with one another in an increasingly smaller world society can hardly be overemphasized. The influence of cultural factors—understood in a wider sense of history, philosophy, law, and accumulated mores of a society—is an important dimension of the study of international relations and law which, though present subconsciously, has generally been ignored. It would be rewarding, therefore, to study the cultural variables and differences of peoples and countries to appreciate their behaviour in the international society.

It must be emphasized, however, that no culture can remain pure and unaffected by other cultures when they come in contact with one another. With the recent technological, political, social, and economic revolutions the world has been transformed beyond recognition. Not only has the international society become a true world society, but it has become absolutely interdependent. With increasing contacts between different peoples and cultures at various levels, a new world culture seems to be developing.

The law cannot remain immune to all these changes. Until yesterday, international law was wholly Eurocentric. With the emergence of the Asian-African states, international society has become universal. The traditional international law, the parochial law of the European Powers, is bound to be affected by the new sociological structure of society. In order to command respect of all the states, it must cease to be just a European national law and become the common law of all mankind. Even a cursory look at the recent developments in international law makes it clear that this transformation is indeed taking place at various levels both inside and outside the United Nations.

November 1983

**Afghanistan in International Perspective**

RAM RAHUL SHEEL

Afghanistan and Mongolia are ancient lands of ancient peoples in the centre of Asia. The Scythians and the Greeks passed through Afghanistan, and the Huns and the Turks nomadized on the Mongol steppes. Historically, both Afghanistan and Mongolia have played important roles in the history and politics of Asia. They have ruled, and have been ruled from, China, India, and Iran. At one time, the Mongols even dominated old Russia and campaigned further west. The Afghans, of course, never had any such connexion with old Russia. Today, Afghanistan and Mongolia are independent states of the Soviet system, and are Members of the United Nations. But what is their political status? A study of their present political status is of more than academic importance. This paper not only examines the history of their political status but also appraises it since the First World War with special reference to its development since the Second World War.

Ahmad Shah (1723–73), "father of the nation", of the Sadozai clan of the Abdali, later Durrani, tribe established the central Afghan political structure at Kandahar in 1747. Britain and Russia were yet to appear in the lists for the great game in West Asia. Britain and Russia then stood poles apart in Asia. The British had only a few trading centres in India; the Russians had political bases only in the Caucasus and Ural territories.

The central authority, which Ahmad Shah had forged and bequeathed to his successors, disintegrated on account of intra-tribal conflicts (as well as forces of external circumstances, especially the extension of European power politics to Asia, by the early-1970s). The Sadozais lost the throne of Afghanistan largely because of intra-tribal animosities, intra-clan discords, and royal family intransigencies. The assassination of Payanda Khan, son of Haji Jamal Khan of the powerful Barakzai clan of the Durrani tribe, destroyed the spirit of cooperation between the Barakzais and the Sadozais and led to a bitter feud between them, which finally culminated in a division of the country. Dost Muhammad Khan (1793–1863), eldest of Payanda Khan’s many sons and grandson of Haji Jamal Khan, emerged supreme in 1819 and ascended the throne of Kabul in 1826. He took the modest title Amir.

At the turn of the century, the British apprehended a Napoleonic scheme to sabotage the British land route to India, especially the Franco-Russian

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The British restored their puppet Shah Shuja on the throne of Afghanistan on 7 August 1839, but they could not keep him there for long. The British invasion unwittingly united the Afghans. They ousted Shah Shuja from the throne and annihilated the British force in a disastrous retreat from Kabul in 1842. Sirajuddollah, son of Zaman Shah, assassinated Shah Shuja on 16 April 1842. Dost Muhammad returned to the throne of Kabul.

The British defeat in, and withdrawal from, Afghanistan resulted in pushing the British back to the banks of the Satluj River and in barring the British from Afghanistan even though Amir Dost Muhammad revived the concept of cooperation with the British which he had first mooted in the mid-1830s. The British realized that they would not be able to achieve their objective of turning Afghanistan into a protectorate so long as they were not masters of the Panjab and Sind. They had known, since Mountstuart Elphinstone's mission to Shah Shuja in 1808–9, that a connexion with Afghanistan would lead to the unification of the Sikhs of the Panjab and the Amirs of Sind.

The British annexation of the Panjab and Sind in 1849–50 advanced the British frontier from the Satluj River to the Indus River and made it contiguous to that of Afghanistan. The boundary-line, the British inheritance from the Sikhs, passed between the Indus and the foothills inhabited by the Pathan tribes on the fringes of the plains.

Dost Muhammad was eventually able to unify Afghanistan. He was even able to take Herat just before his death in 1863. However, Afghan unity, which he had reinforced, withered away by the 1870s on account of internal conflicts and external forces. Amir Sher Ali (r. 1863–66 and 1869–73), elder son of Amir Dost Muhammad, endeavoured to conclude an agreement with the British Government in India for help in the event of a Russian aggression against Afghanistan. The capture of Tashkent in 1865 and the annexation of Samarkand in 1869 by Russia established the Russian power at the Amd Darya for the first time. The Russian expansion in Central Asia posed a political problem for the British. The British Government in India ignored Sher Ali's appeal for British protection of Afghanistan as also his desire to recognize his favourite younger son, Abdullah Jan, who had accompanied him to Ambala at the invitation of Lord Mayo, Viceroy and Governor-General of India (1869–72), in March 1869, as his heir and successor to the throne of Afghanistan. Abdullah Jan died on 17 August 1878. The British award (1873) over the Seistan boundary between Afghanistan and Persia in 1873 was another point of discordance between the Amir and the British. Under the award Seistan went to Persia, and outer Seistan went to Afghanistan. The award was favourable to Persia. The Seistan question continued to strain relations between Afghanistan and Iran up to mid-1974.

Under the circumstances, Amir Sher Ali turned to Russia. A Russian mission, headed by General G.N. Stoletov (Polish), left Samarkand for
Kabul. Sher Ali received the mission on 22 July 1878. General Stoletov, in consultation with Sher Ali, drew up a draft treaty which guaranteed the independence of Afghanistan and promised Russian non-interference in its internal affairs. The Russian Government recalled the Stoletov mission a week before the closing of the Congress of Berlin.

Russia dispatched the Stoletov mission, the British believed, to obtain British concessions relating to the Ottoman Empire after the Russo-Turkish War of 1877–78. Russia perhaps sent it in retaliation for the British action in the Congress of Berlin on 13 June 1878. As an independent ruler, Sher Ali had every right to reject or to receive any mission, whether British or Russian. His reception of the Russian mission, however, earned him the displeasure of Lord Lytton, Viceroy and Governor-General of India (1876–80), who used this as a pretext for declaring war against Afghanistan in order to reassess British influence there. Britain’s concern then, as also later, was not only to preserve Afghanistan from Russian influence but also to limit Russia to the areas north of the Amu Darya and to defend India at a point as far north as possible. Before the First Afghan War, the British effort was to cut short the advance of Russia to east of the Caspian.

Amir Sher Ali abdicated in favour of his elder son, Yakub Khan, and escaped to North Afghanistan. He died at Mazar Sharif on 21 February 1879. The British accepted Yakub Khan as the Amir of Afghanistan. At that time, Ayub Khan, Sher Ali’s other son, was Governor of Herat.

The Second Anglo-Afghan War (1878–80), an attempt to forestall and hold back Russia, was the result of the British failure to make a proper diplomatic arrangement with Amir Sher Ali. As in 1838, the British were nervous about the Russian advance in Central Asia in the 1860s and the 1870s. They suffered early losses, but won eventually. The peace treaty signed in Gandamak on 26 May 1879 provided for the control of the external affairs of Afghanistan by the Government of India in lieu of their pledge of non-interference in its internal affairs. The British also acquired the strategic frontier territories of Kurram, Pishin, and Sibi, including the famous Khaibar Pass. They also absorbed Baluchistan into the British Indian Empire. They had already taken Kalat, capital of Baluchistan, in 1872.

The Afghans, who united at this critical juncture, killed the British agent in the Bala Hisar of Kabul on 3 December 1879. Abdur Rahman Khan (1844–1901), son of Amir Muhammad Afzal Khan (r. 1866–67), grandson of Amir Dost Muhammad, and nephew of Amir Sher Ali, returned from a long exile in Samarkand. He had gone there in protest against his father’s sending a letter of allegiance to Amir Sher Ali. He won the throne of Afghanistan on 22 July 1880. Some of the chiefs continued in their loyalty to the sons and widow of Sher Ali. But Abdur Rahman successfully conciliated them. Sardar (“Prince”) Ayub Khan routed a British force at Maiwand near Kabul on 27 July 1880. Kabul later commemorated Ayub Khan’s victory by naming a street Jada-i-Maiwand.

The British, who decided to accept Abdur Rahman Khan as the Amir of Afghanistan in spite of his long exile of thirteen years in Central Asia on a Russian stipend, handed Kandahar over to him on 21 April 1881. In September Abdur Rahman defeated Ayub Khan at Girishk. Ayub Khan fled to Persia. Thus Abdur Rahman became the undisputed master of entire Afghanistan. The erstwhile Amir Yakub Khan settled down in Musooorie on a British stipend.

Amir Abdur Rahman (r. 1880–1901) accepted the Treaty of Gandamak of 1879. He agreed to negotiate with foreign Powers only through the Government of India. In 1893 he reconfirmed his agreement. The British Government appointed its first native agent at Kabul in the summer of 1882. The British jealously guarded their right to control Afghanistan’s external affairs against influence exercised by the other Powers, particularly Russia, thereby imposing a heavy price for their pledge of non-interference in Afghanistan’s internal affairs.

A formidable autocrat, Amir Abdur Rahman strengthened the authority of the Central Government by institutionalizing the civil bureaucracy, the army, and the royal succession. He divided Afghanistan into administrative provinces and districts. Several Afghan dignitaries such as Mohammad Asif and Mohammad Yusuf, sons of Yaliya Khan who had lived for many years in exile in India, returned with their families to Afghanistan during the reign of Abdur Rahman. Their sons, all born in India, played historic roles in the Third Anglo-Afghan War of 1919 and the civil war of 1929.

Abdur Rahman pacified the tribes and somehow managed to keep their power under control. The Pathan tribes have played a crucial role in the history and politics of Afghanistan. For example, the Mahsuds and the Wazirs overthrew King Amanullah in the civil war of the Bacha Saqqa (“son of a water carrier”), named Habibullah, in 1929. The Pathan tribes of the North-West Frontier are the vanguard of the present resistance movement in Afghanistan.

Lord Dufferin, Viceroy and Governor-General of India (1884–88), formally invited and personally received Abdur Rahman, Amir of Afghanistan, at the frontier post of Jamrud at the mouth of the Khabur Pass, eight miles west of Peshawar, in the spring of 1885. On 29 March 1885 Russia claimed Panjdeh, including the Zhufiqar Pass, as lying within the area which had passed into its control after its capture and occupation of Merv and the Sarakhs. The British Government regarded Panjdeh as a part of Afghanistan and its occupation by Russia as a threat to Herat and the integrity of Afghanistan. In the face of the British resentment against the Russian occupation of Panjdeh, an Anglo-Russian war over the question of the right to possess Panjdeh was imminent. The British Government promised Abdur Rahman that it would prevent the seizure of Herat by Russia.
Abdur Rahman, who was visiting Rawalpindi at the time of the Russian advance, declared that he was not sure whether Panjdeh really belonged to Afghanistan, and that securing the Zulfiqar Pass lying between Panjdeh and Herat would satisfy him. We do not know whether the Amir really pronounced himself unwilling to go to war for Panjdeh or whether he was induced to adopt that stand. Whatever it may have been, Abdur Rahman's shrewd common sense and foresight that an Anglo-Russian war over Panjdeh would necessarily harm Afghanistan, averted the war. A boundary-line was agreed upon by the Anglo-Russian Boundary Commission in 1887, by which Panjdeh was ceded to Russia and the Zulfiqar Pass to Afghanistan.

Abdur Rahman secured definitive boundaries for Afghanistan such as the Durand Line (named after the then British Foreign Secretary of the Government of India, who had led the delegation for talks between Afghanistan and India, which were still in a flux). The Durand award assigned the Pathans to both Afghanistan and India. The unfortunate consequences of this award are dogging Afghanistan even in its present travails. The Durand Line cuts are dogging Afghanistan even in its present travails. The Durand Line cuts across the Pathan tribal areas. The Anglo-Russian Pamir Boundary across the Pathan tribal areas. The Anglo-Russian Pamir Boundary.

Abdur Rahman strove to maintain a policy of balance of power between the expanding British and Russian empires; Afghanistan's security depended solely on such a policy. He set forth the advantages of pursuing such a policy:

On both sides of Afghanistan there are powerful neighbours, namely England and Russia. Though these neighbours are the cause of much anxiety to Afghanistan, yet, as they are pulling against each other, they are no less an advantage and protection for Afghanistan than a danger. Indeed a great deal of the safety of the Afghan Government depends upon the fact that neither of these neighbours can bear to allow the other to annex an inch of Afghan territory.

Abdur Rahman was, of course, more tolerant of the British than of the Russian influence in his country. Though he was a staunch ally of the British, he was also wary of the British intentions towards his country. Decade after decade, the British Government deployed a large army, a force of 70,000 troops, on active service in the North-West Frontier of India and kept 70,000 troops in reserve at Lahore and Delhi, because the Russians, masters of Western Central Asia, were a threat to India's security.

Habibullah Khan (1872-1919), the eldest son of Amir Abdur Rahman, succeeded his father after the latter's death on 1 October 1901. His succession on 3 October 1901 took place without any obvious upheaval, a rare occurrence in the polygamous society of Afghanistan. Apparently, the strong hand of his father had put an end to family quarrels.

In 1903 Amir Habibullah proclaimed an amnesty in favour of all banished Afghans. This not only lightened the harshness of the measures enforced by his father but also showed him to be an enlightened young ruler. Abdur Rahman had exiled the families of the Barakzai and Sadozai royal clans from Afghanistan in the 1880s. Habibullah's gesture led to the return of a large number of Afghans, like the family of Mahmud Tarzi, from India, Turkestan and Central Asia to Afghanistan. The families of Ayub Khan and Yakub Khan, sons of Amir Sher Ali, and a number of sardars of Kandahar ignored the amnesty. Some of them returned to Afghanistan only in the 1930s.

Amir Habibullah established the first modern secondary school for boys in Afghanistan in 1903, naming it Habibiye (now Habibia High School) after his own name. Later, he reorganized it, introducing the teaching of subjects other than religion. In 1905 he encouraged the establishment of the Sirajul Akhbar and the publication of Sirajul Akhbar-i Afghania. In 1907, when he visited India (2 January-7 March) in response to an invitation from the British, he made a handsome endowment to the Aligarh Muslim University. He also selected a few teachers from Aligarh for the Habibiye. Above all, he gave Afghanistan its national flag.

Habibullah pursued the policy of his father especially in respect of his relations with the British. On 21 March 1905 he signed an agreement with the Government of India undertaking to fulfil the commitments made by his father, especially to reaffirm the Durand Line agreement of 1893. Although the Treaty of 1905 granted no railway concessions to the British, it recognized limited Russian commerce with Afghanistan. In spite of strong pressure from the German-Turkish diplomatic mission (1915-16), from Indian revolutionaries such as Mohammad Barakatullah and Mahendra Pratap, then in Kabul, and from fervent Afghan nationalists to support the Central Powers, particularly Germany, against the Allies, mainly Britain, he remained neutral during the First World War (1914-18). The German-Turkish mission was a venture to involve Afghanistan in an attack on India during the war.

Amanullah Khan (1892-1960), the youngest son of Amir Habibullah, succeeded his father upon the latter's assassination on 20 February 1919. From the very beginning he sought to reduce British influence in Afghanistan. He initiated relations with other Powers, particularly with the newly created revolutionary regime in Russia. He established a Ministry of Foreign Affairs for the first time in Afghanistan. He changed the policy of
his forbears, his father Habibullah and his grandfather Abdur Rahman. On 3 May 1919 he declared a month long jihad ("holy war"), the Third Anglo-Afghan War, against the British. General Mohammed Nadir Khan (1883–1929) emerged as a hero in this war, which ended on 8 August 1919. On his (1933) emerged as a hero in this war, which ended on 8 August 1919. On his

side, Amanullah had the support of his brothers Abdul Aziz Khan, Mohammad Ali (d. 1920), Hashim Khan (d. 1953), Shah Mahmud (d. 1959), Mohammad Sultaiman and Ali Ahmad, and Shah Wali (d. 1977), who were born in India and were the sons of the brothers, (d. 1952), who were born in India and were the sons of the brothers, Mohammad Asif and Mohammad Yusuf, who had returned to Afghanistan from India along with their families during the reign of Abdur Rahman.

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Inasmuch as you, Your Excellency, my great and kind friend, President inasmuch as you, Your Excellency, my great and kind friend, President inasmuch as you, Your Excellency, my great and kind friend, President of the great Russian State, together with your comrades—friends of mankind—have undertaken the honourable and noble mission of caring for the peace and well-being of people and have proclaimed the principle of freedom and equality of the countries and peoples of the whole world, I am happy to send to you this friendly message, for the first time on behalf of the Afghan people striving for progress from independent and free Afghanistan.

The Russian Soviet Federal Socialist Republic (RSFSR) recognized the The Russian Soviet Federal Socialist Republic (RSFSR) recognized the The Russian Soviet Federal Socialist Republic (RSFSR) recognized the independence of Afghanistan on 27 March 1919. It was the first country to do so. Afghanistan and Soviet Russia were the first to send diplomatic independence of Afghanistan on 27 March 1919. It was the first country to do so. Afghanistan and Soviet Russia were the first to send diplomatic independence of Afghanistan on 27 March 1919. It was the first country to do so. Afghanistan and Soviet Russia were the first to send diplomatic

Afghanistan, 1919–1945

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... Afghanistan, by its very spirit and nature, has since its emergence as an independent state been the champion of freedom and equality. However, for various reasons it has up till now been unable to establish relations with other countries and peoples. ... Afghanistan, by its very spirit and nature, has since its emergence as an independent state been the champion of freedom and equality. However, for various reasons it has up till now been unable to establish relations with other countries and peoples. ... Afghanistan, by its very spirit and nature, has since its emergence as an independent state been the champion of freedom and equality. However, for various reasons it has up till now been unable to establish relations with other countries and peoples.

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Afghanistan then concluded its first ever treaty with Soviet Russia. It was initiated in Kabul on 13 September 1920 and signed in Moscow on 28 February 1921. It was the first equal treaty that Afghanistan ever signed with any Power. After the conclusion of this treaty Lenin sent a message to Amanullah. Among other things, he said:

... The Russian Soviet Government and the High Afghan State have common interests in the East. Both states cherish their independence and want independence and freedom for themselves and for all the peoples of the East. Their harmony stems not only from this, but more especially from the fact that there are no problems between Afghanistan and Russia... The Russian Soviet Government and the High Afghan State have common interests in the East. Both states cherish their independence and want independence and freedom for themselves and for all the peoples of the East. Their harmony stems not only from this, but more especially from the fact that there are no problems between Afghanistan and Russia... The Russian Soviet Government and the High Afghan State have common interests in the East. Both states cherish their independence and want independence and freedom for themselves and for all the peoples of the East. Their harmony stems not only from this, but more especially from the fact that there are no problems between Afghanistan and Russia...
which can cause disagreements or even cast a shadow on Russo-Afghan friendship. The old imperialist Russia has disappeared for ever, and the High Afghan State now has for its northern neighbour the new Soviet Russia that has extended a hand of friendship to all peoples of the East and to the Afghan people in the first place. Convinced that the bonds of friendship between Russia and Afghanistan will continue to strengthen, I take the liberty of expressing to you my sympathy and confidence that no one, either by force or cunning, will undermine the independence of the High Afghan State.

Georgi Vassilievich Chicherin, People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs, elaborated the basic point of Lenin's and Soviet Russia's policy towards Afghanistan in his instructions to the Soviet Plenipotentiary Yakov Surits in Afghanistan on 3 June 1921:

... Our policy in the East is not aggressive, it is a policy of peace and friendship. Throughout your work you must systematically stress the basic point. The main object of your work in Kabul is to promote our friendship with Afghanistan. Friendship presupposes reciprocal assistance. In line with our desire to facilitate the development and promote the prosperity of the friendly Afghan State as far as possible, we are prepared to give it our utmost assistance. You must study the needs and requirements of Afghanistan and elucidate to us the wishes of its Government so that in carrying out and fulfilling the Russo-Afghan treaty we may give it all the assistance we can with the object of facilitating its development and promoting its prosperity.

You are instructed to pay particularly close attention to the Amir's programme of reform. At Afghanistan's present stage of development, an enlightened absolutism of the type that we had in our country in the eighteenth century is of great progressive significance; we cannot and must not approach Afghanistan with the yardstick of the economically developed countries. Naturally, we must neither forget for a minute nor leave in the shade the tremendous distinction between the programme of communism and the programme that is being fulfilled and can be fulfilled by the present Afghan Government. We must not for a minute conceal our stand. But this need not prevent us from expressing sympathy with and rendering our utmost assistance to the reformist undertakings of the friendly Afghan Government and to the progressive creative work of the enlightened absolutism in Afghanistan. We do not for a moment become either monarchists or adherents of absolutism. This must be made clear to everybody. Yet we render all the assistance we can to the reformist undertakings of the progressive-minded Amir.

You must avoid altogether the fatal mistake of trying to impose communism on that country. We say to the Afghan Government, "You have one political system and we have another; but we are linked up by our community of aspirations for complete sovereignty and independence. We do not interfere in your internal affairs; we do not intrude upon the activity of your people. We do not for a moment contemplate imposing on your people a programme that is alien to them at the present stage of their development . . . ."

The Afghan-Soviet Treaty of 1921 provided for non-aggression, commerce, and assistance. In addition, the Soviet Government agreed to recognize Bukhara and Khiva as independent states, to return to Afghanistan certain territories in the Panjdeh district, and to pay Afghanistan a yearly subsidy of 1,000,000 gold or silver rubles, which the British had formerly paid to Afghanistan but had stopped paying after the war.

In view of the religious sentiments of the people of Afghanistan, Amanullah supported Bukhara and Khiva and the anti-Soviet Basmachi nationalist movement in Central Asia. He established diplomatic relations with Bukhara and Khiva. Perhaps he intended to form a confederation of the Islamic states of Central Asia, with Afghanistan as the core Power. This was anathema to Soviet Russia. After the Soviet troops took Bukhara on 24 September 1920, the Basmachis fled to the Pamir mountains and Afghanistan and continued to raid Soviet territory from there. On a number of occasions, the Soviet troops chased the Basmachis into Afghanistan. Amir Said Mir Alim of Bukhara escaped to Afghanistan on 5 March 1921. This strained Afghan-Soviet relations. The Soviet troops not only consolidated their position in West Turkistan by 1921, but also ousted the Afghan forces from the Panjdeh area.

Amanullah's Government protested against the entry of the Soviet troop into Bukhara in the autumn of 1920. The reply of Mikhail Raskolnikov, the first Soviet Ambassador to Afghanistan, on 20 February 1922 revealed a pattern:

Concerning the question of the independent states of Khiva and Bukhara this has been provided for in the treaty agreed to and signed by the two Governments of Russia and Afghanistan. The Government which represent has always recognized and respected the independenee of the two Governments of Khiva and Bukhara. The presence of a limit contingent of troops belonging to my Government is due to temporary requirements expressed and made known to us by the Bukharan Government. This arrangement has been agreed to with the provision that whenever the Bukharan Government so requests, not a single Russian soldier will remain on Bukharan soil. The extension of our friends' assistance in no way constitutes an interference against the independenee of the sovereign state of Bukhara. If the Government of Bukhara show cease to formulate its request and should have been dissatisfied [sic] w
the continuance of such brotherly assistance, then the Government I represent shall most immediately withdraw its troops.

Raskolnikov had conquered the small Iranian port of Enzeli on the Caspian for Soviet Russia and had also tried to engineer a revolution in Iran in 1919. Amanullah conferred upon him the title of "Sardar", the highest in Afghanistan, for the good work he did in the cause of Soviet-Afghan relations. Raskolnikov probably never used the title nor wore the decoration.

In 1923 Amanullah appointed Abdul Hadi Dawi, an associate of Mahmud Tarzi in the establishment of the Sirajul Akhbar, as head of the fact-finding mission, with the rank of Ambassador Plenipotentiary, for the independence of Bukhara. Dawi was then adviser in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Kabul.

In 1925 the Soviets occupied Urtah Tagai Yangi Qala, an island in the Amu Darya. Afghanistan lodged a strong protest. A joint Afghan-Soviet Commission which investigated the dispute found that the island belonged to Afghanistan. The Soviet Union recognized the importance of the economic advantage of the island to Afghanistan. The joint commission concluded a protocol to this effect in Kabul on 15 August 1926.

The origin of the dispute could be traced back to the first definition of the Afghan-Russian frontier in the 1890s. In the first decade of the present century the Amu Darya changed its course, moving farther north. The Afghans moved into the new area that emerged in the wake of the river changing its course, and the Government of Afghanistan administered it. However, the Government of Russia continued to claim the area south of the river. Hence the dispute as to who actually owned it.

The Afghan-Soviet protocol of 1926 improved relations between Afghanistan and the Soviet Union. The two countries concluded their first treaty of neutrality and non-aggression in Paghman on 31 August 1926. Amanullah specially pledged against the use of Afghan territory as a base for any provocative activity aimed against the Soviet Union. This encouraged the two Governments to promote relations between the two countries.

In March 1929, after Amanullah's exile earlier in the same year, General Mohammed Nadir Khan, son of Yusuf Khan and a cousin of Amanullah, returned from self-exile in France and fought decisive battles with the Bacha Saqqa. Owing to differences with King Amanullah and his Government, Mohammed Nadir Khan had gone into voluntary exile in France. The Bacha Saqqa was a one-eyed Tajik brigand. After becoming King of Afghanistan on 16 October 1929, Nadir Shah pronounced a sentence of death on the Bacha Saqqa.

Although Nadir Shah pledged to follow in the footsteps of Amanullah, he adopted methods different from those of Amanullah. He cautiously proclaimed a constitution for Afghanistan in October 1931. This Constitution provided for an absolute hereditary monarchy, establishing the kingship of Afghanistan in the family of Nadir Shah. It recognized the Loya Jirgah ("Grand Assembly") as the highest repository of power in the land and gave the tribal chiefs a share in the governance of Afghanistan. Under this Constitution the King appointed the Prime Minister, who, in his turn, chose his own council of ministers with the approval of the King. Nadir Shah appointed his brother Mohammed Hashim Khan as his Prime Minister. The Constitution gave the King control over the armed forces and royal expenditure. It also vested the executive, judicial, and legislative powers in the King. The King, further, had the authority to declare war, make peace, and extend clemency.

Nadir Shah declared primary education free and compulsory for all children. He also established a military college and a medical college. He encouraged Afghan students to go abroad for higher studies and training. To promote tribal and national harmony, he introduced several important measures. For example, he founded the Pashto Tolana, the Pashto Academy. He had Babur's grave in the Bag-i-Babur repaired. Indeed, Nadir Shah was a shrewd ruler.

Nadir Shah also broadened the diplomatic infrastructure of Afghanistan. On 18 November 1930 Afghanistan concluded a treaty of friendship with Japan in London and the two countries exchanged legation-level diplomats. The Japan connexion was useful to Afghanistan. Japan's emergence as a major military and commercial Power in the 1930s had made a deep impression on Afghanistan. The appearance of Japan as a commercial competitor in Afghanistan had a great impact on the Soviet economic policy there. Japanese commercial interests in Afghanistan also influenced the Afghan strategy of persuading its neighbours, Britain and the Soviet Union, that they could no longer dictate terms.

In the 1930s the Japanese made surveys of the Helmand River basin for the purpose of digging a canal for irrigating the Girishk region, west of Kandahar. However, the Second World War interrupted the Japanese project. After the war, in 1946, the Government of Afghanistan engaged the Morrison-Knudsen Company (of Boise, Idaho, USA) to complete the Helmand irrigation project. Later, in the mid-1950s, Afghanistan partly accepted official US aid for the purpose. The US involvement in the Helmand reclamation and irrigation project lasted three decades. The post-1978 revolution complications marked the end of this project.

According to certain Afghan quarters, extraneous considerations were responsible for the US interest in the development of the Helmand Valley. The Afghans felt that a permanent settlement there of the Kuchi nomad tribes used to annual winter migrations across the Durand Line was of greater advantage to the eastern neighbour of Afghanistan than to Afghanistan itself.

Nadir Shah renegotiated the Afghan-Soviet treaties of 28 February 192
and 31 August 1926 in Kabul on 24 June 1931. Among other accords, in September 1932, Afghanistan and the Soviet Union concluded an agreement for the appointment of commissioners to study frontier disputes.

Mohammed Zahir was barely twenty years old when he succeeded his father Nadir Shah upon the latter’s assassination on 8 November 1933. He appointed his uncle Mohammed Hashim Khan as his Prime Minister. He sought to maintain correct relations with both Britain and the Soviet Union and close relations with Iran, Turkey and other Muslim countries. He also sought to promote other international contacts.

King Zahir Shah secured Afghanistan's admission into the League of Nations under the sponsorship of Turkey on 17 November 1934. Afghanistan and the United States signed a provisional agreement of friendship in Paris on 20 March 1936. Zahir Shah renewed the Afghan-Soviet Treaty of Neutrality and Mutual Non-Aggression of 1931 by signing a protocol in Moscow on 29 March 1936. This protocol supplemented the Treaty of 1931 stipulating non-interference by either state in the other's affairs.

The Soviet Government discouraged Afghanistan from taking an active interest in the Islamic Republic of Eastern Turkistan (IRET) established in 1933. According to the Soviet view, the Islamic Republic of Eastern Turkistan was an anti-Soviet Anglo-Japanese creation. The Soviets helped the Chinese to annihilate the Islamic Republic of Eastern Turkistan. In fact, it had been a part of the Soviet policy since 1924 to destroy the movement for an independent Turkistan, Eastern or Western, in Central Asia. The Soviet Government also did not approve of Afghanistan's association with the non-aggression treaty of 8 July 1937, commonly known as the Saadabad Pact on account of its having been signed at Saadabad Palace near Tehran. The Saadabad Pact, which allied Afghanistan with Iran, Iraq and Turkey, aroused the Soviet fear of increasing Turkish influence in Afghanistan. According to the Soviet view, Turkey, though not hostile to the Soviet Union, was supporting the imperialist camp headed by Britain. The preliminary talks for the Saadabad Pact had been held in Moscow in 1934.

During the mid-1930s Afghanistan developed friendly relations with Germany and concluded several economic and other agreements with that country. Under the protocol signed in October 1936 Germany pledged to deliver arms to Afghanistan. This protocol was signed in spite of the Afghan-Soviet Treaty of Neutrality and Non-Aggression of 1931, which forbade Afghanistan and the Soviet Union from entering into an alliance with any third country that might threaten either the Afghan or the Soviet interests. Germany became the third power in Afghanistan. A weekly air service, inaugurated in 1937, linked Berlin with Kabul. Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose of India escaped to Germany via this service.

Afghanistan and China are old neighbours. Chinese rule, however nominal, extended up to Afghanistan as early as the first century A.D. Buddhism spread to Ch'angan and Loyang in China from Afghanistan, a part of India then, and the Indo-Iranian kingdoms along the great trade centres and routes in the first and second centuries A.D. The first Chinese pilgrims travelled to Afghanistan and India in the third and fourth centuries A.D. This traffic between Afghanistan and China continued until the end of the Buddhist/Hindu period and the Islamization of Afghanistan in the first half of the eleventh century.

There was no effective connexion between Afghanistan and China in the medieval times except the Mongol hold of both. The Manchu Ch'ing Emperor Ch'ien Lung (r. 1736-95) threatened to attack Samarkand in 1762. Ahmad Shah Durrani dispatched a force against the Manchu expedition in response to an appeal from the chieftains of the Kazak tribes and the Khah of Kokand. The friction between Afghanistan and China continued (on the Balkh side) during the time of Timur Shah, son and successor of Ahmad Shah. The decline of the fighting power of the Afghans coupled with the emerging power of the East India Company in India in the early nineteenth century led to a weakening of Afghanistan. China became weak in the latter half of the nineteenth century with no effective military policy towards its neighbours, including Afghanistan. The expansion of the Western Powers into China after the Taiping rebellion (1850-64) and the emergence of Russia in Central Asia in the 1860s especially worked as barriers against Manchurian adventurism in Afghanistan.

Afghanistan and China began negotiations with a view to a treaty in the 1920s, and concluded a treaty of friendship providing for exchange of diplomatic and consular missions in Ankara on 2 March 1944. Afghanistan remained neutral during the Second World War of 1939-45. While inaugurating the Loya Jurghah on 17 August 1940, Zahir Shah said that Afghanistan had observed a policy of strict neutrality since the outbreak of the European war. Both Britain and the Soviet Union pressured Afghanistan to terminate all ties with Germany and Italy and to intern and expel all Germans, Italians and Japanese from the country. However, Zahir Shah, who had looked primarily to Germany for industrial and technical assistance, maintained friendly relations with Germany even after the German attack on the Soviet Union on 22 June 1941.

The world recognized the strategic importance of Afghanistan during the Second World War. A number of Powers attempted to secure its friendship and collaboration. The United States, which had not evinced much interest in Central Asia, established legation-level diplomatic relations with Afghanistan, especially in view of the lend-lease and war supply questions, on 6 July 1942.

On 29 March 1946 the Afghan and Soviet Governments renewed the Treaty of 1931. Following this, the period of validity of the Treaty of 1931 was automatically extended year by year, each of the parties being entitled to denounce it subject to six months' notice being given. Afghanistan concluded several other agreements with the Soviet Union. An agreement concerning
the boundary-line between the two countries was signed in Moscow on 13 June 1946. This agreement formally fixed the Afghan-Soviet boundary along the Amu Darya and the Panja River according to the principle of the thalweg, or the main channel of these rivers and the centre of the actual main channel "where the thalweg is not determinable".

Afghanistan joined the United Nations on 19 November 1946.

When the British withdrew from India in the summer of 1947, the raison d'être for Afghanistan's status as a buffer between the north and the south, between the Soviet Union and the West, disappeared. This had a profound impact on the outlook of the Afghans, and especially on their policy towards the Soviet Union. Despite the onset of the Cold War, the United States did not yet make its appearance on the horizon.

After 1950 amicable relations developed between Afghanistan and the Soviet Union. On 17 July 1950 the two countries signed an agreement for the exchange of agricultural produce of Afghanistan for Soviet petroleum and other commodities. This agreement also provided for duty-free transit of Afghan goods across Soviet territory.

So long as the primary concern of its foreign policy was the containment of Communism, the United States, which had taken Britain's place in South-West Asia, looked upon Afghanistan as one of the states of the "northern tier", which it was then building along the southern flank of the Soviet Union. Of course, it did fill the power gap in the region in the wake of the British withdrawal from India. However, it did not offer military support necessary to defend the independence and security of Afghanistan. It was not, therefore, able to persuade Afghanistan to join what later became the Central Treaty Organization (CENTO).

A military alliance between Afghanistan and the United States was not possible for a number of reasons. For instance, the Afghan-Soviet Treaty of 1931, still in force, prohibited Afghanistan and the Soviet Union from entering into alliances with other states that might threaten either the Afghan or the Soviet interests. Of course, Washington maintained that it was a deliberate policy of the US Government not to seek to engage Afghanistan as a part of the defence alliance belt on the northern tier as it would have agreed to provide arms to Afghanistan had there been any serious interest in encouraging Kabul to join the "northern tier" alliance.

Later, Mohammed Daoud Khan (1908–78), who became Prime Minister and Minister of the Interior and Defence on 20 September 1953, emphasized the importance of the policy of betarafi ("neutralism"). Since 1950 Mohammed Daoud had been Minister of Defence in the Government of Prime Minister Shah Mahmud (1946–53). Shah Mahmud had resigned on grounds of health on 6 September 1953; apparently, his own nephew Mohammed Daoud removed him from the Prime Ministership in a palace coup. Said Prime Minister Daoud:

"Our whole life, our whole existence revolves around one single focal point—freedom. Should we ever get the feeling that our freedom is in the slightest danger, from whatever quarter, then we should prefer to live on dry bread, or even starve, sooner than accept help that would restrict our freedom.

Daoud felt that only a policy of betarafi could enable Afghanistan to balance the influence of the United States and the Soviet Union in Afghanistan. However, it was not going to be an easy task because establishing a meaningful relationship with the United States entailed relinquishment of the relationship with the Soviet Union. At that time, the leaders of the United States were condemning all forms of neutralism or non-alignment as immoral. Anyway Daoud's policy of betarafi did encourage both American and Soviet aid to Afghanistan.

N.S. Khrushchev, General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU), and N.A. Bulganin, Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the Soviet Union, visited Afghanistan in December 1955. They were the first world leaders ever to do so. In view of Daoud's attitude towards the military pacts of the United States, Bulganin praised Afghanistan's "unswerving adherence to a policy of neutrality". The joint communique issued on 18 December 1955 said that the Afghan and Soviet Governments based their relations on the five principles of coexistence adopted by the Asian-African Conference of April 1955.

The joint communique issued at the end of King Zahir's visit to the Soviet Union in September 1971 acknowledged Afghanistan's non-aligned status:

The Soviet side highly assesses the policy of non-alignment consistently pursued by Afghanistan, and considers it an important factor in the struggle of the peoples for their freedom and independence, for strengthening peace and security, for maintaining peace and cooperation with all the peoples.

When the Government of Afghanistan launched its first five-year development plan in 1956, the Soviet Union agreed to help Afghanistan. In fact, Afghanistan was the first non-Communist country to receive Soviet aid. It so happened that Kabul did not find the economic and technical aid extended by the United States commensurate with its requirements. To meet its requirements Daoud turned to the Soviet Union for help. Whereas the United States had turned down Daoud's request for aid for the modernization of the Afghan armed forces, the Soviet Union readily acceded to his request"
for military supplies; and the Government of Afghanistan sent its army officers to the Soviet Union for training. Important developments on the eastern border of Afghanistan also led Kabul to turn to Moscow especially for trade and transit channels and facilities.

Soviet aid to Afghanistan was certainly a matter of grave concern to the West. Western leaders felt that the Soviet aid might eventually expose Afghanistan to Communism. Anyway, despite the US aid to Afghanistan, especially in the development of the Helmand Valley and civil aviation, and the visit of President Dwight D. Eisenhower to Kabul on 8 December 1959 to express concern over the Soviet aid to Afghanistan, the failure of the West to give aid to Afghanistan was the main factor in its turning to the Soviet Union.

As Prime Minister of Afghanistan, Daoud, who was among the first group of students sent by King Amanullah to Europe for education and training, assumed, as it were, Amanullah's mantle, in that he gave all his energies to promote the modernization of Afghanistan. He introduced several important socio-economic changes in Afghanistan during his tenure as Prime Minister. With the help of Soviet engineers he tunnelled Amanullah's route through the Salang Pass. Among the many other reforms introduced by Amanullah, he abolished chadri (“the custom of women using veils”) in the winter of 1959. His programme of modernization of the armed forces of Afghanistan enabled him to build bases that helped him to return to power on 17 July 1973. He also unilaterally abrogated the Treaty of 1893, which had established the Durand Line.

Zahir Shah introduced several political and social reforms in Afghanistan. By way of an experiment in the democratization of Afghanistan, he appointed the physicist Dr. Mohammed Yousuf as Prime Minister and Minister of the Interior on 10 March 1963. Dr. Yousuf was the first non-Pashtun Prime Minister of Afghanistan. He was a Tajik from the Panjshir Valley. King Zahir Shah also gave Afghanistan a constitution on 1 October 1964. This Constitution included a clause prohibiting members of the royal family from participating in State affairs, that is, from serving as Ministers, Members of Parliament, or Justices of the Supreme Court, in order to separate the Crown from the Government. He declared both Dari and Pashto as the national languages of Afghanistan. Before the Constitution of 1964, Pashto, the language of the Pashtun majority, was not the official language of the country. Pashto is as much the language of Afghanistan now as Dari, the Persian of Afghanistan, has been, and is. Although he did not implement the legislation concerning the establishment of political parties, King Zahir Shah adopted several measures for developing the status of the legislature in the post-1964 period. There were, in the wake of the Constitution of 1964, a number of political parties in Afghanistan like the People’s Democratic Party (formed with the support of a group of Marxists), Jamiat-i-Islami, and Hizb-i Islami. The People’s Democratic Party soon split into two important factions: Nur Muhammad Taraki (1917–79) founded the Khaq Party and proclaimed himself the Secretary-General of the Party on 1 January 1965; and Babrak Karmal (1929—) founded the Parcham Party.

Mohammed Daoud overthrew King Zahir Shah during his absence in Europe and seized power with the assistance of the officers of the armed forces of Afghanistan on 17 July 1973. On 18 July he proclaimed Afghanistan a republic with himself as President. He called his party the National Revolutionary Party.

Daoud’s coup was a watershed in the history and politics of modern Afghanistan. It overthrew the feudal monarchical system, which was replaced by the democratic party system combining both traditional and modern elements. Unfortunately Daoud fell to assassins before establishing a viable order. He was a man of vision and wisdom. His tragedy was his alienation from his cousins and other able administrators of Afghanistan.

Moscow, which had gradually established its influence in Afghanistan, by sending aid and advisers, by the early 1970s, was the first to recognize the Government of Mohammed Daoud. There is, however, no evidence that Moscow manipulated this coup. It wielded considerable influence in Kabul under President Daoud. It further extended the Treaty of Neutrality and Mutual Non-Aggression of 1931 on the occasion of the State visit of Nikolai Podgorny, President of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, to Afghanistan in December 1975. In his speech on this occasion, Daoud especially emphasized the importance of the Treaty of 1931 as the foundation of friendship and good-neighbourliness between Afghanistan and the Soviet Union. Little did he realize that this friendship would prove to be his own undoing and death.

The West accepted the Daoud coup as a domestic affair that had something to do with feuds within the ruling elite of Afghanistan and Daoud’s driving ambition, although several Soviet-trained army officers had been involved. However, it was disturbed by the pro-Soviet tilt in Afghan policy. Anyway the efforts it made, especially the diplomatic initiative of Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi of Iran from 1974 onwards for rolling back the Soviet influence from Afghanistan, proved futile. The Shah of Iran had even lent Daoud the services of experts from SAVAK, his secret police, to streamline the security system of Afghanistan. Though Moscow could not directly pressurize Kabul to refrain from improving relations with Tehran, it outbid the Shah by offering additional credits and committed Daoud to a long-term economic treaty on 16 April 1977.

Daoud eventually appeared, in 1975, to move away from the Soviet Union. In the Loya Jirgah, which he convened for the purpose of securing its approval for the draft constitution of the Republic of Afghanistan on 30 January 1977, he affirmed Afghanistan’s solidarity with the Islamic nations. To balance Afghanistan’s relations between the Soviet Union and other countries, he replaced Soviet-trained personnel of the armed forces of
Afghanistan with officers loyal to him and disbanded Marxist organizations in the country. Thus, he broke away from the group which had enabled him to come to power in 1973.

Moscow viewed all this with great concern, especially Daoud’s bid to end his country’s complete dependence on Soviet economic and military assistance and to diversify the sources of aid and trade. The Soviet Government invited President Daoud along with his younger brother and adviser, Mohammed Naim, to visit the Soviet Union in April 1977. The speech of President Nikolai V. Podgorny, at the banquet hosted by him in honour of President Daoud at the Kremlin Palace, reflected the Soviet anxiety to win him over. Podgorny said:

You, Mr President, are well known in our country as an outstanding statesman who had made a big contribution to promoting friendship between the USSR and Afghanistan. Naturally, therefore, you are being met and received in the Soviet Union as a welcome and respected guest. Our meeting and talks in the past have invariably been marked by an atmosphere of goodwill, contributed to better mutual understanding between the parties of our two neighbouring states and stimulated further development of friendly Soviet-Afghan relations… Lenin wrote that the High Afghan State was one of the first states whose representatives we gladly welcomed in Moscow and we are happy to say that the first treaty of friendship which the Afghan people concluded was with Russia. The treaty of friendship signed in 1921, as well as the treaty on neutrality and mutual non-aggression of 1931, the protocol on whose extension we, Mr President, signed in Kabul a year and a half ago, provide a solid foundation for friendly Soviet-Afghan relations meeting the interests of the peoples of the two countries and the interests of peace and security.

Although Daoud had always emphasized the importance of the Treaty of 1931 as the firm basis for the development of friendly and good-neighbourly relations between Afghanistan and the Soviet Union, he perhaps felt for the first time that his neck was on the line. Unfortunately, a year later, it proved to be so.

Daoud’s moves away from a pro-Soviet policy resulted in the bloody coup of the armed forces of Afghanistan on 7 Saur 1357 (27 April 1978). The radicals in the armed forces of Afghanistan toppled Daoud, who himself had toppled the monarchy. They overthrew and killed Daoud, his brother Naim, many members of their families, and close civil and military officials. On 30 April the Revolutionary Council brought into power a Khalq-Parcham coalition. This coalition reversed the efforts made by Daoud to reduce Afghanistan’s dependence on the Soviet Union. It proclaimed the establishment of the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan (DRA) under Nur Muhammad Taraki. Taraki eventually emerged as the President of the

Revolutionary Council (that is, Head of State), Prime Minister of the DRA and General Secretary of the People’s Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA). As the coup of 1973 destroyed the ancien regime in Afghanistan, the coup of 1978 destroyed the republican system of Daoud’s regime.

The Soviet Union was the first to recognize the Government of Nur Muhammad Taraki on 29 April 1978. There was widespread international speculation on the Soviet role in the (April) revolution as a victory for Marxism-Leninism. It must be borne in mind that neither Marx nor Communism had been mentioned in the manifesto of the PDPA.

The People’s Republic of China accepted the political change in Afghanistan and recognized the Government of Nur Muhammad Taraki on 8 May 1978. It appears to have done so with certain reservations; for soon acute tension developed between Afghanistan and China. Beijing charged Kabul with pro-Sovietism. Kabul countered by charging Beijing with training and supplying arms to the Afghan guerrillas and allying itself with Afghanistan’s enemies. Beijing did not recognize the Government of Babrak Karmal set up on 27 December 1979.

Afghanistan was among the first countries to recognize the People’s Republic of China (PRC) on 12 January 1950. Whenever there was a discussion on the question of the seating of the People’s Republic of China in the United Nations in the early 1950s, the Afghan delegation exercised abstention. After Afghanistan and the People’s Republic of China established embassy-level diplomatic relations on 19 January 1955, on the eve of the Asian-African Conference held in Bandung (Indonesia) in April 1955, when the countries of Asia, together with a few independent countries of Africa, made their first attempt to define a common attitude in world affairs, Afghanistan like Burma, India and the Soviet Union vigorously advocated the seating of the People’s Republic of China in the United Nations. The Afghan delegation said in the UN General Assembly:

We believe that any further absence of the legitimate representative of China from this Organization is not only contrary to the norms of international law, but is also not in the interest of world peace.

Zhou Enlai, Premier and Foreign Minister of the People’s Republic of China, who visited Afghanistan on 19 January 1957, emphasized the contacts between China and Afghanistan from time immemorial and their common struggle for independence as the basis of mutual respect and development of relations between the two countries. He further added that the victory attained by the Afghan people in their struggle for national independence inspired the Chinese people in fighting for their own national independence. Prime Minister Mohammed Daoud returned the visit in October 1957.

Notable among the several agreements concluded by Afghanistan and China was the 10-year Treaty of Friendship and Mutual Non-Aggression
Afghanistan in International Perspective

After 27 December 1979, Beijing considered the Soviet military presence in Afghanistan a threat to the security of China. On 21 January 1980 Beijing put off the talks for normalization of relations with Moscow in view of the Afghan events, and it has insisted ever since on the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan as the precondition for the solution of the Afghan tangle. It has, morally and materially, supported the Afghan mujahidins (“insurgents”) as it has supported insurgents in other neighbouring countries like Burma and India. The Afghan insurgents, according to China, represent the people of Afghanistan and their aspirations.

Apart from the settlement of the short strip of land between Afghanistan and China, nothing much of importance took place between the two countries. (The common border between Afghanistan and China seems to have disappeared after 1979.) China never had a high posture in Afghanistan; it was never in a position to extend economic aid to Afghanistan on the same scale as the Soviet Union or the United States.

With the advent of Taraki, the Soviet influence and presence in Afghanistan developed rapidly. The Soviets looked upon this new Socialist state in Asia with special favour. They concluded numerous agreements with the Marxist Government in Afghanistan both to sustain it and to ensure the non-reversal of the revolutionary change in Afghanistan. The signing of the 20-year Treaty of Friendship, Good-neighbourliness, and Co-operation by Leonid Ilyich Brezhnev and Nur Muhammad Taraki in Moscow on 5 December 1978 brought Afghanistan closer to the Soviet Union than any of the earlier treaties concluded between them. Subsequently, on 27 December 1979, the treaty provided the legal justification for Moscow’s military advance into Afghanistan.

According to the preamble of the treaty, Kabul and Moscow concluded it for the purpose of protecting the independence of Afghanistan. The treaty, which reaffirmed the aims and principles of the treaties of 1921 and 1931, called on the two parties to “consult each other and take by agreement appropriate measures to ensure the security, independence and territorial integrity of the two countries…” On 16 June 1979 Brezhnev declared:

We resolutely condemn the subversive activities against the Afghan revolution and shall not leave our friends, the Afghan people, who have the right to build their life the way they wish.

Taraki appointed Hafizullah Amin, the moving force behind the April coup, Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister and Vice-President of the Revolutionary Council of the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan. Later, in March 1979, Amin was appointed Prime Minister. Amin also became the de facto Minister of Defence and assumed control of the struggle against the insurgency. He held the reins of power in the military and the Party. Amin became leader of the Party and Government of Afghanistan on
14 September 1979 and assumed Taraki's titles and responsibilities on 16 September. He did not announce Taraki's death till 19 October 1979. Although a father figure of the Marxist movement in Afghanistan, Taraki was a mere figure-head. He was a visionary revolutionary. He had no idea, it appears, of how to institutionalize his power.

When the Soviets moved into Afghanistan in December 1979, Moscow's aim seemed to be the protection of Soviet interests there. Moscow also feared the collapse of the PDPA regime. The Soviets believed either that Amin would be overthrown by the anti-Soviet forces in Afghanistan or that he would remain in power but pursue policies incompatible with Soviet interests in Afghanistan. The thrust of events in the Persian Gulf and the reversal of the Soviet position in Egypt still loomed large in the minds of those who were in charge of Soviet foreign policy. Amin had begun to play truant. He perhaps overreached himself in his insistence on the recall of the Soviet Ambassador, A.M. Puzanov, who had apparently involved himself too directly in the internal policies of Afghanistan. Puzanov left Afghanistan on 22 November 1979.

Amin was a serious man. He seemed to emulate both Amanullah and Daoud. He had even moved his residential and operational headquarters with a small body of personal guard from the House of the People in Central Kabul on the south-western outskirts of the city on 20 December, before his assassination on 27 December, to Tapa-i-Tajbek Palace, which Amanullah had built for his sister Tajbek, near Darulaman Palace. He faced tremendous difficulties in the wake of attempting internal reforms, especially land reforms. Perhaps it was also his ambition to pursue a Yugoslavia-type foreign policy.

Moscow installed Babrak Karmal as the General Secretary of the PDPA, the President of the Presidium of the Revolutionary Council of Afghanistan, the Prime Minister of the DRA, and the Commander of the People's Army on 27 December 1979. Babrak Karmal was a member of the Loya Jirga under the Constitution of 1964. He first came into prominence when a small group of Leftist intellectuals demonstrated against the Government of Mohammed Yousuf on 3 Akrab 1342 (24 October 1965). He was a member of the Khalq-Parcham PDPA, led by Taraki. Like Hafizullah Amin, he was Deputy Prime Minister of the Khalq-Parcham regime and Vice-President of the Revolutionary Council. Taraki gave Karmal a diplomatic post in Czechoslovakia to get him out of the country. Karmal was in Eastern Europe when Amin assumed power on 16 September 1979. He is the first non-Pashtun Head of State in the history of the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan.

The Soviet action in Afghanistan raised a hue and cry all over the world. The United States and its allies, including Japan, the Jeddah-based Islamic Foreign Ministers' Conference (IFMC), China, and the UN General Assembly (where the veto does not apply, but which lacks the power to institute an action) not only expressed strong disapproval of the Soviet action, but condemned it. The United States, as the leader of the Western alliance, took political and other initiatives in response to the Soviet action, especially to support the insurgency in Afghanistan. The Soviets believe that the United States took this step because Afghanistan is on the very doorstep of the Soviet Union.

For Japan, which had established diplomatic relations with Afghanistan in the mid-1930s in order to keep watch on Soviet Central Asia, it was more leading, if not the leading, donor giving financial aid for the refugees from immediate neighbours do not recognize the Karmal Government. They recalled their ambassadors from Afghanistan even though they have not snapped diplomatic ties with it. The Islamic Foreign Ministers' Conference resolved, in an extraordinary session, not to recognize the Karmal Government.

On 14 May 1980 President Karmal suggested certain proposals for political talks with the neighbouring countries to settle all mutual differences. The proposals included a US guarantee not to conduct subversive activity inside Afghanistan. Karmal said that acceptance of his proposals by the parties concerned would lead to the withdrawal of Soviet troops from his country and an unravelling of the tangle in Afghanistan.

During his visit to Moscow from 8 to 11 December 1980 Karmal underlined the basic objective of the foreign policy of Afghanistan as the consolidation of friendship and cooperation with the Soviet Union and the other Socialist states. The joint statement, signed by Brezhnev and Karmal in Moscow on 15 October 1980, and issued on 19 October 1980, said:

The Afghan side expressed profound gratitude for the all-round assistance and support rendered by the Soviet people to the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan in the latter's struggle against the counter-revolutionary intervention from outside, against imperialist interference in Afghanistan's internal affairs, for the implementation of the objectives and aims of the April revolution, for building in Afghanistan a new society based on equality and social justice.
It was declared by the Soviet side that in this struggle the people of the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan and its Government can continue to count on the solidarity and internationalist assistance of the Soviet people...

The joint statement described the Afghan-Soviet Treaty of 1978 as the basis of Afghan-Soviet relations.

On 23 February 1981, in his report to the opening session of the Twenty-Sixth Congress of the CPSU in Moscow, Brezhnev declared that the Soviet Union would withdraw its troops from Afghanistan following complete cessation of outside interference in the country and receipt of dependable guarantees by the parties concerned that there would be no intervention in Afghanistan. He wanted the guarantees to be included in the agreements. "Such is the fundamental position of the Soviet Union and we keep to it firmly", he said. President Yuri Andropov not only reiterated this Soviet stand, but also conceived the idea of ensuring the interests of Soviet security along the boundary-line between the Soviet Union and Afghanistan. President Konstantin Chernenko had in an address in Frunze, Kirghiz SSR, in August 1979 (he was then Secretary of the Central Committee of the CPSU) predicted the doom of the forces of reaction and imperialism in the event of their intervening in the internal affairs of Afghanistan.


However, despite the efforts of the United Nations to hold direct and indirect talks on the issue with Afghanistan and its immediate neighbours as well as Karmal's offer of direct talks with Afghanistan's neighbours of 20 December 1982 there is yet no solution of the problem. The solution is not even in sight. The crucial point underscoring the issue is the attitude of the Soviet Union and its allies as well as that of the United States and its allies. Moscow has insisted on the acceptance of the Afghan and Soviet proposals of 1980 and 1981 before the withdrawal of its troops from Afghanistan. In other words, the Soviet troops would be withdrawn from Afghanistan as soon as Afghanistan is able to defend its own frontiers and safeguard its internal security. The question, according to Moscow, is not one of Soviet troops in Afghanistan, their number or their withdrawal, but one of statecraft.

According to the Soviet Government, the Soviet troops are there under the Afghan-Soviet Treaty of 1978, and it may either bring in or recall its troops according to the contingency of its treaty commitments in Afghanistan. The Soviet Government is, however, careful to avoid any action which may project the Soviet military presence in Afghanistan as permanent occupation. Washington, on the other hand, has insisted on the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan before any agreement or dialogue concerning the form of government in Afghanistan may be initiated. In its view, the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan is necessary for restoring a sense of stability in the region. The US Government does not seem to believe that the Soviets would withdraw from Afghanistan. Perhaps the Soviet willingness to withdraw its troops is no proof of its reluctance to control Afghanistan. A change in the strong and inflexible attitudes of the Soviet Union and the United States and their allies may be helpful in creating better negotiating positions. The Islamic Foreign Ministers' Conference could rescind its resolution as it did in the case of Egypt.

Afghanistan and the Soviet Union now maintain the closest connexion. The Soviets have taken long-term measures to consolidate their position in Afghanistan. In addition to building permanent facilities for their military forces in Afghanistan, including expanding the air bases, they have also established a basic civil and military infrastructure. They have also constructed a bridge, officially opened on 12 May 1982, across the frontier river Amu Darya at Tarmez to link Afghanistan with Soviet Central Asia and further strengthened the economic ties between the two countries. Kabul and Moscow have signed several agreements for training the "national personnel" of the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan. Karmal has not been able to manage the situation on his own. Soviet sponsorship has enabled him to hold his authority and position.

Although the Saur (April) revolution was not a revolution like the French (1789), or the Russian (1917), or the Chinese (1949), it marked a movement away from feudalism to Socialism.

The Soviet Union has been developing Afghanistan on the Mongolian model. The Soviet bloc's economic organization, the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (CMEA), also known as COMECON, admitted Afghanistan as an observer on 19 June 1980 even as it had admitted Mongolia. Since then, Afghanistan has undergone the process of economic integration into the CMEA. By drawing Afghanistan into the CMEA, the Soviet Union seeks to shape its economic relations. President Karmal visited Mongolia while on vacation in the Soviet Union in the summer of 1983.

Afghanistan has traditionally been an area where Russia has either exerted influence or intervened. While tracing the history of the Russo-Afghan relations, it becomes apparent that the Soviet Government will never allow any attempt to disturb or disregard its position in Afghanistan. It will never brook the transformation of Afghanistan into a base of aggression against the Soviet Union. It has reiterated time and again that it would not withdraw from Afghanistan unless all external interference in that country's internal affairs or support extended to the insurgents ended. It would spare no effort—military, economic, and political—to maintain this position. Of course,
the Soviet Union needs international acceptance of its position of supremacy in Afghanistan. Whether this would be available to it now or it would be able to secure this only after a major international event (such as a world war in which it is victorious) is another matter.

The Soviet control of Afghanistan, however, has fundamentally changed the situation west of the Khaibar Pass. Even though the aim of the Soviet military move in Afghanistan may have been to ensure Soviet supremacy in western Central Asia in the face of challenges from beyond the borders of Afghanistan and/or to strengthen its state system on its southern flank against a perceived threat, it certainly has lengthened the shadow of Soviet military power over South Asia, with all the misgivings about the future ambition and conduct of the Soviet Union. The question is: Will the Soviets remain on the Khaibar with the Indus in the front or organize insurrection east of the Indus? Even if the Soviet troops do not advance east of the Khaibar Pass, and do not engage in any battle, their very presence in Afghanistan could lead to constant upheaval and ruinous expense. It was always the Tsarist ambition to extend Russia’s influence southwards and have a common border with India, as with China and Iran. Is it not also the Soviet ambition?

The Soviet presence in Afghanistan may enable the Soviet Union to become the mistress of South-West Asia. Of course, Iran/Persia is not yet at its disposal. The British control of Afghanistan had forced Iran/Persia to maintain a balance between Britain and Russia. Would not the Soviet control of Afghanistan force Iran to balance between the Soviet Union and the West? The Soviets have a military footing in Afghanistan, which the British never had. However, what is regrettable is that, even as the failure of the West to be of help to Afghanistan was the main factor in turning it to the Soviet Union in the 1950s and in its becoming economically more dependent on the Soviet Union than it would otherwise have been, the present attitude of the West not to settle issues with the Karmal Government may not only erode the independent and non-aligned status of Afghanistan but end it altogether. In other words, it may culminate in a development which did not come about even with the emergence of the Soviet Union as the dominant influence in Afghanistan during the 1960s and the 1970s. At this point we may ask the question: Will history repeat itself, and will Afghanistan rise again as a truly independent nation? The Afghan insurgents and their supporters seem to be working towards that end. However, the Afghans once regarded their country as the “fortress of Asia” and the “axis in the balance of peace”, despite the limits of its external status. Now they are not even the masters of their own destiny, despite their external relations not only with the Soviet Union and the Soviet bloc but also with India. No foreign Power had ever succeeded in subjugating Afghanistan. It had even escaped occupation by any Western imperialist Power of the nineteenth century. Will it find the system of occupation of Eastern (Soviet) imperialism of the twentieth century eventually inescapable? As in 1839–42 and 1878–79, the Afghans are resisting foreign occupation. Will they succeed this time too? Even if they do so, they may find it to be a precarious independence.

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