PREFACE

Afghanistan is located at the cross roads of Central, South and West Asia and is close to the crisis prone zones. On the north, it is bordered by the Central Asian Republics of Uzbekistan, Tadjikistan and Turkmenistan, on the west and south west by Iran, on the south and south east by Pakistan and Pak-occupied territory of Indian State of Jammu & Kashmir. In the north east, a long slender salient of Afghan territory known as Wakhan touches the People's Republic of China. Sharing a long border of 2,384 kms. with Russia, 75 kms. with the People's Republic of China, 120 kms with India, 180 kms with Pakistan and 820 kms. with Iran, Afghanistan has the distinction of being a land-locked country. This signifies the strategic importance of Afghanistan in the geopolitics of the entire region.

Afghanistan was carved as an independent political entity by Ahmad Shah Durrani in 1747 A.D. when he united various Afghan principalities into an organised state. Kandahar, Ghazni, Kabul, Peshawar and Herat constituted territorial the nucleus of the Durrani state. By the end of the eighteenth century, the hope of Afghan rulers to further increase their domain was foiled. It was more so, because Lord Mornington, Governor of Bengal (1798-1805)
initiated a policy of containment of Afghanistan, and Lord Auckland (1837-1842) interfered directly in the Afghan affairs. The First Anglo-Afghan war (1839-1842), led to the deterioration of Indo-Afghan relations. In the early nineteenth century the provincial heads of Buluchistan, Bahawalpur, Siestan, Khorassan and Southern Turkistan were acting independently from that of Kabul. By that time Maharaja Ranjit Singh of Punjab had already subdued Kashmir and the lands upto the Indus particularly occupying Peshawar in 1823. The process of political destabilisation in Afghanistan stopped in 1826 with the ascendance to power of Dost Mohammad Khan who succeeded in uniting most part of the country into one kingdom.

With the rise of two rival European powers - Britain and Russia in Asia, Afghanistan became the focal point of Anglo-Russian rivalry in the nineteenth century. During this period, the political developments in Afghanistan got inextricably linked up with the Anglo-Russian rivalry, which was a direct result of the expansion of both the British and Russian empires from two opposite directions. Whereas Tsarist Russia had been pushing forward its borders southwards into Central Asia, British had conquered Punjab
and Sindh by the first half of the nineteenth century. In this way both the rival European powers found themselves face to face with Afghanistan wedged in between. Despatch of any diplomatic mission or conducting political intrigue in Afghanistan on the part of one power was matched by a similar or even stronger reaction by the other side. The imposition of first two wars on Afghanistan (1838-42 and 1878-80) by the British was not a mere coincidence, rather it was preceded by the despatch of powerful Russian diplomatic missions to Afghanistan in 1837 and 1877. It is in this context that the bilateral relations between Afghanistan and Russia during such a critical period of history have been examined in this study.

Whereas both Britain and Russia were playing intrigue and counter-intrigue for promoting their imperial interests in Afghanistan, the Afghan rulers vainly tried to play the two powers against each other in order to preserve their independence and consolidate their authority. Dost Mohammad Khan was the first Afghan ruler to make overtures to the Russians. Realising that the British were not prepared to help him get back Peshawar from the Sikhs and that they continued to support Shah Shuja thereby impeding the process
of unification of Afghanistan, Dost Mohammad sent in October 1835 Afghan emissaries to the Russian Governor at Orenburg with a letter addressed to the Russian Tsar Nicholas I. This was the first endeavour on the part of Afghanistan to establish friendly relations with Russia. The Afghan ruler was seeking Russian help against the Sikhs who were supported by the British. Dost Mohammad expressed his fears that the British would destroy trade between Moscow, Bukhara and Kabul. Reciprocating the sentiments of the Afghan ruler, the Russian Governor at Orenburg sent his Aid-de-camp, I.V. Vitkevich, to accompany the Afghan envoy to St. Petersburg. Vitkevich was soon after sent on an official mission to Kabul to assist in the reconciliation between Afghan Chiefs, that is Dost Mohammad Khan and Kohandil Khan (the ruler of Kandhar). Vitkevich was also entrusted the job of exploring the possibilities of expanding Russo-Afghan trade. Vitkevitch arrived at Kabul in December 1837 and succeeded in reaching an understanding with Dost Mohammad Khan on expanding trade between Russia and Afghanistan. He also promised Russian help in Kabul’s struggle for recovery of Peshawar. On his part, the Afghan ruler tried to use the presence of Vitkevitch as a bargain to induce the British
Indian government to commit on his side against the Sikhs. The stage was thus being laid for the first Anglo-Afghan war (1838-42).

In the 1850s and early 1860s Dost Mohammad Khan, succeeded in consolidating his rule in Afghanistan particularly in the north. Russia too had expanded into Western Turkestan thereby reaching in proximity to Afghanistan's northern borders. With the death of Dost Mohammad Khan in 1863, Afghanistan was again plunged into the mess of internecine feuds. The new ruler Sher Ali Khan was challenged by his brothers. Mohammad Afzal Khan, one of the estranged brothers, tried to establish friendly contacts with Russia in a bid to secure reliable support. With the consolidation of his authority over Kabul by Sher Ali Khan in 1868, one of his nephews Abdur Rahman Khan went to Bukhara and then to Samarkand in self exile. He spent more than 10 years in Russian territory of Central Asia, receiving lavish grants from the Tsarist authorities. He had developed personal contacts with Kaufmann, the Russian Governor General of Turkestan. Notwithstanding the Anglo-Russian understanding on maintaining the independence of Afghanistan, General Kaufmann started corresponding with Sher Ali Khan in
a bid to woo the Afghan ruler out of the British influence, much to the discomfiture of the British.

The deterioration in Anglo-Afghan relations, particularly after Lytton pursued 'forward policy' towards Afghanistan in early 1870s was matched by a corresponding increase in the cordiality between Afghanistan and Russia. So much so Russia despatched a diplomatic mission headed by General Stoletov to Kabul in 1878, carrying a letter from Kaufmann. The letter pointed to the advantages of a close alliance with Russia. The reported offer of Russian subsidy, guarantee of the integrity of Amir's dominions and supply of arms and ammunition, perturbed Lytton. The subsequent events and the refusal of Sher Ali to receive a similar British mission at Kabul precipitated the crisis leading to the Second Anglo-Afghan war. Following Sher Ali's death, the new Afghan Amir, Yakub Khan signed Gandamak Treaty with the British in May 1870, under which he promised to conduct his foreign relations only with the advice of British Indian Government. But Yakub Khan could not reign for long. Now Abdur Rahman Khan appeared from his exile in Russian Central Asia. He did not allow his long association with the Russians during his stay in Samarkand to come in the way of

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establishing a workable relationship with the British. He secured the British consent to cancel the provision of the treaty of Gandamak on the presence of a permanent British resident in Afghanistan, but he pledged to conduct his external relations only through the Viceroy of India. Abdur Rahman tried to use Anglo-Russian contradictions to his benefit and to consolidate his authority over the whole of Afghanistan. His rule witnessed hectic negotiations between Britain and Russia over the demarcation of the northern frontier of Afghanistan. Abdur Rahman steered clear of any involvement in the hostilities between Russia and Khanates of Khiva and Bukhara which had sought his support. Abdur Rahman's astute policy helped a lot in the peaceful resolution of the 'Panjdeh' crisis of 1885, and the Anglo-Russian understanding on the north-western frontier of Afghanistan. The Pamirs Boundary Agreement of 1895 finally fixed Afghanistan's modern frontiers. Throughout this critical phase, Abdur Rahman persued a policy of utilising the Anglo-Russian rivalry for maintaining the independence of Afghanistan and to expand and consolidate his possessions in northern Afghanistan. Abdur Rahman's son and successor, Habibulah continued to follow the policies of friendly
relations with the British in India, at the same time taking all steps necessary to preserve sovereignty of Afghanistan. Habibullah succeeded in getting his version of Anglo-Afghan Treaty in which he was designated as 'the Independent King of the Afghan State' concluded in March 1905. But he had to accept the obligations entered into with British by his father, Abdur Rahman Khan, allowing the British control over Afghanistan's foreign policy. However, the emergence of German threat led the hitherto rival powers Britain and Russia to review their policies vis-a-vis Afghanistan and Iran. This led to the conclusion of Anglo-Russian Convention on Afghanistan, Persia and Tibet in 1907.

Afghanistan carried on its trade with Russia through the intervening territory of Bohhara, which was the main commercial centre in Asia during the nineteenth century. Copper, steel, iron, blue paper and lace from Russia were supplied to the whole of Afghanistan. The caravan trade between the two sides played an important role in maintaining their commercial relations. Despite the handicaps posed by the Anglo-Russian rivalry, the traditional overland trade between the two sides continued. Cultural interaction between two sides was facilitated by the existence of common religion and customs. The traders from
Kabul and Central Asia used to go to Renburg and Tashkent and from there people came to Afghan territory. Bokhara and Samarkand played an important role in promoting this cultural interaction as the towns had developed into important centres of Islamic education. Besides, the Persian literary texts were commonly heard and narrated in this region. The stay of Abdur Rahman in Russian Central Asia also brought the Afghan ruling elite close to the Russians, which acted as moderating influence particularly during his rule in Afghanistan.

This study seeks to analyse the extent and pattern of relations between Afghanistan and Russia during the period 1837-1907. First Chapter examines the nature of political contacts between the two side's exchange of diplomatic missions and their impact on the Anglo-Russian relations. Since Afghanistan shared its borders with those of Russian Central Asia and a lucrative trade was being carried between the two sides, the trade relations have been examined in the second chapter. It also deals with various handicaps in trade and several promotion measures to facilitate the trade. Similarly, the cultural interaction between the people of two regions with particular reference to stay of Afghan chiefs in Russian Central Asia in exile has been studied in
the third chapter. The fourth chapter titled "Shadow of Anglo-Russian Rivalry on Afghanistan, "reviews the British and Russian policies in Central Asia and Afghanistan and the convergence of their interests in this area from opposite directions.

The Anglo-Russian negotiations which led to Gorchakov-Clarendon and Granville-Gorchakov agreements on the issue of northern boundary limits of Afghanistan vis-a-vis Russian territory have been discussed and analysed in detail. Similarly Russo-Afghan boundary problems in Panjdeh and Somatash Pamirs and the British response have been dealt within this chapter.

The fifth chapter, titled "Towards the Anglo-Russian Accord on Afghanistan" focuses on the Anglo-Russian negotiations which led to the Pamirs Boundary Agreement of 1895 that finally defined the northern boundary of Afghanistan. It also analyses the circumstances that led to the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907 on Afghanistan.

The study is rounded by detailing the conclusions in the sixth chapter. The scope of this study is limited to the period from 1837, when the first Russian mission led by Vitkevitch arrived at Kabul in 1837, upto 1907 when the Anglo-Russian accord was signed.
The study has followed a descriptive and historico-analytical methodology and is based on such primary sources as the diplomatic proceedings of Foreign and Political Department, Government of India from the period 1837 to 1907 (preserved in the National Archives of India), contemporary accounts, secret diaries, memoranda and reports. These have been supplemented by the study of secondary information gathered from books, articles and journals on the subject.