CHAPTER - IV

DAOUD’S REPUBLIC AND AFGHAN-US RELATIONS: 1973–78
The Coup d'etat on July 17, 1973 by Mohammad Daoud, brought an end to the prevalent politico-economic crisis along with the decade-old experiment in 'democracy-yi-naw' and abolished the centuries old monarchy in Afghanistan. On the face of it, the Coup appeared merely to be a transfer of power from one member of the royal family to another but actually it proved to be a major turning point in the twentieth century Afghan history on several counts. First, it abolished the centuries old institution of monarchy and installed a new state system - the republic. Secondly, it brought Afghan leftists into the mainstream political life, which at a later date played a crucial role in national politics. In fact, the participation of the communist elements in the 1973 Coup and subsequent formation of the Daoud government, gave a political legitimacy to the Afghan communists which in turn encouraged and emboldened them to come to power on their own in April, 1978. Thus, Daoud's Republic proved to be a launching pad for the Afghan communists' (P.D.P.A.) accession to power. Finally, in the
sphere of foreign affairs, the period represents a phase in search of a third alternative source of economic assistance¹ i.e. oil-rich Islamic countries - while maintaining cordial relations with both the Super Powers.

Soon after assuming the reins of power, Daoud Khan said in a nationwide broadcast that he had led the coup to replace the "corrupt and effete" rule of the king with a "genuine democracy" and to save the country from ruin.² Elaborating on the conditions prevalent on the eve of the coup, he stated that during the decade of constitutional experience (1963-73):

democracy or the government of the people was changed into anarchy and the constitutional monarchy to a despotic regime. All these forces struggled against one another and the people, and in pursuing the principle of divide and rule, fire was lighted throughout the country. So in this turbulent and dark atmosphere impregnated with misery, poverty, and misfortune they (the ruling class and official bureaucrats) were able to attain their material and political ends. The patriots, wherever they were, watched with deep sorrow and anguish this horrible state of their nation. But they were constantly aware of the situation, especially the Afghan armed

1. During his Premiership, Daoud attracted both the Super Powers to invest in Afghanistan. However, the decade of Constitutional experiment witnessed a substantial decline in Super ·Powers aid to Afghanistan. Hence, during his Presidency, Daoud tried to find a third alternative source of economic assistance to Afghanistan.


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forces who felt this agony more than anyone else exercising extreme patience hoping that today or tomorrow the vile and rotten system in Afghanistan would become aware of the misery of the nation and endeavour to reform itself. But the result proved that these hopes are impertinent, and the regime and system became so corrupt that no hope or expectation for its reform existed. Consequently, all patriots, especially the patriotic armed forces of Afghanistan, decided to put an end to this rotten system and deliver the nation from their plight ... the system has been overthrown and a new order which is the republican regime has been established which conforms to the true spirit of Islam.3

In order to run the new republican government, Daoud formed a Central Committee consisting of army officers of both Khalq and Parcham factions of the PDPA who had played a major role in the July coup, along with other members of his choice.4 The Central Committee in turn, elected General Daoud as the President and Premier of the Republic of Afghanistan.5 Soon, President Daoud started taking measures aimed at consolidating the political, economic and social base of his republican government. To strengthen the government's position politically, Daoud arrested and eliminated opposition political leaders; shared power with


prominent forces of the day — army — particularly officers sympathetic to the Parcham and Khalq factions of the PDPA; prohibited functioning of opposition political parties, and dispatched young members of Parcham and Khalq factions of the PDPA to the countryside to propagate the policies of the state among the people. Besides, with a view to win over another politically sensitive section — intelligentsia and students, Daoud introduced educational reforms favourable to the students at school level. According to the reforms, students enrolled in grades one through three were automatically promoted without annual examinations and primary schools upgraded from six to eight years. After completing eight years of primary school the students had to sit for entrance examinations to high schools. Moreover, all religious and public schools and institutions of higher education (universities) were directed and administered by the Ministry of Education. Rectors, professors, teachers, and employees of educational establishments were all selected and appointed by the state.

8. Ibid.
Perceiving the grim scenario of economy, Daoud took some drastic measures to stabilize it. To improve the banking facilities in the country, he announced the nationalization of banking system. Consequently, all the banks in private sector namely – the Bank-e-Milli-e-Afghanistan (the National Bank of Afghanistan), the Pashtani Tejarati Bank, the Industrial Development Bank, the Agriculture Bank, and the Mortgage and Construction Bank – came under state control. In the rural sector too, the President implemented certain reforms to improve the condition of the poor peasantry and in turn win their support. Accordingly, he declared land reforms and distributed land from the state-owned lands to landless peasants and farmers. Within a year of declaration, the state claimed that 5,371 families received land, 3,930 in the Helmand Valley, 1,269 in Nangarhar, and 172 in Ghorband. In other words approximately 32,226 individuals benefited from the project. Moreover, the government set up a Rural Development Board to study the economic and social conditions in every village and to categorize the land and poorer grades.

10. Ibid.
11. Ibid.
Besides implementing economic changes and adjusting to the tune of prevalent political forces, Daoud took some progressive steps to strengthen his social base of power and show himself as a revolutionary leader. To put an end to monarchy, renouncing the royal titles and establishment of republican order in the country were some such measures.

Furthermore, with a view to create a legitimate base for the State, President Daoud called a meeting of the Loya Jirgah (Grand Assembly of Tribal Leaders) in March 1977. To give the Loya Jirgah more balance (and to reward faithful followers of the President and friends of the Cabinet), he appointed 130 additional Wakil including military officers, factory workers, small farmers, urban intellectuals, and women, and got this assembly to pass a new constitution.12

The Grand Assembly elected him President of the country as well as Prime Minister, Defence Minister and Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces. The Constitution enabled President Daoud to legalize his National Revolutionary Party (Hizbi Enqilab-e-Milli) as the only political party in Afghanistan.13 Thus, the Constitution

13. Hafizullah Emadi, no.4, p.69.
adopted by the Loya Jirgah was a replica of an authoritarian state's document that provided for a presidential system of government within the framework of a single-party system.

As a matter of fact Daoud's authoritarian style of ruling brought political stability after domestic chaos of the 'Constitutional Period. However he could not solve the economic problems of the country. Neither his new Constitution nor economic development projects put an end to the prevalent poverty and unemployment. The country's trade deficit was growing bigger. For example, the 1973-74 trade deficit of $ 35.2 million rose to $ 41.2 million in 1975-76. The cost of living rose from 97 per cent to 111 per cent in 1974 and to 129 per cent in 1975.14 This state of affairs gave rise to dissatisfaction among merchants, blue-collar workers, intellectuals and the peasants, and helped opposition forces particularly the PDPA to increase its strength. Finally, the PDPA exploited the situation and with the help of army overthrew Daoud's Republic in 1978.

Foreign Policy

Like his earlier stint in power, as Prime Minister, Daoud attached considerable significance to foreign policy.

14. Cited in Hafizullah Emadi, no.4, p.70.
He viewed it as an essential mechanism for the survival of his government and continuance of modernization of the Afghan state.\textsuperscript{15} The importance that Daoud attached to foreign affairs can be gauged from the fact that on the very day of the coup d'etat, he announced the basic principles of his government's foreign policy while addressing his countrymen:

The foreign policy of Afghanistan is based on neutrality, non-participation in military pacts, and independent judgment of the issues by the people themselves. Emanating from our national aspirations, this policy is designed to fulfill the material and spiritual needs of the people. More than anything else the fulfillment of these needs requires a world peace. No country can attain its legitimate national aspirations except in conditions of tranquillity. As we in Afghanistan endeavour to develop our country we aspire to the consolidation of world peace and security. The strongest pillars of Afghanistan's policy of non-alignment are its frankness and sincerity which stem from the national free will of the Afghan people. Thus, Afghanistan's friendly relations with other countries will retain their unshakable foundations, and through diplomacy, personal visits, and promotion of international cooperation, efforts will be exerted to consolidate these ties further. It is our hope that these efforts will bear positive and practical results ... This regime observes and respects the principles of the United Nations Charter, the main goals of which are the welfare of mankind and global peace.\textsuperscript{16}

The outlines of his foreign policy made it amply clear that he would tread the path softly-balancing both the

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{15} Abdul Samad Ghaus, \textit{The Fall of Afghanistan}, (Washington, 1988), p.109.
\item \textsuperscript{16} Cited in A.S. Ghaus, Ibid.
\end{itemize}
superpowers. The history of Afghanistan shows that neutrality which underlay his foreign policy was essential to stave off 'protracted war' by the US and the Soviet Union in his country. No wonder, it suited the two powers pretty well. Indeed, the political "neutrality" of Afghanistan meant largely to win favours from both the Soviet Union and the US and get economic aid to accelerate Afghanistan's economic development. His foreign policy resolutions stymied the influence of one superpower at the expense of the other. It would be worthwhile here to point out that during his earlier term of power as Prime Minsiter, Mohammad Daoud decided from the beginning to enlist Soviet Union's support as assistance mainly due to the negative attitude of the West. But in 1973 (when he came to power again as the President of Afghanistan) he took the tactical decision of not being too close to Soviet Union or even the U.S. Instead, he attempted to explore a Third Option, so that Afghanistan could diversify its sources of economic assistance. Especially the expansion and improvement of relations with Afghanistan's neighbours and major Arab countries were considered important goals of the republic.17

17. Ibid.
The Pashtunistan Issue and Afghan Search for Third Alternative

The question of Pashtunistan, which had bedevilled Daoud's first regime remained a touchy issue between Kabul and Islamabad at least in the initial years of the Daoud's republic. Soon after assumption of power, Daoud reiterated his firm commitment to the cause of Pashtuns east of the Durand Line. He underlined the Afghan-Pakistan differences over the Pashtunistan question, even during his first press conference. He said that "our relations with Pakistan which is the only nation with whom we have a political difference over the Pashtunistan issue which we have not been able to solve so far, will be based on our permanent efforts to find a solution to the Pashtunistan problem."18

He further stated that

we hope that in grasping this reality (the existence of an Afghan-Pakistan dispute with regard to the legitimate rights of the Pathans and the Baluchi people) and with mutual goodwill, both sides (Afghanistan and Pakistan) will be able to find an amicable, peaceful and honourable solution to this problem in accordance with the hopes and aspirations of the Pashtun and the Baluchi people and their leaders.19

Daoud made it explicit that the "Durand Line, which divided the Pashtun population between Afghanistan and Pakistan, remained an obstacle in maintaining a friendly relationship with Pakistan.\textsuperscript{20} The matter reached a high point of crisis when on 5 November, 1973, the Deputy Foreign Minister Waheed Abdullah unequivocally declared that "Afghanistan did not recognize the Durand Line as an official border line between the two countries since it separates almost 2.5 million Pashtuns from Afghansitan.\textsuperscript{21} The "Pashtunistan stunt" (as Pakistan called it) created bad blood between the two countries. This complex issue was given a new dimension by Afghanistan when Pakistan asked for military and economic assistance from the United States. This was perceived by the Daoud government as a serious threat to upset the balance of power between Afghanistan and Pakistan. Expressing his government's serious concern over the issue, President Daoud emphasized that

the lifting of arms embargo to Pakistan by the US government in a time that Pakistan is engaged in shedding blood in Baluchistan and Pashtunistan has caused grave concern to the people of Afghansitan. It will lead to imbalance in the region and promote an armaments race and would create an additional threat to the peace in the region.\textsuperscript{22}

\textsuperscript{20.} Hafizullah Emadi, no.4, p.72.

\textsuperscript{21.} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{22.} Afghanistan, \textit{Afghanistan Republic's Annual, 1976}, (Kabul, 1976), p.25.
The highlighting of the Pashtunistan issue by Afghanistan worsened the bilateral relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan by 1974. In an interview with *Le Monde* (Paris) in February 1974, President Daoud declared that "we support in every way the right of our brothers in Pakhtoonistan to self-determination" and claimed that the NWFP and Baluchistan had "always formed an integral part of Afghanistan." He also alleged that the recent plot against the republican regime (in September 1973) had been "financed by certain foreign countries", apparently alluding to Pakistan. On the other hand, the "Pakistan government repeatedly alleged that Afghanistan was supporting the uprising in Baluchistan and was responsible for the bomb explosion in other provinces, and accused the NAP of connivance with the Kabul regime." Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto went to the extent of warning that "If Afghanistan persisted in its claims, ... Pakistan might


support tribal separatist movements in Afghanistan." 25 The war of attrition between the two countries only made the matter worse confounded. Bhutto even went to the extent of saying that he would welcome King Zahir Shah if the latter wants to come to Pakistan as a guest. 26 The same belligerent attitude was adopted by Daoud when in an interview with Le Monde in early February 1974, he said that Pakistan's North-west Frontier Province had always been an integral part of Afghanistan and that the British, through imposing unequal treaties unacceptable to his government, had severed these regions from Afghan sovereignty. 27

The simmering antagonism between Afghanistan and Pakistan continued unabated with Bhutto establishing an anti-Kabul propaganda center in Pakistan and giving refuge to the enemies of Daoud government like Gulbuddin Hukmatyar,


Burhanuddin Rabbani et al. Besides, Bhutto got roads constructed in North-West Frontier Province to thwart any attempt by the Afghan government to encourage Pashtun rebellion in the region. Tariq Ali opined that Bhutto's:

drive toward superficial modernization of the Tribal Areas was clearly prompted by the overthrow of the monarchy in neighbouring Afghanistan. It was part of a strategic military offensive designed to destabilize Daoud. That is why the Razmak camp in South Weziristan was reactivated, and that also explains the desperate rush to construct new roads and improve communications. The high command in Islamabad was determined to forestall a "Pathandesh" on its northern frontiers. Bhutto's forward policy was designed, by putting maximum pressure on Kabul, to permanently foreclose the Pashtunistan issue. A tribal revolt which erupted on 21 July 1975 in the Panjshir Valley north of Kabul was planned and executed by Afghan exiles financed and armed by Islamabad.  

The internecine quarrel between Afghanistan and Pakistan was taken seriously by the Islamic world, especially Iran and Libya. So much so that Moamar Kaddafi tried to cajole Daoud into attending the Islamic summit.

meeting held in Lahore on February 21, 1974. Kaddafi impressed upon Daoud the need for preservation of Islamic solidarity. But Libya's biased attitude in favour of Pakistan prevented a dialogue between the two warring nations. Moreover, the denial of a political difference between Afghanistan and Pakistan by the latter also stood in the way of any fruitful talks. While Afghanistan opined that political differences existed over the fate of Pashtuns and Baluchis inside Pakistan, Pakistan underlined that the differences existed in the field of trade, transit, nomads, etc. 29

Before long, the government of Afghanistan took steps to de-escalate the tension between the two countries. Domestic compulsions in both the countries acted as a catalyst in defusing the crisis. Besides, Iran and Turkey played an important role behind the scene in drawing Afghanistan and Pakistan to a meaningful dialogue. Thomas T. Hammond opines that the US had also an important role to

play in bringing the two sides to a talk. "He (Daoud) joined Pakistan's President Bhutto to reduce the conflict over the Pashtunistan issue, perhaps to avoid the closing of the important trade route through Pakistan, and perhaps in part in response to American influence ... According to Eliot, the US realized that Afghanistan had to maintain good relations with Russia, but wanted Afghanistan to be truly independent; the US thought that the Pashtunistan conflict had made Afghanistan excessively dependent on Moscow. Since Pakistan was a friend of US, Washington also wanted to keep Pakistan out of unnecessary disputes and obviously did not wish to see Pakistan dismembered by Pashtuns and Baluch."30

One of the important mediators in Afghan-Pakistan crisis was the Shah of Iran. Besides being a friend of Pakistan, Iran understood that any dismemberment of Pakistan would have a negative impact on Iran, and would threaten its stability since there was a sizable Baluchi population in

South-east Iran (which was strategically important for Iran). Elaborating on Iran's effort, President Daoud said, "We are deeply gratified for Iranian economic assistance to Afghanistan, and likewise we are thoughtful for the interest which Iran takes in eliminating tension between Afghanistan and Pakistan." The extent of improvement of relations between the two countries can be gauged from the fact that Bhutto and Daoud exchanged official visits to each other's country. Later on, even General Zia-ul-Haq paid an official visit to Kabul. On the last of these visits, when Daoud visited Islamabad on March 5, 1978, an agreement was reached that both Pakistan and Afghanistan's own Pashtun and Baluch leaders would stop raising the Pashtunistan issue, that Zia would release from prison those Pakistanis who had been agitating against his martial rule, and that Daoud would send home Pakistani exiles.


Afghanistan and Pakistan realized the importance of defusing the crisis so as to forge ahead a durable friendship so essential in a world order steeped in turbulence and tension. "The Afghan and Pakistani leaders had tacitly agreed that the establishment of a durable friendship based on mutual trust and community of interest would bring about an environment in which an honourable solution of the difference between the two countries would peacefully emerge by itself.33

Reforging Links with West Asia

As noted above, the Shah of Iran played an important role in the rapprochement between Afghanistan and Pakistan. The good offices of Iran used in defusing the tension, earned the goodwill of Afghanistan. Relations between Afghanistan and Iran were lying dormant since 1951. It was renewed in June 1972 to settle the Helmand Water dispute resulting in the signing of the Helmand Water Treaty in May 1973. This treaty sowed the seeds for future improvement of relations between Afghanistan and Iran. Daoud saw in the closeness of Afghanistan and Iran a distinct advantage in

33. A.S. Ghaus, no.15, p.147.
the economic development of the former. With this perspective in mind as also to reassert its non-aligned and Islamic stance it forged a relationship with Iran and other Arab countries. The economic angle to this relationship cannot be under-estimated. "In October 1974, the Shah promised to provide $2 billion in economic aid over a period of ten years, which would have made Iran Afghanistan's biggest aid donor, replacing the USSR." 34 The economic reconstruction programme of Afghanistan by Iran included the construction of a rail road from Kabul to Iran, which would have facilitated Afghanistan's trade with the outside world through Iranian ports, thereby decreasing Afghan dependence on Soviet trade. 35

There was a method in Shah's philanthrophist attitude towards Afghanistan which certainly could not have taken place without the implicit blessings of the US. It was a concerted effort by Iran and US to bring Afghanistan out of the Soviet sphere of influence. But at the same time, it cannot be denied that Daoud wanted to come out of the Soviet

34. Hammond, n.29, p.39.
shadow and extend hands of friendship towards Islamic countries. Hence, in July 1974 Mohammed Naim and Waheed Abdullah toured Iran, Iraq, Libya, Algeria, Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait. The tours were an exercise in foreign relations as well as in getting substantial foreign aid. Although, these countries heard the Afghan case sympathetically they tied the advance of financial aid with the improvement of Afghanistan's relationship with Pakistan. No wonder then, Afghanistan acted post haste to smoothen ties with Pakistan on the Pashtunistan issue which bedevilled the relations between the two neighbouring nations for many years.

To strengthen the ties between Iran and Afghanistan Daoud visited Tehran in April 1975. It was during this visit that the Shah of Iran promised to extend to Afghanistan a credit of $2 billion. Out of this massive aid, $1.7 billion was specially meant for the construction of a railroad from Herat to Kandhar and Kabul. The remaining $300 million was earmarked for other developmental projects in Afghanistan. The construction of railroad gave
Afghanistan access to Iranian seaports (to boost Afghan trade).\textsuperscript{36} This was a landmark development as far as Afghan economic regeneration was concerned. Moreover, this was a milestone in economic and political alignment in the region.

In 1977 the instruments of ratification of the Helmand Treaty was exchanged between the two countries, thus formally ending the dispute between the two countries over the sharing of the Helmand waters. The positive contribution by Iran in improving the relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan was not lost on Afghanistan. This had a positive impact on the development of Iranian-Afghan friendship. It was felt by the Daoud regime that Iran could play an important role in the easing of tensions between Afghanistan and Pakistan. Therefore, the Daoud government kept the Iranian government posted on the Afghan-Pakistan situation. Hence, Afghanistan did not approach Iran to make any official pronouncement in favour of Afghanistan vis-a-vis the dispute. This stand by Afghanistan amply proves that the Daoud regime wanted a rapprochement with Pakistan, not withstanding the vitriol exchanged between Pakistan and Afghanistan. Therefore, the 1975 joint Iranian-Afghan

\textsuperscript{36. Ibid.}
communique issued at the end of Daoud's visit to Tehran did not refer to the Afghan-Pakistan dispute and even Afghanistan did not insist on it.

Though in late 1977, the Shah of Iran accepted an invitation from the Daoud government to pay a state visit to Afghanistan in July 1978, the internal events in Iran were taking a turn for the worse. The oil boom was now a thing of the past and Iran found herself embroiled in economic problems. And therefore, she was finding it difficult to fulfill the economic assistance that she promised to Afghanistan. Kabul was not unaware of this development. Hence, it was decided that certain re-adjustments had to be made in the Afghan Seven Year Plan. But the financial backings by Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Soviet Union bailed Afghanistan out of a crisis situation.

Afghanistan was more perturbed by the internal tension in Iran than by the trickle in the financial assistance by Iran, because that would bring the superpowers into play in Iran. The repercussions on Afghanistan would have been immense. Daoud visualised that Soviet Union would not tolerate American intervention in Iran because the former's position in Afghanistan would be

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jeopardized. The Russians might even try to assume direct control of Afghanistan if they envisaged American military deployment in the region, Daoud thought. In the event of Soviet occupation of Afghanistan, the former's clout in the Persian Gulf would considerably increase. This was the perspective of the Daoud regime on which they based their genuine fear of an Iranian crisis escalating to a regional tension to the detriment of Afghanistan's future. The tensions in Iran notwithstanding, the relations between Afghanistan and Iran remained cordial. The Shah of Iran minced no words to emphasize the importance of having friendly relations among the three Islamic neighbours - Iran, Pakistan and Afghanistan. Thus, by now Daoud had thrown all pretensions of leftism and whole-heartedly cultivated Islamic solidarity. Because Daoud knew full well that his regime cannot survive in an atmosphere where the good will of the Islamic countries is absent. It was quite an unenviable situation for the Daoud government which came to power with the help of leftist forces. But geopolitical considerations took the upper hand over whatever pretensions of ideology Daoud professed in the initial months of the republican government.
Hectic diplomatic activities were undertaken by Daoud to cultivate friendships by touring Libya, Yugoslavia, India, Pakistan, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and Egypt. He was specially successful in getting financial assistance from Saudi Arabia who promised to give $10 million grant and $55 million interest free loan in 1974. Talks were also under way to enlist Libyan economic assistance for Afghanistan. Thus, Daoud was able to negotiate his way to the good books of Afghanistan's neighbours. The mending of fences with Pakistan was highly appreciated by the Arab world who wanted the Muslim neighbours to live in amity. The Arab world was convinced of the fact that Afghanistan harboured no rancor towards Pakistan. Thus, Daoud's visit to the various capitals also sought to enlist support for his change of policy. Indeed, Daoud spoke openly of his intention to return (the non-Aligned Movement) from its pro-Soviet orientation to genuine non-alignment. 38

Daoud Distances from the Soviet Union

So far as Afghan-Soviet relations were concerned,


President Daoud during the early phase of his rule maintained a pro-Soviet orientation in his foreign policy. The Soviet Union was among the first countries to accord diplomatic recognition to the Daoud regime. Albeit a lack of concrete evidence, it has been alleged that Moscow played an important role in the ouster of King Zahir Shah and the creation of the first Afghan Republic by Prince Mohammad Daoud. Whatever might have been the Soviet cause for delight lay, inter alia, in the fact that Daoud seized power with the help of leftist officers, majority of whom were trained in Soviet Union. The Soviet cause for delight lay, inter alia, in the fact that Daoud seized power with the help of leftist officers, majority of whom were trained in Soviet Union. In a message to Daoud on July 26, 1973, Kremlin expressed confidence that "the genuinely good-neighbourly relations of friendship and all-round cooperation existing between the "Soviet Union and Afghanistan will further successfully develop." The Soviet leaders pledged to provide political and economic assistance to Afghanistan. The new regime with its leftist overtures (at least in the initial months) would further their interest in south-west Asia. Therefore, to extract

maximum benefits out of the favourable situation with minimum show of explicit support, the Soviets went all out to help the Daoud regime and make it subservient to its aid. Thus when Daoud visited Soviet Union (a year after the coup), "the Soviet government agreed to participate in Afghanistan's economic development projects such as irrigation, power generation, construction of a copper smelting plant, expansion of chemical fertilizer industry, a thermal power plant, construction of a silo, ... construction of airports as well as several other projects. The Soviet Union also agreed to defer payment of 100 million roubles which it loaned Afghanistan under a technical and economic assistance agreement." 40

As discussed above, Daoud was not willing to take the friendly relationship with Soviet Union very far, unlike in his earlier tenure from 1953-63. Although Daoud did not make it very obvious in his initial months, he was already trying to woo friends from other quarters. But that did not deter him from accepting Russian economic aid, which "during the two years of President Daoud's rule the Soviet Union

40. Hafizullah Emadi, no.4, p.74.
extended a loan of $428 million for the survey and construction of developmental projects and granted $600 million for financing a five-year development plan which had been launched in 1973 as well as a loan of $3.6 million worth of geological survey and exploration equipment, agricultural machinery, and construction equipment. 41

Daoud did not believe that the massive Russian largess would penetrate the Afghan society and cause ideological conflict, because, according to him, a well-to-do Islamic society was a powerful deterrent to the propagation of communism. 42 But Daoud was most certainly worried about the Soviet's systematic penetration of the army. Unlike Egypt, where Anwar Sadat ousted all Russian military and technical advisers from Egypt and also abrogated the Russo-Egyptian Friendship Treaty in 1971, Daoud could not do so because Afghanistan shared a long boundary with Soviet Union. Moreover, being a landlocked country with a close proximity to Soviet Union, it was not possible for Afghanistan to acquire arms from the West given the logistic difficulties.

41. Ibid., p.75.
42. A.S. Ghaus, no.15, p.160.
involved. Also, the U.S. had already turned down Afghan request for arms.43

Despite such constraints, Daoud opted for steps to loosen overwhelming dependency on the Soviets and curb the leftist influence inside Afghanistan. By the end of 1975, Daoud went public in his views against leftist influences in his government and began ousting communist elements from the government and the army. In April 1975, he forcefully stated that Afghanistan "would not tolerate the introduction ... of any 'imported ideology' and would resist its spread with all the strength at its command".44 Daoud was indeed in an unenviable position since he came to power with the help of communist military officers and therefore had to include the leftists in the government. But when their number reached an alarming proportion he had to clip their strength. This was coupled with Afghanistan seeking economic assistance from Islamic countries. Such moves surely antagonized the communists in Afghanistan and may also have angered the communists in Moscow.45

43. Ibid., p.190.
44. Ibid., p.190
As a response to these developments, Moscow became actively involved in bringing together the two rival factions of the PDPA - Parcham and Khalq, into one unified party. Undoubtedly, this had been undertaken as a means of salvaging the Afghan communists party and preparing it for more important tasks, after the Russians realized that the divorce between Daoud and the Left was final. This was certainly annoying for the Afghan leadership. Though Daoud discounted the usefulness of this show of unity by PDPA, he was nonetheless perturbed about Russia which no longer appreciated Afghanistan’s unswerving nonalignment. Strains were increasing between Daoud and the USSR, with worse yet to come. Daoud visited Moscow again from 12 to 15 April 1977, the month after he had under his new Constitution appointed a Cabinet of personal supporters and some known anti-communists. He informed the Soviet leadership regarding the improved relations with Pakistan and closer ties with Iran and the Arab states even while expressing the hope that the friendly relations between Afghanistan and Soviet Union would flourish.

Daoud's visit to Moscow proved to be the last straw in the ties between the two countries. In spite of the
official pleasantries exchanged, it was implicit that Kremlin was no more warmly disposed towards Daoud's republican regime. Soon Soviet subversive activities were increased in Afghanistan to do away with Daoud. The result was the 'Saur Revolution' on April 27, 1978, which ousted the republican regime and brought the P.D.P.A. in to power.

Afghan-U.S. Relations

So far as Afghan-U.S. relations during the republican regime are concerned, it presents a trend of steady development of mutual interests and involvement. Initially both the sides did not go much beyond the diplomatic formalities for their own reasons, though each one needed other's cooperation. The United States took a wait-and-see attitude vis-a-vis the political and economic line of the new regime, which on account of its composition apparently seemed to be pro-Moscow. Daoud too, in the initial period avoided pro-Western inclination due to geo-political realities. Moreover, Daoud instigated by the leftist members of his cabinet, was annoyed with the Americans suspecting them of being involved in the Maiwandwal plot.46

46. Former Prime Minister Mohammad Hashim Maiwandwal was arrested soon after Daoud's assumption of power as President in July 1973. Few days later it was announced that he committed suicide in prison.
These irritants were, however, quickly removed. Indeed, President Daoud believed in the meaningful presence of the Americans to counteract the Soviets.

Soon after Daoud's assumption of power, the United States gave diplomatic recognition to the new regime and expressed a wish to continue the long standing and warm relations between the two countries. In the aftermath of Washington's recognition of Daoud's republic, the U.S. ambassador in Kabul, Robert Neumann paid a courtesy call on the President Daoud and presented the sincere congratulation and good will of the U.S. President, Richard Nixon. Further, he expressed the hope that relations between the Republic of Afghanistan and the United States will be further strengthened and expanded and wished the success of the President and the Republic of Afghanistan.

Close on the heel of Washington's recognition of the new regime came the official visit of Senator Charles H. Percy, member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee of the U.S. Congress, to Kabul in early August 1973. In Kabul

48. Ibid.

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Senator Percy met the President Daoud and other government ministers and had discussions on bilateral and international issues. Before his departure, at Kabul airport he told journalists that through his discussion with President Daoud and other ministers he was convinced that "the young Republic of Afghanistan is resolved to search seriously new solutions for its old problems." 49 Answering a question in regard to continuation of U.S. assistance to Afghanistan, Senator Percy said that certainly American help for economic growth and stepping up agricultural production in Afghanistan will continue. 50

As a matter of fact the wait-and-see attitude of the United States in the initial period of the Daoud's Republic had created a sense of suspicion and irritation in the diplomatic circles in Kabul towards Washington. However, the subsequent show of interest and involvement by the United States in the Kabul government's efforts at development and appreciation of her policy of neutrality and non-alignment, softened the attitude of the Afghan

50. Ibid.
leadership towards Washington. It was at this juncture that Mohammad Naim (brother of President Daoud) expressed his country's desire to have friendly relations with the Americans and underscored the need for a strong American presence both economically and politically.

In his meeting with the then US Ambassador Theodore L. Eliot, Jr., Naim said that "Afghan republic has the mandate to create a policy for benefit of the people, which will not be an easy task."\(^{51}\) There was general acceptance of the new regime, among the populace but no acceptance for extremism of either left or right. The left was not acceptable for people of Afghanistan. The right was too backward and not really interested in solving problems. The new regime will take measures to prevent extremism, but the real problem is to eradicate that which feeds leftism — poverty."\(^{52}\)

These were enough hints for the US to step up its interest in Afghanistan. But Washington treaded the path

\(^{51}\) Declassified, Department of State Telegram, July 20, 1973.

\(^{52}\) Ibid.
cautiously, as is evident from the confidential document sent by the Secretary of State to Kabul embassy outlining preliminary department thinking:

Announced our intention to continue our good relations with Afghanistan, believe it is in our interest to avoid indication that we are willing to get back into aid competition with USSR in Afghanistan ... Surest means to avoid giving impression of eagerness to complete in economic aid is to eschew all US initiatives in aid field. We should not give impression we are seeking business as usual, but make it clear we are waiting government of Afghanistan initiatives... We recognize, however, that we cannot hold this line with complete consistency since it departs substantially from past patterns and could be read as withdrawal of US interests. Thus, for on-going aid and PC projects for which discussions are needed to prevent serious interruption of action, mission, would be authorized take initiative upto and including ambassador going to Daoud for indication as to Afghan attitudes regarding on-going projects and activities.53

Meanwhile, the US Ambassador Eliot kept the Afghan Government happy by praising its independence and non-alignment and talked of increased American aid. But a confidential telegram from the Ambassador to the Secretary of State brings out the overriding difference in views

harboured by the Special Review Group on the existing policy. The Review Group argued that "US interest in regional stability is not significantly affected by events in Afghanistan. Existence or non-existence of any particular form of Government in Kabul, of any particular borders for Afghanistan, or any political leaning by Afghan authorities is unimportant to US regional interests." 54 The Ambassador disagreed with this view. He believed that US interests and Afghanistan's remain parallel. American programme decisions here should reflect that parallelism, and should always be made with overriding political interests in mind which have from the inception of US assistance of Afghanistan been the bedrock of justification for that assistance. On individual projects, the aid's legislative mandate and developmental criteria must of course be met. However, Afghanistan must continue to have some reasonable claim on the aid resource pie, not just as one of the 25 'least developed, but more importantly for the US political interest in helping preserve its independence." 55 To thwart Soviet influence and encourage

55. Ibid.
Afghanistan to distance herself from the Soviet Union and its bloc, Eliot advised the Department of State that the US must continue providing economic assistance to Afghanistan as a means to this end. A top secret memo from the US embassy in Kabul to the Department of State reads: "we continue to demonstrate our friendly and tangible interest through a visible American presence in the country."56

In November, 1974 the United states Secretary of State, Henry A. Kissinger paid an official visit to the Republic of Afghanistan at the latter's invitation.57 "Both sides expressed pleasure at the warm and friendly relation between their governments ...(they) stressed the importance of international cooperation in the field of economic and technical cooperation in the field of economic and technical development and its major role in strengthening international stability and peace."58 Daoud impressed upon Kissinger the fundamental importance to Afghanistan of good

56. The Documents from the US Espionage Department, Section (1) Afghanistan, by Muslim Students Following the Line of the Imam (Tehran, n.d.), p.50.


58. Ibid.
Afghan-Soviet relations and "regretably quite bad" relations with Pakistan, blaming the latter's ill-advised policies vis-a-vis Baluchistan and Northwest frontier province for the dispute between Pakistan and Afghanistan. Daoud minced no words to express his grave concern at the resumption of US military aid to Pakistan which would upset the balance of arms in the region.

In January, 1975, US AID officials visited Afghanistan to explore possibilities of American economic aid to Afghanistan. They informed the Afghan government of their decision of providing technical assistance for the Helmand Valley project. This was a landmark in Afghan-US relations. It impressed upon Afghans the US commitment in the country. Indeed, the US has all along been interested in decreasing the influence of the Soviet Union in Afghanistan. In a highly secret 'Annual Policy Assessment' from the Embassy of Kabul to the secretary of State, this point was emphasized: "The US 'presence' has been an important element in assisting Afghanistan in limiting its dependence on the USSR and hence in assuring its independence." 59 It further added that, "our economic assistance contributes to internal stability in so far as it

assists the Afghan government to meet the expectations of Afghans for economic progress."60

Regarding its assessment of Pakistan-Afghan relationship, the report advised that the principal policy issue for the next few years as in the past would be how the US can influence Afghan-Pakistan relations so as to promote regional stability. Given the intractability of the problem and America's limited influence in Afghanistan, "our approach to the government of Afghanistan will be confined to quiet diplomatic persuasion, pointing out opportunities for reconciliation and the dangers of confrontation. We should also encourage the Indians, Iranians, and Arab countries to counsel moderation and reconciliation. We should not be overly sanguine about the chances of success for these efforts. But we should keep at it."61

Thus in the political sphere the Americans worked behind the scene to bring about a rapprochement between Afghanistan and Pakistan. In the economic sphere, the US continued its development projects and offered nominal

60. Ibid.
61. Ibid.
financial aid, though at a reduced scale to Afghanistan's modernization programme. In the first year of the Afghan Republic, the United States provided $37.2 million worth of economic assistance to Afghanistan -- $19.5 million in loans, $7.6 million in grants, and $10.1 million under PL-480 Programme. In the following year i.e., 1974 the total American commitments to Afghanistan remained only $12.6 million -- $7.5 million in loans, $5 million in grants, and $1 million under PL-480 Programme. In 1975, Washington gave $20.1 million worth of assistance to Kabul -- $10 million in loans, $6.2 million in grants and $3.9 million under PL-480 Programme. In the following year, the U.S. aid to Afghanistan further declined to $7.8 million -- $6.3 million in grants, and $1.5 million under PL-480 Programme. In 1977, Washington committed $20.7 million to Afghanistan -- $20 million in grants and $0.7 million under PL-480 Programme. In the last year of the Republican regime, Washington gave only $10.7 million to


63. Ibid.

64. Ibid.

65. Ibid.

66. Ibid.
Afghanistan -- $ 5 million in grants and $ 5.7 million under PL-480 Programme. Apart from providing their own economic and technical assistance to Afghanistan, Americans made clear to the Afghans their unabated encouragement of the friendly oil-rich Arab countries to help Afghanistan financially in its economic development. Ambassador Eliot told that this kind of friendly persuasion was going on at various levels and that he himself had made it a habit of bringing it constantly to the attention of friendly Arab Ambassadors in Kabul, particularly the Ambassador of Saudi Arabia.

In August, 1976 Kissinger visited Kabul for the second time. An important step had already been taken by Afghanistan and Pakistan to improve their relations. This was conveyed to Kissinger by the Afghan government. The two visits by Kissinger underlined the importance given by Washington to Afghanistan. The latter had always desired for close relations with US. Indeed, as a result of the US economic assistance the relations between the two countries improved considerably. Daoud welcomed the accelerated pace

67. Ibid.

of US involvement in Afghanistan's social and economic development. According to the US administration, US-Afghan relations during 1977 were excellent. The government of Afghanistan (GOA) fulfilled an obligation to US to establish a joint commission to control narcotic production and trafficking. Daoud accepted an invitation to make a state visit to the US in the summer of 1978. Funding for the US military training programme for Afghan officers was doubled in an effort to offset - albeit to a modest degree - the massive Soviet predominance in the area of foreign support for the Afghan armed forces.69

Due to the Communist takeover, Daoud's visit to Washington could never take place. It has been alleged that this aborted visit (coupled with the scheduled trip of the Shah of Iran to Kabul in July 1978) proved to be his undoing. The Soviets did not like his getting too close to the US and hence the coup. "President Daoud's pro-western policy antagonized the PDPA as well as the Soviet Union. Contradictions between the state and the PDPA grew and intensified."70

69. The Documents from the US Espionage Dep., no.54, p.47.
70. Hafizullah Emadi, n.4, p.78.
It would be worth while to point out here that the confidential 'Annual Policy Assessment' of January 1977 though noted the distancing of Moscow from Kabul, it could not foresee the result of such politics. It stated that the Afghans continued to maintain their internal stability and independence and to hold the Soviets and their local communist supporters at arms length without seeming to create any fundamental concerns in Moscow about basic Soviet interests in the area. "Again, it would be false to attribute this welcome situation directly to our policies, but we believe that our presence here is an important aid in the Afghan political balancing act." 71

The US was more anxious in reducing an element of regional instability exploitable by the USSR as Afghanistan's main supplier of military goods. Indeed, the US was playing a balancing act with the Soviet Union. Hence, the US felt that it need not directly structure its activities in Afghanistan on the basis of competition with the Soviet Union. The US recognized that the Afghans are ingenious players of the 'Great Game' in Central Asia, using

their position as a neutral state to extract maximum benefits (i.e., expression of political interest) from their relations with competing powers. They desired greater US 'visibility' but visibility is not a precise term. The Afghans have had the ability to emphasize visibility of powers antipathetic to the Soviet Union such as the PRC, the same can be done for the US as it suits Afghan purposes. 72

Thus the period from 1973 till the Coup of 1978 can be seen as one of growing interplay of the Superpowers in Afghanistan which was earlier dismissed as "a remote non-place of only minor exotic interest." 73 Indeed even as late as 1978, Afghanistan's importance in geo-politics was nullified: "The Soviets aren't going to invade Afghanistan. Afghanistan is of absolutely no importance to anyone. The Soviets don't want it - and if they do want it, they can have it. Nobody cares." 74

The Soviets had always shown great interest in the country and wanted to bring it within its sphere of

72. Ibid.
73. Rossane Klass, n.36, p.5.
74. Ibid.
influence. Therefore, it showered Afghanistan with massive economic aid which was essential for the impoverished landlocked country. But being proud and patriotic people, they refused to be in the line of the Soviet communists. And that is where the trouble started. Although, the Soviets did not show its anger explicitly, it harboured great designs. It patiently bore Afghan resistance. The courting of US by Daoud was an important event during the period. It brought the superpowers in confrontation with each other, though not so openly.

As regards the Afghan-US relations, the US took much interest in the country's economic regeneration. But the US desisted from making their presence visible. They encouraged an increase in Afghan utilization of American products and services in undertakings funded by OPEC and other donors, and also encouraged US-Afghan investment projects. The strong presence of US (through economic aid, military training programmes, etc.) in Afghanistan was just sufficient to achieve their traditional objective - limiting Soviet
influence - without any special consideration being given to that objective. Indeed, the US advocated for a responsive rather than a dynamic role for itself in Afghanistan. This is where the US failed in checking the Soviet designs. Ultimately, the Communist coup brought home the Americans, the importance of Afghanistan.