Chapter I

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

This chapter endeavours to analyse the evolution of Afghan foreign policy since the emergence of modern Afghanistan in 1747 till the conclusion of the Second World War, with special reference to Afghanistan's relations with the contemporary great powers -- Russia and Britain and Afghan response to them. In other words, it will be an analysis of the challenges posed by Anglo-Russian rivalry and its impact on Afghan foreign policy.

The word "Afghan" is the national name of all the peoples of Afghanistan which symbolizes an indivisible unit under all historical, economic and social conditions in the heart of Asia. According to Hasan Kawun Kakar, a noted Afghan scholar, Afghanistan has had three principal names -- *Aryana* in antiquity, *Khurasan* in the medieval era and Afghanistan in modern times. Modern Afghanistan is almost co-extensive with the land mentioned in the old Greek as Ariana, in the old Persian as Airya or Airyana, in Sanskrit as Arya-Vartta or Arya-Varsha and in Zend as Briene-Veejo. Situated between India and Persia, Aryana was a geographical and cultural rather than political name. The name Aryana lasted for about 1,500 years from

3 Ibid., p. xvi.
1000 B.C. to the fifth century of the Christian Era. The word Khurasan, denoting the "land of the rising sun" gained currency during the second century of the Christian Era. According to Mir Ghulam Muhammad Ghobar, an eminent Afghan historian, "for fourteen centuries Khurasan was applied initially to parts of Afghanistan and later to the whole country and is still in use for a small region to the northwest of it." Even up to the nineteenth century the name Khurasan, signifying Afghanistan was in vogue along with the words Pashtunkhwa and Sarhad. Thus it was only toward the end of the nineteenth century that "the appellation Afghanistan replaced the word Khurasan completely". According to Hasan K. Kakar, Afghanistan is not a new name and "it is generally believed to have appeared with the accession of Ahmad Shah Durrani in 1747". This view has also been supported by A.R. Pazhwak, a seasoned Afghan statesman. He writes: "Afghanistan is not the original name of this country but a term which gained currency in usage when Ahmad Shah Durrani united the various principalities under one political entity in 1747." According to available evidence the word "Afghanistan" was applied in a political sense to

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6 Kakar, n. 2, p. xvi.

7 Ibid.

a land for the first time in the third decade of the fourteenth century by Saifi Herawi. A detailed analysis of this etymological controversy is beyond the scope of the present study and it deems suffice to say that Afghanistan is an ancient country whose history dates back to over five thousand years.

The anthropological excavations undertaken in the early decades of the present century in Afghanistan revealed that Palaeolithic man probably lived in the caves of northern Afghanistan as long as 50,000 years ago. According to Louis Dupree, "Post-World War II excavations in south-central Afghanistan point to intimate relationships with the Indus Valley Civilization fourth-second millennia B.C."10

References to Afghanistan recur in the ancient Vedic literature and subsequent travelogues of foreign travellers. The reference to Afghanistan as Avagana occurs in Varaha Mishra's Bhrlta Sanhita. This view has been supported by A. Foucher, a noted French scholar. The works of Al Beiruni and Hsuen Tsang also mention about Afghanistan.

The advent of Islam during the seventh century in Afghanistan proved instrumental in overhauling the entire


culture and civilization of Afghanistan. Islam which brought about an overall change in the social, cultural and historical development of Afghanistan also forged a new religious and cultural bonds - bonds that to a certain extent overrode the prevalent ethnic diversities.

The advent of Islam in Afghanistan was followed by the conquest by Arabs who reached Kabul and Kandhar during the seventh century. The Muslim conquest brought Afghanistan within a greater political entity, stimulated trade in the region and preserved the country's geographic importance as a crossroad between India, Central Asia and the Mediterranean world.

For about two centuries the local dynasties ruled over Afghanistan -- Tahirids (820-70), and the Samanids (874-999). The closing years of the tenth century witnessed the advent of regime of Sabuk-tagin in Afghanistan who was succeeded by his son Mahmud Ghaznavi who ruled over Afghanistan till 1157 A.D. The Ghaznavi's empire extended over Kabul, Balkh, Badakhshan, Persian Khorasan and some parts of India. Following the collapse of Ghaznavi rule, the central authority in Afghanistan passed on to the local forces. The

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12 For details see, Pazhwak, n. 8, pp. 77-91.
16 Gregorian, n. 14, p. 15.
Mongol invasion brought economic disaster for Afghanistan during the thirteenth century. During the fourteenth century Afghanistan was invaded by Taimurlane and the early decades of the sixteenth century witnessed the establishment of Mughal rule in Kabul by Babur, a descendant of Timur, in 1504. Following the death of Babur which led to the collapse of Mughal rule in Afghanistan, the local tribes again vied for establishing their paramountcy in Afghanistan. During this period, Afghanistan was divided "between the empires of Persia and Mughal India, the northern tribes being under Mughal rule". The Afghan nationalism found its early seedlings during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries under the inspiration of Roshanla movement and Khushal Khan Khattak (1613-89) who inspired the Afghan tribes to "defend their independence and strive for political unity".

The geo-political situation in the region underwent a substantial change and the early period of eighteenth century witnessed the southern Afghan tribes led by Ghilzais rise in revolt against Persia which in later years spread to Herat and southeast of Persia. However the revolt was quelled by the then Persian King, Nadir Shah, whose assassination in 1747 provided an opportunity to the Abdalis under the leadership of Ahmad Khan Abdali to declare the independence of Afghanistan. During the same year, Ahmad Shah Abdali was made the King of Afghanistan. The succeeding pages present an analysis of Afghan foreign

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17 Molesworth, n. 15, p. 4.
18 Gregorian, n. 14, p. 43.
policy since its emergence as an independent modern State in 1747 till the conclusion of the Second World War with special reference to contemporary great powers. Adamec has divided the period between 1747 till the end of Second World War into the following four phases:

(A) The Period of Consolidation (1747 to 1800)
(B) The Period of Foreign Conflict (1800 to 1880)
(C) The Period of Defensive Isolationism (1880 to 1919)
(D) The Period of Defensive Neutralism (1919 till the end of Second World War).

The above classification envisaged by Adamec is retained for the purpose of present study.

(A) The Period of Consolidation : 1747 to 1800

Ahmad Shah Abdali after assuming the reins of power, consolidated his position and took measures to strengthen his empire. In this direction, he led eight expeditions into India. In their first expedition launched in 1748, however, the Afghan forces could not go beyond the Indus. In his subsequent expeditions, the Afghan King was able to incorporate Punjab, Kashmir and Multan into his empire. At the time of his death in 1773, the Afghan empire of Ahmad Shah Abdali extended from Atrek river to the Indus and from Tibet to the Arabian Sea.

21 Sultan Mohammad Khan, Tarikh-i-Afghanistan (n.d.), p. 27.
Timur Shah succeeded after the death of his father in 1773 as the new ruler of Afghanistan. Two decades of Timur Shah's rule over Afghanistan witnessed no major change in Afghan domestic and external policies but continuation of the legacy.

The closing years of the eighteenth century witnessed the rise of a powerful France evincing interest in the countries of South-West and Central Asia. The British, whose power in India had been in ascendency since the establishment of the East India Company in the beginning of the seventeenth century, were also planning to augment their political power and expand their trade and commerce in and beyond Afghanistan. This period also "witnessed the beginning of that interesting epoch when the diplomatic rivalries of the European powers became clear cut on the chess-board of Central Asia".

Zaman Shah (1793-99) who succeeded Timur Shah as the King of Afghanistan continued the policy of his father and grandfather. The external threats to Afghanistan during this period had increased. The growing power and expansion of the British in India and Persian plans to reassert its sovereignty over Herat portended threat to Afghanistan. According to Vartan Gregorian, "Afghanistan thus entered the nineteenth century a politically disunited ... state".


23 Gregorian, n. 14, p. 51.
(B) The Period of Foreign Conflict, 1800-1830

The onset of the nineteenth century envisaged an era of foreign conflicts for Afghanistan. During the first decade of the nineteenth century, the British signed a treaty with the Sikh ruler of Punjab, Maharaja Ranjit Singh on 25 April 1809 under which the British acquired a right of passage for their army through the Sikh territories in case of foreign aggression and the Sikhs undertook to help the British in their task of defence. This treaty was motivated by two factors. In the first place, by the growing possibility of a French invasion of India in 1808 and, secondly, to check the growing Sikh power to secure the British power in India.

During this period, the British were facing threat to their power locally from Marathas and the Sikhs. In the scheme of their defence strategy, the British made friendly gestures to the then Afghan ruler, Shah Shuja, and a British mission under Mountstuart Elphinstone left for Kabul on 13 October 1808.

The Elphinstone Mission tried to raise the issue of French and Russian threat to Afghanistan as well as India and wanted Shah Shuja to contract an alliance but were reluctant to help the Afghan King in his internal challenge which threatened the throne. However the Afghans were shrewd enough to discover the British

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25 Bilgrami, n. 22, p. 35.

designs and regarded "an alliance for the purpose of repelling one enemy was imperfect and that true friendship between the two states could only be maintained by identifying their interests in all cases."

Despite the differing approaches, the British India and Afghanistan signed a treaty in June 1809 in terms of which Afghanistan undertook to prevent the passage through Afghanistan of French and Persian troops on their way to India and the British Government pledged to pay the Afghans for their services against the confederacy. Besides Afghanistan was to exclude all Frenchmen from its territory. However, following the defeat of Shah Shuja by Shah Mahmud, the treaty became almost a dead letter.

Afghanistan, because of its borders with Russia and Persia, had assumed immense strategic importance in British defence strategy with regard to consolidation and protection of British rule in India. The Russians had started showing interest in Persia during this period. Besides, the growing French power was also deemed as a threat by the British. Consequently the British signed two treaties in 1809 and 1814 with Persia. Under the terms of the Anglo-Persian Treaty of 1809, Persia agreed "not to permit any European force whatever to pass through Persia either towards India or towards the

27 Ibid.

28 For text of the Treaty, see ibid., vol. XIII, pp. 53-55.

29 The name Persia is used for Iran here because the official use of name "Iran" was started only in 1937. Hence prior to that reference is made to Persia in the present study.
ports of that country". Persia also promised to afford a force for the protection of British dominions in case of attack from Afghanistan or any other country. The British Government in return agreed to "afford to the Shah [Persian King] a force, or in lieu of it, a subsidy, with warlike ammunition such as guns, muskets etc..." Similarly the Anglo-Persian treaty of 1814 envisaged for a Persian attack against Afghanistan in the event Afghans invaded India.

On the other hand, Russia had gained considerable diplomatic, political and economic gains in the region by virtue of two treaties -- the Treaty of Turkmanchay signed with Persia in 1828 and the Treaty of Adrianople signed with the Ottoman Empire in 1829. Under the terms of the Treaty of Turkmanchay, Persia surrendered its all territories west of the Caspian Sea to Russia. These developments proved instrumental in changing British strategy towards Iran as well as Afghanistan. It regarded any Persian encroachment or gain at the expense of Afghanistan as tantamount to an extension of Russia's political and economic gains on the doorstep of India.

30 For text of the treaty of 1809, see Aitchison, n. 24, vol. XIII (Calcutta : Government of India Publication Branch, 1933), pp. 53-55.
31 Ibid.
32 For text of Anglo-Persian treaty of 1814, see, ibid., p. 54. Also see J.C. Hurewitz, Diplomacy in the Near and the Middle East : A Documentary Survey 1535-1914 (New York, 1956), vol. I, pp. 86-88.
Lord Ellenborough, a then top ranking British official, had opined that Russia could enter India via Afghanistan. He further added: "Russian commerce would be utilized to prepare the way for Russian armies in Afghanistan". Thus, the Russian factor was the major determinant of British policies towards Afghanistan and Persia. Lord Palmerston, the then British Foreign Secretary was of the view that "a pro-British power in Afghanistan could influence officers in Persia in which Russia was deeply interested".

The British Governor-General in India, Lord Auckland, was advised by London to conclude political or commercial agreements with Afghanistan:

The time has arrived when it will be right for you to interfere, decidedly in the affairs of Afghanistan. Such an interference would doubtless be requisite either to prevent the extension of Persian dominion in that quarter or to raise a timely barrier against impending encroachments of Russian influence.

Consequently Lord Auckland sent his emissary Alexander Burnes to Kabul in November 1836 with the objective of securing political and commercial advantages without conceding any strategic concessions to Afghanistan.

The First Anglo-Afghan War

Realizing that the British were not going to get the desired concessions from the then Afghan ruler, Amir Dost

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36 Ibid., p. 603.
Mohammad, they tried to cultivate Shah Shuja who was then living in exile in India with the promise to restore him his throne. Efforts were also made to enlist the support of Maharaja Ranjit Singh of Punjab. During that period, Persia was planning to invade Herat. However in November 1838, the British foiled Persian attempts to invade Herat and forced the latter to accept a hands-off policy in regard to Herat. Subsequently the British also concluded a treaty with Shah Kamran, the ruler of Herat in August 1839, thus making Herat an exclusive British sphere of influence. This move seemed to be the part of overall British policy of bringing Afghanistan under British sphere of influence in the wake of growing Russian influence in the neighbouring countries of Central Asia. The Russians, who had gained considerable economic stakes in Central Asia between 1758 and 1858, considered a pro-British or English dominated Afghanistan a serious threat to their interests in the region. Thus both British and Russians were apprehensive of each other over Afghanistan.

In the meanwhile, in October 1838, the then Governor-General of India, Lord Auckland, issued a "Manifesto" accusing the Afghan ruler, Dost Mohammad of taking measures prejudicial

39 Smith, n. 35, p. 591.
to the security and peace of Indian frontiers. It was also
planned to install Shah Shuja as the ruler of Afghanistan with
the help of British army. In November 1838, the British army
launched expedition against Amir Dost Mohammad and in August
1839 Shah Shuja entered Kabul following the surrender of Dost
Mohammad.

However the people of Afghanistan, despite their internal
differences, could not tolerate the alien presence on their land.
Consequently a countrywide revolt by the Afghans resulted in the
annihilation of a British force of 4,500 men and supporting army
of 12,000 and the murder of Shah Shuja.

Despite this crushing defeat, the British forces again
entered Afghanistan in the autumn of 1842 but were defeated
again. As a consequence of the British failure, Amir Dost
Mohammad regained his throne in 1842. Prof. Bilgrami has opined
that the first British defeat in the first Anglo-Afghan war
"served as a good lesson to the British empire builders not to
meddle in the affairs of the far-off lands and taught them to
follow a policy of non-entanglement and non-interference".
However the British never learnt the lesson but repeated the
same mistake by launching second and third war against
Afghanistan as analysed in the succeeding pages.

41 For details see, Kaye, n. 37, vol. II, pp. 218-46.
42 For details see Munawar Khan, Anglo-Afghan Relations: 1738-1878 (Peshawar, 1963).
Second Anglo-Afghan War

Until the death of Amir Dost Mohammad in 1863, the British followed a policy of non-intervention in the internal affairs of Afghanistan. There followed a period of internal dissensions in Afghanistan after the death of Amir Dost Mohammad. However, between 1869 and 1872, the British and the Afghans forged closer relations. Following the second Anglo-Sikh War of 1847, India and Afghanistan had become close to each other. In 1869, the then Afghan Amir, Sher Ali Khan paid a visit to India which resulted in the signing of Anglo-Afghan agreement under which the British declared their intention not to interfere in Afghan internal affairs and also undertook to support Afghanistan’s independence.

However the British Government was alarmed over the growing Russian advances in the Central Asian countries bordering Afghanistan. In 1864, Russians gained control of Khiva and Kookand, captured Tashkent in 1865 and annexed Samarkand in 1869 and then got Bukhara. These Russian advances were deemed a serious threat to British power in India. A section of the British policy makers argued in favour of establishing a permanent British mission in Kabul and make clear to all that a pro-British and peaceful Afghanistan was of immense significance to British interests in India and the East.


Until the beginning of 1874, London favoured a policy of non-intervention in Afghanistan. In February 1874, Benjamin Disraeli’s Government came to power in London and Lord Salisbury was appointed as the new Secretary of State for India. The new government followed a “Forward Policy” which meant that Britain could not preserve its interests in India while pursuing a non-interventionist policy in Afghanistan and demanded the establishment of a permanent British mission in Kabul. However, the then Afghan ruler, Sher Ali Khan was opposed to the appointment of a British mission in Kabul and argued that the religious sentiments of his “people at the time would impose too great a responsibility upon him in protecting a British agent in Afghanistan”. This provided an excuse for the British to invade Afghanistan which resulted in the outbreak of Second Anglo-Afghan War. Afghan forces withdrew back and Amir Sher Ali Khan who had to take refuge in Mazari-Sharief, died on 21 February 1879.

Consequently the British imposed the Treaty of Gandamak signed in May 1879 on Afghanistan. Amir Yakub Khan, son of Amir Sher Ali, became the new ruler of Afghanistan. Under the Treaty of Gandamak, Afghan ruler agreed to the appointment of a


48 Ibid., p. 22.

49 For text of the Treaty of Gandamak, see Aitchison, no. 24, Vol. XI (Calcutta, 1909), pp. 344-47.
British agent in Kabul and follow the advice of the British in the conduct of Afghan foreign relations. Sir Louis Cavagnari who took over as British envoy in Kabul was murdered in September 1879 which led to the British reprisals. These events led to the abdication of Amir Yakub Khan and in 1880, Amir Abdur Rahman, the nephew of Amir Sher Ali Khan took over as the new ruler of Afghanistan.

(C) The Period of Defensive Isolationism (1880 - 1919)

When Amir Abdur Rahman took over as the new ruler of Afghanistan in 1880, "Anglo-Afghan relations were burdened with the legacy of two wars, the loss of life and property and the illwill and distrust that resulted". In his first foreign policy pronouncement, Amir Abdur Rahman informed the then chief British political officer in Afghanistan:

"... As long as your Empire and that Russia exist, my countrymen, the tribes of Afghanistan should live quietly in ease and peace; and that these two States should find us true and faithful ... and we hope of your friendship that, sympathizing with and assisting the people of Afghanistan, you will place them under the honourable protection of the two Powers...."

In the wake of acute Anglo-Russian rivalry, the Afghan Amir wanted Afghanistan to pursue an independent foreign policy by maintaining friendly relations with British India as well as


51 National Archives of India (NAI, New Delhi), Foreign and Political Department, Secret F, Nos. 243-250, June 1880, No. 244A.
Rustia. However the British were reluctant to concede the Afghan demand. Lepel Griffin, while assuring the Afghan Amir about the British intention not to interfere in the internal affairs of Afghanistan, wrote: "... Your Highness can have no political relations with any foreign power except with the British Government..." This analysis makes it discernible that the British Government accepted the internal independence of Afghanistan while continuing its control over the foreign affairs of Afghanistan. However, Amir Abdur Rahman wanted to pursue an independent policy, both domestically and externally.

Ludwig W. Adamec has divided the foreign policy of Abdur Rahman into three categories:

1. Assertion of National Independence;
2. Insistence on Isolationism; and

The succeeding pages analyse these aspects.

(1) **Assertion of National Independence**

Amir Abdur Rahman always regarded himself as an independent ruler of an independent Afghanistan. In the light of the fact that British exerted control over Afghanistan's foreign relations, the Amir insisted that, after seeking the advice of the British Indian Government, he could take an independent decision on any issue at hand. The Amir wrote to the then chief British agent in Kabul, Lepel Griffin in 1880, "I desire nothing in lieu of

52 Ibid., Nos. 143-144, August 1905, No. 143.
53 Adamec, n. 50, p. 17.
54 NAI, n. 51, Nos. 34-40, August 1889, No. 34.
services rendered nor do I demand favours in exchange for duties performed. But I have my claims on the desire of the Afghan nation."

In a royal proclamation issued in 1887, he appealed to the Afghan's sense of honour, national dignity and patriotism, drawing their attention to the Anglo-Russian threat: "The country of Afghanistan is a mere spot under the compass of two infidels... it is closely besieged; yet although imprisoned, men are always thinking of their release, you are indifferent to your bonds". Amir Abdur Rahman united Afghanistan and retained powers and authority to himself. He also equipped the army with modern weapons.

(ii) **Insistence on Isolationism**

Afghanistan followed a consistent policy of isolationism during the reign of Amir Abdur Rahman. Because of the British control over Afghan foreign policy, Afghanistan was isolated from Persia and Russia and left the door for political relations open only to Britain. Even while dealing with the British, the Afghan Amir exercised and asserted his independence to decide the important issues. In place of a British envoy, the Afghan Amir insisted on the appointment of a Muslim as British envoy to Kabul. In October 1881, the British Viceroy suggested the name of Mir Hashim Khan as the British envoy, but the Amir insisted on the appointment of Afzal Khan, which was to be approved by

the British.

As a part of the policy of isolationism, the Afghan Amir also refused to allow the British troops and officers to visit the strategic areas in Afghanistan. In 1884, when the Russians had reached Merv, the British tried to influence the Amir for the construction of rail links for the defence of Afghanistan but the Amir while appreciating the British suggestions refused to oblige. He protested the planned extension of the British rail roads to Chaman as "leading to no good".

The Amir was all in favour of the induction of modern technology into Afghanistan but at the same time he feared that it would lead to the penetration of foreign influence. He was also opposed to the stationing of British troops or advisers in Afghanistan. During 1887-88 when the Amir was faced with Ghilzai rebellion and revolt of Ishaq Khan, he proclaimed that the British were waiting at the border for his call to come to his help. In fact, he did not invite the British army. His purpose was only to warn his enemies and he was not inclined to invite foreign troops on Afghan soil.

The independent thinking of Amir Abdur Rahman was noticed by the British. Lord Dufferin wrote to the Amir in 1886: 

"... your mind is constantly occupied by the idea of asserting your independence of all control in internal affairs, that you see

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57 NAI, n. 51, Nos. 213-239, August 1882, K.W. I, p. 4.
58 Ibid., Nos. 475-488, June 1892, No. 475.
59 Adamec, n. 50, p. 23.
60 NAI, n. 51, Nos. 76-83, August 1899, No. 81A, pp. 6-7.
interference in every British action."

(iii) Promotion of Balance of Power:

During the reign of Amir Abdur Rahman, the geopolitical situation in the neighbourhood of Afghanistan had assumed significant dimensions. Anglo-Russian rivalry was at its zenith. Both great powers were increasing and expanding the sphere of influence in Islamic countries -- Afghanistan, Persia and Ottoman Empire.

Under these circumstances, Amir wanted Afghanistan to pursue a "middle course" policy of forging closer relations with neighbouring Islamic countries without annoying the either great power in the neighbourhood. According to Adamec: "Abdur Rahman's relations with the more or less independent Muslim populations of the East were influenced by Pan-Islamic considerations".

According to Amir Abdur Rahman, the Russian policy was essentially that "rightly or wrongly, friendly or unfriendly, with peace or war, the Islamic kingdoms should be washed away from the face of the Asiatic continent".

Amir Abdur Rahman was perhaps also convinced that the Russians were determined to annex Persia, Turkey and Afghanistan, by hook or crook. There were two possible ways of doing so. In

61 Ibid., Nos. 573-77, August 1892, No. 575, p. 5.
62 Adamec, n. 50, p. 24.
the first place, Russians could directly befriend these countries and thus draw them to their orbit or on the other hand provoke these countries against Britain and eventually reach an understanding with the British in crushing them and thus dividing the booty.

The Afghan Amir also recounted in his memoirs that the Russians were planning to attack India: "Russia expected that an attack on India would be accompanied by a general uprising in that country, followed by a quick Russian victory, since Britain, as a seapower, was no match for Russia on land". In the wake of such geo-political compulsions, Amir Abdur Rahman proposed the establishment of an Islamic alliance among Turkey, Persia and Afghanistan, which could separate the two great empires neither allowing Russia nor England to take any part of our dominions. The Amir was convinced about the nefarious designs of both great powers and added that no single power could usurp Afghanistan without invoking the hostility of the other. He felt that although "these neighbours are a cause of much anxiety to Afghanistan, yet, as they are pulling against each other, they are no less an advantage and protection for Afghanistan than a danger and indeed a great deal of safety of the Afghan Government depends upon the fact that neither of these two neighbours can bear to allow the other to annex an inch of Afghan territory."

64 Ibid.
65 Ibid., p. 272.
66 Ibid., p. 266.
67 Ibid., p. 171.
Thus, Amir Abdur Rahman kept Afghanistan politically intact by pursuing a policy of strict neutrality by warding off the internal or external interference by either great power. He also maintained the balance of power to the advantage of Afghanistan.

The Durand Line agreement signed between Amir Abdur Rahman and the British India in 1893 is analysed in the succeeding pages because of its recurring references in subsequent years.

Following the death of Amir Abdur Rahman in October 1901, his son, Habibullah succeeded as new Amir of Afghanistan during the same month. Amir Habibullah was faced with a critical foreign political challenge because both Russia and Britain desired a change in the political status quo of Afghanistan. The Russians wanted to have direct relations with the new Afghan Amir but the British were opposed to such a move and wanted to retain their hold over the conduct of Afghan foreign affairs.

The British Indian Government, while sending the condolence message to the new Amir over the demise of late Amir Abdur Rahman, hinted that a mission would be required to meet the new Amir to confirm the previous Anglo-Afghan agreements. Britain also informed Russia that there prevailed a status quo even after the death of Amir Abdur Rahman.

68 Adamec, n. 19, p. 9.
69 NAI, n. 51, Nos. 1-129, November 1901, Nos. 9, 22, 35.
70 Ibid., Nos. 8-48, December 1901, No. 37.
However Amir Habibullah in his reply on 31 October 1901, while ignoring the British hint, promised that he would honour the agreements made by his late father with the British Indian Government "so long as the illustrious British Government firmly adhere to them." 

However, the Russians wanted a change in the status quo. Even prior to the death of Abdur Rahman, the Russians had expressed such a desire on 1 February 1899, a Russian publication Novoe Vremya contained a hint in this regard:

Russia, whose frontiers run more than 2000 versts with that of Afghanistan, cannot settle the most simple, but unavoidable, frontier question through her relations with the powers of this neighbouring state. For this purpose, we have to communicate with London, and London with Simla, and from Simla attempts begin to enter into negotiations with Kabul, which can easily lead to no result, as the Amir already for some time, and on every possible occasion, shows that he is not a vassal of England...

It further suggested the stationing of representatives of both Russia and Britain in Kabul -- a move which could help in removing the British distrust of a Russian invasion of India. In this regard, M. Lesar, Secretary at the Russian Embassy in London, informed the British Government on 6 February 1900:

Russo-Afghan relations have been defined by the Arrangement of 1872 and 1873, which Russia regards as still being in effect and as placing Afghanistan entirely outside her sphere of action. Although Russia's obligations only bind her to refrain from political action, she has, except in the case of transient deviation from the correct standard of diplomatic

71 Ibid.
action, consented in the past, from a feeling of friendly interest toward Great Britain, to forego even non-political relations ... the moment would accordingly appear to have come when a definite step should be taken in the regularization of these relations.... 73

Thus it is evident from these pronouncements that Russia had predetermined to have direct relations with Kabul even prior to the taking over by Habibullah as the new Amir of Afghanistan.

There ensued a series of diplomatic negotiations between Russia and England in which London wanted to know Russian intentions of having direct relations with Kabul with a view to ascertain if a mutually satisfactory solution could be found. On 29 January 1902, the British envoy in St. Ptersburg conveyed a verbal declaration of his Government to the Russians that Britain did not wish to contend that "there was no force in the Russian arguments for direct communications on matters of local detail, but that as having charge of Afghan foreign relations, they held that arrangements for the purpose could only be made with their consent". 74 Ludwig W. Adamec feels that now it was left to Russia to formulate proposals as to the change of the status quo and to give guarantees that any relations would remain of a nonpolitical character. However on 19 December 1902, the Novoe Vremya, a Soviet publication, carried a statement of the Russian Foreign Office which stated:

73 Ibid., Nos. 145-147, May 1900, Note No. 147, Encl. 1, p. 55.
74 Quoted in Adamec, n. 50, p. 33.
75 Ibid.
In regard to our relations to Afghanistan, it must be remarked that in this matter we made no request to the London Cabinet, but that we merely intimated our decision to enter into direct relations with Afghanistan in consequence of altered circumstances. No further explanations have taken place on this subject. 76

Both Britain and Russia stuck to their respective positions which created an impasse. In the meanwhile, Russians initiated diplomatic offences resulting in a series of incidents. In September 1902, the Afghan officials noticed removal of boundary pillars at Meshed by the Russians. The Russian Government, however, expressed its willingness to reinstate the boundary pillars by a joint Russo-Afghan commission but Amir Habibullah 77 declined the Russian suggestion. The Afghan Amir, at that juncture, asked for the British advice and the latter offered to send a representative. However, the Russians rejected the idea of dealing with the British representative and went ahead with the task of restoring some of the pillars themselves. In the meantime Meshed area was hit by a famine and some Russians were reportedly selling wheat at cheap rates to the Afghans in the famine hit areas. Thus on the one pretext or the other, the Russians got an opportunity to deal and negotiate with local Afghan officials in Meshed and Herat.

In the wake of these developments the British Indian Government got alarmed and thought that a permanent British representative should be stationed at Herat. However this

76 NAI, n. 51, Nos. 145-147, May 1900, No. 147, Encl. 1, p. 59.
77 Ibid., Nos. 40-183, February 1904, Encl. 1, No. 147.
Idea was shelved for the time being because the then Viceroy, Lord Curzon, cautioned the British against such a move since it would frighten the Amir who might resent Russian pressure just as much as he did British.

As a follow up of these developments, the British impressed upon the Afghan Amir the need for the revision of Anglo-Afghan agreements signed earlier on the plea that those agreements were concluded with the late Amir Abdur Rahman as person, subject to renegotiations with every successor. However, Amir Habibullah asserted that there was no need to renegotiate those agreements. Following prolonged discussions, the Amir finally agreed to accept a British mission in this regard at Kabul.

Consequently, a British mission headed by Louis W. Dane reached Kabul on 12 December 1904 to renegotiate the Anglo-Afghan agreements in force during the reign of late Amir Abdur Rahman. It came to be known as Dane Mission. The negotiations between the British officials and Afghan officials lasted until the end of March 1905. The main issue around which the discussions veered was the nature of Anglo-Afghan agreement of 1880 and its revision. The major British objective was both to get the Agreement of 1880 renewed with favourable modifications and resolve the vexing question of Russo-Afghan relations. However, Amir Habibullah's main objective was to remain independent and not to serve as a "mere pawn on the

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78 Ibid., Nos. 83-162, August 1903, No. 155, Notes.
79 Adamec, n. 19, p. 10.
chessboard of Indian military defence". Consequently, both
the sides exchanged drafts of the proposed treaty. The copy of
the British draft treaty was given by Dane to the Afghan Amir who
objected to the word "Sivasi" as a translation for "Political"
for his foreign relations. This shows that the Amir was
conscious of not accepting any provision in the proposed treaty
which could undermine the Afghan national interests.

The prolonged series of negotiations resulted in the
conclusion of what became to be known as Habibullah-Dane Treaty
on 21 March 1905. The Amir Habibullah was recognized by the
British as the "Independent King of the State of Afghanistan
and its Dependencies" and he was to be addressed as "His
Majesty". The treaty reaffirmed the annual subsidy granted
in 1893, allowing the Amir to collect £ 400,000 in undrawn
subsidy payments and Afghanistan's right to import arms without
restrictions.

The Amir was very cautious about British strategic
manoeuvres. He declined to accord trade concessions to the
British in Afghanistan as well as introduction of railways in
his country. Under the new treaty though the British failed

80 NAI, Foreign Section F, No. 34-136, January 1905,
No. 126, Notes.
81 For text of the Treaty see Aitchison, n. 24, vol. XIII,
pp. 282-83.
82 Ibid.
83 August Hamilton, Problems of the Middle East
84 Ibid. Also see, Mohammed Ali, Afghanistan : The
to obtain the right to set up a diplomatic mission in Kabul yet they retained control of Afghanistan's foreign relations and considered the treaty as a renewal of the Durand Agreement.

The Russians expressed apprehensions about the Anglo-Afghan agreement lest the British seek to alter the then existing pattern of Indo-Afghan relations by annexing or occupying Afghan territory. In this regard, the British Foreign Secretary, Lord Lansdowne, with a view to allay Russian misgivings, assured the Russian Ambassador in London, Count Benckendorff, that Britain would not interfere in the internal affairs of Afghanistan and maintain status quo.

The British on their part sought a similar assurance from the Russian Government for maintaining status quo in their policy towards Afghanistan and regarding the latter "as wholly outside the sphere of their influence". After having secured such an assurance from St. Petersburg, the British were willing to allow the Russians to have interchange of communications between the Russian and Afghan frontier officials on non-political matters of a local nature. However the Russians refused to give a formal assurance in this regard. However Russians expressed satisfaction over it.

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87 Ibid.
88 Lansdowne to Hardinge, 8 March 1905, ibid., p. 521.
89 Ibid.
Towards the Anglo-Russian Rapprochement (1907)

The Habibullah-Dane agreement was concluded at a time when Russia was entangled in hostilities with Japan. Russia was defeated at the hands of Japan. The renewal of Anglo-Japanese treaty of 1902 in 1905 made the Russians hesitant towards the British with regard to Afghanistan. For Russia, the treaty envisaged implications for the Afghan policy of the British Indian Government, and was, therefore, directed against it. The Russians feared that the British Government had entertained some designs on the Russian possessions of Central Asia and "Special Russian interests" in Persia. In October 1905, the Russian Foreign Minister, Count Lansdorff apprised the British Ambassador of the adverse effect caused in Russia about the Anglo-Japanese treaty.

The year 1905 had brought changes in domestic political scenario both in Britain and Russia. The new set up of government in Russia with Alexander Isvalski as new Foreign Minister, sought friendly rather than competitive relationship with Britain. During the same year the Liberals came to power in London. The increasing influence of Germany had brought Britain and France close to each other under the immutable law of balance of power. In the wake of Russia's close relations with France and French-

90 Ibid., pp. 203-7.
91 Ibid.
92 Ibid., pp. 203-4, Enclosure in No. 193.
93 For details about British policy towards France and Germany see, ibid., vol. III, pp. 379-440.
British entente, Russia also made efforts to forge close ties with London. Consequently, in May 1906 both countries started negotiations which lasted until August 1907, with the main purpose of resolving differences and forge cooperation on mutually agreed terms. Consequently on 31 August 1907, Britain and Russia signed an agreement which came to be known as Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907. It comprised three agreements on each on Persia, Afghanistan and Tibet. The part pertaining to Afghanistan was on the whole more favourable to Britain.

The Russians conceded that Afghanistan was out of their sphere of influence and agreed to conduct their political relations with Afghanistan through the intermediary of the British Government. The Russians gained only in terms of local question of a non-political nature which could be settled directly by the Afghan and Russian officials.

The British Government on its part declared its adherence to the provisions of the Anglo-Afghan treaty of 1905 and also declared not to interfere in the internal affairs of Afghanistan. In other words, British control over the conduct of Afghan foreign policy was conceded in the Convention.

However the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907 came as a shock for Amir Habibullah and the people of Afghanistan. According to Vartan Gregorian, perhaps "no single event gave as much impetus to the growth of Afghan nationalism as the Anglo-


Russian Convention of 1907. The fifth article of the Convention provided that it would come into force only after the British Government had obtained the consent of the Amir of Afghanistan and notified the same to the Government of Russia. Though the Convention required the approval of the Afghan Amir but he was not consulted by the British in this regard. The Afghan Government feared that the Convention posed a threat to Afghan independence. Amir Habibullah was determined to keep Afghanistan completely independent and to that end he wanted to refrain from having any closer relations with either of the two great powers. Thus the Amir of Afghanistan expressed his reluctance to adhere to the Anglo-Russian Convention.

The British Indian Government offered several explanations that the Convention was in no way a slight on Afghan independence but all this failed to appease or allay the misgivings of Afghan Government.

During Amir Habibullah's visit to India in 1908, the then Viceroy Lord Minto tried to convince the Amir: "I cannot but think that your Majesty will regard the conclusion of the Convention with lively satisfaction". The Afghan Amir while acknowledging the receipt of Minto's message promised that he would send his reply. After keeping the British Government in suspense for about a year, Amir Habibullah in his fifty-four

96 Gregorian, n. 14, p. 211.
98 NAI, Foreign Section F, No. 111, 14 August 1908.
99 Ibid., No. 94-128, October 1908, No. 98.
page reply stated that the Convention destroyed the independence of Afghanistan. It further added that "if they [the British] act in contravention of the principle laid down by them in the past, they will have to show a better principle to their own Government and to ours". However, Afghanistan never signed the Convention.

Seeing that there was no change in Afghan attitude on Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907, the British Foreign Secretary, Sir Edward Grey and his Soviet counterpart, A.P. Isvolsky, agreed in late 1908 that consent of the Afghan Amir was not necessary. Consequently, the British Government declared that "as the Amir had raised no objection to Article 3, and was not prohibiting communication between his frontier officials and those of Russia, we saw no reason why the Convention should not continue to work well, for the Amir was in practice, acting upon it."

Despite these differences, Anglo-Afghan relations remained normal in the years preceding the outbreak of First World War. The cautious and independent nature of foreign policy pursued by Amir Habibullah deterred both Britain and Russia from exerting any sort of pressure on Afghanistan.

On the home front, Amir further consolidated his position by initiating reforms and projects of modernization. The international developments occurring during that period had considerable impact in Kabul. Turkey's war with Italy and Balkan

100 Ibid., No. 99.
101 Ibid. E. Grey to A. Nicolson, 13 October 1908, Nos. 51-65, December 1908, No. 61.
were "politicized Afghans and taught them the lesson of unity and Islamic solidarity". Nationalists like Mahmud Tarzi played notable role in this regard. Tarzi's *Siraj-al-Akhbar*, a prominent newspaper, interpreted world affairs from the Pan-Islamic and Afghan perspective.

**Afghanistan and First World War**

The outbreak of the First World War in the summer of 1914 forced both Britain and Russia not to force the Convention of 1907 on Afghanistan. On 7 August 1914, Lord Hardinge informed Amir Habibullah about the outbreak of war in Europe between Russia, France and Britain on one side and Germany and Austria on the other and the Amir was urged to remain neutral. The Afghan Amir promptly replied pledging his continued adherence to the Anglo-Afghan treaty obligations and declared his determination to maintain neutrality in the war.

Following Turkey joining the war, the British became apprehensive about the possibilities of misgivings between Britain and Afghanistan in the wake of Britain's war with the Ottoman Empire. Consequently on 5 November 1915 Lord Hardinge informed Amir Habibullah that "owing to the ill-advised, unprovoked and deliberate action of the Ottoman Government, war has broken out

103 Ibid.


105 Habibullah to Hardinge, 18 August 1914, ibid., pp. 540-42.
between Great Britain and Turkey". The British Viceroy further added that Britain's war against Turkey was in no sense a religious war and Britain had the support of Muslim community in India and Persia. He finally urged the Amir: "I feel sure that Your Majesty will not waver from the attitude of neutrality ... you have already guaranteed". The Afghan Amir, Habibullah reiterated his country's continued commitment to the policy of neutrality. The British Government was satisfied with Amir's assurances.

However the British realized that the Afghan mood was sympathetic to the Turkey and not to Germany. An Englishman wrote to his relatives in Bombay from Kabul: "Almost everyone in Kabul was strongly anti-British and pro-Turkish, except the Amir, who speaks seldom in public ... occasionally remarks that the British were very powerful." The Afghan public opinion was reflected by the popular newspaper Sirai-al-Akhbar. Mahmud Khan Tarzi writing in the issue of 16 April 1915 of Sirai-al-Akhbar expressed his surprise that Allies and Axis powers were putting blame for the war on the shoulders of the other. While "the chief and the only cause of this general bloodshed is the commercial rivalry between England and Germany and their respective claims to supremacy based on their achievements in science, expansion of

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106 India Office (London), PS Papers 4741 (1914), Memo No. 173.
107 Ibid.
108 NAI, FPS 'War, Nos. 1-202, December 1915, No. 12.
While pursuing the policy of strict neutrality, Amir Habibullah did not respond to German overtures. The British King George V sent a personal letter to Amir Habibullah commending the Afghan ruler for maintaining strict neutrality. The British could not afford to disbelieve Amir Habibullah's commitment to the policy of strict neutrality during the war period. On 5 November 1915, the Viceroy of India in his report sent to London observed: "The attitude of the Amir continues to be most satisfactory. He is one of the few statesmen in the East, and his conduct has really of all praise". During 1915 and early 1916, the Germans tried to woo Amir Habibullah to sign a treaty with Germany. But the Amir refused to respond to German overtures and reiterated his adherence to the principle of strict neutrality.

The collapse of the Ottoman Empire in the wake of Turkey's defeat in the First World War, the advent of the Bolshevik revolution in Russia in 1917 and the defeat of Axis Powers in the war had changed the international political scenario. The maintenance of strict neutrality by Afghanistan during the war period and rejection of German overtures by Amir Habibullah had made the British Governments in India and London think how to reward Amir's loyalty. Amir Habibullah wanted his country's

111 India Office, n. 106, Memo A-173a.
112 For details see Adamec, n. 50, pp. 28-40.
Independence recognised by Britain including Afghanistan's freedom of maintaining political relations with other countries. Lord Chelmsford, the Viceroy of India, wrote to London, asserting that "the services of the Amir have been immense, and when the time comes to reward them, we must be generous". According to Lord Chelmsford, the Afghan Amir could ask for the following concessions from Britain (i) complete political freedom, (ii) territorial aggrandizement, (iii) money, and (iv) representation in England. On 2 February 1919, Amir Habibullah wrote to the Indian Viceroy that his country be represented at the Peace Conference because Afghanistan was an independent country and had remained neutral during the war. The Amir further stipulated that if the Viceroy could bring a signed certificate of Afghan independence from the Conference he would be satisfied; otherwise an Afghan representative must be allowed to attend the conference to obtain one... The Viceroy's Council was willing to provide some concessions to Afghanistan. However Denys Brag, a member of Viceroy's Council, remarked:

... Our control of Afghanistan's foreign relations have been so long a fundamental principle of our Afghan policy that it requires an effort of mind to conceive of our willingly consenting to any diminution of it. Possibly it may prove essential that it should continue to dominate our policy. But the present is so different from the past, and

113  NAI, Foreign Secret F, Nos. 705-806, October 1920, No. 705, Notes.
114  Ibid.
115  Ibid.
the future seems likely to be so much more different still, that the time has come for us to scrutinize our traditional policy anew. 116

Thus Brag opined that Britain should not alleviate its control over Afghan foreign relations and recommended the conclusion of a definite treaty between Afghanistan and the British India.

However, Viceroy's mood of "being generous" to Amir Habibullah was not shared by London which advised the Viceroy to stave off the Amir telling how that participation at the Peace Conference was open only to belligerents, and that international guarantee would be no good to Afghanistan, even if they could be secured, since they might lead to interference by other nations...

(D) The Period of Defensive Neutralism (1919 to the End of Second World War)

Following the assassination of Amir Habibullah on 29 February 1919, Amanullah succeeded the throne of Afghanistan on 21 February 1919. After assuming the power, the first thing Amir Amanullah did was that he wrote a letter on 3 March 1919 to the British Viceroy in India, informing the latter of his father's death, reiterated his Government's policy:

... our independent and free Government of Afghanistan considers itself ready and prepared at every time and season to conclude, with due regards to every consideration of the requirements of friendship and the like, such arrangements and treaties with the mighty Government of England as may be useful and serviceable in the way of commercial gains and advantages to our Government and yours. 118

116 Ibid., No. 706, Notes.
117 Ibid., No. 705, Notes.
118 NAI, Foreign B, Nos. 92-101, September 1919, No. 98.
Again on 13 April 1919, Amir Amanullah announced in a durbar:

... I have declared myself and my country entirely free, autonomous and independent, both internally and externally. My country will hereafter be as independent a state as the other states and powers of the world are. No foreign power will be allowed to have a hair's breadth of hight to interfere internally or externally. With the affairs of Afghanistan, and if any ever does I am ready to cut its throat with this sword. 119

The Viceroy of India in his reply to the Afghan Amir remained non-committal and only thanked the latter for informing that he had become the Amir of Afghanistan. Amir Amanullah was proclaimed as King of Afghanistan in March 1919. However the British Government maintained complete silence to Amanullah's demand for recognition of his accession to the throne. The British silence conveyed an impression that Amanullah's rise to power was not favourably viewed by London...

Third Anglo-Afghan War

The proclamation of Amir Amanullah as the King of Afghanistan was facilitated through a firman envisaging that he was proclaimed King by the people and that he accepted on condition that

(i) Afghanistan should be internally and externally free;

(ii) the people should unite with him to avenge the assassination of Habibullah, and

(iii) the people should be free and no one be oppressed and government should be by law ..." 121

119 Ibid., Foreign Secret F, Nos. 705-806, October 1920, No. 720.


121 NAI, Foreign Secret B, Nos. 18-191, September 1919, No. 121.
The dawn of the May month in 1919 marked the crossing of Indo-Afghan boundary by the regular Afghan force. On 1 May 1919, Saleh Mohammad Khan, the Commander-in-Chief, moved to the Indian border, and reached at Dakka on 3 May 1919 along with two companies of infantry "for the ostensible purpose of inspecting the border..." In a couple of days, Mohammad Nadir Khan arrived in Khost with regular Afghan troops and Abdul Kuddus Khan proceeded to Kandhar ...

The firman issued by King Amanullah, which had begun to circulate among the tribesmen living on the Afghan side of the Indo-Afghan border, inter alia stated in part:

I send this order to all subjects of the Eastern circles who are sayyids, Shaikhs, Mullahs, Khans and Motabars and tell you that there is a great unrest in India. Hindus and Muhammedans have almost all remained faithful... but it is a pity that they have been rewarded by cruelty and all kinds of injustices in connection with their religion, their honour and their modesty. 124

The firman further stated that the uprising occurring in India also affected Afghanistan, therefore Saleh Mohammad was deputed with full power for the protection of Afghanistan's boundaries. On 4 May 1919, the Afghan troops cut the water supply to Landi Kotal once the British forces retaliated by closing the Khyber

122 Adamec, n. 50, p. 111.
124 Ibid., Nos. 1-200B, August 1919, Appendix to Notes.
125 During that period, the Khalifat movement was launched in India which called upon the British Government that Indian Muslims could cooperate with the British during the war of the latter did not launch was against Turkey, the seat of Khilafat.
126 NAI, Foreign Secret F, Nos. 1-200B, August 1919, Appendix to Notes.
Pass, Two days later the Afghanistan forces in the region were increased and they occupied Tor Trappar and Spinatsuka. The Afghans then moved three regiments from Jalalabad to Mohamand country, and Nadir Khan arrived at Khost with troops and several thousand tribesmen, most of them Ghilzais.

The British retaliated on 7 May 1919 by dispatching a column to Landi Kotal and another to Parachinar. A Cavalry brigade was sent on 7 May to Shahgai on the Malagori Road. In the beginning the hostilities were confined to the eastern front and the British registered some success. The tribal armies and the forces of Nadir Khan then opened up a new front and the British offensive moves were stopped. The British sent feelers to the Afghan King for ending the hostilities. On 24 May 1919, King Amanullah responded to the British peace overtures and the British Government gladly accepted the end of hostilities in the wake of rapidly deteriorating situation in the North-West Frontier. Series of negotiations between the two countries led to the conclusion of the Anglo-Afghan Treaty on 8 August 1919 at Rawalpindi under which Afghanistan was recognized as a fully sovereign country. Amanullah paid a price for Afghan independence. "However, he was forced to recognize the Durand Line..."

127 India Office Library (London), Memoranda Nos. A 177, A 183.
128 Ibid.
129 Ibid.
131 Gregorian, n. 14, p. 231.
When King Amanullah had assumed the reins of power in Afghanistan, the latter's confrontation with Britain was underway. Consequently, Amanullah's foreign policy followed three distinct paths -- establishment of diplomatic relations with Russia, normalization of relations with Britain and forging solidarity with the Muslim world.

On 7 April 1919, King Amanullah despatched two letters to Moscow. One letter sent in the name of Mahmud Tarzi, then named as Foreign Minister of Afghanistan informed the "Great President of the Russian Republic (Lenin)" of the enthronement of the benevolent Amir Amanullah Khan. The second letter, a personal note from Amanullah to Lenin stressed the fact that Afghanistan was free and independent, and pointed out that the Afghan "psychology had always contained in it ideas of equality, humanity and liberty". Lenin in his reply sent on 27 May 1919, congratulated the Amir and the people of Afghanistan for their heroic defence of liberty and accepting the proposal to establish relations with Russia.

In April 1919, an "Afghan Mission" headed by Maulvi Barakatullah arrived in Moscow. However, Maulvi Barakatullah, disowning any official status or relationship with Afghan Government, declared that he was neither a communist or socialist but an Asian nationalist interested in ousting the

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132 For full text of the letter, see Ministerstvo Innostrannikh del SSSR, vol. II, p. 175 as cited in Kapur, n. 120, p. 217.

133 Ibid.

134 The Times (London), 13 June 1919.
British from India. In early June 1919, an Afghan mission led by Mohammad Wali Khan was cordially received in Tashkent and Russia granted permission to Afghanistan to open an Afghan consulate there. While opening the consulate, the Afghan envoy, Mohammad Aslam Khan, said: "We who have risen against the tyrannical British, and made friends with the Russian Soviet, have not done so merely to liberate ourselves or the oppressed Muhammadans of India alone. We strive for the salvation of Muhammadans all over the world". The Afghan objective of establishing diplomatic relations with Russia was to make its northern borders secure and "to be able to conclude an alliance with the Soviets in case of a renewed outbreak of the Anglo-Afghan war".

The Afghan Mission headed by Mohammad Wali Khan reached Moscow on 10 October 1919 and welcomed by Narimanov, the representative of the Commissariat for Foreign Affairs and Sultan Galiev, the representative of the Revolutionary Council of the Soviet Republics. In his welcome address Narimanov, while referring to the visit of the mission as "first Ambassador" of Afghanistan further added that the "historic event proves that imperialism which aims at the enslavement and humiliation of large and small nations, has been given a death blow".

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136 Adamec, n. 19, p. 53.

137 *The Times* (London), 28 October 1919.

138 Ibid.
Galiev went further and frankly stated that Soviet Russia would render assistance to Afghanistan. On 14 October 1919, the Afghan envoy was received personally by Lenin who expressed the pleasure of his government at the presence of the Afghan Ambassador in the capital of Soviet Russia. On this occasion the Afghan Ambassador handed over to Lenin, a letter from the Amir of Afghanistan and personally stressed the importance of military assistance to Afghanistan. Lenin in his reply to Amir's letter on 27 November 1919 wrote that Afghanistan was "the only independent Muslim state in the world, and the fate sends the Afghan people the great historic task of uniting about itself enslaved Mohammedan peoples and leading them on the road to freedom and independence. The desire of both Kabul and Moscow to normalize relations led to negotiations in Moscow in this regard.

**Afghan-Soviet Differences Over Bukhara**

The negotiations regarding the normalization of relations between Afghanistan and the Soviet Union suffered a setback in the autumn of 1920 because of the rising differences between the two countries over the future of Bukhara. Prior to 1917, Bukhara was a protectorate of Russian Empire. In 1868, the Amir of

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139 Ibid.
140 Ibid., 15 October 1919.
142 Kapur, n. 120, p. 221.
143 Ibid.
Bukhara had acknowledged the sovereignty of the Russian Tsar and ceded to him the right to represent Bukhara with other powers.

Following the advent of Bolshevik Revolution in Russia, the Russian leaders had made various declarations recognizing the secession of all states which had declared themselves independent from the Central Government in Moscow. However, the new Bolshevik Government at the same time was awaiting a suitable opportunity to incorporate these states into Soviet Russia. The state of Bukhara was given tremendous revolutionary importance. The Soviet journal Zhizn Natsionalnostei wrote: "Bukhara represents a very important place for the development of revolution in central Asia. Either it will serve a bulwark of reaction led by Britain... or it will become the vanguard for a number of central Asian and Indian revolutionary movements".

Afghanistan also showed interest in Bukhara. King Amanullah in his pursuit of pan-Islamic policy, felt that he had a special responsibility to protect the interests of Islamic world. A Russian scholar, I.R. Reysner wrote: "The ruler of Afghanistan appeared in the role of supreme protector of all Moslems, and was equally interested in the result of Greco-Turkish war, in the rising of Egypt and in the fate of Bukhara".

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145 Zhizn Natsionalnostei (Moscow), no. 6 (14), 23 February 1919, cited in Kapur, n. 120, p. 223.

besides being a Muslim country, was also of strategic importance for Afghanistan. According to Fraser-Tytler, Amanullah had dreams of a Central Asian confederacy under his own leadership of which neighbouring Bukhara would constitute an important part. Most of the trade of Bukhara was conducted through Afghanistan. This flow of trade entitled Kabul to charge transit duties which, according to Reysner, constituted an important part of revenue of Afghanistan in 1920. Thus in the wake of the conflicting nature of interests of Afghanistan and Russia, it was natural that any effort on the part of either of them to undermine the existing status of Bukhara would have been instrumental in straining their mutual relations.

In March 1918, when Kolesov, Chairman of the Turkestan Soviet Government, had moved with his troops to the capital of Bukhara, the Amir of Bukhara was openly assisted by Afghan volunteers, who undoubtedly played an important role in defeating the Soviet troops. It was also reported that Afghan regular troops had crossed the frontier and for a few weeks had effectively occupied Merv and Eastern Bukhara. Thus encouraged by this development, Kabul made efforts to establish even closer relations with the Amir of Bukhara, and to assist him in every possible

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150 L'Asie Francaise (Paris), May 1923, p. 500, cited in Kapur, n. 120, p. 224.
way in order to make him strong enough to stop any further attack from Soviet territory. One of the first steps taken in this direction was the exchange of ambassadors by the two countries and making of public declarations of eternal friendship by the King of Afghanistan and Amir of Bukhara.

While Afghanistan was helping Bukhara to strengthen it, the Russians were making attempts to launch another offensive against Bukhara. In August 1920, the Russian troops moved into Bukhara. The troops of the Amir of Bukhara gave a tough fight which lasted for over a week but finally on 2 September 1920, the Red Army managed to capture the capital of Bukhara. The Amir of Bukhara fled to Afghanistan and a Soviet Government was established in Bukharan capital. On 15 September 1920, the new Government of Bukhara, sent through the Russian envoy in Kabul, a cable to the Afghan Government requesting an exchange of diplomatic representatives between two countries and announcing firm intention to develop close relations between Bukhara and Afghanistan.

However, Afghanistan continued rendering support to the oppositional elements in Bukhara to undermine the interest of pro-Russian elements. The Afghan activities came to the notice of Russians and on 21 September 1920 Moscow instructed its Ambassador in Kabul to hand over to the Afghan Government a strong note containing a number of charges against Afghanistan and demanding an inquiry into the activities of the Afghan

151 Kunitz, n. 144, p. 118.
representative in Bukhara and the immediate withdrawal of the Afghan troops. The future of Bukhara was an important issue during the negotiations between Afghanistan and Soviet Russia for concluding a friendship treaty between the two countries.

**Afghan-Soviet Treaty of Friendship, 1921**

On 13 September 1920, Afghanistan and Soviet Russia signed a treaty at Kabul which was ratified by Moscow on 28 February 1921 and by Kabul in August 1921. Article I of the treaty secured Russian recognition for independence of Afghanistan. It also enjoined upon the either side to undertake to respect it and enter into proper political relations with the other. Article II provided that both countries would refrain from entering into any military or political agreement with a third party that might be against the interests of the other. By obtaining the inclusion of such a provision in the treaty, Moscow had been successful in forestalling in the area any military or political alliance which could have adverse effects on the Central Asian borders of Soviet Russia. The Article IX envisaged that Russia agreed to return to Afghanistan all the lands situated in the frontier zone and which had belonged to Afghanistan in the past century. However Russia did not return these territories to Afghanistan. Under Article VI, Afghanistan acquired free transit through Russian

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153 Ibid., p. 225.


155 Ibid., p. 96.

156 Ibid., p. 97.
territory of all goods whether purchased in Russia or abroad. Under Article VII, "the actual independence and freedom of Bukhara and Khiva, whatever form of government may be in existence there" was recognized. This provision was a concession to the Afghans and greatly enhanced Amanullah's position as a champion of Islamic solidarity. A supplementary article added to the treaty provided that within a year of coming into force of the treaty, a subsidy would be given by Russia to the extent of one million rubles in gold or silver coin or bullion. It also provided for construction of a telegraph line from Kushk through Herat and Kandhar to Kabul and place technical and other specialists at the disposal of the Afghan Government. According to a news item published in London based The Times, Russia was also to establish a powerful radio station at Kabul and, to supply engineers to improve Afghanistan's communications.

Viewed from Afghan perspective the treaty marked a significant move towards Afghanistan's independence in international relations, and was "calculated to strengthen the hands of the Afghan Government in future dealings with Great Britain". For Moscow it provided new opportunities for offensive and defensive action against Great Britain.

157 Ibid.
159 Ibid.
160 The Times (London), 21 September 1921.
161 Kapur, n. 120, p. 229.
The Afghan-Soviet *entente* aroused British suspicions because only a couple of years back Britain had complete control over Afghan foreign relations and now Kabul had proclaimed its independence which perhaps irritated the British. Besides, the increasing Soviet influence in Afghanistan also alarmed the British. The British Government had become fearful and it voiced its concern in a note of March 1921 to Moscow — that the major objective of Soviet policy in the region was to overthrow British rule in India. King Amanullah, on his part, was apprehensive of both Great Britain and Russia. He did not trust either. Thus he forged closer cooperation and friendship with Islamic countries. In March 1921, Afghanistan concluded a treaty of friendship with Turkey which affirmed Turkish independence and recognized Afghanistan as "independent in the most real and complete sense of the word". In June 1921, Afghanistan concluded a Treaty of Friendship and Neutrality with Iran. Thus by concluding a treaty with Iran, King Amanullah not only greatly strengthened Afghanistan's diplomatic position in the Middle East but in the entire Islamic community.

Though Afghanistan had concluded a friendship treaty with Moscow, King Amanullah was equally apprehensive of Soviet designs. The British had tended to regard Amanullah as a Soviet "Trojan

164 For text of the treaty, see *League of Nations, Treaty Series*, vol. XXXIII, pp. 295-301.
Horse" but according to M.N. Roy, the Afghans made it clear that they had no intention of allowing any Soviet force to enter their territory and use it as a base of operations against India, nor did they desire to participate in such an operation.

However, King Amanullah's primary concern was to steer Afghanistan by pursuing independent foreign policy without compromising the freedom and territorial integrity of Afghanistan in the presence of powerful Soviet Union and British India on its borders. He also followed the traditional policy of seeking a balance of power in the region. He signed a treaty with Britain on 22 November 1921. The treaty provided for the establishment of legations in London and Kabul, and granted tax exemption on materials destined to help modernize the country. A major feature of the treaty was Afghanistan's agreement to keep the Soviet consulates out of eastern Afghanistan.

The year 1922 witnessed the recrudescence of complications between Moscow and Kabul over Bukhara where the nationalists had again raised the banner of revolt against Moscow. The Russians, with a view to utilize the influence of Enver Pasha, a former Turkish leader who had escaped to Russia after First World War, sent him to Bukhara to fight the nationalists. On the contrary, Enver Pasha joined hands with the Bukharan nationalists and managed to control important portions of Bukhara by May 1922. King Amanullah, being encouraged by these developments, took the

166 See Aitchison, n. 24, pp. 288-96.
167 Ibid.
step of concentrating his armed forces on the northern borders and at the same time entered into correspondence with Enver Pasha. However, the Soviet Government of Bukhara, having discovered Afghan complicity in the affairs, sent a formal note on 11 July 1922 to the Afghan Foreign Ministry demanding the immediate withdrawal of Afghan aid to "rebels" in Bukhara, the extradition of all rebel leaders in Afghanistan to Soviet Russia and an assurance from the Afghan Government that Enver Pasha and his supporters would not be allowed to enter the Afghan territory.

However, the Afghan Government declared that disturbances in Bukhara were "a kind of internal disorder... and Afghanistan remains neutral". Moscow also expressed its displeasure to Kabul over these developments. Some Soviet leaders began to consider Amanullah as a puppet of the British and demanded the cancellation of the annual subsidy that Soviet Russia had been giving to Afghanistan under the treaty of 1921. The death of Enver Pasha in August 1922 and consolidation of power by Soviet Government in Bukhara made King Amanullah to forsake his desire of consolidating Afghan power in Central Asia. In the meantime, the developments in the southern frontiers had also been taking dramatic turns. The Afghan King consequently focussed his attention on the Indo-Afghan border.

168 Fraser-Tytler, n. 147, p. 203.
169 Kapur, n. 120, pp. 234-35.
170 Adamec, n. 19, p. 71.
171 Kapur, n. 120, p. 235.
In the North-Western Frontier Province (NWFP), the British followed the "forward policy" with a view to exert their administrative control in the region. King Amanullah saw British move as a slow advance towards Afghanistan. In early 1923 he visited the NWFP areas on the Afghan side and came to the conclusion that British policy was dangerous for Afghanistan as well as for the tribes living in the area. The British reluctance to abandon the forward policy led to the revolt by the people in the NWFP. Moscow tried to exploit the situation to its own advantage. The Russian Ambassador in Kabul, Raskolnikov, was alleged to have recommended to Soviet authorities in Tashkent on 17 February 1923 that the Afghan-British crisis be aggravated by the distribution of arms and money to the various tribal groups. The British Government in an ultimatum sent to Moscow demanded among other things, the recall of Communist agents from India and the withdrawal of Raskolnikov from Kabul. Though Moscow recalled its envoy from Kabul but the relations between Kabul and London remained estranged. In December 1923, the British Government sent an ultimatum to Kabul demanding the cessation of all Afghan support to the "rebels" in the NWFP area and severance of relations between Kabul and Moscow. The Soviet Russia denounced the British move and at the same time warned Kabul that the expulsion

173 Fraser-Tytler, n. 147, p
174 For details see, Toynbee, n. 163, p. 563.
175 Great Britain, Command Papers, No. 1869, p. 7.
176 Ibid., p. 13.
177 Kapur, n. 120, p. 237.
of Soviet ambassador from Kabul would in fact mean the end of
an "independent Afghan state".

King Amanullah, being a shrewd statesman, did not go by
either British threats or Soviet advice. For him the national
interest was supreme. Seizing the gravity of the situation, he
ordered for the arrest of "rebels" who had sought asylum in
Afghanistan.

With a view to seize new opportunity, Moscow started
negotiations for the construction of a telegraph line, a radio
station, roads between the two countries and the agreement in
July 1924 to commence talks at an early date for the conclusion
of a commercial treaty. During 1925 both countries again held
negotiations to conclude a commercial agreement. The quantum of
trade grew rapidly between the two countries in 1925-26. The
frontier dispute over the possession of Dorgid island on the Amu
River, which was claimed by Bukhara, annexed by Afghanistan, and
again occupied by Soviet troops, was also settled by a diplomatic
agreement on 28 February 1926.

Afghan-Soviet Treaty of Neutrality
and Non-Aggression

On 31 August 1926, both Kabul and Moscow signed the treaty
of Neutrality and Non-Aggression. Under the treaty, the two

178 Ibid., p. 235.
179 Toynbee, n. 163, p. 564.
180 Ministerstvo Inostrannykh del SSR, vol. VII, p. 395,
cited in Kapur, n. 120, p. 239.
181 Kapur, n. 120, p. 239.
182 For full text see Shapiro, n. 154, pp. 322-23.
countries agreed to maintain neutrality in case either of them was involved in a military conflict with a third country. It was also agreed not to take part in any alliance or agreement of a military or political character with another or several third powers which might be directed against the other contracting party. Both countries also agreed that they would abstain from interfering in the internal affairs of each other. The treaty, on the whole, was more advantageous to the Afghanistan than to the Soviet Union because the being a small country could neither match the Soviet military might nor could interfere in its internal affairs. This shows that Afghanistan signed the treaty to safeguard its territorial integrity from Russian expansions.

On 28 November 1927, another agreement was signed between the two countries providing for the establishment of an airline between Kabul and Tashkent thus linking the two countries by air. From December 1927 to July 1928, King Amanullah paid state visit to India, various countries in Europe and the Middle East. While in India, King Amanullah spoke of Islamic solidarity and in turn was hailed as the King of Islam. He then visited Egypt, Italy, France and Germany. During his visit to England, he was presented the Collar of the Royal Victorian Order by King George. The visit was marked by Amanullah's visit to

183 Ibid., p. 322.
184 Ibid.
185 For full text see ibid., pp. 356-57.
186 Muslim Outlook (Lahore), 24 July 1928.
the various places in England. During his visit to the Soviet Union, Amanullah delayed three days in Warsaw enroute, judiciously avoiding the May Day Celebrations in order to spare his host’s embarrassment and in order to mollify the British. Before his return to Afghanistan, the King also visited Turkey and Iran.

King Amanullah was greatly influenced by the progress made by Europe and he now recognized the enormity of the task of modernizing Afghanistan. His western ways and radical reforms were opposed by the orthodox forces in Afghanistan. His opponents said that the King "had turned against Allah and Islam". He reduced the autonomy of the tribes and the influence of the religious leaders, opposed polygamy and the veil, established schools for girls and extended the military draft to the whole country. Though these were progressive measures, but Amanullah became very unpopular. The resultant impact was the outbreak of a revolt against King Amanullah in January which forced him to flee from Kabul to Kandhar. The leader of the rebellion was an illiterate person called Bacha-i-Saqao who proclaimed himself as the King.

This new development in Afghanistan divided the leadership in Moscow on the question of rendering support to Bacha-i-Saqao.

187 Ibid.
188 Dupree, n. 10, p. 450.
189 Ibid.
According to Agabekov, a former officer of OGPU, the OGPU was in favour of aiding Bacha in the hope that he would carry out a radical revolution in Afghanistan and that through him, the country would gradually be Sovietized. Consequently, he received the hold of OGPU to come into power.

**Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan**

In view of the fluid situation in Afghanistan after Bacha-i-Saqao had proclaimed himself as the King of Afghanistan, Moscow decided to avail the situation to its own advantage. According to Agabekov "It was decided to form an expeditionary force of red soldiers disguised as Afghans who would secretly cross the frontier and march against Kabul". The Soviets provided forty airplanes as well as horsemen especially equipped with machineguns. Thus Soviet army entered Afghanistan and after crossing the Amu River captured the town of Mazar-i-Sharif on 30 April 1929. There occurred a fierce battle between the Russian army and the supporters of Bacha-i-Saqao near Khulm and after defeating the latter they marched toward Kabul. In the meanwhile two Basmachi leaders also conducted raids inside Soviet Union from Afghanistan, though unsuccessful. The Soviet media claimed that those attacks were instigated either by Bacha or the British.

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191 The Russian name for the then secret service, predecessor of the present K.G.B.


193 Ibid., pp. 166-67.

194 India Office Library (London), LPS/10/1203, p. 135/1927.

195 Adamec, n.
While Ghulam Nabi's army was marching toward Kabul, word came that Amanullah had abdicated and fled to India. This created a panic in the Ghulam Nabi's army of whom many had deserted. The Russians promptly withdrew their troops, the last of them leaving in June 1929. Another reason for Soviet Union to abandon the Afghan invasion was that Moscow did not want to alarm the British at a time when it was hoping to restore diplomatic relations with the newly elected Labour Government in London. Thus by launching a well concerted attack on Afghanistan, Moscow had demonstrated that "like its Tsarist predecessor, it had ambitions regarding Afghanistan and was willing to use military force to back them up".

Afghan Foreign Policy under Nadir Khan (1929-1933)

Following the defeat of Zacha-i-Saqao in October 1929, Nadir Shah became the King of Afghanistan. The new Afghan King pursued a cautious modernization programme at home and followed the traditional policy of neutrality. While giving the opening speech in the Afghan National Consultative Assembly, Nadir Shah said:

In my opinion the best and more useful policy that one can imagine for Afghanistan is a policy of neutrality. Afghanistan must always entertain good relations with its neighbours as well as all the friendly powers who are not opposed to the


197 Agabekov, n. 192, p. 168.


national interests of the country. Afghanistan must give its neighbours assurances of its friendly attitude while safeguarding the rights of reciprocity. Such a line of conduct is the best one for the interest of Afghanistan. 200

Nadir Shah was really faced with an uphill task which was to make Afghan neutrality a reality and to convince among others - Moscow and the Islamic world - that he was not a tool of British imperialism. While refuting the charge that he had received British assistance in overthrowing Bacha, he said: "It was only through the exclusive help of the Almighty God, and thanks to the sacrifices of the people of Afghanistan, unassisted by any foreign power, that I took Kabul." 201

He adhered to a policy of non-involvement both in India and in Central Asia seeing in "positive neutralism" the best means of securing internal stability and external independence. In May 1930, Afghanistan confirmed the Anglo-Afghan treaty of 1921 and the Trade Convention of 1923 which had envisaged the tacit understanding that no Soviet trade agencies were to be opened in the eastern provinces of the Afghan Kingdom adjacent to India. At the same time Nadir Shah tried to put a stop to anti-British revolutionary activity in Afghanistan. He discouraged the activities of the Red Shirt Movement and the Afridi and Mohmand tribal struggles on Indo-Afghan border by making clear to them that the "whole frontier policy of the Afghan government would be actuated by a desire for peace on both sides of the frontier and a spirit of true friendship

200 Islah (Kabul), 8 July 1931.
201 Ibid.
towards His Majesty's Government".

King Nadir Shah also took steps to further normalize relations with the Soviet Union. While welcoming the enthronement of Nadir Shah the Soviet Foreign Minister, Maxim Litvinov, said that Moscow intended to continue to be a good neighbour to Afghanistan and hoped to develop relations with it on the basis of existing agreements. Afghanistan concluded a non-aggression pact with the Soviet Union in 1931 which was in fact the reiteration of the Afghan-Soviet treaty of 1926. The new treaty also gave Afghan commitment against the use of Afghan territory as a base for subversive activities against the Soviet Union. Following the combined blows of Russian Army in Central Asia and the suddenly effective Afghan border patrols, Basmachi activities were on the decline. The relations between Kabul and Moscow were further improved by the signing of a Soviet-Afghan agreement on the definition of aggression.

This entente in Afghan-Soviet relations was accompanied by an expansion of trade between the two countries. Between 1928 and 1932 Moscow gained a greater share of the Afghan market and in Herat and northern Afghanistan, goods made in Bukhara and Tashkent dominated.

202 Fraser-Tytler, n. 147, p. 236.
204 On this Soviet-Afghan Agreement, see Islah, 13 July 1933.
However, the policy of Nadir Shah with regard to forging close relations with Moscow could in no way be interpreted that he was pro-Soviet. He was scrupulous in his adherence to the Afghanistan's traditional policy of neutrality. He denied a Soviet request for establishing a commercial mission in Afghanistan. In place of the departing Soviet advisers, Afghanistan acquired the services of experts from Germany, Italy, Japan and India. Nadir Shah wanted "foreign advisers only those who were unlikely to be supported by neighbouring armed forces in case of any disagreement".

Besides, Nadir Shah also made attempts to have cordial relations with Islamic countries, especially Turkey and Iran. He also took steps in forging Afghan relations with Italy, France, Germany, United States and Japan. The activities of the British and the Russians within Afghanistan were curtailed during Nadir Shah's reign.

Post-Nadir Shah Period

The Wharkhi brothers especially Ghulam Nabi and other supporters of Amanullah were opposed to the regime of Nadir Shah. The execution of Ghulam Nabi in November 1932 ushered in a brief spell of political violence in Afghanistan which

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207 Ibid.


209 For details see, Gregorian, n. 14, pp. 335-37.
culminated in the assassination of Nadir Shah on 8 November 1933. On the same day, Zahir Shah, the nineteen year old son of Nadir Shah, was proclaimed as the new King of Afghanistan. The young Zahir Shah was assisted by his paternal uncle Shah Mahmud Khan, Shah Wali Khan and Mohammad Hashim Khan, the latter being the Prime Minister and being in full control of Afghanistan's domestic and foreign policies.

King Zahir Shah in a speech in 1934, said that the general foreign policy aims of Afghanistan were "shaped by the desire of the King and his government for world peace so that Afghanistan could continue to combat its socio-economic retardation and catch up with progress. The King laid emphasis on three points: his desire to maintain friendly relations with all countries; his hope to live in peace and friendship with neighbouring countries, and his intention not to raise political difficulties or obstacles for other governments, a policy he anticipated other governments to adopt for Afghanistan.

Strict adherence to the traditional policy of neutrality remained the main hallmark of Afghanistan foreign policy during the post-Nadir Shah period. Kabul assured the Soviet Government that the Basmachis and other emigre elements from Turkistan would not be allowed to indulge in anti-Soviet activities from its territory. Despite British protests, the Afghan Government allowed the Indian freedom fighters like Raja Mahendra Pratap to

210 Fraser-Tytler, n. 147, p. 243.
211 For full text of King Zahir Shah's speech, see Kabul Almanach 1934-35 (Kabul, 1937), p. 67.
212 Ibid.
form provisional government in Afghanistan. The Afghan tribes also indulged in acts hostile to British India.

Afghanistan became the member of the League of Nations in 1934 and during the same year Soviet Union also joined the League. In May 1935, Kabul and Moscow signed an agreement on an anti-locust campaign and this agreement paved the way for mutual cooperation and a pretext for the convening of annual meetings. In 1936, Kabul renewed the Soviet-Afghan mutual pact of 1931, which was extended upto 29 May 1946. This was followed by a commercial agreement in May 1936 which envisaged transit facilities for Afghans through Soviet Union and a financial agreement between the Soviet Commissariat for external commerce and the Bank-i-Milli. Kabul and Moscow also decided to close their respective consulates in Tashkent and Mazar-i-Sharif with an avowed objective of non-interference in each other's affairs. This move was welcomed by Great Britain which had campaigned since 1921 against the establishment of Soviet consulate in the strategic regions of Afghanistan.


216 *Islah*, 23 May 1936.

217 Ibid., 25 April 1938.
Afghanistan During the Second World War

By the time the Second World War broke out in Europe with Japanese involvement in East Asia, Afghanistan had become heavily dependent on the financial and technical assistance of the Axis powers, especially Germany, Italy and Japan. The best way for the Allies "to have ended the dominance of the Axis in this strategic country was for the United States and Great Britain themselves to have extended technical assistance and long term credits to the Afghan Kingdom but neither chose to do so". However, the only alternative before Afghanistan was to turn to the Soviet Union instead of the Axis powers. But such a move was not keeping in tune with the Afghanistan's traditional policy of neutrality and it would have been highly unwelcome for the British as well. Afghanistan was opposed to both Russian and British influence in the country.

Thus, when the Second World War broke out in the early 1939, it posed a big challenge to Afghanistan's foreign and economic policies. As Vartan Gregorian has aptly observed: "The possibility that Afghanistan independence might be jeopardized or that the country might become a battleground of European diplomacy - even a theater of war - seemed very real." Consequently, King Zahir Shah after consulting the Afghan Parliament, issued a decree on 6 September 1939, proclaiming the neutrality of Afghanistan. This proclamation was made

218 Gregorian, n. 14, p. 382.
219 Ibid., p. 383.
220 Salnama-ye-Kabul (Kabul, 1940), pp. 46-47.
with a view to keep Afghanistan away from the flames of Second World War and safeguard its independence.

The decree of neutrality restricted the activities of nationals of the belligerent powers; no propaganda activities were to be tolerated and the dissemination of news was restricted to official press releases by the government of the belligerent in the Kabul daily Islah.

In the wake of the Nazi-Soviet non-aggression pact concluded in 1939, Moscow did not pressurize Kabul to sever its relations with the Axis powers until 1941. And the British being deeply involved in the war in Europe also did not raise any eyebrow in this regard.

During 1939-41 period, Germany made further efforts to woo Afghans, including the supporters of Amanullah, to create troubles among the tribesmen of the NWFP to weaken the position of the British but King Zahir Shah's Government refused to comply with German overtures and reiterated its commitment to the policy of strict neutrality. Fraser-Tytler, who during that period was a British envoy to Kabul, described the situation as one in which "the Afghans figuratively buttoned their coats and turned their backs to the blast, couching behind the frail shelter of their international frontiers, and their proclaimed neutrality... hoping that the whirlwind would pass them by..."

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221 Adamec, n. 19, p. 243.
222 Gregorian, n. 14, pp. 385-87.
223 Fraser-Tytler, n. 147, p. 253.
The events had taken decisive turn during the close of 1941 and following the German invasion of the Soviet Union, the latter had joined the Allies. There were hundreds of Axis powers' nationals in Afghanistan during that period and the changed war scenario was found to give worries to Kabul. Both Iran and Afghanistan were of strategic significance for the Allies. The presence of Axis subjects in Afghanistan was bound to attract the attention of the Allies. In October 1941, Moscow and London sent similar notes to the Afghan Government demanding the ouster of German and Italian citizens. This demand by the powerful neighbours of Afghanistan had created misapprehensions among the minds of many Afghans. Finally the Zahir Shah's Government after consulting the Loya Jirga, decided to comply with the demand and at the same time reiterated Afghanistan's will and determination to preserve its strict neutrality, independence and territorial integrity.

Accordingly, Kabul was placed under strict surveillance and gasoline rationing was imposed in July 1941. During the same month, the Afghan border guards shot two German agents on their way to the camp of the Fakir of Ipi resulting in the death of one and other was wounded. The then Afghan Prime Minister, Hashim Khan, conveyed his regrets to the Germans over the incident. Following the British and Soviet invasion of Iran during the last week of August 1941, the Germans were trapped in Afghanistan. Both Moscow and London exerted pressure on Kabul.

224 The Times (London), 21 October 1941.
225 Kabul Almanach 1941-42, pp. 280-85.
for the expulsion of Axis nationals from Afghanistan. The German legation in Kabul was not satisfied with the British promise of safe passage for the Axis nationals trapped in Afghanistan. However, on 15 October 1941, Najibullah Khan, the Director-General of the Political Department of the Afghan Foreign Ministry, explained Afghanistan's actions in yielding to Allied pressures as being prompted by his government's desire for peace. The British propaganda and reports in the Indian press continued reporting about the dangers inherent in the continued presence of Axis nationals in Afghanistan.

During this period of crisis, the Afghan Government reiterated its policy of peace and neutrality and expressed surprise over the excess propaganda over the presence of Axis nationals in Afghanistan. The Loya Jirga met during 5-6 November 1941 to approve the dismissal of the Germans and at the same time it confirmed Afghanistan's neutrality and as a warning issued a declaration that no further fight or interference would be tolerated.

Following the departure of the Axis nationals from Afghanistan there was no more further pressure from Great Britain or Soviet Union in this regard and perhaps both London and Moscow were convinced of Afghanistan's adherence to strict neutrality.

227 Adamec, n. 19, p. 257.
228 Islan, 18 October 1941.
229 Anis (Kabul), 8 November 1941.
The Durand Agreement

The Durand Line Agreement was signed between Afghanistan and British India in November 1893. Under this agreement, Afghanistan agreed to relinquish its control over all districts to the north of the Upper Oxus in exchange for all districts not held by Afghanistan to the south of the Oxus river. Afghanistan was also allowed to retain Asmar Kunar and Birmal Valley. Afghanistan in return promised not to advance or interfere in Chitral, Bajaur and Swat and relinquished its claim to Chagai, Dawa and Waziristan. The conclusion of the agreement was facilitated by Sir Mortimer Durand on behalf of the British Government and it came to be known after him. The line demarcating the frontier between Afghanistan and British India came to be known as Durand Line.

The task of demarcation of frontier between British India and Afghanistan, as envisaged in the Durand agreement, was carried out for the most part by joint commission of the two countries during 1894-1896, except a small portion remaining undemarcated in the vicinity of Mohmand and the Khyber. The Durand agreement instead of solving the border problem, envisaged more complications for Afghanistan. The tribes inhabiting the areas which had come under British rule after

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230 For full text of the agreement, see Aitchison, n. 24, pp. 255-57.
231 Ibid., p. 218.
232 Ibid., p. 219.
233 Ibid.
the demarcation, were opposed to the very idea of delimitation of the boundary and regarded it as an interference with their independence. When the map demarcating the boundary-line was sent by the British to Abdur Rahman, the then Afghan King, the latter protested against it by pointing out many discrepancies but the British insisted that the frontier drawn on the map was final and Kabul was bound to follow it. The intransigence shown by the British led to large scale uprising on the frontier areas in 1897. Under these circumstances the Durand agreement came under severe criticism. According to Fraser-Tytler, the Durand agreement presented the concrete symbol of compromise, "the manifestation of a policy which, whatever its merit, was not carried out to its logical conclusion". He regarded it illogical from the standpoint of ethnography, strategy and geography as it cut across the people, split the nation into two and even divided the tribes. According to C.C. Davies, the Durand agreement was forced on Afghanistan and the new boundary line was not based on sound topographical data "for during the process of demarcation it was discovered that certain places marked on the Durand map, did not exist on the actual ground. Many ethnic absurdities were perpetrated ... the worst


235 Adamec, n. 19, p. 79.

236 Fraser-Tytler, n. 147, p. 188.

237 Ibid.
blunder of all was the arrangement by which the boundary cut the Mohmand tribal area into two separate parts. King Abdur Rahman refused to accept the agreement and permanent cession of any Afghan territory to the British under this agreement. In 1901, the British created the North West Frontier Province (NWFP) in which included Pakhtoon inhabited areas "grabbed" by the British from Afghanistan after the Durand agreement.

King Abdur Rahman and his successor rulers of Afghanistan refused to accept the Durand agreement. In the wake of the partition of the Indian subcontinent leading to the emergence of India and Pakistan as two sovereign and independent countries, the NWFP became the part of Pakistan. The Afghan Government regards the Durand agreement as invalid and hence insists on the right to self-determination for the people of NWFP while Pakistan has denied Afghan contention. Thus there exists difference of opinion between the two countries on this issue.

The conclusion of the Second World War in 1945 changed the international political scenario which had impact on the post-war Afghanistan as well. The war time allies -- United States and Soviet Union emerged as the main rivals for dominating the world scene. The traditional great power - United Kingdom had lost its power and its withdrawal from the Indian subcontinent in the middle of 1947 changed the political configurations. The traditional Anglo-Russian rivalry was replaced by Soviet-US rivalry which ushered in an era of cold war. Afghanistan's response to super powers rivalry is analysed in the succeeding chapters.

238 Davies, n. 234, pp. 161-62.
239 Mir Munshi, n. 63, p. 158.