspaper. Whatever it says, whatever melody it sings, is from an Afghan point of view and stems from the tone of Afghan national dignity"* (Afghanistan Constitution, 1964, article 31; Gorzang, 2018, p. 13; Qiang & Pamirzad, 2023, p.10).

The term *Afghan* used in this extract of Mahmood Tarzi's writing is the first overgeneralized reference to all Afghanistan's populations -an attempt known as forceful nation-building and assimilation (Lee, 2018).<sup>30</sup> Before this, Britain used *Afghans* as the rulers of Kabul but never meant the overall diverse ethnic groups in the country. *Afghan* is an originally ethnic-associated term that referred to Pashtun people; however, it has gradually been generalized over others over time. The 8<sup>th</sup> article of the *Nizamnama-e-Asasi* 1924, "To all those who live in Afghanistan regardless of their religious affiliation is called Afghanistan's citizen, and the *Afghania* (Afghanistan) citizenship granting or suspension is principled by another regulation." This article, which is the first-ever law made in modern Afghanistan that refers to citizenship in the country, does not endorse the generalization of the term to all people. However, unexpectedly, the term *Afghan*, which is racial and ethnic, has been generalized to every citizen in Afghanistan and was legalized in 1964 in the national constitution. An observation of the *Aman-e-Afghan* publication shows that the term *Afghan* has been only used for the Pashtun people. For instance, on the 3<sup>rd</sup> issue of 1923, the 12<sup>th</sup> of 1923 of the *Aman-e-Afghan* used the term *Zabani Afghani* (Afghani Language) to the Pashtu language. Similarly, in the 3<sup>rd</sup> issue of the 1924 publication, the king himself, during the Eid's *Khutbah*, mentions that "I want to recite the *Khutbah* in Persian and *Afghani* (Pashtu) languages instead of Arabic because the majority of you (people) might not know Arabic." Similarly, the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> issues of the 1924 *Aman-e-Afghan* publication used the term *Zaban-e-Afghani* for the Pashtu language. More apparently, in the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> issues of the 7<sup>th</sup> year of this publication, the king himself, during his trip to *Mashriqi* (Jalalabad) in a public gathering while advising people for coexistence, said: "Based on Islamic *Sharia*, my ethnic group belongs to those who say the *Kalima-e-Taiba*, no matter if they are *Kabuli*, *Hazara*, *Afghan*, *Tajik*, or *Sunni* and *Shia*, and no matter from which corner of this land they are." In a nutshell, from this quote and based on all these historical pieces of evidence of the use of this term, it becomes obvious that the term *Afghan* was only used for the Pashtuns and was not inclusive or comprehensive enough to address the complexity of the ethnic structure of the country. However, this narrative was deliberately generalized to the country's population in the constitution of 1964 and laid the foundation of the flawed, conflictual, and controversial also-called national identity in Afghanistan.

The ethnic-centered engineered identity "*Afghan*" has been repeatedly used in the *Aman-e-Afghan* publication; however, it is difficult from the content of this

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<sup>30</sup>Ruttig, T, "Afghanistan's Early Reformists: Mahmud Tarzi's ideas and their influence on the *Wesh Zalman* movement," *Afghanistan Analyst Network*, 2011, Accessed (Jan 2024)



publication to conclude that the term was used for Afghanistan's inhabitants. The issue of nationalism in this publication is manifested in different forms: One of the dominant aspects of nationalism is using the term Afghanistan's citizens. In this manifestation, without any ethnic implication based on the 8<sup>th</sup> article of the Nizamnama-e-Asasi, every country inhabitant is equally addressed. The second manifestation of nationalism in Afghanistan is associated with a generalized version of the Afghan term to all of Afghanistan's citizens. In this manifestation, the term Afghan Nation (Millat Afghan) is repeatedly used, which, due to the limited implication of the term Afghan -which the authors knew- makes it difficult to make sense of who had been addressed.

The additional themes that had been used with nationalism are independence, the kingdom, and education. First, the articles praise the Afghan nation (Millat Afghan) for their bravery and dedication in gaining and preserving independence. In the second theme, the kingdom officials are addressed as the King of the Afghan nation (Millat Afghan), the Sapah Salar of the Afghan nation, the proud of the Afghan nation, and so forth. The third is more self-critical while talking about education. In this theme, for instance, the article instigates the people by saying you brave people who believe in Afghaniat (being Afghan-Pashtun) and Islamiat (being Muslim); how could you accept that all your products are being produced abroad? In some cases, the term Afghan is used equally for Pashtunwali. For instance, in the 24<sup>th</sup> issue of 1921 and the 21<sup>st</sup> issue of 1923, Afghan nationalism descended to the Pashtunwali ethnic code, which is only practiced among the Pashtun people. This theme sparsely appeared in this publication's first and second years, while after 1923, and the first grand assembly paced an ascending and forward trajectory.

### **5.2.3 Modernism**

Modernism is another dominant theme covered in the Aman-e-Afghan publication throughout its publishing age. The most important keyword associated with modernism in this publication is education. Generally speaking, education has been the most dominant theme in this outlet; almost educational-oriented topics and direct articles promoting education can be noticed throughout this study's samples. This publication believed that without education, making a modern society is impossible. From the coverage of this publication in issues 6<sup>th</sup> of 1920, 7<sup>th</sup> of 1920, 18<sup>th</sup> of 1921, 19<sup>th</sup> of 1921, 22<sup>nd</sup> of 1921, 32<sup>nd</sup> of 1922, 2<sup>nd</sup> of 1923, 23 and 24<sup>th</sup> of 1923, and 3<sup>rd</sup> of 1924, it can be understood that the government promoted education as the core component of modernism to a great extent. Establishing new schools, sending groups of students abroad, inviting foreign teachers to the country, and opening new publications are the two explicit educational-centered policies of the government at that time. Within this publication, it can be seen that the government, although limited, provided educational opportunities to the people. However, the coverage of this publication shows that this initiative was mainly limited to Kabul and some big cities such as Herat and Qandahar. In all of the samples of this study, only once in the 2<sup>nd</sup> 1923 issue, the names of Turkistan, Qataghan, and Hazarajat states associated with schools or education have been mentioned, while excessive concentration was on the education issue in Kabul



province. The founding of the first girls' school (Maktab-e-Mastorat), the Rulers Schools (Ukam school), the school of languages (Al-Sana), the Amani management school (Maktab-e-Edari), and the Amani Lecce are among the schools that were established in Kabul during this era.

Another modernist aspect of this era, which was extensively covered in this publication, is related to establishing governmental organizations and legislation. During this era, the basis of modern governance was laid. The ministries and governmental offices were established, and the state's organizations were initiated. In this era, governing the country, which was a traditional familial or force-based approach, became lawful and disciplined. For the first time, the 872 representatives of the people in 1923 were invited to adopt new regulations and laws and found the basis of the new government. Although the quality of the Grand Assembly's representativeness and inclusiveness regarding the country's social and cultural diversity is unknown, this can be one of the greatest semi-democratic achievements of this era.

Except for the first constitution and the first media regulation mentioned before, a wide range of regulatory frameworks were initiated in this era. The laws and regulations, except for being published in the official gazette, were also orderly published in the issues of this publication. For instance, the Nizamnam-e-TashkilatAsasi has been published from the 5<sup>th</sup> issue of 1921 to the 29<sup>th</sup> issue of this year in this publication. Similarly, the Nizamnam-e-Nufos (population regulation), Nizamnama-e-Mahjiran (Refugee regulation) 8<sup>th</sup> 1920, and Nizamnama-e-Tarjuma 26<sup>th</sup> 1923 are other regulatory documents that were published in this publication. The role of Aman-e-Afghan in publicizing and spreading these legal documents was highly precious. Modernism remains a dominant theme of this publication from the beginning to the end of the sample of this study.

### ***Aman-e-Afghan political position***

Except for the dominant themes that were discussed, the publication also holds some specific positions, some of which were temporal and some substantially related to the identity of this publication. The first position of this publication is being pro-Turkish and pro-German. To a lesser and greater degree, this standpoint almost remained stable throughout its publishing. Regarding the issue of Turkey, in the beginning, the publication advocated for the protection of the caliph and even called for a general uprising and recruitment of fighters in Afghanistan and India to help the caliph. However, as the Ottoman caliph collapsed, this publication delicately switched its position toward Turkish nationalism. Particularly, by symbolizing Mustafa Kamal Ataturk (the founder of modern Turkey) as the defender of Turkish nationalism in the face of Western imperialism, it made an inconspicuous transition in its pro-Turkish position. In the seventh and eighth issues of 1923, this publication published the speech of Mustafa Kamal Ataturk in its editorial, which was the first important article in the mentioned issue. Besides, in this publication's 24<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> issues, the photos of Mustafa Kamal Ataturk (Mustafa Kamal Pasha) have been published. Similarly, the publication followed a pro-German tone. For instance, in the 19<sup>th</sup> issue of 1921 and the 9<sup>th</sup> issue of 1923, this publication defends Germany's position in World War I. It argued that



Germany was unfairly obliged for compensation in World War I. Similarly, this publication's 16<sup>th</sup> to 22<sup>nd</sup> issues in 1921 published photos of German politicians, generals, and officials out of context. Moreover, Amanullah Khan's government's friendly policy toward Germany and the two countries' cooperation in the era of education, in which different batches of students were sent to Germany, confirms their friendly relationship in this era, which affected Aman-e-Afghan's position.

On the contrary, it followed an anti-Russian and anti-British tone. Although Russia has been indirectly criticized on some issues, its relationship has been portrayed as almost friendly. Britain, however, has been repeatedly and harshly attacked for being the main reason for the Muslim world situation. Taking the Anglo-Afghan wars and historical enmity into account, nationalism and pan-Islamism were the two main amplifiers of the negative tone of this publication against Britain. Besides, this publication was following a pro-revolution position in India against Britain. It promoted Muslim and Hindu unity and praised the rebels' revolutionary attempts in India. Since 1926, the articles and position of this publication about the global politics of that era show that the Afghanistan government significantly changed its radical position. The pro-German, pro-Turkish, and direct anti-Britain tones have been profoundly softened. The southern provinces' revolt against the government, which started in 1924 and took a long time for the government to handle, might be the main reason. Although this publication declared in the first issue of 1925 that the rebellion ended, its peripheral resentment remained until the last rebellion in 1929, which led to the collapse of Amanullah Khan's government.

### ***DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION***

This study used the 80 issues of the Aman-e-Afghan weekly to explore the intersection of nationalism, pan-Islamism, and modernism in the second decade of the twentieth century. This study used the three mentioned themes as a framework to evaluate the content of the Aman-e-Afghan, the official organ of the Amanullah Khan government. The findings of this study confirmed that, similar to Siraj-ul-Akhbar publication, nationalism, modernism, and pan-Islamism have been the three main themes covered in this publication. Modernism, with 40% coverage in the sample of this study, was the most covered, while pan-Islamism and nationalism, each with 24% and 20%, respectively, were also covered in the content of this publication. This finding confirms previous studies (Gregorian, 1967; Maconachie, 1928; Nawid, 1999; Shir, 2012) about the content of Siraj-ul-Akhbar, the precedent publication of Aman-e-Afghan. It reiterates that although the name of the publication was changed from Siraj-ul-Akhbar to Aman-e-Afghan, the publishing policy and core advocating missions and ideological foundations remained the same. Observing the pan-Islamist coverage of this publication, this study found that two categories of content emerged. The first category is inherent in Mahmood Tarzi's pan-Islamism, which the Ottoman caliphs inspired. The second type of pan-Islamist content was a reflection of the Muslim world in that era. The central topic from which these contents emanated is the Turkish revolution, the Indian Muslim situation, and the Arab world, which suffered under colonialism. Similar to the previous findings (Gregorian, 1967; Maconachie, 1928; Nawid, 1999; Shir, 2012), this study also found that in Aman-e-Afghan pan-Islamism contained calls for Muslim unity, plenishing



self with modern knowledge, self-criticizing of the way of pursuing religious teaching, and misguiding interpretation of the clerics which are against the real message of Islam.

Regarding nationalism, this study found that the foundation of nationalism was laid based on non-conclusive ethnic-oriented terms, which was deficient. Observing the content of this publication, this study came up with this conclusion regarding nationalism: First, the term Afghan, which was later generalized to all citizens of Afghanistan in the 1964 constitution, lacks any type of public agreement and legal endorsement in this era. Based on the evidence from this publication, it was found that the term Afghan has repeatedly been used only for the Pashtun people, and extending its ethnic-dependent meaning to other ethnic groups had no logic other than forceful assimilation. This study partly confirms the (Shir, 2012)<sup>31</sup> findings, which show that the nation building and nationalism in Afghanistan have been colonial products, being hegemonically applied through a state-centric approach. Similarly, another topic related to the theme of nationalism is associated with languages. Throughout the content of this publication, the Persian language has never been mentioned as Dari. However, in the later years, particularly during Nadir Khan's reign, it dramatically changed from Persian to Dari. This also could be due to the ethnocentric policies of Nadir Khan towards non-Pashtun people. Similarly, Nadir Khan belonged to the religious faction in Amanullah Khan's Darbar, and this might be because religious fanaticism led him to differentiate the Afghanistan Persian, which is spoken by mainly Sunni Muslims, from the Iranian Persian, which Shia Muslims mainly speak. This separate topic needs extensive investigation and deserves independent research.

Concerning the theme of modernism, it was found that the Amanullah government was a staunch proponent of modernity, partly inherited from his father and partly influenced by his father-in-law and probably his wife, a partly Turkish-educated woman (Maconachie, 1928; Nawid, 1999). Education, legislation, and reformation are the three central keywords in the modernism theme, which includes a variety of modern initiatives. The establishment of new modern schools mainly in the capital, the sending of students abroad mainly from the royal family and the tribal leader close to Darbar, the establishing of the first girl's school, and also promoting public awareness through press and publication are activities which can be categorized under education initiatives. Similarly, as (Ruttig, 2011)<sup>32</sup> explained, the legislation was one of the other modern initiatives of the Amanullah government, some with achievements and some with failures and devastating results. During Amanullah's reign, dozens of legal documents were drafted and ratified, from the first constitution and first press regulation to the notorious Qataghan and Turkistan's land distribution to the Pashtun people. Through observation of the content of this publication, it was found that a wide range of legal documents and regulations were published in an orderly manner. Its positive impact on public awareness of laws and the mass distribution of legal documents is very important. Although some regulations, such as the Nizamnama-e-Qataghan, which paved the way for "Pashtun colonization," the usurpation of the native peoples' land and distribution to the non-locals and particularly Pashtuns, are known to

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be aligned with ethnocentric approaches in order to engineer the social structure (Wafayezada, 2023; RASC-NewsAgency, 2023).<sup>33</sup> However, holistically, the fact cannot be undermined that the positive aspects of legislation in this era outweigh its negative aspects, which laid the foundation of lawful governance in Afghanistan.

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