CHAPTER – I

THE EARLY AFGHAN–US RELATIONS
1919–1953
The foreign policy of a country which determines its position on the world scene is largely the reflection of domestic and external factors. Internal determinants viz., the geographic conditions, the politico-economic system, the cultural milieu, historical legacy, etc., shapes the contours of the foreign policy of a country. Correspondingly, the dialectics of relationship of a country with other nations also partially structures its attitude towards the outside world. Hence, there is an organic relationship between the domestic and external factors which combines to outline the foreign policy of a country.

The foreign policy of Afghanistan is also the heritage of the combination of domestic and external factors. "The geopolitical cultural, historical and political factors impinge upon Afghanistan's foreign relations". \(^1\) Geopolitically, Afghanistan is located at the crossroads of Central, South and West Asia and is close to the crisis-prone zones like the Indian Ocean and Middle East. Historically, insistence upon national independence

amidst external interferences has been the legacy of the Afghans. The socio-cultural milieu is such that Afghans are ethnically divided which makes political stability problematic.

While the sum of domestic factors forms the crux of an independent Afghan foreign policy, they put to a certain extent, limitations upon Afghanistan's diplomatic alternatives. In other words - determinants shaping Afghanistan's diplomacy presents an unique dichotomy. The land-locked geopolitical situation of Afghanistan, since the days of its inception in 1747, "impelled" her "to remain introvert in its foreign policy moves...."2 The backwardness, illiteracy, ignorance and blind faith of the people....were the historical and social evils"3 of Afghanistan. Insistence upon internal autonomy by various ethnic groups in tribal society coupled with the extremely independent nature of Afghans impeded the unification and reformation process of the nation and never gave the rulers "enough respite to conduct a successful foreign policy".4

4. V.P. Vaidik, no.2, p.4.
Besides domestic factors, external forces also have decisively conditioned the diplomacy of Afghan rulers which has to be seen in the context of the geo-strategic location of Afghanistan. In fact, its important geo-strategic position in the heart of Asia invited unwarranted outside interest and interference: between Mughals and Persians in the Seventeenth century 'Great Game' between European rivals, Tsarist Russia and British India and, Super Power rivalry during 'Cold War' era between the United States of America and the USSR. "Despite these complexities, Afghan foreign relations have been conducted with remarkable consistency of purpose. Great internal and external changes have not altered the core of requirements for national security and economic viability." 5

Since the establishment of nationhood in Afghanistan in 1747, till gaining political independence in the year 1919, the central quest of Afghan diplomacy has been the 'struggle for survival' and to secure and maintain national independence. Over the past century, the Afghans have been increasingly successful at this, a remarkable achievement in the face of external forces that at all times have been capable of intervening in or overrunning Afghanistan" 6

5. Richard Newell, no.1, p.76.
While the Afghans under Ahmad Shah Abdali were making Afghanistan as a nation state, some of its "neighbours were becoming imperial and then global powers".\textsuperscript{7} The British were building a vast Indian empire and the Russians were traversing Transoxiana. The result was "the 'Great Game' between the Russians and the British for consolidation of their empire and for hegemony in Asia. Between these two colossuses stood Afghanistan and also Turkey, Iran, Tibet, and China. Varying methods and degrees of intrusion into the surviving Asian realms were attempted by these European empires.\textsuperscript{8}

The British continued to be drawn to the northwest for 'the defence of India', and in the search of 'scientific frontier' to their coveted Indian empire: the Russians to the south-east for territorial expansion and the 'access for warm-water ports'. Obviously, Afghanistan was 'sandwiched' between these two European imperialist powers and became an 'unwilling pawn' on the chessboard of Anglo-Russian rivalry in Central Asia. The British put the greatest pressure on Afghanistan and twice (1839-42; 1878-80) invaded the Afghan region with the objective of bringing that nation under "British sphere of influence". With the signing of the

\textsuperscript{7} Ibid., p.78.

\textsuperscript{8} Idem.
Treaty of Gandamak in 1879, "the Afghans accepted to conduct their foreign relations in accordance with the British desire and consultation". 9

By the early twentieth century, with a view to avoid inevitable armed conflict, the two imperialist powers drew the boundaries around Afghanistan. For all practical purposes "Afghanistan became a 'buffer state', physically separating the imperialist ambitions of Tsarist Russia and British India". 10 However, it could perform that role only so long as the two empires wanted it to function as such and so long as the Afghan rulers managed to preserve its independent identity keeping a balance between the two European rivals". 11

To ensure the survival of Afghanistan as an independent entity, the Amirs embarked on a foreign policy aimed at keeping a certain balance between the two mighty neighbours. In fact, this diplomacy of balance at that point of time was the mechanics of survival of Afghanistan. However, with the unwilling acquisition of the status of buffer, Afghanistan slipped into oblivion and hence was

9. V.P. Vaidik, no. 2, p. 2.


isolated from the international community of nations which in turn embedded its process of modernization and all round development.

Afghanistan preserved the strict neutrality during the World War I, in spite of continued external and internal pressures to join the war and demand complete independence from Britain. The Amir Habibullah, decided that the interests of Afghanistan would be served best by staying neutral at least for the time being. He believed that the imperatives of survival necessitated the maintenance of a balance and made neutrality the natural choice. However, the shattering of the international system by World War I provided Afghanistan with a new set of external opportunities. Russia was no longer Czarist; the Bolsheviks were actively encouraging nationalist movements in Asia against European colonialists. The British were confronted with discontent and rebellion in the region. Pan-Islamic and nationalist ideas were arousing the Muslim peoples of the Middle East. These external developments strengthened the hands of the new charismatic and 'reformist' ruler on the throne of Kabul who believed that conditions were ripe to take the initiative against his neighbours. King

12. Ibid., p.25.
14. Idem
Amanullah who came to power in 1919 challenged the Treaty of Gandamak (1879) and declared complete independence of Afghanistan which eventually led to the Anglo-Afghan war in May 1919. The Third Anglo-Afghan war also known as the war of Independence, "proved momentary, but it resulted in a treaty ending control by the British of the country's foreign relationships".\textsuperscript{15}

With Amanullah began a new phase in the foreign relations of Afghanistan when nationalism and modernization became essential components of Afghan diplomacy. In the search for national security, a place in the international system and to seek development assistance, the new diplomacy did try to look beyond the two neighbouring giants and proceeded to establish bilateral relations with distant powerful nations of Europe and America and independent Muslim states. Accordingly, Amanullah, deputed a high level official mission in 1921, under the leadership of Mohammad Wali Khan to a number of countries, viz., Soviet Union, Great Britain, USA, France, Belgium, Italy, Holland, Spain, Portugal, Poland, Czechoslovakia and Germany, etc., with a view to establish direct diplomatic ties.\textsuperscript{16}

\textsuperscript{15} Idem

\textsuperscript{16} V.P. Vaidik, \textit{Afghanistan Mein Soviet-Americi Pratispardha} (Delhi, 1973), p. 85
The Wali mission received a warm response in the Soviet Union and Europe, and USSR by its prompt action became the first nation to recognize Afghan independence. The Afghan mission reached Moscow on October 10, 1919, and was given a warm welcome by the new Bolshevik government. The Mission was received personally by V. Lenin on October 14, 1919. Thus, all this made a strong and favourable impression on Afghan people and King Amanullah, laid the groundwork for close Afghan-Soviet relations during his reign.

The Afghan Mission on its way to New York, visited Paris where it was received by French Foreign Minister, M. Briand and by the President of French Republic. Though, Britain recognised the independence of Afghanistan in 1919 itself, it did not like Afghanistan forging relations with other European countries, particularly Russia. Despite, British unhappiness, many European countries received Wali Mission and recognised independence of Afghanistan. After completing the European part of its tour, the Afghan Mission arrived in the United States in July 1921. Explaining the purpose of the Mission, Mohammad Wali Khan told the reporters on 11 July 1921 in New York that he had come to explore the possibilities of establishing diplomatic
relations between Afghanistan and the United States."17 This official mission could be considered as the first formal contact between independent Afghanistan and the United States of America. Mohammad Wali Khan, on 12 July 1921 at New York reiterated his country's desire for establishing diplomatic relations with the United States.18 While expressing his views on the investment avenues in Afghanistan, he told the press on 17 July 1921 that the establishment of relations between Kabul and Washington would provide ample opportunities for American businessmen to invest in Kabul".19

After about a week's stay in New York, the Afghan Mission reached Washington. Soon a meeting of Wali Khan with the US Secretary of State was fixed.20 However, it was made clear from the outset that the welcome accorded to the Afghan Mission by the United States should not be interpreted as full recognition of Amanullah's government".21 As on the eve of the meeting the Secretary

18. Ibid., 13 July 1921.
19. Ibid., 18 July 1921.
20. Ibid.
21. Ibid., 20 July, 1921.
of State, Charles E. Hughes, in a briefing to the American President on 18 July 1921 communicated that "There is a Mission here from Afghanistan apparently with full powers and desirous of having American participation in the development of that country. Apparently we have hitherto had no relations with Afghanistan directly, as formerly our dealings with that country were through Great Britain. In 1919, Great Britain recognised the independence of Afghanistan".22 He also informed the President that the British government was not opposed to U.S. recognition of the Afghan Mission. However, she did not look with favour on its (Afghan Mission's) endeavours to conclude agreements with other Governments inasmuch Afghanistan, although ostensibly independent, was still within the British "spheres of political influence".23 In the same letter he added "I have informed the Mission that I shall receive them on Wednesday at the Department and I think that it would be well, if you approve, that you should also receive them. I do not think, however, that pending further inquiries it is necessary or advisable to go beyond their courteous reception".24


23. Ibid.

24. Ibid., p.259.
The Secretary of State received the Wali Mission on 20 July 1921 at the Department of State and accepted a letter from the Amir. 25 After his meeting with the Mission, Huges informed the President that "the members of the Mission do desire to be received by you." 26 He further conveyed that the Afghan Mission was in the United States, "to press the request for the establishment of diplomatic relations". 27 In the same communication the Secretary of State informed that the U.S. "never had diplomatic relations with Afghanistan, in fact not even a Consular representation." 28 But as the Great Britain "has relinquished her protectorate" 29 over Afghanistan, the U.S. could have direct relations with it. However, Huges (Probably because of British interests in Afghanistan) advised the President that "nothing further should be said at this time than that the matter will be taken under careful consideration". 30 Similarly, regarding commercial

25. The Secretary of State to President Harding, 21 July 1921, Ibid., p.259.
26. Ibid.
27. Ibid.
28. Ibid.
29. Ibid.
30. Ibid.
opined that they were extremely limited; "In fact ... there is little or no opportunity for trade, aside from the products of the sapphire and of the lapis lazuli mines".31

The Secretary of State arranged Afghan Mission's appointment with the President on 26 July 1921. During the meeting Wali Khan presented the personal letter of the Afghan King, Amir Amanullah, to President Harding. In the letter Amir Amanullah expressed his "sincere wish to establish permanent friendly relations between Afghanistan and high Government of the United States.32

In reply to Amanullah's letter, President Harding expressed happiness over his accession to Afghan throne. However, on the question of the establishment of bilateral relations he wrote

"It is my wish that the relations between the United States and Afghanistan may always be of friendly character, and I shall be happy to cooperate with your Majesty to this end. I am constrained, however, to confirm to your Majesty what was stated orally to G. Mohammed Wali Khan, that with respect to the United States, the question of the creation of a Diplomatic Mission and of the appropriate action to that end by the Congress of the United States, must be reserved for further consideration".33

31. Ibid.
32. Amir Amanullah's letter to President Harding (no date), no.22, p.260.
33. President Harding to Amanullah Khan, 29 July 1921, Ibid., p.261.
After its meeting with President the Wali Mission left for London on 30 July 1921. During a press conference at the time of his departure, Wali Khan refused to give more details about his mission and only said that it was a secret diplomatic mission which had not attained its objective. Thus the visit of the Afghan delegation to the United States of America did not achieve the desired results. But it paved the way for the future relationship between the two countries. Though the United States did not grant diplomatic recognition to Afghanistan, it evinced interest in the land of Afghans. This is obvious from the fact that Cornelius Van H. Engert, an American diplomat stationed in Persia, made an unofficial visit to Amanullah's court in 1922 who was accorded a friendly welcome as the first official American to visit Afghanistan. He wrote a detailed report to the State Department strongly recommending the recognition of the country.

How far the American administration was concerned about its interest in Afghanistan is obvious from the State Department's reaction over an agreement between Prof. Auguste Foucher of France and Afghan Government to detain

34. V.P. Vaidik, no.16, pp.11
exclusive French privilege for archaeological exploration in Afghanistan". Ambassador Merrick after making discreet and informal enquiries, in his reply to the home government wrote that, firstly, Prof. Fourcher has secured this facility in his individual capacity; secondly, the French government was opposed to such monopolies, thirdly, if any American organisation desired to work in Afghanistan, it would be easy for it to reach an agreement with Prof. Foucher". 37

The State Department further instructed Ambassador Merrick to apprise the French Foreign Office that "the American Government is likewise opposed to the granting of privileges of this nature to the national of our country calculated to exclude the nationals of other countries". 38 The State Department, considering the future prospects of availing such privileges by the Americans further stated: "American individuals or institutions, in case at some future time, they desire to enter the field with the consent of the Afghan authorities, should enjoy an equality of

37. Merrick to the Secretary of State, 7 March 1923, Ibid., p.19.
38. Secretary of State to Ambassador Merrick, 28 April 1923, Ibid., p.20.
opportunity with the nationals of any other country". 39 Ambassador Merrick, after consulting the State Department, replied to the Secretary of State that no American archaeologist would have any difficulty in coming to an arrangement with Prof. Fourcher to dig any part of the country desired. Prof. Coucher did not desire an exclusive concession from the Afghan government, but that the agreement was drawn up in that form". 40 The Secretary of State further wrote on 26 February 1924 to Merrick to take up the issue while enclosing a copy of the letter received from the President of the Archaeological Institute of America which contained protests on behalf of the Institute and of several of the larger museums against the concessions granted to France in Afghanistan and Albania". 41 Merrick in his reply informed the Secretary of State that the French Government was in agreement with the United States on the question of the concessions in Afghanistan ... owing to the difficulty in amending or changing the agreement, it is considered advisable to leave the concessions as it is ... the French Government is anxious for American archaeologists

39. Ibid.
40. Merrick to the Secretary of State, 27 July 1923, Ibid.
to make excavations in those localities where the French will not have explored".42 Thus, a minute observation of the above correspondence makes it clear that only after having obtained French assurance related to archaeological exploration, United States deemed its interests in Afghanistan as secured.

In spite of the unsympathetic American attitude towards the Wali Mission, Amanullah regime made another friendly gesture in 1925 to forge diplomatic relations between Afghanistan and the United States through its embassy in Paris. Afghan Ambassador to Paris Mohammad Nadir Khan wrote a letter to American Ambassador Merrick in France on 30 October 1925 regarding the establishment of an Afghan Legation at Washington, and an American Legation at Kabul43 enclosing a specimen Draft of Treaty of Friendship44 to be concluded between the two countries.

Ambassador Merrick sent a despatch along with the proposed Afghan Draft of Treaty of Friendship to the Department of State.45 Soon the Secretary of State, Frank

42. Merrick to the Secretary of State, 2 April 1924, Ibid., pp.754-55.
44. Ibid.
B. Kellogg instructed American Embassy in Paris to convey US Government's appreciation of friendly sentiments towards the United States and also appended a draft reply to be conveyed to the Afghan Ambassador Nadir Khan by Merrick. 46 The enclosed note, while appreciating the Afghan gesture, and recalling the visit of Wali Mission of 1921 also ensured "careful consideration" for the draft treaty submitted by Nadir Khan with Merrick. 47 Here it is apparent that the attitude of the US Administration was not as ambiguous and rigid in 1925-26, in its reply to the Afghan Ambassador Nadir Khan, as it was with the Wali Khan Mission in 1921.

In August 1928, Merrick suggested to the State Department to conduct diplomatic relations with Kabul through French Ambassador over there and wrote: "the fact that we are also without a diplomatic representative in Afghanistan, whereas there is a French Minister ... were we to make request, the French would be entirely willing to perform the same service with regard to Afghanistan as with Russia. 48 Soon after Merrick's suggestion, both France and


47. Ibid., pp.559-60.

the United States signed a treaty known as Kellogg-Briand Pact (1928) renouncing the resort to war. Though a copy of this treaty was sent to Merrick in Paris for onward transmission to Afghan Government through latter's ambassador in Paris", the US still opted to transit its communications to Afghan Government through French Ambassador in Kabul rather establishing direct diplomatic relations with Afghanistan. This attitude of US policy makers is clear from Kellogg's letter to Armour in Paris, which instructed the ambassador to transit two authenticated copies of the Multilateral Treaty for the Renunciation of War to the Minister of Afghanistan in Paris. The French Ambassador in Washington sent to the State Department, the instrument (letter) by which the Afghan Government declared its adhesion to the pact against war (Kellogg-Briand Pact). It seems that Afghan Government had given the letter of ratification to French Legation in Kabul which in turn passed the same to French Government for onward transmission to the US State Department.

49. Secretary of State to Merrick, 16 August, 1928, Ibid., p.145.

50. Secretary of State to Armour, 22 September 1928, Ibid., p.211.

51. French Ambassador to the Secretary of State, 27 November 1928, Ibid., p.234.

52. Ibid.
Thus, at this stage the United States wanted to have relations with Afghanistan, though not directly. As such the establishment of Afghan-U.S. direct diplomatic relationship was a gradual process. In fact, indirect relations were inaugurated between Kabul and Washington through Paris. At the same time, it is pertinent to state that though Washington's attitude was different as compared to 1921, but still it was hesitant to show an unambiguous and warm response to match the expectations of Kabul. This is evident from the fact that when Amanullah, despite earlier US indifference, made another friendly gesture in 1928 to establish diplomatic relations between the two countries by proposing to extend his European tour to Washington, the US response was offending. The US Government rejected Amanullah's offer for diplomatic relations "with an insulting suggestion that his visit be unofficial, at his own-expense and that entertainment would be limited to lunch with President Coolidge".53 In this way, the Afghan request to forge friendly and diplomatic relations with Washington was once again snubbed by the US Administration.

However, even this momentum in the normalization of Afghan-US relations suffered a setback when king Amanullah

was forced to leave Afghanistan in April 1929. A close look at the foreign policy of Afghanistan during Amanullah's reign reveals in no uncertain terms that Kabul made continuous efforts for establishing diplomatic relations with the United States. The US position was ambiguous and cool. Without much success for all practical purposes in this regard, it was however, a step towards dealing with the Government of Afghanistan through Paris.

After the fall of Amanullah the throne was usurped by a Tajik (called Bacha Sagao by his detractors) who ruled Afghanistan for nine months. He was overthrown by Nadir Khan, the former Commander-in-Chief of the Afghan army, and the Ambassador to France ascended the throne of Kabul on 17 October 1929." Nadir Shah adopted a more traditional foreign policy. "The pendulum, which had gone too far to the left, swung back to the middle". It was a policy of neutrality and equitable relations with all countries; good relations with neighbours, sought to develop ties with Germany and France in view to harness their economic potentialities.

54. Ibid.
56. Abdul Samad Ghaus, no.11, p.47.
57. Ibid.
Cooperation with the US was enticing for Nadir Shah as it was deemed to be helpful in the modernization process of Afghanistan. "It was a rich, far away country with no imperialistic ambitions in Asia, its private investors were perceived to be bold and imaginative and the quality of its technical know-how was second to none". Hence, Nadir Shah endeavoured to forge direct diplomatic ties with Washington. This time the negotiations were channelized through Afghan embassies in London and Paris. Accordingly, the Afghan Ambassador to London seemed to have approached his American counterpart in London.

American Ambassador Dawes on April 15 1931 sent a telegram to the State Department conveying that "the Afghan Minister desires to call on me in the near future to discuss the question of recognition... an expression of the Department's views would be appreciated". The Secretary of State, Stimson instructed Ambassador Dawes on April 16 that "There is no objection to you receiving the Afghan Minister at his request. If he raises the question of recognition, you should state that you are not authorised to discuss the matter with him".

58. Ibid., pp.51-2.
60. The Secretary of State to Dawes, Ibid.
Nadir Shah's government despite unpromising U.S. response, continued efforts to establish diplomatic relations with that country. Likewise, the Afghan Minister in Italy called on his American counterpart Kirk on September 18, 1931 and expressed his government's aspiration to establish relations with Washington. Kirk conveyed the Afghan request to the State Department.61 The Secretary of State instructed Kirk to inform the Afghan Ambassador "no recent consideration has been given by this Government to the question of the establishment of official relations with the Afghan Government and the present moment is not considered to be opportune to negotiate a treaty."62 The communication of the Secretary of State with the Afghan Ambassador in Italy and London reveals that even after eleven years of Afghan requests, the State Department was reluctant to grant diplomatic recognition and establish friendly relations with Afghanistan.

In 1933, Nadir Shah passed away. Like King Amanullah, he wished to enlist the cooperation of the US in the development of Afghanistan and had made sincere efforts to establish direct relations with that country, but there

62. Secretary of State to Kirk, 24 September 1931, Ibid.
was no major breakthrough in this direction. The US industrialists, who were preoccupied with their own economic difficulties at that time on account of economic depression, evinced no interest in Afghanistan. It is also likely, that the country's remoteness and lack of knowledge in the US about its internal conditions discouraged the American Government and American investors from getting involved in Afghanistan.63

King Zahir Shah who ascended to the throne of Kabul in 1933, followed the same principles as Nadir Shah in foreign policy, "Correct relations with the Soviet Union and Great Britain: Close relations with Turkey, Iran and other Muslim countries; greater international recognition and wider contacts; and a continued attempt to secure the assistance of distant industrial powers in modernizing the country."64 With these objectives the Government of Zahir Shah attempted to improve Afghanistan's relations with Japan, Italy, France and Czechoslovakia and procured economic help".65

63. Abdul Samad Ghaus, no.11, p.52.
64. Gregorian Vertan; no.55, p.375.
At this stage, the new Afghan regime once again sought American "goodwill and recognition". To this end, King Zahir Shah sent a letter to the US President through Afghan Minister in Paris for onward transmission, in which a desire of Afghan Government to strengthen the political and economic relations with the United States was expressed.\(^{66}\) Acting Secretary of State, William Philips, commenting on King Zahir Shah's letter, wrote to President Roosevelt that "Although this Government has never entered into direct diplomatic relations with Afghanistan, President Harding in 1921 received an official mission from that country by which it was generally accepted that recognition had been accorded to the regime of King Amanullah who was then in power."\(^{67}\) Enunciating the reasons for U.S. hesitancy in granting diplomatic recognition to Afghanistan, he wrote that "we have been conservative on the subject owing to the primitive condition of that country, the lack of capitulatory or other guarantees for the safety of foreigners, and the absence of any important American interest."\(^{68}\) Citing facts in favour


\(^{67}\) Acting Secretary of State to President, 26 August 1934, Ibid., p.749.

\(^{68}\) Ibid.
of the recognition he stated "Since the Government of Afghanistan is recognized by all of the Great Powers and since the present regime appears to be a stable one, I can see no reason why we should withhold recognition of that country." 69

The American President Roosevelt replied to King Zahir Shah's letter on 21 August 1934 which was considered by both the countries as diplomatic recognition of Afghanistan." 70 The President communicated to the Afghan king through the American embassy in Paris.

"I cordially reciprocate the sentiments which you express and in extending recognition to your Majesty's Government, take this opportunity of assuring you of my hope that friendly relations will always exist between the United States and Afghanistan." 71

Thus, after thirteen years of untiring and sincere efforts by the three successive regimes in Kabul, the Afghans were able to secure U.S. diplomatic recognition for their country.

69. Ibid.
70. The Acting Secretary of State to the Ambassador in France (Straus) August 28, 1934, Foreign Relations of the US. 1934, vol.II, p.750.
71. President Roosevelt taking Zahir Shah, 21 August 1934, Ibid., p.750.
Though the Afghan were happy with the diplomatic recognition for their country by President Roosevelt, after so many years of their efforts to establish friendly relations with the United States, they were not satisfied merely with the formal recognition. In fact, the Afghan government wanted to establish closer and broad-based relations with the United States and involve that country in its developmental efforts. It was with these policy objectives in mind that the Afghan Ambassador to Paris, Shah Wali Khan on September 6, 1934 approached his American counterpart Jesse Isidor Straus and "raised the question of future relations between the Afghan monarchy and the United States ... (and) expressed the hope that these relations might be established on a permanent basis"72 and outlined the need for a treaty of friendship. In the same meeting the Afghan Ambassador proposed a draft for treaty of friendship between Afghanistan and the United States.73

On January 2, 1935, the Secretary of State reacting to the proposed draft, replied to Ambassador Straus in Paris:

"Although the U.S. was not averse to concluding a treaty of friendship and commerce with the Government


73. Ibid.
of Afghanistan, it considers that the purpose which the two Governments have in mind might be accomplished more expeditiously and satisfactorily by the conclusion of a less formal agreement.  

In the same communication the Secretary of State sent a draft proposal of the agreement, which was to be in English and French, and similar to the U.S. agreement with Saudi Arabia concluded in November 1933 with minor differences. He authorized Ambassador Straus to negotiate an agreement with the Afghan Ambassador Shah Wali along the lines of the proposed draft which sought to establish enduring peace and sincere friendship between the American and Afghan citizens and unconditional most-favoured-nation treatment by both the countries in respect of import-export and other duties and charges affecting commerce, as well as in respect of transit, warehousing and other facilities.

However, the Afghan government which was eagerly trying to make its relations with the US broad-based took more than five months to respond to the American proposed

75. Ibid., pp.556-57.
76. Ibid., pp.557-58.
draft agreement. On June 4, 1935, the U.S. Ambassador in France, Straus wrote to the Secretary of State that "after prolonged negotiations the Afghan Legation ... has agreed to all the articles proposed by the State Department in its draft agreement ... with the exception of article 4," which envisaged provisions for economic relations on the basis of unconditional most-favoured nation-treatment. Responding to the Afghan counter proposal, the Secretary of State informed Straus that the "Afghan counter proposal is ambiguous and consequently the Department prefers its own draft of Article IV."78

Ambassador Straus communicated to the Secretary of State that Afghans were still unwilling to accept the words "most favoured nation" treatment of Article IV and sought authorization to propose the substitute text of the same which could be acceptable to Afghanistan.79 On 3 July 1935, the State Department granted authorization to Ambassador Straus to propose a substitute text of the disputed part of the Article IV.80 Consequently, the American Embassy could

77. The Ambassador in France (Straus) to the Secretary of State, June 4, 1935, Ibid., p.560.
78. The Secretary of State to the Ambassador in France (Straus) June 6, 1935, Ibid., p.561
speed up the process and on October 7, 1935 informed the State Department that the Afghan Government was prepared to sign the agreement. However, it took quite a long time before a bilateral agreement could actually be concluded. Meanwhile, correspondence continued between the two governments to omit all controversial articles in the original drafts. The American Counselor Theodore Marriner told the Afghan Charge d'Affairs at their meeting on February 25, 1936 that "the sole way of bringing about some form of agreement, so desirable for the foundation of good relations between ... (the) two countries, seemed to be the omission of all controversial articles where the mention of most-favoured-nation treatment had been included in the original drafts." Soon on March 10, 1936 the Afghan Charge d'Affairs informed Marriner that his Government was in accord for the signature of the proposed treaty. Subsequently on March 26, 1936, the much sought agreement was signed by Ali Mohammed Khan, Minister of the Kingdom of Afghanistan, in London, and Ambassador Straus at Paris.

81. The Charge in France (Marriner) to the Secretary of State, October 7, 1935, Ibid., pp. 561-62.
82. Memorandum by the Counselor of Embassy in France (Marriner), February 25, 1936, Ibid., vol. III, p. 4.
83. The Ambassador in France (Straus) to the Secretary of State, March 10, 1936, Ibid., vol. III, p. 5-6.
84. The Ambassador in France (Straus) to the Secretary of State, March 26, 1936, Ibid., vol. III, p. 7.
Though Afghanistan was granted formal diplomatic recognition by the US, her activities in the land-locked country were limited. After repeated Afghan efforts to get resident American diplomatic representation in Kabul, the American Minister in Teheran, William H. Hornybrook, was accredited to Kabul in January 1935.\textsuperscript{85} Hornybrook, visited Kabul in April 1935 with a view to explore possibilities of exchanging diplomatic personnel between the two countries.\textsuperscript{86} At this juncture, the Afghan government through its embassies in Europe once again tried to attract private American investors. Responding to the renewed Afghan initiative, the representatives of the Inland Exploration Company of New York, contacted the Afghan Foreign Minister, Fiaz Mohammed Khan in Berlin in October 1936, through the American Ambassador to Germany with a view to explore and exploit the oil resources in Afghanistan.\textsuperscript{87} On November 20 1936, the representatives of Inland Exploration Company and Afghan Foreign Minister Fiaz Mohammed concluded an agreement which granted a 75 year concession to the American company in five provinces of the country, "for the development of

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{85} Leon B. Poullada, "Afghanistan and the U.S., The Crucial years", no.53, p.180}
\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{86} \textit{New York Times}, April 26, 1935.}
\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{87} V.P. Vaidik, no.16, p.34.
Afghanistan's preserved petroleum deposits - the first and the only time that such a concession has been given. 88

However, this project never fructified. The company closed its shop no sooner had they started drilling in 1938. The company surrendered its concessions pleading that the rich oil deposits of Afghanistan were virtually inaccessible and would require about $300 million to exploit them. 89

Several reasons were given for the withdrawal of American company, but none was convincing to the Afghans. In fact, the U.S. decision served a blow to Afghanistan's policy of seeking support, services and investments from distant countries which were, it was hoped, politically disinterested in Afghan affairs. 90

World War-II and Afghan-US Relations

When the World War II broke out in Europe in September 1939, the Afghan leaders prudently sought to remain neutral. Though their sympathies were primarily with the Axis powers, they "announced a position of strict


89. Vertan Gregorian, no. 55, p.381.

neutrality, which (they) reiterated in a royal proclamation on August 17, 1940 ... The neutrality remained constant throughout the War, although it was strained by an Allied demand, made in the fall of 1941, for the expulsion of all Axis nationals. As the war widened to include Japan and the United States, Afghanistan began to feel the effects of the conflict on its economy in more than one way.

However, it was during the war years that the United States of America became alive to the geo-strategic importance of Afghanistan when in June 1941 Germany invaded USSR and also intensified its activities in Afghanistan. It was during such circumstances that the U.S. Minister in Iran, Dreyfus visited Kabul and sent a report to the State Department, stating:

"The Afghans have a sincere and deep rooted desire, in the absence of a friend or neighbour to whom they can turn, to have a disinterested friend to assist and advise them and they have always hoped that the US would be willing to fill such a role ... I venture to recommend the immediate opening of a Legation at Kabul for the following reasons: - first and most important the US should accept the hand of friendship offered by this small independent nation in keeping with its world responsibilities; secondly this is an opportunity which should not be missed of establishing ourselves solidly in a strategic position in Asia; thirdly our interests in Afghanistan should increase since negotiations are

91. Arnold Fletcher, no.88, p.239. op.cit., p.239.
now underway to bring a number of American teachers and technical advisers. and many more are contemplated if all goes well."92

At this stage, after the recommendation of the American Minister in Iran, Dreyfus to the Secretary of State, the State Department proposed to appoint Charles W. Thayer as Third Secretary and Vice Counsel93 at Kabul. But, the Afghan Government did not agree to this American proposal and asked for the appointment of a full-fledged Ambassador to Kabul.94 However, it took around four months' intense diplomatic correspondence between Washington, Teheran and Kabul and the intervention of the President Roosevelt95 before Cornelius Van H. Engert cold be appointed as the first U.S. Minister to Afghanistan on March 25, 1942.96 After getting its demand fulfilled, the Afghan Government granted permission for Thayer to proceed to Kabul


93. The Secretary of State to the Minister in Iran (Dreyfus), February 7, 1942, Ibid., 1942, p.45.

94. The Minister in Iran (Dreyfus) to the Secretary of State, Ibid., March 1, 1942, p.46.

95. Memorandum by President Roosevelt to the Acting Secretary of State, March 16, 1942, Foreign Relations, 1942, vol.IV, p.48, See pp.46-50 also.

96. The Under Secretary of State (Walles) to President Roosevelt, March 25, 1942, Ibid., p.49.

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to open the Legation. Accordingly, they on June 6, 1942 opened American Legation at Kabul. The King Zahir Shah, welcomed the U.S. decision to open the Legation at Kabul and expressed the hope of better economic and political relations between the two countries.

By the time Engert, the first American Minister to Afghanistan assumed charge in Kabul on July 1942, Afghan economy, on account of the expansion of war, was facing severe crisis. Her foreign trade was virtually paralysed. Engert rose to the occasion and with the help of home government and British authorities launched an economic rescue operation for the collapsing Afghan economy. The resultant effect of the war time American help was the beginning of goodwill between the two countries. In this atmosphere, the Afghan Government

97. The Minister in Iran (Dreyfus) to the Secretary of State, April 22, 1942, op. cit., p. 50.
98. The Charge in Afghanistan (Thayer) to the Secretary of State, June 6, 1942, Ibid.
99. The Charge in Afghanistan (Thayer) to the Secretary of State, June 17, 1942, ibid., p. 51.
100. The Minister in Afghanistan (Engert) to the Secretary of State, July 25, 1942, ibid., pp. 51-52.
102. Ibid.
103. Ibid.
appointed Addul Hussein Aziz as the Minister to the United States, in February 1943. On June 4, 1943 Aziz presented his credentials to President Roosevelt. 104

Afghan-U.S. Relations in the Post-War Years

The world of 1945 was quite different from the one prevalent on its eve. It was marked by the breaking up of the old colonial system and the emergence of new centres of power. "Germany was prostrate and dismembered; the remote United States of America had emerged as the world leader. The Soviet Union had survived the war, scarred but as inscrutable and as powerful as ever. Great Britain, on the other hand, had come to the close of an era of imperialism. 105

Before long, the war time Allies divided into two antagonistic camps, one led by the United States and the other by the Soviet Union, and gave genesis to the Cold War. At this juncture, the main objectives of the US foreign policy, particularly after the establishment of communism in China, were to contain communism all over the world and to fill the power vacuum left by the former colonial powers.

The US strategic interest in Afghanistan also stemmed from its desire to check the further spread of communism, (as its borders touched USSR and China) and filling the power vacuum after the departure of the British from the Indian subcontinent.

At a time when major changes took place on the world scene, the Afghans, too, were trying to adjust with the new realities - regional as well as international- and give momentum to their centuries old stagnant economy. All this necessitated not only a change in policies but of personalities also. Realizing this fact, the ruling family in Afghanistan brought as change of personality, Hashim Khan, who served as Prime Minister from 1933, resigned in early 1946, and was succeeded by his younger brother, Shah Mahmud Khan.106 Speaking on foreign policy, the new Prime Minister said that establishment of friendly relations with all countries, especially the neighbours, constituted the cornerstone of the Afghan foreign policy.107 Outlining the new government's economic agenda, Shah Mahmud said that his government was planning to reduce the armed forces and maintain only a limited army, sufficient enough to prevent

107. Cited in V.P. Vaidik, no.16, p.47.
the feuding tribes. The money, thus saved could be utilized for the developmental purpose.108

As a matter of fact, through his initial pronouncements, the new Prime Minister gave a hint about the government’s decision to give momentum to the stagnant Afghan economy. But, if actual development was to take place, the land-locked country needed ample outside economic and technical assistance. And this fact was quite clear to the Afghan leadership also. However, at a time when British departure from the region seemed imminent and Russia still had to recover from the war effects, Afghan’s needed a substitute for the pre-war German-Italian involvement in their country. At this juncture, the Afghans realized that technically advanced United States could be the ideal substitute 109 for the pre-war German Italian economic activities in Afghanistan. Moreover, the “distant America (without colonial past in Asia) was no imperialist threat to Afghanistan”.110

Working on this thesis, the Royal Family sought to engage American engineers and educators in their

108. Ibid., p.48.
110. Ibid.
development. Accordingly, the Afghan Government approached the Morrison-Knudsen construction company of Boise, Idaho (U.S.A) and concluded a $17 million agreement with a view to start a large multipurpose irrigation project in the Helmand River Valley of southern Afghanistan. According to the contract, the project was to be completed in three years. However, neither the money nor time could prove sufficient for the completion of the work. Original funds of $17 million were exhausted on preliminary study of the project, without achieving any positive results.

Soon, the Government of Afghanistan had to turn to the United States Export-Import Bank for assistance in order to renew its contract with the M.K.A.A. and continue the Helmand Valley Project. Abdul Majid Zahuli, Minister of National Economy, in 1949 went to Washington to seek a $118 million loan from the Exim Bank. Initially the Bank took a dim view of the economic rationality of the Afghan


plans and refused to grant a loan until the Afghans formulated a Helmand Valley Authority (H.A.V.A modeled on the Tennessee Valley Authority) to integrate the project. However, finally the bank approved on November 23, 1949 a $21 million loan only to continue the ongoing work of the Morrison-Knudsen Company in the Helmand Valley.

With the Exim Bank loan of $21 million, M.K.A. resumed its work on the construction of the proposed dams - Arghandab and Kajakhai - and principal canals - namely Boghra canal system. The Afghans undertook to bring the water from the main canals to the land, to prepare the new lands for cultivation and to settle the nomads. However, when the Afghan Government found herself unable to undertake the assigned task, it asked M.K.A. to take over its obligations. Moreover, soon on the advice of Export-Import Bank, with a view to unify the efforts in the valley, the Afghan Government created the Helmand Valley Authority (H.V.A.) in July 1952.

114. Ibid.
115. Louis Dupree, no. 106, p. 484.
118. Ibid.
119. Louis Dupree, no. 106, p. 484.
120. Ibid.
In 1952 in order to strengthen and give desired direction to the economic involvement of the United States, the USAID mission was opened up in Kabul.\(^{121}\) The Helmand Valley automatically became the high priority area of the USAID mission's activities since its establishment. Soon, the mission in collaboration with the M.K.A. staff produced a report on the performance and prospects of the Project.\(^{122}\) The Afghan Government, which applied for another loan of $36 million in 1952-53, used the report - "The Helmand Valley Development Program" produced by the USAID mission to support its case before the Ex-Exim Bank. However, the Bank agreed to provide only $10.5 million loan in July, 1953.\(^{123}\) It was with this involvement of M.K.A., U.S. Export Import Bank and USAID mission to Afghanistan, that Helmand Valley Project began to be considered an 'American Project' in the years to come, and successes and failures in the valley were indelibly linked to the U.S. government.\(^{124}\)

Though the U.S. economic assistance was meagre and overall American response to the Afghan overtures was


\(^{122}\) Ibid., pp.84-85.

\(^{123}\) Ibid.

\(^{124}\) Ibid.

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disappointing, the Afghan ruling circle wanted to establish close economic relations with the distant United States for political reasons.\footnote{125}{Leon B. Poullada, no.35, p.233.} It is confirmed from a conversation between President Truman and the Afghan Prime Minister, whereby the latter said "The Afghan Government tends to think of the loans of political as well of economic importance, possibly increasingly so in the light of manifestations of Soviet interest and offers of assistance to Afghanistan.\footnote{126}{Cited in Leon B. Poullada, "The Failure of American Diplomacy in Afghanistan", no.35, p.233.}

However, it was not only Afghanistan, but the U.S. too which was interested in maintaining cordial relations with the strategically located central Asian country as she was taking the place of the receding British power from the region. It was this mutuality of interests which prompted both the countries - U.S. and Afghanistan - to upgrade the status of their diplomatic missions to embassies on June 5 and November 1948, respectively.\footnote{127}{Department of State Bulletin, December 12, 1948, p.746; See, Foreign Relations of the U.S., 1948, vol. V, pp.480-81.} Ely E. Palmer was appointed as the first U.S. Ambassador to Afghanistan and Sardar Mohammad Naim Khan, first cousin of the king was
posted as Afghanistan Ambassador to the United States.\textsuperscript{128} Beside the elevation of legations to Embassy status, both the countries took another important step forward to establish even closer ties in February 1951. On 7 February 1951, United States and Afghanistan concluded an agreement for technical cooperation.\textsuperscript{129} Under the terms of the agreement both the signatories agreed to "cooperate with each other in the interchange of technical knowledge and skills and related activities designed to contribute to the balanced and integrated development of the economic resources and productive capacities of Afghanistan".\textsuperscript{130}

Besides the economic development, the Afghan Government sought to enlist U.S. assistance in the field of education. Both the Government of Afghanistan and the U.S. diplomatic mission in Kabul recognized the development of education as of fundamental importance to economic and social progress. Hence, in the immediate post-war era, on the request of the Afghan Government "a number of teachers were recruited for service in Afghanistan, usually on three-

\textsuperscript{128} Ibid.


\textsuperscript{130} Ibid.
year contracts. Most of these were assigned to Habibia, the oldest and largest of Afghan schools, although a few went to conservative Kandhar.\textsuperscript{131} This process of enlisting American help in the field of education continued in the years to come and rather widened to include the higher education during the 1950s and 1960s.

\textbf{Pashtunistan}

At a time when Afghans were striving to give momentum to their centuries old stagnant economy, and began enlisting moderate U.S. assistance for the same, a new development (having old history and profound impact on Afghan foreign policy) took place in the region - the departure of the British and partition of the Indian sub-continent into India and Pakistan in August, 1947. With this revived more than a half a century old issue about the fate of Pashtuns, living east of the Durand line.\textsuperscript{132} The Afghan Government raised the demand for the self determination of the Pashtuns living east of Durand Line with Pakistan, the British successor to the region. But when the Afghans found the Pakistan Government uncompromising on the issue, they tried to

\textsuperscript{131} Arnold Fletcher, \textit{Afghanistan: Highway of Conquest} (New York, Ithaca, 1966), p.244.

\textsuperscript{132} Durand Line was demarcated by the British in November 1893, in the wake of Anglo-Russian rivalry in the Central Asia.
internationalize it by blocking Pakistan's entry to the U.N.\textsuperscript{133} Moreover, they sought to enlist the support of international community, particularly the important powers of the day the United States and the Soviet Union.

As far as Soviet Union was concerned, her position on the 'Pashtunistan' issue was determined, theoretically by Marxist-Leninist ideology of 'Nationalities' right to self-determination, and practically by her strategic interest on its southern borders, more so in the light of increased U.S. activities in the region.\textsuperscript{134} Both the considerations led Moscow to support the Afghan position on the Pashtunistan issue. The Soviets emphasized that the Pashtuns and Baluchis were separate nationalities and that the partition of India along religious lines had not solved the national problem in the area constituting Pakistan.\textsuperscript{135} In an article, a Soviet writer not only supported the Pashtuns right to self-determination theoretically, but also expressed the fear that the Pashtuns territory might be used for building bases by the American and British imperialists,

\textsuperscript{133} Afghanistan opposed U.N. entry of Pakistan in September 1947 and was the only country to cast negative vote against Pakistan.

\textsuperscript{134} V.P. Vaidik, no.16, p.70.

\textsuperscript{135} Cited in Kulwant Kaur, \textit{Pak-Afghanistan Relations} (New Delhi, nd., p.175.)
which would prove inimical to Soviet interests.\textsuperscript{136}

So far as the United States is concerned, who took the place of the British in the region, she wanted to maintain 'status quo' on the question of Pashtunistan. Unlike the British, the U.S. could not afford Pakistan's position whole-heartedly and openly, as she wanted to prevent the USSR from having her dominance over Afghanistan.\textsuperscript{137} However, by adopting a pro-Afghan posture, the U.S. could not effort to alienate Pakistan too, where she was interested in safeguarding her economic, political and strategic interests.\textsuperscript{138} Actually, since the beginning, the US realized that if she had to prevent the Soviets from exploiting the 'Pashtunistan' question, the best course was the promotion of mutual dialogue between the disputants - Pakistan and Afghanistan - and maintenance of peace in the region.\textsuperscript{139} Working on this line, the U.S. even tried to serve as an informal "go between" during the 1950 blockade. However, Washington could not succeed either to discourage the Afghan agitation on the Pashtunistan issue or to

\textsuperscript{136} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{137} Ibid., p.162.
\textsuperscript{138} Ibid.
dissuade Pakistan from economic blockage against Afghanistan.\textsuperscript{140}

The continuance of the 1950 Pakistan-Afghan blockade affected the Afghan foreign policy, particularly, Afghan-U.S. relations on several counts. First, it resulted in a setback not only to the Afghan economy but also to the American prestige in Afghanistan.\textsuperscript{141} Secondly, Washington's position on the issue vis-a-vis Afghanistan, without understanding the validity of the Afghan case, and continued supply of substantial American aid to Pakistan, disappointed the Afghans and made them realize that they cannot depend on the U.S. support on the issue. Hence, if they wanted to give a definite conclusion to the problem, they had to search for an alternative for political support. Lastly, for economic and political problems which arose on account of the continued blockade, Afghanistan, to the disliking of the U.S., turned towards the Soviet Union, listened to Soviet overtures and concluded a four-year barter agreement.\textsuperscript{142} Thus, the U.S. position on the Pashtunistan issue and resultant blockade of 1950, not only poisoned

\textsuperscript{140}. V.P. Vaidik, no.16, pp.57-58.

\textsuperscript{141}. Ibid.

\textsuperscript{142}. Louis Dupree, \textit{Afghanistan}, no.106, p.493.
Afghan-U.S. relations but prepared background for the later day Soviet opportunities in Afghanistan.

Arms Aid

Besides the socio-economic development of the country and to give definite conclusion to the issue of Pashtuns living east of Durand Line, another related but important issue before the Afghan leaders in the post-war era was the modernization of the antiquated Afghan army. In fact, the internal security in Afghanistan was fragile partly because of the unruly nature of the Pashtun tribes, more so after World War II. The condition of the Afghan armed forces was very poor and the "political development, economic progress and internal stability were hindered by the weakness of the central government." Moreover, frequent border clashes of the Afghan forces with the Pakistani forces, with whom Afghanistan have dispute over Pashtun-Baluch areas, pressed the leadership to equip their army with the modern weapons.

For weapons, as for economic aid, Afghanistan turned to the United States. Even during the war period in 1944 the Afghan sought military assistance from the U.S. which


was ignored by the U.S. Government on the ground that "the immediate Soviet objective is sufficiently served by the existing isolation and backwardness of the country (Afghanistan)," and since "the Soviet Union has no reason to be dissatisfied with the present situation - (it) is unlikely to develop a more active policy in that country under present circumstances. 145

In the post-War period, the Afghan Government raised the demand for U.S. arms on more than one occasion. In December 1948, Abdul Majid, Minister of National Economy told the State Department officials that Afghanistan urgently needed weapons to maintain internal security against revolts by well-armed tribesmen. Moreover, he pointed out to the danger from the north in the wake of British withdrawal from the region. 146 However, the Truman administration was not moved by the Afghan request and declined their demand for U.S. arms aid on the following grounds:

(i) Owing to limitations in manpower and productive potential in the event of war, it is only on the basis of regional cooperation between Afghanistan,


Iran, Pakistan and India that Afghanistan would be able to offer more than a token resistance to invasion from the North. The prospects for cooperation among these four countries at the present time are not promising.

(ii) The need for allocating our not unlimited resources to the first line of defence in other words, Europe.

(iii) The present government has maintained its stability for seventeen years. Although the country is faced with problems of inflation and great poverty, the economy is not in a critical condition and there is not yet a grave internal threat to the stability of the government. For these reasons it is considered that assistance beyond a small loan for development purposes and assistance in buying military equipment to assure the Government's ability to maintain internal order is not advisable at this time.147

However, in 1950 the U.S. embassy in Kabul recommended the State Department to consider Afghan requests for arms in a more positive way. The reasons prompting the embassy to make such a recommendation were to exclude Soviet influence, cement Afghan-American friendship, maintain internal security, and prompt settlement of differences with Pakistan.148 This recommendation resulted in a visit to Kabul by Assistant Secretary of State George McGhee in March 1951, but could not go beyond the assurance of "sympathetic consideration"149 in the matter.


149. Ibid.
The Afghan Government interpreted Assistant Secretary of State George McGhee's assurance of "Sympathetic consideration" for Afghan request of U.S. arms aid as approval of its demand and, hence, in August 1951, it submitted a formal request for armaments with a list of arms it needed.\textsuperscript{150} The United States replied in November that "the arms requested will cost 25 million dollars. They will have to be paid in cash. Transit through Pakistan will have to be arranged with no help from the United States. The sale will have to be made public, and it would help if the Pashtunistan claim is dropped."\textsuperscript{151} The Afghan Prime Minsiter, Shah Mahmood called it as a "political refusal", as the American terms were unacceptable.\textsuperscript{152}

An Overview of Afghan - U.S. relations: 1919-1953

From the foregoing discussion, it is clear that the Afghan-U.S. relations presents a definite trend between a land-locked and economically backward country and a distant power, wherein different phases can easily be envisaged. The period from Afghan independence in 1919 till the U.S. recognition of Afghanistan and establishment of diplomatic

\textsuperscript{150}. Henry S. Bradsher, no.113, pp.19-20.
\textsuperscript{151}. Cited in Leon B. Poullada, no.53, pp.186-7.
\textsuperscript{152}. Ibid.
relations in 1934, marks the first phase of Afghan-U.S. relationship which saw repeated and sincere friendly overtures by the Afghans. This was a departure from the earlier Afghan policy of isolationism from the outside world. But the U.S. Government dilly-dallied in establishing friendly ties with the Afghans. Partly due to the lack of knowledge and interest about Afghanistan and partly the desire of the United States of not antagonizing the British Indian Government, the State Department kept on postponing the diplomatic recognition of the Afghan Government.

The Second phase (from 1934 till the U.S. participation in World War II) also does not show a distinct departure from the earlier U.S. stance, except in extending diplomatic recognition to Afghanistan in 1934. At the same time, the American Inland Exploration Company closed down its oil exploration activities in Afghanistan on the eve of the World War II, which was to be continued for 75 years. This act certainly did not create a sense of goodwill and trust for the United States in the minds of the Afghans. However, all this did not stop the U.S. Government from understanding the importance of Afghanistan vis-a-vis its geo-strategic location. The U.S. government realized this during the World War II, when the guns started booming in the neighbourhood of Afghanistan to the detriment of the U.S. interests in the region. It was in this respect that
direct diplomatic relationship was established with the opening of an American legation in Kabul in June 1942. This act, which had been its long-standing desire, was highly appreciated by the Afghan Government. In addition, the U.S. Government also extended economic assistance to Afghanistan by launching an economic rescue operation for the collapsing Afghan economy.

Thus, the immediate post-War period created a groundwork for good relationship between the two countries. At this stage, the Afghan leadership was convinced of the fact that distant America would not be an imperialist threat, rather it could be a good substitute for the British, whose stars were by now fading. But unfortunately, the U.S. Government could not fulfill some of the long standing Afghan aspirations, viz. to modernize economy, to strengthen internal security and safeguarding political independence and to secure political support on the Pashtunistan issue. This greatly disillusioned the Afghans. Hence, the imperative need on the part of Afghanistan to have looked out for other avenues of friendship. Thus, it may be said that historical forces in Afghanistan were moving in such a direction that compelled closer ties with another power of the day, i.e., the Soviet Union, and the beginnings of anti-American feeling which reached at the point of no return in the 1970s.

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