CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION
This study of Afghan-U.S. relations in the post-World War II era is a study of relationship between a small landlocked, poor country occupying an extremely geo-strategic location and a distant super power having mostly strategic interests in the region. It reveals how geography of a country determines its foreign policy as well as other's attitude towards it. When we talk of Afghan geography, it includes strategic location but lacking natural endowment, mountainous terrain and land-locked conditions.

Time and again strategic location of Afghanistan at the heart of Asia invited external intervention into the country, sometimes among neighbours and sometimes among extraregional powers, such as between the Moghuls and the Samanids who intervened in internal developments prior to the establishment of Afghanistan as a modern state: the British and the Russians in the 19th Century, the Germans and the Italians between the World-Wars and finally the US-USSR rivalry during the cold war. Its geographical proximity to the Soviet Union and Peoples Republic of China
and strategic location in the heart of Asia coupled with its nearness to Indian Ocean and Persian Gulf was the main interest of the United States in Afghanistan during the period. Similarly, Afghanistan's proximity to the Soviet borders and its location between warm waters and Soviet boundaries compelled the Soviets to take more interest in the Central Asian Kingdom. It was such interest which prompted the Super Powers to compete for spheres of influence in Afghanistan.

Whereas, Afghanistan's geo-strategic location often invites external interests and involvement, her land-locked position made her dependent on neighbours for the communication with the outside world and transport, almost all of its trade and other business with foreign countries. And whenever there is any hindrance particularly in her communication channel to the south, Afghanistan faces economic crisis situation and becomes dependent on her sole channel which is difficult northward. This is evident from the study of post World War II, Afghan foreign relations when thrice in 1950, 1955 and 1961 for all practical
purposes, Afghanistan was cut off from her natural outlet to the south and became dependent on the Soviet Union for external trade-transit with the outside world.

Besides the land-locked position, the lack of natural endowment limits Afghanistan's foreign policy options while dealing with the outside world. On account of that, Kabul had to turn to external industrial powers for necessary economic assistance aimed at modernization and development of the country. In return Afghanistan had nothing to offer except her strategic location for both the Super Powers - Soviet Union and the United States.

While her land-locked position makes her communication difficult with the outside world, Afghanistan's hostile mountainous terrain create internal communication problems and makes national unity and nation building problematic. This in turn made the outside powers less interested in investing in Afghanistan. Thus, while her strategic location invites outside attention including that of the United States, the land-locked position, lack of
natural resources and mountainous terrain limits her foreign policy options and investment attractiveness.

Afghan society is multi-ethnic, where social consensus is problematic. This tribal society coupled with the hostile mountainous terrain always thwarted the central government's attempts at political centralization and national unity and brought frequent domestic power struggles in the land-locked country. Such political scenario in turn not only created problems of national unity and development but made it difficult for the central government to pursue consistent foreign policy goals except that of national independence. Besides, this domestic power struggle invited external intervention and occasionally made the country dependent on the British, Soviet Union, United States, Iran and Pakistan as of today.

Besides geographical and ethnic factor, historical legacy of the nineteenth century - the Anglo-Russian rivalry-affected Afghanistan's foreign policy during the present century in more than one way. As a result of Anglo-Russian rivalry, Afghanistan assumed the undesirable role of
a buffer state and remained isolated from outside world till the early 1920s. Even after achieving independence in the conduct of its foreign policy, the presence of British interests in the region and in Afghanistan affected the attitude of western countries, especially that of the United States. It is this hangover of the colonial view of Afghanistan as the "British sphere of influence" which kept the Department of State delaying in granting diplomatic recognition to Afghanistan until 1939. On account of this geographically imposed isolationism, Afghanistan remained not only introverted in her external behaviour but also economically poor. Another glaring example and result of colonial legacy left for the present century Afghan history is the arbitrary demarcation of Afghan boundaries especially the Durand Line and the resultant ethno-territorial dispute over Pashtunistan, which more than any other single determinant influenced Afghan foreign policy particularly in the post-British era in the region.

To make some specific generalizations applicable to this study in particular we observe basically four phases in
the Afghan-U.S. relations with implications to the regional political system. During the early phase of Afghan-U.S. relations (1919-1953), all the three regimes that changed hands in Kabul made serious efforts to establish close diplomatic relations with the United States. But Washington did not show matching interest in terms of closer diplomatic relations or economic investment in the country.

For a long time Afghanistan was considered too distant a country for serious American involvement and its economic potential rather dim. However, 'Axis Power' interest in Afghanistan during the war sensitized the strategic importance of Afghanistan in American global geo-strategy and this prompted Washington to render moderate economic assistance to Afghanistan. But this meagre assistance was not up to the expectations of the ruling elite in Kabul who wanted to accelerate the development of the country and keep pace with the neighbouring countries. At about the same time, on account of internal instability and the Pashtunistan dispute with the newly emerged state of Pakistan, the Kabul government increasingly came to realize
the necessities of arms equipment, but none of the Western countries, including the United States, was forthcoming in this respect. In fact, by this time Pakistan assumed a more important role in the U.S. Asian strategy than Afghanistan and thereafter as we shall see the U.S. interest in Afghanistan became subordinate to its interest in Pakistan.

It was at this juncture of Afghan history that Mohammed Daoud came to power as Prime Minister with his policies of rapid economic modernization, the resolution of Pashtunistan issue and strengthening of armed forces and invited the Super-Power rivalry into Afghanistan. However, the United States could not support Daoud's demands fully for its own reasons. To supply arms meant indirectly inviting increased Soviet concerns and activity in the region. To support Daoud on the Pashtunistan question would have directly offended its most important ally in South Asia-Pakistan. Even on the issue of helping Afghanistan economically in its efforts at modernization, there emerged three schools of thought in the State Department. One school argued that the United States cannot afford to give
up Afghanistan, while the other felt that Washington should let the Russians have Afghanistan and consider itself well out of a bad bargain. Besides these two schools, there was a third group which pleaded that the U.S. should follow a middle path - to continue with small amounts of aid to Afghanistan. This would allow the United States to let the Afghans see if they can get away with trying to outwit the Russians and provide an escape for Kabul in case things do not turn out as well as the Afghan bargainers think.

Finally, the third school favouring moderate economic assistance to Afghanistan won. Whereas the U.S. administration was reluctant to help Afghanistan - politically, militarily and economically, Daoud received greater measure of support from the Soviet Union in spheres crucial to his rule: unconditional support on Pashtunistan issue and arms supply, as well as much needed economic assistance. Thus, the Soviet Union gained a foothold in a strategic area during the height of the cold-war period.
During the decade following Daoud's Premiership in 1963, Afghanistan witnessed an experiment in democracy and development. However, neither the much talked about democracy nor the efforts at development produced any concrete results. In fact, the experiment in democracy landed up in political instability and brought rapid change of Prime Ministers numbering five in a span of mere ten years. Democracy failed as there were no organized political parties and as a matter of fact, throughout the period the Royal Family monopolized political power. Development, too, could not take off because of lack of Western investment and assistance and domestic political instability.

Since there was an extremely unstable political situation in Afghanistan and also since there were other domestic concerns, the Pashtunistan issue was shelved away during the period of Constitutional Monarchy. This meant in a sense that Kabul did not feel the necessity to seek support and involvement of the Super Powers against Pakistan. Hence, both the Super Powers played low key roles
in Afghanistan during the period. But there was no doubt that Royal family tilted its policy towards the West while not completely ignoring the Soviet Union. As far as the U.S. policy was concerned it was more rhetorical than substantial during the period. It appears in retrospect that both Washington and Moscow were keenly watching the situation in Kabul as Prime Minister after Prime Minister changed.

The final phase of this study is the return of Daoud to power culminating in the 'Saur Revolution'. Daoud with his previous political experience tried to devise a new strategy for Afghanistan's economic development and the Pashtunistan issue. He came to power with Afghan leftists' support, but soon eradicated communist elements from his government and army and as well reduced dependence on the Soviet Union by opening the third option for Afghanistan's problems: the Islamic Middle East. He sought economic assistance from Iran, Saudi Arabia and other Islamic countries to stimulate economic development in the country. Secondly, he was responsive to the Shah of Iran's mediation.
over the Pashtunistan issue. There is evidence that such a mediation by Iran had the backing of the Western powers, particularly the United States. Kremlin perceived Iran's role in Afghanistan as Western inspired and therefore they quickly decided to move in. The result was the 'Saur Revolution' on April 27, 1978, which ousted Daoud's republican regime and brought the P.D.P.A. in to power in Kabul.

As we have seen the ideal foreign policy that most regimes in Kabul wanted to pursue was one of balancing between great powers so as to maintain Afghanistan's independence and to extract maximum assistance from both powers. However, the United States often showed an unwillingness to play the game desired and designed by Kabul: to rival the Soviet Union both politically and economically. As a result, Kabul's equidistance policy, more often than not, failed to operate under the circumstances. Actually, when Afghanistan did not allow its strategic location to be used by the United States for its strategic purposes against the Soviet Union, Washington did
not take much interest in Afghanistan. However, whenever there was a presumed Soviet threat to American interests in the region, Washington increased her involvement in Afghanistan which is evident from this study and from the latter period of Soviet occupation.

We can observe a consistent dilemma faced by different regimes in Afghanistan. It needed external recognition of its national sovereignty, economic assistance for development and support for its stand on the Pashtunistan issue. Kabul harboured a deep seated suspicion of Russia and close Russian involvement in Afghanistan was quietly ruled out unless political necessity compelled it. For a long time in the modern history of Afghanistan, United States of America was perceived to be an ideal power to support its various goals mentioned above. But Washington did not consider Afghanistan economically vital to its interests. Realizing this well, Daoud, during his second stint of power in Kabul, tried the Third Option of opening up and relying on the Islamic Middle East, especially Iran. But he, too, failed because the Iranian Shah was perceived