Chapter-I
US Policy Towards Afghanistan
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Foreign policy has been regarded as a reflection and application of a country's national interest to the international arena. On numerous occasions, nation states have shown their willingness to delve into great depths to protect their national interest. However, in a 'smarter than thou' world order, it is possible to commit faux pas and get trapped in a vicious circle, getting out of which becomes the ultimate goal for a nation state. Zeev Maoz, an Israeli analyst, in his "Paradoxes of War: On the Art of National Self-Entrapment", has dwelt at length upon the paradox of how nations guided by very intelligent and rational analysis, sometimes knowingly get into traps of tremendously destructive proportions. The application of the concept of 'policy paradox' reveals the typical nature of US foreign policy towards Afghanistan.

The processes by which the US foreign policy is determined are complex and obscure. While the end policy decisions reveal very little regarding its formulation process, in actuality, too many actors have a decisive say in this matter. The President, in spite of his 'Imperial Presidency' in foreign policy making is open to the influence of the Congress, the Secretary of State and most importantly in this particular case the Central Investigative Agency (CIA). The attention, which a particular issue receives, depends on how prominently 'the issue' engages the attention of these actors and evokes the personal interest and commitment of any of the above key figures in the decision making process.

Outside these institutional structures, the lobbies and the pressure groups, and corporate interests may also exert considerable influence in shaping the approach to particular

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2 Interview with Dr. Zbigniew Kazimierz Brzezinski, Washington DC, November 1, 2005.
issues, either by direct lobbying or by supplying personnel for particular administrations. "A consequence of this multiplicity of influences is that there is rarely a 'mastermind' behind US foreign policy steps, let alone a master plan." Thus, it can be concluded that while it is national interest that guides foreign policy formulations, it is the confluence of a diverse range local interests that plays an important role. This intricacy in policy making towards Afghanistan in the pre and cold war period has been dealt with broadly in the first chapter.

After the end of the cold war and having bled the Soviet's white in Afghanistan, Washington's policy towards the region was stymied by the lack of a strategic framework. The U.S. dealt with issues as they cropped up, many times in a random and slapdash fashion rather than adopting a coherent approach. US policy towards Afghanistan depicts an unending saga of how the super power continually neglected Afghan concerns, both in the cold War and post Cold War and it was the periods of inattention that witnessed Afghanistan's slide into chaos and anarchy.

Beginnings of US-Afghan Relations:
The history of early US-Afghan relations is the story of a continuous Afghan effort to convince reluctant American governments that it was in its national interest to be represented in Kabul. The beginnings of US-Afghan relations can be traced back to the early 1920s when King Amanullah (1919-29) having sought Afghanistan's independence from the British by the Treaty of August 8, 1919, sought to establish diplomatic relations with the United States. While the Soviet Union was the first country to grant formal recognition to Afghanistan on February 28, 1921, it was only on August 21, 1934; President Roosevelt accorded recognition to King Zahir Shah's (1933-1973) regime.

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6 In July 1921, an Afghan mission under the leadership of Mohammad Wali Khan met President Harding with a letter from King Amanullah seeking diplomatic relations. But President Harding considering Afghanistan to be in the Anglo-Soviet influence gave a non-committal reply. For details refer to Ludwig Adamec, Afghanistan Foreign Affairs to the Mid-twentieth Century (Tuscon: University of Arizona Press, 1974), pp.234-5.
7 In 1935, W H Hornibrook, who headed the American legation in Kabul came to arrange for accreditation of American diplomats in India as representatives in Afghanistan. See Ram Rahul, Afghanistan, the USSR and the USA, (New Delhi: ABC Publishing House, 1994), p.10.
This facilitated the conclusion of a provisional agreement on March 26, 1936 in Paris regarding diplomatic representation between the United States and Afghanistan. However, it was not until June 6, 1942 that President Roosevelt gave consent to the establishment of a permanent American legation.

The Second World War brought about significant changes in the international scenario. While Afghanistan under King Zahir Shah's royal decree of September 6, 1939 maintained strict neutrality, the Afghan ruling elite realised that Afghanistan's position during the war had remained same as during the Great Game demanding the same kind of a policy of bi-tarafi as required of a traditional buffer. In the period between the two World Wars, the Afghan rulers had encouraged Germany's involvement in Afghanistan as they had envisioned "a distinct political role as a third power in the balancing effort" in the Great Game between the expansionist powers of Great Britain and Russia. However, following Germany's dismemberment in the Second World War, the United States emerged the only alternative for the Afghan rulers.

Cold War in Afghanistan:

After the Second World War, Afghanistan's foreign policy continued to be dominated by geopolitical considerations. In the north, Afghanistan came to share a common border with a country that was feared to have substituted Czarist policy of expansion for a policy of 'political expansion or subversion'. Thus, the Afghan ruling elite looked towards the Americans to play a balancing role to counter pressures from the north. In 1947, the British withdrawal from the Indian sub-continent further increased the need for American

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10 For details of the special relationship between Afghanistan and Germany, see Ludwig Adamec, *ibid.*, pp.213-60. Henry S. Bradsher, *ibid.*, pp.16-20.

presence in the region to fill in the power vacuum. Thus, United States gradually emerged as the most important power in post war Afghanistan in the perception of the Afghan ruling elite.

However, in the post World War II era, the United States to a much more limited extent, replaced the British as the major international force balancing the southern side of the geopolitical equation in opposition to the Soviet Union. The British had always been aware of the importance of Afghanistan as the “keystone in the defence of the imperial position in the Indian subcontinent and the Persian Gulf.” In contrast, even at the height of the Cold War, the United States never considered Afghanistan to be within its politico-strategic definition of the ‘Free World’. The Soviets on the other hand had drawn exactly opposite conclusions with regard to Afghanistan’s geopolitical significance in the region and therefore took active interest in the political affairs of the country.

Warming up of US-Afghan Relations: 1946-1953

During Shah Mahmud’s premiership (1946-53) expansion of foreign ties dominated the political agenda. The American legation established in 1942 was upgraded to the status of an embassy on June 5, 1948. Afghanistan also set up an embassy in the United States. Thus, the groundwork being laid for closer relationship between the two countries, led to considerable American influence on various sectors of Afghan life. In March 1946, an irrigation project on Helmand River was started with the assistance of Morrison-Knudsen construction Firm from Idaho, Boise. By 1949, the US aid atmosphere was beginning to change and under Truman administration’s ‘Point-4 programme’ the United States on June 30, 1953 concluded with Afghanistan an agreement on technical assistance. In spite of increasing economic cooperation, closer political ties were not possible. This was mainly due to United States evolving relations with Pakistan in the Cold War atmosphere.

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13 However, by 1953, the Helmand project ended up becoming a white elephant swallowing huge finances and resulting in misgivings between the two governments. Marvin Brant, Recent Economic Developments in Louis Dupree and Linette Albert, eds., Afghanistan in the 1970s, (New York: Praeger, 1974), p.94.
differences with Pakistan on border issues.

Therefore, coupled with the United States policy makers’ view of strategic insignificance of Afghanistan, the hostile relations between Afghanistan and Pakistan, especially on the ‘Pushtunistan issue’ impeded its closer relationship with the United States. On the other hand, it led to cementing of relationship between the Soviet Union and Afghanistan. As Pakistan closed its borders and halted Afghan goods passing through its Karachi port, causing colossal economic losses to landlocked Afghanistan, Soviet Union came to the rescue of Afghanistan by providing a duty-free transit route. From then on Soviet Union started aiding Afghanistan vis-à-vis Pakistan on the Pushtun cause. For weapons as for economic aid, Afghanistan first approached the United States. In 1944 and later in 1948, Premier Shah Mahmud’s request for military aid was turned down by the Truman administration. It’s South Asian specialist were engrossed with India and Pakistan in the wake of British withdrawal from the region to worry about a small and unimportant country like Afghanistan. Thus the perceptions of the Great Game seemed to be forgotten.

In the 1950s, at the height of the Cold War, the Americans were more interested in a northern tier alliance in the Middle East to prevent a repetition of 1950 Korean episode. It was difficult to get further north in the northern tier, as Afghanistan was next to the Soviet Union and on terms of hostility with Pakistan. Thus, even before Pakistan became a formal ally of the United States by signing the Mutual Security Agreement of 1954, the American military experts had reached the conclusion that “Afghanistan was too distant to be defensible by US action,” should the Soviets repeat the Korean type aggression in the region.

16 In 1953, a study for the US Defense Department’s Joint Chief of Staff stated, “Afghanistan is of little or no strategic importance to the United States...Its geographic location...Soviet control of the country, whenever the international situation so dictates...” The study also warned that “any
Daoud's Premiership: 1953-63

The year 1953 was marked by major domestic changes both in Afghanistan and in the United States. As a result of internal opposition, on August 6, 1953, Premier Shah Mahmud was replaced by Sardar Daoud Khan, a cousin of king Zahir Shah. In the United States too, there was a change in the administration. The new President Dwight Eisenhower and his Secretary of State John Foster Dulles envisaged the US policy for containing Communism by forming military alliances around Soviet Union and Communist China. In the wake of the Korean War President Eisenhower decided to grant military aid to Pakistan on February 25, 1952. Premier Daoud Khan criticised the proposal as a "grave danger to the peace and security of Afghanistan" and in 1954 requested for a similar support to Afghanistan. However, the American response was negative. However, in December 1953, during US Vice-President Nixon's visit to Northern tier countries including Afghanistan, he did propose that if Afghanistan wished to obtain arms from the US, it could join an alliance with Iran and Pakistan.

The American indifference towards the Pushtun issue and linking of requests for arms aid to Afghanistan in 1951 and later in 1954 to resolving its Pushtunistan problem with Pakistan were the key factors in the difficult relationship between both the countries. In this background, the first major Soviet-Afghan agreement involving long-term credit was announced on January 27, 1954 after the US plan of arming Pakistan was revealed. The subsequent border closure by Pakistan in 1955, which led to economic hardship further the Afghan people, led to the 'Grand Assembly of Tribal Leaders' (Loya Jirgah) to authorize Daoud to make a formal request to Soviet Union for arms aid. Soviet Union, under the leadership of Nikita Khrushchev was too willing to comply as it wished to see Afghanistan remain outside the American sponsored military alliances.

17 Henry S. Bradsher, ibid., p.20.
During Secretary of State Dulles’ visit to Pakistan, it was assured of military aid of $21 million, which was criticised by Daoud. For details see, Ram Rahul, ibid., p.30.
During the Cold War period Afghanistan played the role of a buffer between the USSR and the US sponsored Baghdad pact (later CENTO) countries. In a way, the disinterest of the American administration to promote an ally in Afghanistan pushed the latter to the Soviet camp. During Khrushchev and Bulganin’s visit to Afghanistan in December 1955, a loan of $100 million was provided at two- percent interest, the Non-aggression and Neutrality treaty was renewed and support for the pushtun cause was reaffirmed. Contacts grew rapidly after that and co-operation in every field expanded. The most significant military agreement to be signed between Afghanistan, Soviet Union and its COMECON (Economic Association for Communist Countries) allies in 1956 had a profound impact on the nature of relationship between the two countries in the years to come.

However, in the post-1955 period, the increased Soviet involvement in Afghanistan started to be viewed with concern by Americans, prominently by the Secretary of State John Foster Dulles. After 1956 the regular economic support to Afghanistan started assuming political overtones. Five months after the Soviet arms deal was made, the National Security Council found that, the “capability of the US to shape events in South Asia is severely limited and therefore, recommended to ‘encourage Afghanistan to minimize its reliance upon the Communist block for military training and equipment and to look to the US and other Free World sources for military training and assistance.” The State department designated Afghanistan as an ‘emergency action area’ where vital US interest needs to be protected and it began, in 1959, devising ways to compete with

20 Khruschev explained the Soviet thinking at that time in his memoirs “America was courting Afghanistan ... The capital we have invested in Afghanistan ... we have one Afghan friendship and it has not fallen into American trap”. Quoted in The Truth About Afghanistan: Documents, Facts, Eyewitness Reports, (Moscow: 1981), p.31.
21 L.B.Poullada points out that military aid to Afghanistan was secretly struck during Khruschev’s visit in 1955. See L.B.Poullada, ibid., p.189. The large amount of military aid ($600 million) and training provided to the Afghan soldiers by the Soviets played a crucial role during the leftist coup in 1978. Raja Anwar, ibid., p.36.
22 The United States began to offer places in US military school to Afghans as part of low budget
the Soviet Union.\textsuperscript{23} It was followed by an exchange of visits by both American and Afghanistan leadership and conclusion of several bilateral treaties for cooperation. American engagement in Afghanistan had entered a new phase.

Though many observers feared that Daqud was leading the country into Soviet vassalage, others perceived his action to be ‘high risk gamble’\textsuperscript{24}, to improve his country’s lot by playing off the Super Powers against each other, at the same time maintaining the fragile non-alignment policy. One analyst termed Afghanistan as an ‘economic Korea’\textsuperscript{25} where the competition between the East and the West benefited the local population without endangering the independence of the country. Hardly had agreements with the USSR been concluded in early 1956, the United States in a turnaround of its Afghan policy, also started providing aid to the country to make its presence felt.\textsuperscript{26}

United States projects included road building, further aid for Helmand Valley and long term education aid. In addition, the United States donated one hundred thousand tonnes of wheat to Afghanistan in the period 1956-59, under the terms of PL-480 II, in comparison with the earlier 1952-54 period, when it had sold just twenty thousand tonnes. Although the United States did not try to match the volume of Soviet assistance, the impact of US projects in Afghanistan was considerable. Thus, in the late 1950’s and early 1960’s, Afghanistan became “a peaceful battleground of the Cold War with the

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\textsuperscript{23} A secret study of the NSC concluded that “vital United States objectives were best served if Afghanistan remains neutral and not over-committed to the Soviet block”. ibid, p.29. George Grassmuck and Ludwig Adamec, ibid., p.210-11.

\textsuperscript{24} The terminology was used by A.S. Ghaus, \textit{The Fall of Afghanistan: An Insider’s Account}, (Washington D.C.: Pergamon Brassey’s, 1988), p.194.

\textsuperscript{25} Louis Dupree, ibid., p.514.

\textsuperscript{26} Before that time, i.e. 1956 the Afghans had secured individual commercial loans from the West, but these were not connected with the overall US policy. Official US policy had been on a very small scale. Anthony Arnold, \textit{ibid.}, p.38. Upto 1979, when the aid was halted, the US had provided $532.87 million aid to Afghanistan. Of this, $378.17 million was in outright grants or gifts and the remaining $154.7 million was in loans on concessionary terms. Henry S. Bradsher, \textit{ibid.}, p.18. Barnett R. Rubin, \textit{The Search for Peace in Afghanistan: From Buffer State to Failed State}, (London: 1995), pp.21-2.
Soviets and the American rivalry being based on the value of their respective foreign aid programme.  

While economic relations between Afghanistan and the US strengthened, US political commitment towards Afghan’s Pushtun cause still floundered. The ‘Pakistan factor’ played a major role behind the deliberate ambiguous US commitment towards Afghanistan. Further in 1956, US backed SEATO endorsed Pakistan’s position for the Pushtun cause. In early 1957, the visit of Special Presidential Assistant James P. Richards to Kabul, resulted in a communiqué that confirmed US support to Afghanistan’s independence, but did not say whether or not Afghanistan was protected by the ‘Eisenhower doctrine’. On September 6, 1961, diplomatic relations between Afghanistan and Pakistan were snapped, due to differences in Pushtun issue and subsequent border closure, resulting in economic hardship to the Afghans. The Soviets yet again came to their rescue, further reorienting the Afghan economy to the north. Premier Daoud’s brother, Foreign Minister Naim Khan appealed to President J.F. Kennedy, on September 27, 1962 to help resolve the political impasse by developing an alternate overland trade route through Iran. The American President, instead, told him “to make adjustments in its policy to resolve its problems with Pakistan, because no country could maintain its independence by complete dependence on the Soviet Union.” But Daoud was too rigid on the Pushtun stance to concede. Following a consensus in the royal family that he should step down, he did so in 1963.

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27 During the Cold War peaceful competition brought foreign aid from Western sources, the US being the largest donor. For further details on competitive aid see Peter G. Franck, Afghanistan Between East and West, (Washington D.C.1960). p.67.


Constitutional Liberal Experiment: 1963-1973

During the constitutional liberal period, also known as ‘democracy-i-naw’\(^{31}\) (New Democracy), King Zahir Shah by the 1964 constitution provided for the first time a representative government with a bicameral parliament.\(^{32}\) King Zahir Shah and his five Prime Ministers down played the Pushtunistan card and sought improving relations with the West to ward off excessive Soviet dependence. During the visit of king Zahir Shah in September 1963 to the United States, the American President assured him of the ‘continuing US desire to cooperate in economic and technical fields.’\(^{33}\) However, US policy objectives as approved in 1966 was to preserve Afghan independence to prevent Soviet influence from becoming dominant in Afghanistan and to improve ties between Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan.

On July 19, 1967 the US and Afghanistan signed an agreement for the sales of agricultural commodities under the Agricultural Trade Development and Assistance Act of 1954 and the US-Afghan agreement of June 30, 1953 on technical cooperation was extended. Various other agreements extending cooperation in the fields of culture and education were agreed upon in the following years. In this phase of increased proximity, US officials including Secretary of State William Rogers visited Afghanistan on May 25, 1969 being the first Secretary of State to do so. This was followed by Vice President Spiro T. Agnews' visit to Kabul on January 8, 1970 when he reiterated to prime minister Nur Ahmed Etemadi further cooperation and assistance for agricultural development.

However, in spite of close economic cooperation, for the US administration, the strategic perceptions of Afghanistan did not undergo profound change. This was clear from the policy approved by the Afghan section of the Nixon administration and the National Security Council under Henry Kissinger on August 6, 1969. It defined American objective in Afghanistan as:

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\(^{31}\) Anthony Hyman, ibid., p.53.
This period also saw the mushrooming of various political parties, *Hizbi Demokratiki Khalqi Afghanistan* (The People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan), *Shula-e-Jawid* (Eternal Flame), *Eikhan-ul-Muslimin* (Islamic Brotherhood) to name few. For further details see Hafizullah Emadi, *State, Revolution and Super Powers in Afghanistan* (New York: Praeger, 1990), pp.43-44.

\(^{32}\) Mohammad Khalid Ma’aroof, *ibid.*, p.51.
I. The preservation of Afghanistan’s independence and territorial integrity.
2. The prevention of Soviet influence in the country from becoming so strong that Afghanistan would lose its freedom of action.
3. The improvement of Afghanistan’s ties with Pakistan and Iran.34

The low strategic significance of Afghanistan was further observed in 1972 when the policy stated that, “Afghanistan is a minor element in our policy towards Central-South Asia”, but, “Soviet military or greatly increased political presence in Afghanistan would be clearly against American interests. It is difficult however, to perceive any combination of circumstances which would make such crude, overt, highly visible action essential or desirable to Moscow.”35

In the late 1960s, the détente between the US and the USSR weakened the US competitive aid giving with the soviet in remote areas like Afghanistan. By the early 1970s, the overall extent of US economic aid declined and became far more selective36. Afghanistan was no longer a priority of the United States’ foreign policy when compared to US commitments in Southeast Asia. However, ever since the split of PDPA in 1967 into two factions-the Parcham and the Khalq and the subsequent power struggle between and within the factions followed by Shafiq’s government’s crackdown on leftist dissidents, their strength had been waning37. In contrast, the Western influence, despite fall off in US government aid, appeared to be growing38. Thus, Afghanistan and the United States in the 1960s and 1970s maintained a cordial relationship till the time Daoud usurped the monarchy by a coup in 1973.

34 In a policy change in 1971 citing these objectives, the US embassy in Kabul observed that for the United States, Afghanistan at present has limited direct interest; it is not an important trading partner; it is not an access route for the US trade with others; there are no treaty ties or defence commitments and Afghanistan does not provide US with significant defence, intelligence or scientific facilities. Henry S. Bradsher, ibid., pp.51-52.
35 ibid., pp.52-60. Anthony Hyman, ibid., pp.67-70
37 For the formation of the PDPA in 1965 and its split in 1967 see Anthony Arnold, ibid., pp.23-36.
38 Though in the late 1960’s US aid to Afghanistan tailed off, the American influence was felt through international agencies like World Bank, IMF and so on. See Richard S. Newell, The Struggle for Afghanistan, (London: 1981),p.50.
Daud's Republican Era: 1973-1978

The year 1973 was a landmark in Afghan history not only because of Daoud's comeback through a bloodless coup on July 17, 1973, but also because of a complete reversal of Daoud's foreign policy. The Nixon Doctrine of 1969, which encouraged nations reduce their security dependence on the US by assuming more responsibility for their own regional problems, had led the Shah of Iran to seduce Afghanistan away from its Soviet influenced neutrality to its own anti-Communist network. Daoud, on his part, approached countries like Iran, Saudi Arabia, Iraq and Kuwait for economic aid. By 1976, Daoud, to get out of the Soviet tilt, started ignoring the pro-Soviet faction of the PDPA, "embarked on the delicate task of trying to retrieve his previous errors by disengaging Afghanistan from the smothering Soviet embrace"\(^39\) by diversifying relations with Islamic and other non-aligned countries.

In another major policy shift, Daoud backed away from his earlier quarter century support for the Pushtun cause and took steps to improve his ties with Pakistan. This rapprochement with Pakistan was a result of shah of Iran and United States' mediation efforts.\(^40\) Daoud visited Pakistan and both Bhutto and his successor Zia-ul-Haq paid visits to Kabul. During Daoud's last visit to Pakistan on March 5, 1978 both the leaders agreed to resolve the Pashtun issue.

On July 22, 1973, the US recognised the Daoud regime. Due to the mediation of the visiting Secretary of State, Henry Kissinger, on November 1, 1974, the Pushtun issue was amicably resolved. In order to thwart Soviet influence and encourage Afghanistan to distance herself from the Soviet bloc, Theodore L. Eliot, Jr., former US ambassador to Afghanistan advised the Department of State that US must continue to demonstrate


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"friendly and tangible interest through a visible American presence in this country." In order to exert its influence, the US continued its development projects and offered financial aid to Afghanistan's modernisation programme. As a result of the US economic assistance, the relations between the two countries improved. According to the US administration:

"US-Afghan relations during 1977 were excellent... Daoud accepted an invitation to make a state visit to the US in the summer of 1978... Funding for the US military training programme for Afghan officers was doubled in an effort to offset... albeit to a modest degree... the massive Soviet predominance in the area of foreign support for the Afghan armed forces." The new Carter administration expected to make gesture of increasing the dwindling level of aid. Behind this lay confidence in Washington that, "Afghanistan would remain the quiet political backwater that it had traditionally been."

On the domestic front Dauod repressed the Islamic movement, which had gained influence from 1965 in Kabul University. The prominent leaders like Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, Burhanuddin Rabbani and others fled to Pakistan from where they started aiding insurrections in Afghanistan with active Pakistani collaboration.

During the initial years of Daoud's second term, Daoud maintained a pro-Soviet orientation in his foreign policy and even endorsed Brezhnev's Asian Collective Security Arrangement of 1969. But when the Soviets started peddling the Pushtun cause since the mid-1960s to win Pakistan over to its side, while competing with the Chinese and American influence, Daoud felt betrayed. Thereafter, he turned towards the Muslim and Western countries, more in view of the economic development of the country. Coinciding

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31 Quoted in Hafizullah Emadi, ibid. p.76.  
32 ibid.  
33 Henry S. Bradsher, ibid., p.66.  
with this, Daoud began reducing the leftist influence in the government, fearing their political influence in the army, more specifically the Parcham faction of the PDPA, with whose help he had come to power.

During Daoud’s visit to Moscow in June 1974, the Soviet leadership urged him to carry on reforms by working closely with the PDPA. However, that was the time when Daoud had developed close ties with the anti-Communist countries and had banned all political parties. Strains in the relationship with the Soviet Union were becoming apparent. In 1975, Daoud set up his own National Revolutionary Party that required all political elements to come under its umbrella. Gradually the strained relationship led to a situation when Daoud was viewed by the Soviet leadership a burden, which needed to be relieved. With the Soviet blessings, the two factions of the PDPA, the Parcham and the Khalq after a decade of factionalism were united by Soviet efforts in March 1977, staged a coup on April 27, 1978 and proclaimed Afghanistan a ‘democratic republic’.

The Saur (April) Revolution:

Following the 1978 coup with Noor Mohammad Taraki as the Chairman of the Revolutionary Council and the prime Minister, Afghanistan was declared Democratic Republic. The Soviet Union was the first to recognize the democratic regime. There was no immediate US official reaction to the Communist coup. No attempt was made to break relations with the Communist usurpers or to express official disapproval of such a shift in political power in such a strategic country.

Although the United States recognized the Kabul regime, it was exploring means to re-establish its influence in Afghanistan. A top secret diplomatic note depicted U.S.

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46 For the strained Afghan-Soviet relations during the latter part of Daoud’s tenure see A.S.Ghaus, ibid., pp.173-9.
47 Beverlay Male, Revolutionary Afghanistan, A Reappraisal, (London: Croom Helm, 1982), p.59
48 In May 1978, the Soviets signed 31 economic projects and in July 1978, an agreement for providing $250 million in military assistance. In November 1978, the Treaty Of Friendship and Cooperation was signed between the Soviet union and Afghanistan which was later used by the Soviets as an excuse to invade Afghanistan in 1979. See Hafizullah Emadi, ibid., pp.83-84.
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calls: “closing out our efforts in Afghanistan would likely to be seen as an abdication of our responsibility and accomplish for the Soviets one of their primary objectives, namely to reduce further US and Western influence in Afghanistan and the region. It would not be in our interest to give such a blank cheque signed to Moscow.” 49

As Afghanistan was passing through a stage of power struggle within the government between Prime Minister Taraki and Foreign Minister Hafizullah Amin, the United States pursued a policy of ‘watchful waiting’. However, the killing of the US ambassador Adolph Dubs on February 14, 1979 caused rapture in the US-Afghan relations. President Carter announced severe reduction in assistance programmes projected for 1979, withdrawal of US Peace Corps by April, and the termination of a military assistance programme that was in the planning stages. 50

An added source of irritation for the Americans was the regime’s proximity with the Soviet Union. The US policy hardened towards the government and led to the searching of clandestine potential groups to challenge the regime. The US began supporting the exiled afghan Islamic parties 51 based in Pakistan and started providing them financial and military assistance 52. By late May 1978, within a month of the coup, a National Rescue Front was founded by seven Islamic organisations under the leadership of Syed Burhanuddin Rabbani. Following uprisings of landowners, businessmen, peasants and religious clerics against the democratic state, the situation provided these Islamic parties

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52 Following post-1978 political changes the Hekmatyar’s (Hizb islami) and Rabbani’s (Jamiat-e-Islami) consolidated their organizational structure with funds from the US and other Western countries see Hafizullah Emadi, ibid., p.99.
an opportunity to use Islam as an unifying force in resistance against the Soviet backed government in Kabul. This led to the beginning of anti-Soviet ‘jihad’ in Afghanistan.

Afghan politics witnessed turbulence because of widening of rift between Taraki and Amin. While Amin, who was jockeying for more power and was showing increased animosity towards the Parcham faction and was not averse to exploring possibilities of securing US assistance, Taraki under Soviet direction was planning Amin’s removal. But the attempt failed and on 16 September 1979 in a palace shoot out staged by Amin, Taraki was killed and Amin became the Prime minister. However Amin’s pro-western tilt and increasing estrangement with the Soviet leadership led to his exit from the Afghan political scene. Babrak Karmal of the Parcham faction took over as the head of the Democratic Republic.

Moreover, the overthrow of Shah in Iran in 1979 increased Afghanistan’s geo political significance greatly in American perception. On 3 July 1979, President Carter signed a directive authorizing covert aid to the opponents of the pro-Soviet regime in Afghanistan. National Security Adviser, Zbigniew Brzezinski points out to the rationale in funding the resistance movement in Afghanistan, “to induce a Soviet military intervention… I wrote to President Carter. We now have the opportunity of giving the USSR its Vietnam war”

The Soviet Intervention: 1979-1989

The Soviet occupation of Afghanistan can be dealt in two phases. In the first phase, i.e. from December 1979 to May 1986, the Soviet policy was dominated by a hawkish approach under the leadership of Leonid Brezhnev, Yuri Andropov and Konstantin

55 Gabriel Kolko, ibid., p.47. Also see Edward R. Drachman and Alan Shank, ibid., p 218.
Chernenko. In the second phase with the arrival of Gorbachev in Kremlin in 1985 there was a significant change in the thinking with the realisation that the war in Afghanistan is unwinnable.

Active Soviet Policy: 1979-86

The reasons that led the Soviets to invade Afghanistan on the eve of Christmas of 1979 have been well documented.\(^{57}\) For the United States, however, the Soviet intervention was a direct threat to its global interest and security. President Carter stated, "Our own nation's security was directly threatened. There is no doubt that the Soviet move into Afghanistan, if done without adverse consequences, would have resulted in the temptation to move again until they reached the warm water ports or until they acquired control over a portion of world's oil supplies."\(^{58}\)

It was definite case of altered strategic situation for the Americans. Strong statements conveying a clear disapproval of the Soviet action marked the American policy. President Carter's statement that the invasion constituted "the greatest threat to peace since the Second World War" set the tone and the image of an expansionist Soviet Union hardened.\(^{59}\) Carter's State of the Union address to the Congress on January 23, 1980 stated, "Let our position be absolutely clear. An attempt by any outside force to gain control of the Persian Gulf region will be regarded as an assault on the vital interests of the United States of America and such an assault will be repelled by any means necessary including military force."\(^{60}\)

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\(^{60}\) Henry S. Bradsher, ibid., pp.192-3. This came to be known as the Carter Doctrine. Edward Girardet, ibid., p.29.
However, the prevailing spirit of détente compelled the Carter administration not to take any serious step, which would antagonize the Soviets.\(^6\) Therefore, the US policy makers were interested only to impose military and economic costs that might discourage the Soviet Army from consolidating its position in Afghanistan and moving against Pakistan. Therefore the US policy makers prepared resistance as the ‘second best policy’ to drain Soviet resources and diminish Soviet influence in the region and justify a policy of resistance to the real dangers of Soviet expansionism in a region of vital importance to the security of the United States.\(^6\)

Hence, the US started supporting the Afghan resistance parties based in Pakistan. President Carter decided that the US had a ‘moral obligation’ to help the resistance movement.\(^6\) On January 9, 1980, the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence was briefed by the CIA on plans for covert aid to the mujahideen.\(^6\) National Security Advisor Brezezinski visited Pakistan and assured the resistance parties supply of arms.\(^6\) However, the aid was in its modest beginnings.

With the change of Presidency in the United States in 1981, the new Reagan administration adopted a highhanded approach towards the Soviets. It included provision of financial aid to mujahideen\(^6\) battling the Soviets and declaring its solidarity with

\(^{61}\) Moderate reaction to the Soviet action included boycotting the Summer Olympics in Moscow, postponing of cultural and educational exchange programmes, delaying the opening of a Soviet Consulate in New York and that of the American’s in Kiev, curbing Soviet fishing privileges in US waters, stopping of the sale of US technologies to USSR and blocking the sale of grain to USSR. Edward R. Drachman and Alan Shank, ibid., pp. 231-43


\(^{64}\) Henry S. Bradsher, ibid., p.223. For CIA funding see Mohammad Yousaf & Major Mark Adkin, *The Bear Trap: Afghanistan’s Untold Story*, (Lahore: Jang Publishers, 1992), pp.120-32.

\(^{65}\) National Security Advisor Brezezinski got Carter to sign a secret directive for covert aid to the nascent anti-Soviet resistance fighters. Ibid, p.120. Also see John K. Cooley, *ibid.*, p.13.

\(^{66}\) It was the Soviet intervention in the climate of the Cold War that allowed respectability in the West for the concept of Mujahideen or the Holy Warriors. President Reagan’s administration was particularly fond of using the term. See Ralph H. Magnus & Eden Naby, eds., ibid., p. 135 &259.
US Policy Towards Afghanistan

Afghanistan. On March 10, 1982, the US administration designated March 21 as ‘Afghan Day’ in the United States. It attempted to depict the Soviet invasion as a threat to the security of the Islamic nations and began to portray itself as a natural ally of all the Islamic nations. In an address to a gathering of Afghan refugees in Pakistan, in July 1983, Secretary of State George Schultz stated, “This is a gathering in the name of freedom, a gathering in the name of self determination, a gathering in the name of getting the Soviet forces out of Afghanistan, a gathering in the name of sovereign Afghanistan controlled by its own people. Fellow freedom fighters we are with you.”67

The Reagan administration, in the largest CIA covert operation since the Vietnam War, provided the Pakistan-based Islamic groups more than $625 million68 aid. The US Congress increasingly pushing for more aid, took the initiative of doubling the administration’s request to $250 million plus an extra allocation for anti-aircraft weapons.69 The entire aid programme was channeled through the Pakistani Inter Services Intelligence (ISI), which was created by Zia-ul-Haq in 1979 to channel the Afghan war.70 The whole objective of the Americans seemed to be transforming Afghanistan into a ‘Soviet-Vietnam’71, to reduce Iran’s influence in Afghanistan, to restore confidence among the US allies that the US post-Vietnam isolationism is over and they can rely on the US leadership, and re-establish American domination in the region which was torn apart by the US hostage crisis in Iran. However, the consequences of this ruthless policy of arming all the ethnic groups were colossal.

In the meantime, Afghan domestic politics was marked by ups and downs. The Soviet hope that their intervention would end the internecine quibbling within PDPA came to a naught. All of Karmal’s attempts to bring about party unity and enforce discipline floundered on the Khalq-Parcham fault line. As a fall out Karmal was begun to be viewed

67 Quoted in Hafizullah Emadi, ibid., p.59.
68 For details of covert aid during Reagan era see Barnett R. Rubin, ibid., pp.30-34.
71 Andre Brigot and Oliver Roy, ibid., p.141
as an embarrassment for the Soviets. Being associated with the policies of the Brezhnev era, Karmal had no place under the policies of glasnost and perestroika of the Gorbachev regime. The choice befell on Mohammad Najibullah, head of the State security organisation, KHAD to take over the mantle.72

Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan: 1986-1992

The US-sponsored mujahideens proved to be a difficult force to deal with for the Soviets. The CIA's aid to the anti-Soviet resistance increased in the mid-1980s and the supply of anti-aircraft Stinger missile in 1986 to the mujahideen turned the tide of the war against the Soviets.73 The details of the arms supply, training and involvement of other powers in the Afghan affairs have been discussed in the subsequent chapters. The Soviets failed to subjugate the mujahideens and facing severe opposition both at home and in the international fora, began searching for formula for a graceful exit from Afghanistan. As a result, 1987 onwards the Soviets demonstrated an increasing commitment to the U.N. sponsored peace-negotiations involving Pakistan, the U.S.A., Afghan government, but excluding the mujahideen parties. The Geneva Accord of May 14, 1988 signed between the governments of Afghanistan and Pakistan concerning non-interference in each other's internal affairs provided the Soviets with an opportunity to undo its 'monumental blunders'74 and withdraw its troops from Afghanistan in February 15, 1989. In anticipation of the fall of the Najibullah government immediately after the Soviet withdrawal, Pakistan and the US put a strong pressure on the seven party alliance to form a government in waiting. Agreement between them proved elusive, but the seven party alliance was reformed into the Afghan Interim Government only days before the Soviet withdrawal.75

72 For details see, Ralph H. Magnus & Eden Naby, ibid., pp.128-33.
73 Interviews with the former CIA officials. It was the first time that the sophisticated weapon was distributed outside NATO. CIA using Saudi and American funds brought weapons from China, Egypt, Israel and elsewhere. To preserve the 'myth of deniability' CIA supplied no American weapon till the Stingers in 1986. Also see Mohammad Yousaf & Major Mark Adkin, ibid., pp.97-112.
75 Peter Marsden, ibid., p.36.
After the withdrawal of Soviet troops, the regime in Kabul continued to maintain its rule, but its authority and influence was gradually eroding. The country had already been thrown into the quagmire of conflicting aspirations. The disunity among the various mujahideen factions had a telling effect on the future political developments in Afghanistan. In addition the disintegration of the Soviet Union in 1990 not only led to the independence of several Central Asian States but also paved the way for substantial political transformation in Afghanistan. In the dying months the USSR finally reached an agreement with the US to halt arms supply to the respective protégées that is the Najibullah government and the mujahideen. In 1989 the Najibullah regime to bolster its position boldly sought allies in the West. Using the US cut off of aid to Hekmatyar in November 1989 as a political stepping stone, Najibullah launched a campaign to exert the United States to “join hands with him to checkmate the progress of the Islamic fundamentalists so that they may not be able to establish an Islamic fundamentalism government in Afghanistan.”76


In the milieu of eroding Communism, the regime in Kabul had to concede to the United Nations peace formula detailing the transfer of power to a transitional Islamic government headed by Sebtagullah Mojaddadi, Chief of Jabha-e-Nijat-e-Nelli,77 in April 1992. Immediately after the fall of Najibullah, Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif brokered Peshwar Accord and Islamabad Declaration proved ineffective and the fratricidal war continued unabated. ‘By 1992, America’s main motivation for close attention to Afghanistan- the existence and threat of the Soviet Union- had passed. Both Washington and Moscow cut off supplies to their clients at the end of 1991, and by April 18, 1992, the day Najibullah quit presidency, the Mujah Ideen had entered Kabul marking the beginning of fratricidal warfare in the country. During the Mojaddadi presidency, the US

Ambassador to the Afghan resistance Peter Tomsen and his deputy, Richard Hoagland, made the last significant visit of a US official to Kabul.\textsuperscript{78}

Sebtagullah Mojaddadi having failed to disarm the militia in Kabul was succeeded by Burhanuddin Rabbani, head of the Jamiat-e-Islamic Party on August 30, 1992. The United States, however, did not open its embassy in Kabul. On October 7, 1992 President George Bush declared that the United States will provide financial assistance and resume normal diplomatic ties with the Rabbani government.\textsuperscript{79} In December 1992, Rabbani reelected himself as the President by a handpicked National Assembly, an arrangement, which failed to address the concerns of other mujahideen parties. This resulted in the struggle for power among various Islamist and assumed ethnic character with each ethnic group rallying behind its leader, Pakistan’s policy further ethnicized post-Soviet politics in Afghanistan by its support to Hekmatyar against Rabbani- a Tajik from Badakshan. Finally on January 1, 1994, Rashid Dostum and the Hizb-i-Islami head Gulbuddin Hekmatyar joined forces to unseat the Rabbani government by rocketing the capital. The attempt failed, but spread panic among people leading to a mass exodus to Pakistan.

In the situation of complete ethnic strife with each group rallying behind its leaders, the United States had little option, but to keep a close watch on the unfolding events. However at the end of the cold war Afghanistan was no longer a priority area for the United States. The Afghans were left to fight among themselves. In the prevailing situation of anarchy and chaos the Taliban began their victory march.

\textsuperscript{78} William Maley, ibid., p.95.
\textsuperscript{79} Hafizullah Emadi, ibid., p.60.