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## Soviet Occupation of Afghanistan and its Aftermath

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### ABSTRACT

This article provides an analytical discussion on the events of Soviet occupation of Afghanistan in 1979 and its effects in the historical perspective as well as global context. In this regard some notable historical events of the development of diplomatic relations between Afghanistan and its two mighty neighbors –Russia and British India are addressed. Afghanistan's foreign relations with the Soviet Russia and United States during the cold war era are also evaluated to assess the events of Soviet occupation and its aftermath. While the Soviet invasion necessitated a response from the United States and its allies to compel the Red Army to withdraw Afghanistan in 1988, there is a long-term impact of the Soviet withdrawal in the post-cold war international relations.

**Keyword:** *Great-Game, Buffer State, Anglo-Afghan Wars, Cold War, Pushtunistan problem, Sour Revolution, Brezhnev Doctrine, Geneva Peace Accord, Taliban*

### Section-I: Introduction

The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 was an important event in the history of cold war. The invasion had far-reaching and long-term consequences which are still realized both by politicians and academicians. The invasion not only triggered a decade long bloody civil war that contributed significantly to the collapse of the Soviet Union, but it also caused a major rupture in the political ties between super powers. It also paved the way to the formation of al-Qaeda and the stage for the Taliban's takeover of the country in 1996. The main purpose of this paper is to track the prefaces of the Soviet invasion, and the role played by the United States and its allies in supporting the Afghan mujahedeen militarily, technically, and materially while an aftermath of the invasion is also analyzed in the historical perspective. The present study is based on currently available literature on Afghanistan and Soviet foreign policy drawn from diverse sources such as books, journals, international acts and pacts.

The study, which is descriptive and analytical, undertakes a historical approach in attempting to answer to questions relating to Russia's historical relations with Afghanistan leading to the direct military intervention in 1979 and the implications upon the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan. In doing so, the paper is divided into seven sections including introduction and conclusion. Section one gives a very short introduction about the present study. Following the introduction, the second section lays out the historical involvement of Russia (and later the Soviet Union) in Afghanistan from 1880 to 1919. During this period Afghanistan was the focal point of the power struggle between Czarist Russia and Great Britain. Section three provides a detailed account of Afghanistan's foreign relations with Soviet Russia and British India during the two decades between the two world wars particularly in the 1920s. Section four is devoted to investigating the policies towards the two super powers from the beginning of the cold war upto the *Sour Revolution* era and its implications in Afghan politics and society. Section five discusses the facts and events occurred in Afghanistan from the *Saur Revolution*

to the Soviet invasion, in December 1979. Section six analyses the result and subsequent results of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. This chapter will analyze the causes and effects of the Soviet invasion and occupation. In section seven, a concluding remark is also added.

## **Section-II: Historical Involvement of Russia in Afghanistan (1880-1919)**

### **Anglo-Russian rivalry and Afghanistan**

Afghanistan, the citadel of Asia, was invaded repeatedly throughout its long history by foreigners- Persians, Greeks, Scythians, Huns, Mongols, Arabs, Turks, English, Russians and Americans for its strategic and geographic notability. The 1979 Soviet invasion was one of the important of many incursions by foreign powers into Afghanistan. The root of Soviet occupation in Afghanistan may be traced to the “Great Game”- the 19th century strategic rivalry and conflict between two imperial powers- the ‘Czarist Russia’ and ‘Victorian Britain’ for power and influence in Central Asia, particularly in Afghanistan, Persia and Tibet. The Great Game between Britain and Russia began in 1830 and lasted throughout the 19th century. The nature of rivalry between the two imperial powers was so serious that ‘each empire eyed the other nervously, often overreacting to every move which might be deemed to be expansionist’ (Mooney 1982). Fearing a Russian invasion in Central Asia and the potential threat to India, Britain attempted to establish a puppet regime in Afghanistan that would be friendly to their interests. To achieve this goal, they had to ‘embark on three military interventions’ in Afghanistan in the nineteenth and early twentieth century. The “most catastrophic of these interventions” was in 1839, which ended in a disastrous defeat for the British army in January 1842” (Marsden 2010).

After the end of the First Anglo-Afghan War the Russians continued to advance southward. The threatening attitude of Persia towards Herat and Kandahar compelled the Afghan Amir Dost Mohammad to establish a cordial relation with British India which also believed that Britain’s regional interests could be served only by bolstering the strength of Dost Mohammad. In March 1855 Britain signed an “innocuous three point agreement” which was reconfirmed in January 1857 by a new agreement with a promise to “aid the Amir if he was attacked by a foreign enemy.” At the conclusion of the treaty Dost Mohammad said “I have now made an alliance with the British and come what may I will keep it till death” (Fletcher 1965). The Anglo-Afghan friendship was put to test in October 1856 when a Persian army encouraged by the Russians captured Herat. The British Indian authority not only helped the Amir with money and arms, but also declared war against Persia and sent a force from Bombay (Bold 2001). After three months, the Persians agreed to leave the city in March 1857 and recognized the independence of Afghanistan. The “Great Amir” Dost Mohammad did not forget his promise given to the British (Tytler 1950). In 1857 he refrained from assisting the insurgents during the Indian mutiny of 1857, in spite of an Indian request for assistance against the British (Watkins 1963).

### **Second Anglo-Afghan War (1878-1880)**

In the Clarendon-Gortchakoff Agreement of 1872-1873 both Britain and Russia agreed to regard Afghanistan as a *de facto* neutral zone between two imperial powers. In this treaty, Russia agreed that it would respect the northern boundaries of Afghanistan but that was just a paper promise from Russia. By June 1873, Russia captured the Khanates of Khiva, Khokand and Bukhara in Central Asia. After the Congress of Berlin (June-July 1878) that ended the tension between Russia and Britain in Europe, Russia’s expansion policy became so desperate that on July 22, the day when the Berlin Conference ended, an uninvited Russian diplomatic mission arrived in Kabul that finally led to the Second Anglo-Afghan War (1878-1880). The War was instigated by the Afghan ruler Sher Ali’s refusal to accept a British mission while receiving a Russian one (Bold 2001). On 21 November 1878 British army crossed into Afghanistan ‘in a three pronged attack’ (Dupree 1980) and after some initial resistance occupied Kabul for the second time in forty 40 years. Amir Sher Ali fled the country and the British replaced Sher Ali with his son Yakub Khan who signed the Treaty of Gandamak with Britain in May 1879.

### **Great Game and Amir Abdur Rahman**

Under the Gandamak Treaty, Amir Yakub Khan relinquished control of Afghan foreign affairs to the British who would also place a resident mission in Kabul and other locations (Bold 2002). But the British victory lasted only for less than three months. The murder of the British envoy Sir Louis Cavagnari and his escort on 3 September 1879 in Kabul by some mutinous Afghan soldiers compelled British Indian authority to send General Roberts with a large army to recapture Kabul (Watkins 1963). Yaqūb Khan abdicated and asked asylum in British India where he died in exile in 1923. General Roberts, who was 'hardly humanitarian,' became 'the *de facto* ruler of Kabul.' To take the revenge of the murder of Cavagnari and his companions, he 'summarily executed' many Afghan rebels (Fletcher 1965). Consequently, in July 1880, Britain installed Abdur Rahman Khan, Amir Sher Ali's able nephew, who had spent twelve years of exile in Russian Turkistan, as the new Amir of Afghanistan. Abdur Rahman Khan reaffirmed the Gandamak treaty and remained secure on the throne until his death in 1901. Amir Abdur Rahman unified Afghanistan and paid his attention to technological advancement. As 'a man of shrewdness, clear judgment and iron will' (Fletcher 1965) he was very conscious of the new geopolitical realities of the 'Great Game' between Britain and Russia (Rouland 2014). Yet, it was not possible for him to ignore his two powerful mighty neighbors as his foreign policy was completely in the hand of Britain and Russia (Bold 2002).

After the end of the Second Anglo-Afghan War, the advancement of Russian forces to the north of Afghanistan led to renewed tensions for British India. In 1881 Russian army annexed Khiva. In March 1884, Russia occupied the Merv Oasis, "the queen of the world" (Yetişgin, 2007). By acquiring Merv, Russia nearly completed its conquest of Central Asia (Benjamin 2018). But the capture of Pajndeh, southeast of Merv, in March 1885 by Russian army led to a serious diplomatic crisis between Britain and Russia. The incident nearly gave rise to war between Great Britain and Tsarist Russia. British Prime Minister Gladstone 'sought for and obtained from Parliament a war credit of 11 million'. For several weeks it seemed possible that Britain would go to war with Russia (Griffiths 1981). Finally, Gladstone refrained from military intervention due to a public uproar in England against his government's alleged inaction in Khartoum rebellion (Watkins 1963). Russia was not also ready for a military conflict. Both sides backed down and solved the matter diplomatically in July 1887 (Wilber 1962). Russia agreed to make no further advance southward. Under the 1887 Anglo-Russian treaty, Panjehdeh was given to the Russians in exchange for various salient territories on the Afghanistan's side of the Oxus River (Griffiths 1981).

In 1889 Russian military operations near the Afghan border caused the British to repeat the warning that an advance on Herat, the 'key to India' would be treated as a 'declaration of war' (Fletcher 1965). Again tensions were relaxed by diplomacy. In 1891 the Russian army began to move beyond the eastern end of the agreed Afghan frontier of 1873, where an undemarcated gap between Lake Victoria and the Chinese frontier, caused a tension for British India. This move was countered by the government of India who persuaded the Amir Abdur Rahman to assume control of Wakhan, a Valley in the Pamir Mountains (the roof of the world). The problem was solved by an Anglo-Russian agreement of 1895 without any major military encounter (Watkins 1963). From that time Afghan-Russian boundary remained remarkably stable (Fletcher 1965). At the same time, in 1893 under the British pressure, Amir Abdur Rahman signed the Durand Line agreement with British India to indicate the boundary between its domain and Afghanistan. But the Durand Line agreement 'proved politically, geographically, and strategically untenable' between the governments of Afghanistan and British India, and later, Afghanistan and Pakistan (Dupree 1965). Both the parties many time 'violated the spirit and sometimes the letter of this agreement' (Wilber 1962). In 1896 another agreement was signed between Britain and Russia in order to make comprehensive border settlement. But Russia did not abandon its interest in Afghanistan (Amstutz 1986).

Amir Abdur Rahman's successor Habibullah (r 1901-1919) was not as strict as his father. In foreign relations, Habibullah followed his father's policy of neutrality. Alongside his various reforms, he invited foreigners to assist in development projects (Rouland 2014). In 1901, Amir Habibullah sent envoys to Great Britain, Russia, France, Germany, Japan, China, the Ottoman Empire, Egypt, Persia, and the United States. In 1905, he offered the British control over Afghan foreign relations in return

for a subsidy of 18 lakhs of rupees a year (160,000 British pounds) and access to military supplies through India (Tytler 1950).

### **End of the Great Game**

Until Russia's humiliating defeat in the Russo-Japanese war of 1904-1905 and the subsequent Russo-British alliance against the newly unified Germany, the Russians 'continued their efforts to penetrate Afghanistan politically and economically, but not militarily' (Dupree 1980). In August 1907 a treaty was signed between the two powers to 'regulate their affairs in Persia, Afghanistan and Tibet' (Braithwaite 2011). By this treaty, which formally ended the great game between the two great imperial powers, Russia considered Afghanistan as outside the sphere of its influence and agreed to confer directly with Britain on all matters relating to Afghanistan. Britain in turn agreed neither to occupy or annex any part of Afghanistan nor to interfere the internal affairs of the country. Thus, by mutual consent, Afghanistan emerged as a semi-independent 'buffer state' with British influence in foreign affairs. But Amir Habibullah had not ratified the Anglo-Russian treaty for two reasons. Firstly, the treaty was considered by Amir Habibullah as a threat to Afghanistan's national integrity. Secondly, the Afghan political elites were not consulted during negotiations between Russia and Britain regarding their interests in Afghanistan (Rouland 2014).

Although Anglo-Russian pact (1907) ended the great game, the legacy of this rivalry continues to shape the geopolitics of the region. It was difficult for the Afghans to ignore the implications of the global changes that had been taking place in the years before World War I. The Russian revolution 1905-7, the constitutional movement of Persia in 1906, the Young Turk movement of 1904 and the writings of Jamaluddin Afghani and the Balkan Wars of 1911-1913 influenced the modernist and nationalist elites of Afghanistan. This had an impact in the Young Afghan party led by Mahmud Tarzi, a devoted worker for reforms and progress who had been exiled by Amir Abdur Rahman but repatriated under Amir Habibullah.

### **World War-I and Afghanistan**

Upon the outbreak of the World War I, Amir Habibullah declared the strict neutrality of Afghanistan in the war. Although his domestic opponents forced to induce him to support Turkey and the Central Powers, the Amir maintained strict neutrality throughout the World War I. Afghanistan nonetheless signed a treaty of friendship with Germany in January 1916. This treaty did not alter Afghanistan's position of neutrality. The strength of the Afghan nationalist movement inspired by Mahmud Tarzi induced Habibullah in 1916 to forward a demand that Afghanistan would be represented at the coming Peace Conference. After the War had finished, the Amir, wrote to the Viceroy of India, asking 'written recognition by the Paris Peace Conference, of Afghanistan's absolute liberty, freedom of action and perpetual independence'. But the British government showed very little interest in the Amir's aspirations. On 20 February 1919, Habibullah was assassinated by a military officer while he was sleeping in his tent during a hunting trip in Laghman.

## **Section-III: Soviet relation with Afghanistan between the Two World Wars**

### **Third Anglo-Afghan War (1919)**

Amir Habibullah was succeeded to the throne by his third son Amanullah whose first major political task was to restore the complete independence of Afghanistan. But the British reluctance about Afghan independence led him to make decision of using frontier Afghan tribes against the British government of India. At the same time, he was preparing himself diplomatically to confront the British. One of his diplomatic actions in this regard was to make friendship with the new communist regime in Soviet Russia to whom Afghanistan was now more important for its geographical location and natural resources. In a letter to Vladimir Lenin dated 21 April 1919 Amanullah proposed the establishment of diplomatic relations with Russia. In his reply Lenin on 27 May warmly welcomes Amanullah's gesture (Amstutz 1986).

Barely two months after ascending the throne King Amanullah boldly denounced his country's 1879 treaty obligation to follow British advice in conducting Afghanistan foreign relations. On 3 May 1919

the Afghan army crossed the Indian border, and occupied a village that provoked the Third Anglo-Afghan War. However, the four months war that was inconclusive ended on 8 August 1919 with the Treaty of Rawalpindi. Under Article 5 of the treaty, Britain effectively gave Afghanistan full sovereignty by allowing Kabul to open diplomatic relations with other countries. By demarcating undefined portions of the Khaibar pass area Afghanistan also affirmed the 'Durand Line' as the official border between itself and the British India. Thus the period of 'buffer state' came to an end after the First World War.

### **Soviet-Afghan Treaty 1921**

The British withdrawal of 'privilege' enjoyed by previous Afghan rulers to import arms and ammunition from India, forced King Amanullah to seek closer relations with Soviet Russia and to turn to the latter for weapons. The USSR also was in waiting to take this opportunity. The new government in Moscow under Lenin was the first to recognize Afghanistan's independence and establish diplomatic relations. By October 1919 Russia and Afghanistan had exchanged missions to discuss Afghanistan's new independence in foreign affairs (Goodson 2001). But Soviet Russia's internal situation and its uncertain promises to Afghanistan did not bring any fruitful result. As the probationary period stipulated in the Rawalpindi agreement came to an end, the British, probably in a bid to forestall a Russo-Afghan alliance offered the Afghans to discuss about a new agreement. But there were so many areas of strong disagreement that the discussion finally foundered. On 13 September 1920 Afghanistan signed a treaty with the Soviet Union and it was ratified by Moscow on 28 February 1921.

Under the Soviet-Afghan treaty Soviet Russia gave limited economic and military aid to King Amanullah. Afghanistan was given a 'Russian gift of a million gold rubles, 500 rifles with ammunition, and several aircraft' (Bradsher 1983). The Soviets also offered limited aid to build a radio station in Kabul and a telegraph line from Kabul to Kandahar and to Serhetabat (Kushka), Turkmenistan (Roulund 2014). In spite of its friendly relations with the Soviet Russia, Afghanistan was extremely disturbed by Soviet Union's suppressing behavior over the Muslim brothers in Central Asia, who had expected to win their own freedom as a result of Bolshevik revolution. Moreover, as part of the treaty, the Soviets also promised to return the Panjdeh Oasis seized in 1885, but ultimately they returned little land (Wilber 1962).

### **Anglo-Afghan Treaty of 1921**

During the negotiations of Soviet-Afghan treaty, the Afghan diplomatic mission under Wali Khan made a tour of European capitals seeking recognition; inviting foreign technicians, and trying to establish commercial relations. But British interference on Afghanistan's foreign affairs caused a considerable resentment among the Afghans. Amanullah now refused to sign a treaty with the British government, and ratified the Russo-Afghan treaty on 13 August 1921. The British, who were quite disturbed by the Russo-Afghan treaty, approached the Afghans with their objections and presented their distress to the Soviet government. Realizing Afghanistan's advantage to enter into a treaty with British India, on 22 November 1921 Amanullah concluded a new Anglo-Afghan treaty. This treaty did not bring any success more than a 'neighborly relations' between Afghanistan and British India (Wilber 1962).

### **Soviet's Unpopular Image**

Relations between Soviet Russia and Afghanistan were fluctuated until the end of the Second World War due to the Soviets repressive policy to the Muslims of Central Asia. In 1925 Afghan and Russian interests came into conflict when Russian troops occupy a small island, Urta Tagrl in the Amu Darya River. However, the dispute was settled in favor of Afghanistan by the treaty of neutrality and non-aggression signed in 1926. But Amanullah, who wanted reformative changes, was not enthusiastic about Russia and avoided too much cordiality with the Soviet Union. In 1922 he signed friendship treaty with two Islamic nations- Iran and Turkey. To reduce his dependency upon either the Russians or the British, Amanullah sought technical aid from other European powers including Germany. Between 1921 and 1923 Afghanistan concluded agreements with Italy, France, Belgium and China (Wilber 1962). Amanullah was never a Soviet vassal. This was cleared in 1929 when he was over-

thrown by Habibullah Kalakani, the Soviets tried to restore him to power, but Amanullah refused to receive Soviet help. Periodic Soviet military incursions into Afghanistan in 1929 and 1930 also contributed to a negative image of the Soviet among Afghans.

Amanullah's successor Nadir Khan, a man of 'strong personality' (Griffiths 1981) and Nadir Khan's son Zahir Shah followed a 'cautions and realistic' foreign policy (Lenczowski 1980). From his accession to power in 1933 until his deposition in 1973 Afghanistan went through a range of social, economic and political changes. In early 1930s, although trade grew steadily between Afghanistan and Soviet Russia, Afghan King viewed the aesthetic and oppressive Soviet regime with aversion and distrust. By the mid 1930s, all Soviet civilians and military technicians brought in by Amanullah had returned to the USSR, and were not replaced in Afghanistan. In 1936 Afghanistan refused to accept Soviet trade missions in several cities, preferring to keep economic relations on the level of barter agreements (Amstutz 1986). In 1938 two countries agreed by mutual consent to close their respective consulates, largely as a result of the Afghans' fear that the Soviet consulates in northern Afghanistan could be used for subversive activities (Ghaus 1988).

### **Second World War and Afghanistan**

Upon the outbreak of the Second World War King Zahir Shah proclaimed and maintained neutrality, until being persuaded in 1941, at the request of the British and Soviet Union, to expel more than 200 German and Italian nationals from the country. Although this action was a breach of neutrality, it ensured Afghan tranquility for the rest of the years. In 1941, Soviet Russia, principal supplier of manufactured items, stopped exports through Afghanistan's northern frontier as during the war, it was not considered profitable to pursue business with a marginally useful trade partner like Afghanistan (Nollau and Wiehe 1963). Soviet action caused bitterness among the Afghan people, and made them largely dependent upon imports from British India. However, British India promptly came to rescue Afghanistan by supplying necessary items including food and gasoline (Wilber 1962). This improved Anglo-Afghan relations that persuaded the Afghan government to comply request of the Allied powers for the expulsion of non-Allied nationals. During this period diplomatic relation was established between Kabul and Washington. In 1944 China also opened diplomatic relations with Afghanistan and signed a treaty of friendship to promote commercial relations. Thus, towards the close of the Second World War Afghanistan's relations with the principal Allied powers reached a state of reliable friendship (Wilber 1962).

### **Section- IV: Soviet Influence in Afghanistan in the early Post World War II Years Pushtunistan Issue and Soviet involvement**

After the Second World War there had been significant developments in the diplomatic relations of Afghanistan. The events in South Asia and the beginning of the Cold war between the United States and Soviet Russia, however, largely dominated the foreign policy of the 'landlocked' Afghanistan. With the end of British rule in the subcontinent, two independent states, India and Pakistan (including Bangladesh which became an independent state in 1971) were created. From the very beginning of the birth of Pakistan, Afghanistan had been putting forward the demand for the Pushtu-speaking tribal areas of Pakistan. But Pakistan dismissed the claim summarily, as several times before the partition of India, Afghan governments in power reaffirmed their treaty obligations. In December 1947, Afghanistan raised the Pushtunistan issue and reclaimed for the Pushtu-speaking tribal areas of Pakistan. Propaganda war was launched against Pakistan which led to several Pakistan-Afghanistan border clashes between 1948 and 1951. Pakistan stopped Afghan petroleum imports for about three months on the ground that the Afghan tankers did not comply with the Pakistani safety measures. After border clashes in 1950, Pakistan closed the frontier and in the same year the Soviet Russia signed a barter and transit agreement with Afghanistan (Ghaus 1988).

During the Second World War Soviet operations in Iranian Azerbaijan and Central Asia that was contrary to Article 5 of the Tripartite Treaty, signed by Iran, the Soviet Union, and England, made the Afghans very cautious in seeking Soviet support. Moreover, Afghan rulers still then did not forget the valuable advice of Amir Abdur Rahman who before his death urged his successors "never trust Rus-

sians” (Fletcher 1965). That’s why after the war when Afghanistan attempted to develop its economy and military, it turned to the United States, a country that already “had proven able to build roads and airfields in remote parts of the world” (Bradsher 1985). In 1948 and 1951 Afghan Prime Minister Shah Mahmud made requests to the United States for economic and military aid, but both the times Washington refused to supply arms to Afghanistan, although it gave financial help.

### **First Daud regime (1953-1963)**

Mohammed Daud’s premiership (1953-1963) effectively marked the end of Afghanistan’s tradition of neutrality. His regime took the Pushtunistan issue as the foundation for Afghan nationalism (Andisha 2015). He used the Pushtunistan issue as a means of gaining the support of the powerful Pushtun tribes within the country whilst at the same time distracting those same conservative elements of society from the unpopular modernization measures that he initiated. Daud also used the Pushtunistan issue as a means of raising strong army that could reinforce the authority of the central government and protect the sovereignty of Afghanistan. In view of the Americans negative attitude to Pushtunistan problem, Daud decided to seek Soviet Union’s assistance and support. However, before embarking on such a shift in Afghan policy, he decided to ask the United States for development aid and military supplies once more. Daud sent his brother foreign minister Naim to Washington to make a personal appeal to US Secretary of State John Foster Dulles for military logistics and support but Dulles response upset the Afghans. Rober G. Neumann, who served as ambassador to Afghanistan from 1966 to 1973, said that “Dulles refused the Afghan request because, in view of Afghanistan’s “location and poor communications, an enormous logistics effort would have led to be undertaken by the US, where the risk of escalating the cold war would have been high” (Hammond 1983).

After the rejection of the arms request by the US government Afghanistan inclined to Soviet Russia. Premier Daud now opened negotiations with the USSR on their long standing offer of a military aid which the Afghans had previously ignored. On 27 January 1954, the first major agreement was signed between Soviet Union and Afghanistan. Under this agreement Russia loaned Afghanistan \$3.5 million for the construction of grain elevators at Kabul and Phul-i-Kumari, and a flour mill and bakery at Kabul. (Bradsher 1985). After this first major Soviet aid agreement, dozens of other soon followed specially after the closing of Pakistan border by its authorities.

### **Growth of Soviet Economic aid**

Post World War American aid to Pakistan and the Baghdad Pact of 1955 caused some serious concern for Soviet Russia. However, Pushtunistan problem brought a great opportunity for Soviet Russia to make a closer tie with Afghanistan (Boyd 2002). In 1955, Pakistan closed its border for five months that created serious economic blow for Afghan economy (Poullada 1981). To overcome its transit problem Afghanistan sought American assistance in building about sixteen hundred kilometers of a new transit route across Iran to the port of Chahbahar on the Persian Gulf. But both Iran and United States found the proposal economically unrealistic and practically rejected it (Dupree 1980). By contrast, the USSR promptly stepped in to rescue Afghanistan with offers of transit facilities, political support and military aid. In June 1955, Russia agreed to renew the 1950 transit agreement on duty free transit of Afghan goods across Soviet territory for another five years based on Article 6 of the 1921 treaty between the two countries (Arnold 1981). On 27 August 1955, Russia signed a barter Protocol on commodity with Afghanistan. By this protocol Russia guaranteed that it will supply essential import items as gasoline and building materials in exchange of Afghan wool, silk cotton and hides (Dupree 1980). In December 1955, Nikita S. Khrushchev, the first Secretary of the Soviet Communist Party and Soviet Premier Nikolai A. Bulganin visited Afghanistan. During their five days visit to Kabul, both the leaders supported Pushtunistan issue in favour of Afghanistan, and promised a thirty year credit of \$100 million at 2 percent interest rate’ (Bradsher 1985). Upon their return to Moscow Bulganin in an address stated that “the demand of Afghanistan the population of neighboring Paktunistan should be given an opportunity of freely expressing their will is justified as well grounded. The people of this region have the same right of self-determination as any other people” (Wilber 1962). At the same time, Prime Minister Daud announced a ten year extension of the 1931 Soviet-Afghan Treaty of

Neutrality and Non-Aggression (Dupree 1980). In March 1956, Afghanistan launched its first five year plan that was created primarily by the help of Soviet experts.

### **Growth of Soviet Military assistance**

In July 1956, Soviet Military Mission arrived in Kabul, and offered a loan of \$32.4 million on favorable terms for the purchasing of Russian armaments (Bradsher 1985). Moscow agreed to equip and train the Afghan army and air force respectively. Several thousand Afghan military officers were sent to Soviet Russia for training whereas only several hundreds were sent to USA. In August 1957, during Zahir Shah's visit to Moscow, the King was promised \$15 million for the development of natural gas exports to the Soviet Union, to replace primary products like wool and cotton in repaying loans (Bradsher 1985). In 1958 marshal K.Y. Vroshilov visited Kabul and in 1959 Prime Minister Daud and foreign minister Naim made separate visits to the Soviet capital in 1959. Again in 1960 and 1961 Daud met Soviet leaders in Moscow to discuss Afghan matters (Wilber 1962). To attract military and political support from, in particular, the Soviet Union over the Pushtunistan issue, Daud redefined Afghanistan's neutrality by joining the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) in 1961 (Andisha 2015). In the same year, he attended the 1st Summit of the Non-Aligned Movement in Belgrade making Afghanistan one of the founding members of the Non-Aligned Movement. As part of Afghan development projects, Russia built a giant new military air base at Bagram. By the early 1960s, historian J. Bruce Amstutz wrote, "Soviet military instructors had completely replaced the longstanding contingent of Turkish officers, traditionally the military advisers to the Afghan army. Of the almost 4,000 Afghan military officers, who went to the USSR for training, all were obliged to take one or more courses in communism" (Amstutz 1986).

The assurance for large-scale Soviet economic aid to Afghanistan, Soviet support for Pushtunistan, and especially the Russo-Afghan military agreement caused a change in the American attitude to Afghanistan (Bradsher 1985). The United States undoubtedly prompted in part by cold war situation came forward to help Afghanistan recover from its precarious position. The most important contribution of the United States to Afghanistan was the development of education in the country. Thus, while the Soviet Union was training future military leaders, the United States decided to make a major effort to train civilian leaders (Bradsher 1985).

Between 1960 and 1968, about 120 million worth arms deals were completed by Soviet Russia. By 1968 Soviet engineers had completed a gas pipeline to pump low-priced Afghan gas to Soviet Central Asian industrial centers (Cooley 2002). By 1970, around 7000 junior officers had been trained in Soviet Russia and Czechoslovakia whereas at the same time only 600 Afghan officers had received training in the USA (Mooney 1982).

### **Daud's resignation**

Taking advantage of the cold war situation Daud received large economic aid from both Russia and America. Therefore, during Daud's Premiership Afghanistan witnessed an unprecedented development in economic, social and military sectors. But his alliance with USSR for economic and military aid was viewed negatively by the Islamic groups who were ideologically antagonistic to communism. Besides, Daud's stand on Pushtunistan issue created serious internal crisis. As a landlocked country, Afghanistan was dependent on Pakistan's Karachi port for transit facilities for trade with other countries. When Pakistan closed its border from September 1961 to June 1963, a serious crisis arose in Afghan economy (Hyman 1992). As a result, in March 1963, under pressure from King Zahir Shah, Daud resigned, mainly because of his rigidity over the Pushtunistan issue (Goodson 2001). Within a month from this event, the border with Pakistan was reopened and normal trade and transit resumed. Most of the members of Afghan army, who went to Russia for training, returned home with pro-communist views. King Zahir, realizing this did not allow them to rise to top position. Therefore, many of these officers were resentful and opposed the royal government. It was not surprising, therefore, that army officers played an important role in the ouster of the King in 1973.

### **Foundation of PDPA**



After the end of the Second World War Afghan rulers as part of modernization program began to send young Afghan university students to the Soviet Russia and USA to gain knowledge. These students, who became familiar with divergent strands of ideological thought such as liberalism and communism, added a new equation in national politics. Despite the government crackdown on the liberal ideologists in 1951 and 1952, Daud's regime provided a breeding ground for the future revolutionary movement (Bold 2001). The communist students and army officers who were sent to the Soviet Union for training came back to Afghanistan with communist ideology and involved themselves ideology based politics. They demand a new political system in Afghanistan. Daud's resignation in 1963 revived the demand for a return to liberal parliamentary system. In 1964 King Zahir introduced a "New Democracy" program, which included a constitution, a parliament, election, freedom of press and freedom to form political parties. The new constitution gave an opportunity for the Soviet Union to "to penetrate Afghanistan even further by attempting to manipulate the Afghan political process" (Goodson 2001).

During the period of political liberalization on 1 January 1965, the communists in Afghanistan, who had so long been working in a disorganized manner, launched the first leftist political party Peoples Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) upon Marxist-Leninist ideology and allegiance to Moscow. Most of the recruiting members of the PDPA were from educated professional groups. PDPA's main purpose was "to modernize the government of Afghanistan and bring the people into an international world through education and political action (Batts, Bruce, Garbrough, Sangster, Schilling, and Wardall 2013)." Taraki was the elected Secretary General of the Party and Babrak Karmal was chosen the deputy Secretary-General of the party. Although no evidence exists that the Soviets were directly responsible for the establishment of the PDPA, the Soviet Russia obviously was the inspiration and model. Taraki and Babrak Karmal were frequent visitors and contacts of the Soviet embassy from the late 1950s on. But in 1967, two years after its founding the PDPA split into two rival factions (Goodson 2001). The Khalq (Masses) faction headed by Nur Mohammed Taraki, and Parcham (meaning banner) headed by Babrak Karmal. Taraki, a "very impractical romantic revolutionary" favored a Leninist type party, based on the working class, while Karmal, a "conventional Marxist ideologue" wanted to form a broad based national democratic front. (Griffiths 1981). In the 1969 Parliamentary election, only two members of the PDPA Babrak Karmal and Hafizullah Amin were elected to the *Wolsi Jirga* (Ghaus 1988).

### **1973 Coup**

From 1963 to 1973, Afghanistan witnessed serious political instability. The 1964 constitution failed to bring stability in Afghanistan. From 1964 to 1973, five Prime Ministers failed to impose a proper democratic ways in a hostile environment. Moreover, the King's half-hearted advance towards constitutional monarchy failed to satisfy the rising political aspirations of the progressive Afghans. However, the change in administration had no effect on Soviet-Afghan relations. Soviet Russia continued its economic and military assistance to Afghanistan (Khan 1990). A serious drought in 1970-1972 retarded economic development and heightened social tension 'ploughed with corruption' (Bradsher 1983). Many Afghans died for food due to famine. This situation paved the way of capturing power for Daud who had a close ties with the USSR and the pro-Moscow Afghan military officers. The Afghan army, who were not satisfied with the King, staged a bloodless coup on 17 July 1973 with the help of a group of army officers and ousted the King Zahir Shah. Daud abolished the monarchy, abrogated the 1964 constitution, and proclaimed Afghanistan a republic, with himself as its first president. The "golden age" of King Zahir now "turned red, first politically and then literally" (Boyd 2002).

**Second Daud regime (1973-1978)**

The resumption of power by Daud was welcomed by Moscow as it thought the return of Daud, surrounded by pro-Soviet army officers was a significant step in the furtherance of their interests in Southwest Asia. To increase Afghanistan's dependence on the Soviet Union in 1974, Moscow offered a large scale military and economic aid to Afghanistan. Soviet leaders were very much pleased to have an ally on their "strategic southern border, which, although still ruled by a member of the traditional royal family, had recently been proclaimed a republic and seen its monarchy abolished" (Lenczowski 1980). By 1975, the Soviets and the Afghans had agreed on over seventy projects for improving Afghan economy (Chaffetz 1980). After taking power Daud tried to continue his policy of modernization.

Although Daud came to power with the help of leftist army officers, his Marxist policy had no ideological basis. He just used them as a means to gain power. With Russian economic backing, he was able, in the early years at least to improve the Afghan economy and even achieve a small balance of payments surplus. To reduce the influence of both the military and the leftists in the government by the end of 1975, Daud removed all representatives of *Parcham* from offices and did not permit representative institutions (Bradsher 1983). He acted very much like the autocrat he was. On 30 January 1977, Daud promulgated a new constitution, which provided for a single party system besides investing enormous powers in his hand as the head of state. Only two newspapers - *Anis* and *Zomhoriat* were allowed to be published instead of earlier nineteen in number (Hammond 1983). Daud's new constitution approved by *Loya Jirga* and new Cabinet excluding members of two PDPA factions was a bitter disappointment to Afghan leftists (Bradsher 1985).

**Soviet Reaction to Daud's New Policy**

In April 1977 during his three day state visit to Moscow Daud signed a twelve year agreement for the development of bilateral Soviet-Afghan economic and trade relations; "but his meeting with Brezhnev ended in a row" (Braithwaite 2011). In a private meeting held between President Daud and Leonid Brezhnev the latter tried to give some dictation to the former about Afghanistan's internal and external affairs. But Daud bluntly replied that "Afghans are masters in their own house and no foreign country could tell them how to run their own affairs" (Bradsher 1983). Daud also added that "we will never allow you to dictate to us how to run our country and whom to employ in Afghanistan. How and where we employ the foreign experts will remain the exclusive prerogative of the Afghan state. Afghanistan shall remain poor, if necessary, but free in its acts and decisions" (Ghaus 1988). Soviet behaviour forced President Daud to diminish Afghanistan's relationships with the Soviet Union and instead forge closer contacts with the USA and its oil-rich allies -Saudi Arabia and Iran. Afghanistan signed a cooperative military treaty with Egypt to bring in Egyptian officers to train the Afghan military and police forces. The Afghan-Egypt treaty "provided an unpleasant reminder for the Soviet leadership of how Egypt had recently distanced itself from its Soviet patrons before and after the 1973 October War" (Lenczowski 1980).

To improve relations with Pakistan Daud also tried to settle the Pushtunistan dispute and suspended support for Baluch separatists in Pakistan. He attempted to strengthen his relation with the truly non-aligned members and extended his whole hearted support for the non-aligned movement. To this end in the early spring of 1978 he made trips to India, Pakistan, Egypt, Libya, Turkey and Yugoslavia. He had scheduled a visit to Washington to meet President Jimmi Carter for the spring 1978. By making closer ties with these countries, Daud desired to make Afghanistan less dependent on the USSR. All these policies followed by Daud, antagonized the members of the PDPA whom he had used as the political base of his own team at the time of the coup. But the PDPA, which was divided more on the basis of personality and not on substantive issues, was not able to protect Daud's repression. In July 1977 both *Parcham* and *Khalq*, who had solid power base among army officers, were united as a result of Soviet pressure. Although *Parcham* had closer ties to Moscow, Taraki was chosen as leader of the unified party because the *Khalqis* had more supporters in the military at that time (Borer 1988). It was widely discussed in Kabul intellectual society that "Taraki might succeed Daud" (Khan 1990).

**The PDPA Coup, April 1978**

Daud's secular modernization policies also caused immediate negative reaction among the rural Afghan people including anti-communist Muslim Youth Organization, a group that had been founded in 1969 inspired by the Egyptian Islamic scholar Sayed Qutb. In 1974 when he banned the Muslim Youth Organization, all its leaders fled to Pakistan. There they organized an Afghan Muslim resistance supported by Pakistani government (Lenczowski 1980). Pakistan supported Afghan Islamist leaders against Daoud's Pushtunistan rhetoric as well as his pro-India foreign policy (Rubin 2002). Thus, by 1978 Daud had lost all power bases and was opposed by the Afghan army as well as Islamic fundamentalists. This provided the perfect opportunity for the communists to overthrow him. On 27 April 1978, Soviet trained Afghan army officers, who had been sympathetic to the PDPA, killed Daud along with members of his family in a violent military coup led by PDPA. This event, now known as the *Saur Revolution* (named for the Afghan calendar month when it occurred) was sparked by the repression imposed on PDPA by Daud's regime and mysterious circumstances of the death of a high ranking PDPA member, Mir Akbar Khyber. Afghanistan was declared Democratic Republic of Afghanistan (DRA).

**Section-V: From the Saur Revolution to the Soviet Invasion, 1978–1979**

By the end of the *Saur* revolution, on 30 April 1978 Taraki was elected the President of the newly formed Democratic Republic of Afghanistan and also hold the post of the Prime Minister. He also retained the Secretary Generalship of the PDPA, which he had held from the very beginning of the party. Hafizullah Amin, who was younger than Taraki more energetic and ruthless, was elected deputy Prime Minister as well as foreign minister. Babrak Karmal, as the leader of the Parchamists, was named Vice President of the Revolutionary Council and senior deputy Prime Minister. Eleven members of the cabinet belonged to Khalq while ten were selected from Parcham. Both the Revolutionary Council and the Cabinet were made up entirely of party members, who had been earlier put behind the bar for their political activities. It may be mentioned that although military personnel had carried out the *coup*, only three of them were included in the cabinet. It was clear that the PDPA, in the Leninist fashion, would be the 'vanguard' of the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan.

**PDPA's Closer Ties with Soviet Russia**

After capturing power although Taraki promised a foreign policy of non-alignment and good relations with all neighbors but in fact he aligned himself with Soviet Russia. From the very beginning of his regime, he had enjoyed the absolute backing of Moscow, which was really delighted to see the unexpected communist coup in Afghanistan specially after the time when neighboring Iran initiated its Islamic revolution under the leadership of Imam Khomeini. Russia was the first to grant diplomatic recognition to Afghanistan on 30 April 1978 and it was shortly followed by the Leonid Brezhnev and other leaders of the Soviet bloc (Hammond 1983).

The new Taraki government closed down the South Korean embassy and welcomed a diplomatic mission from Cuba. Although the communist leaders, referred to in the press as "comrade", repeatedly denied that they were communist, Marxist, or atheist but few people believed them because their policies and their way of talking gave them away. (Hammond 1983). India was the second country that extended its diplomatic recognition to the new Afghan government. Within six months, thirty agreements were concluded between Afghanistan and the Soviet Union with commitment for more than 14,000 million US dollars and twenty five agreements were concluded with the communist countries (Amin 1982). Besides twenty-five agreements with COMECON countries (Czechoslovakia, Poland, Hungary, Bulgaria, Romania, Albania, and the Soviet Union), the new regime received an additional \$ 22 million from the Soviet Union to exploit natural gas (Khan 1986). Taraki invited several hundred of Soviet military and civilian advisers to strengthen and control the Afghan Army, Air force and other sectors. Daud's seven year plan was replaced by a five year plan with Soviet assistance of Soviet experts (Hammond 1983).

**Internal division of the PDPA**

Unity and balance between the Parcham and Khalq factions were graceful. But within three months, rivalry between the two groups resumed because of policy differences, personality clashes and different

ethnic background. The Khalqis with their larger party membership and greater strength in the armed forces moved in early June 1978 to purge Parcham faction members. By mid June 1978 Babrak Kamal, first deputy Prime Minister and the Parcham faction leader, was under house arrest. In July 1978, Babrak Karmal and other four Parcham leaders were removed from the cabinet and assigned to less important diplomatic posts abroad. In October 1978 the five above-stated ambassadors were declared traitors and were ordered to return to Afghanistan but they refused to return to Kabul and absconded to Eastern Europe. According to Soviet sources, 2000 Parcham faction members were imprisoned and close to 500 were executed by the Khalqis before the Soviet intervention in December 1979 (Amstutz 1986). Lesser members of Parcham, including hundreds of military officers, were also purged from important positions (Hammond 1983). Although Soviet leaders “had shown a clear but discrete preference for Parcham, the faction that was least radical and more receptive to Soviet interests, they pragmatically continued to work with the radical Khalqis” (Khan 1990).

### **Resistance against Radical Reforms**

In the beginning, ideological inspiration of the PDPA government was “kept half-hidden” (Bradsher 1985). Therefore, Afghan people ignored government’s promulgated reforms. But when Taraki was taking series of transient reforms seriously, it was not surprising that opposition developed against government’s anti-religious policy. By late May 1978, within a month of the coup, a National Rescue Front was founded by nine Islamic parties and anti-Communist organizations. About 320,000 mullahs of Afghanistan became the supporters of this National Rescue Front (Bradsher 1985). The takeover of local administration by young party members without training and experiences and, at the same time, the force retirement of large numbers of trained people, who served under Daud, resulted in the shortage of efficient personnel. To carry out its administrative activities, PDPA government turned to the Soviet Russia for help. The number of Soviet Advises in Afghanistan grew so steadily that within three months their numbers reached doubled to 700 (Bradsher 1985). The presence of too many Soviet advisers in Afghanistan provoked the patriotic Afghan people.

A disastrous symbolic move occurred in 19 October 1978, when Taraki introduced the national flag by replacing the Islamic green flag with a blood-red flag carrying a star just like that of the Soviet Central Asian Republics. Although the new regime was reluctant to identify itself with a communist regime, it was apparent that it was in fact communist. On 7 November 1978, the anniversary day of the Bolshevik Revolution, Hafizullah Amin said, the *Saur* Revolution was a continuation of the Russian event. “Though we are not the first socialist country of the world, we have the honour of being the neighbor” of it. Amin said Afghanistan’s duty is to defend “its evolution on the basis of scientific socialism” (Bradsher 1985). When in December 1978 Taraki signed a twenty year treaty of friendship, good neighborliness and co-operation with Russia, “it made clear under whose patronage the restructuring of Afghanistan would occur” (Goodson 2001). The treaty contained a clause that would allow the DRA regime to call on the Soviets for military assistance (Batts, Bruce, Garbrough, Sangster, Schilling, and Wardall 2013). Similar treaties Moscow signed with India and Vietnam in 1971 and 1978 respectively. By this treaty Russia became Afghanistan’s “dearest and nearest” strategic friend (Hammond 1983).

Rebellion against the PDPA’s sweeping program spread “rapidly and unremittingly” (Goodson 2001). To suppress the opposition, government arrested thousand of Afghan rebels. From April 1978 to December 1979, the number of slain political prisoners rose to 20,000. Among the victims there were ex-Daoud elements, Parchamis and Islamic traditionalists (Khan 1990). Discord and unrest was created among the nationalistic elements of Afghan army who sometimes deserted from their duty. Even members of the Afghan army still loyal to the PDPA regime refused to work into the country side then dominated by the Islamic rebels (Khan 1990). To bring the situation under control, in the beginning of 1979 selected Soviet advisors assumed direct combat and leadership roles in the DRA army. But this effort caused even greater discord within the ranks and mujahidin (Khan 1990). In October 1978, the first anti-government revolt broke out in the countryside in eastern Kunar Province (Amstutz 1986). By early 1979, most of Afghanistan was in open revolt against the Khalq government (Goodson 2001).

### **Herat Revolt**

Although the anti-government movement spread rapidly throughout Afghanistan, the uprising in Herat was very serious. Herat has a relatively large Shi'ite population and deep ties to Iran. Encouraged by their Iranian neighbors, Islamic radicals in Herat took up arms against the Soviet advisers. The Afghan central government sent 17th division of the army to defeat the uprising; but the soldiers mutinied and joined the insurrection. However, the rebellion was suppressed by the loyal regiments brought in from Kandahar. Approximately 5,000 Afghans were dead along with 100 Soviet advisers and family members during the revolt (Matthew 2011). Soviet intelligence noted that it was supported from abroad, mostly by the Iran of Ayatollah Khomeiny, who had returned to Tehran from exile following pro-American Mohammad Reza Shah's departure in February 1979. Moscow's reaction to the Herat uprising was to rush military aid to Kabul. On 26 and 27 March, supplies of Soviet military equipment, advisers and technicians were delivered into Afghanistan (Bradsher 1985). The Soviet troops were sent to assume control of strategic airfields, roads, and bridges (Hammond 1983).

The Soviet arms aid was followed immediately by a visit to Afghanistan by a top level Soviet military team headed by General Alexi Yepishiv, first Deputy Minister of Defense and General Secretary of political affairs for the Russian Army and Navy. General Alexi Yepishiv arrived in Kabul on 5 April including six other generals and stayed one week to assess the current military situation in Afghanistan. His visit was followed by a survey of the situation by a group of middle ranked KGB officials. The visit of Yepishiv to Kabul made it clear that Moscow was taking decisive steps toward the December 1979 invasion because the same person visited Czechoslovakia in 1968 just before the invasion of that country (Bradsher 1985).

After the Herat uprising, Moscow strengthened its efforts to give political guidance to the PDPA and its government. The main agent for this task was Vasily S. Safronchuk, a "trained economist and career diplomat." Safronchuk, who arrived in Kabul a few weeks after the Herat uprising, urged Taraki to broaden the government's base by offering some positions in the government to the moderate Parcham faction members and the non-communists who served under Zahir Shah and Daud (Bradsher 1985). He also advised the Kabul regime to "suspend temporarily its radical policies in order to regain a measure of stability in the country (Khan 1990). But his advice had little or no effect on the Afghan regime because of Amin's authoritative behavior and "tyranny with the others" (Bradsher 1985).

By July 1979, it became clear that for the survival of the communist government in Afghanistan Moscow's support was essential. President Nur Mohammad Taraki realizing the crucial situation made at least 20 desperate appeals to Moscow to send a direct military support to Afghanistan (Matthews 2011). But the Soviet leaders were not ready to send more military help to Afghanistan except some military advisers and some weapons. This was probably due to Brezhnev's much reiterated fear of nuclear escalation with the US, at a time when the Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty II (SALT II) had just been concluded (Morini 2010). Besides, direct military support would not improve the situation in Afghanistan but make it even worse. Arrests and murders of opposition leaders was regular matter. Afghanistan became a rebellious country. Both Taraki and Moscow blamed Amin for this situation. Amin's "behavior and tyranny" were so embarrassing to the PDPA that party members became bound to complain to Taraki to stop Amin from his disastrous policy although the later was not liable alone. In fact it was also Taraki whose statement not only provoked the anti-revolutionaries but also united them against the communist regime. In May 1979, Taraki stated "whoever stands against our revolution – whoever he may be we will put him in jail and will really punish him" (Bradsher 1985). Although brutal counteraction was taken to suppress the rebellion, the Taraki regime was losing more areas to the rebels, even in the provinces around Kabul. The Soviet leadership also now clearly assumed that the resistant movement was patronized by any foreign power i.e. CIA. Moscow's this idea was not ill-founded.

### **US Reaction to PDPA Government**

Although there were clear indications that PDPA came to power in Kabul with the support of Soviet Russia, the United States did not discontinue its aid to Afghanistan (Hammond 1983). The Carter administration's first reaction at the start of the April revolution was limited to the human rights issue under the communist regime (Hasoon 2021). Both the Secretary of State Cyrus Vance and Security

Advisor Brzezinski agreed on 'wait and see' policy (Imran and Xiaochun 2015). Washington also avoided publicly criticizing the Afghan government or calling it communist (Hasoon 2021). After the tragic killing of American Ambassador Adolph Dubs by the hands of unknown persons in Kabul on 14 February 1979, US sharply reduced its assistance in Afghanistan. The staffs of the American embassy were reduced and a new *charge de affair* came. This change of US policy towards Afghanistan was taken by Soviet and Afghan officials as if the Islamic resistance was being inspired, and even conducted by Washington. After Dubs affair the United States focused heavily on the decision of President Carter and his National Security Adviser, Zbigniew Brzezinski. Influenced by the latter in mid-1979, the Carter administration began to provide non-lethal aid to the Afghan resistance movement (Osterman 2003-2004). By this covert aid, USA ultimately was inducing Soviet Russia for military intervention in Afghanistan (Imran & Xiaochuan 2015).

### **Soviet search for an alternative of Amin**

Soviet leaders realized that Taraki and Amin's radical communist reforms provoked the anger of Afghan people who viewed those radical programs as opposing to Islam. Having being frustrated by the Afghan situation, Moscow now decided to intervene in a big way and formulated a plan of action. In mid August 1979, a high-ranking Soviet military delegation led by General Ivan G. Pavlovski, who had planned and commanded the invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968, arrived in Kabul to assess the situation. Pavlovsky stayed in Afghanistan for two months along with a group of army commanders including eleven generals he brought with him. After his arrival in Kabul Pavlovskiy made his contingency plans (Bradsher 1985). Surprisingly, the visit of Pavlovskiy did not receive any publicity although he stayed in Afghanistan till the mid of October 1979.

There was a power struggle within the Khalq faction. In March 1979, Taraki was forced to handover the portfolio of Prime Minister to Amin, who in July, took over direct control of military operations and proposed to change the cabinet. According to Soviet leaders because of wrong policy of Khalq leaders, Afghan government was losing more areas to the rebels even in the provinces around Kabul. So, the leadership had to be changed. The extreme civil unrest throughout Afghanistan led the Soviet General Secretary Yuri Andropov to conclude that "the Soviet Union must act decisively to replace Amin and shore up Afghan communism (Lowenstein 2016). Moscow had more confidence in the good sense of President Taraki than in Amin. In September 1979, during Taraki's visit to Moscow Leonid Brezhnev urged him to take action against the Prime Minister Hafizullah Amin, who was then in full command in Kabul. But suspecting a Soviet plot against him, Amin staged a counter *coup* on 14 September, killed Taraki and seized power himself.

### **Soviet reaction to Taraki's assassination**

Amin's assumption of power was not acceptable to Kremlin but it did not react sharply. Instead, Moscow followed a cautious policy of wait and see as he was the 'center of a system to which Soviet prestige had become committed, along with a large Soviet financial investment and the lives and safety of thousands of Soviet advisors' (Bradsher 1985). Besides, there was no way of overthrowing him except through intervention, for which the Soviet leaders were not then ready. Therefore, Moscow offered to give more military equipments worth 6.7 million-dollars and send KGB experts to help him improve the efficiency of his secret police (Heller 1980). On the other side, Amin, who had no popularity at home and abroad, also needed Soviet military and economic help to run his defensive efforts to unite Afghan nation successfully. Therefore, it was not "physically possible for Amin's regime to divorce itself from Moscow" (Bradsher 1985). Soviet decision to send KGB experts into Afghanistan in late 1979, however, was not a sign of continued support for Amin; rather, it was the first step in a new Soviet policy that had been formed after Taraki's assassination (Libro 2017). Although Amin declared he was still a trusted ally of the USSR, but infact aspired to be independent in the decisions of internal and external policy making.

### **Amin's distrust of Soviets and his Pro-US policy**

Amin was very anxious about his personal security and began to distrust the Soviets. On 6 October 1979, at an inauguration of a PDPA training institute, his top deputy, Shah Wali 'accused Puzanov of complicity in the abortive attempt to remove Amin.' As a result, Puzanov was replaced by a new ambassador, Fikryat A. Tabeyev. Safronchuk, a Kremlin agent remained in Kabul with the new ambas-

sador (Bradsher 1985). Fearing Moscow's renewed attempt to overthrow him, Amin re-established damaged relations with the United States and Pakistan. According to a secret memo of the Soviet Central Committee released in 1993 Amin had met secretly at least fourteen times with Adolph-Dubs, the American ambassador to Afghanistan. The pro-US policy of Amin regime was pronounced on 5 December 1979, when Amin as President of the Revolutionary Council and Prime Minister, reiterated: "We are hoping the United States will revise its stand vis-a-vis Afghanistan and expand its relations according to our good wishes" (Hammond 1983)

### **Soviet plan to invade Afghanistan**

Amin's intentions to reduce his dependence on the USSR led to a Soviet decision to replace him either by assassination preferably or by military force if necessary. Meanwhile, after completing his study of Afghanistan situation, General Pavlovsky returned to Moscow in mid October 1979, and reported to Defense Minister Dmitry F. Ustinov and other Kremlin leaders. Probably on the basis of his report, Soviet Union took decision to go ahead with the plan for the invasion. In November 1979 when a Soviet-supervised military operation failed to get rid of Amin, the Soviet leadership apparently decided that if the "revolution" were to succeed, the incumbent government would have to be changed (Collins 1987). Accordingly on 26 November at the Politburo meeting the Soviet leadership committed itself to the invasion of Afghanistan. In late November 1979, international attention was drawn in the Iran crisis in which the US was deeply involved. Taking advantages of Iran crisis, Russia began its preparation for the collection of military personnel and equipment (Bradsher 1985). Simultaneously, Soviet Red army had started replacing Afghan units in the capital ostensibly to free national forces for operations in the country (Khan 1990).

On 28 November, a Soviet Deputy Minister of internal affairs, Lieutenant General Viktor S. Paputin arrived in Kabul, for the purpose of discussing "mutual cooperation and other issues of interest" with Afghan officials. On 30 November, Paputin held meetings with the Afghan deputy minister of the interior and other high officials. On 2 December, he met Amin at his Palace, known as the House of the People. After holding a series of talks with various people for a couple of weeks Paputin left for home. The real mission of Paputin "was to help prepare Kabul for the invasion by getting control of the Afghan police, pressurizing Amin to step aside in favour of Babrak Karmal, persuading the former to invite the Soviet Union to send large number of troops into the country, or, if all those failed, assassinating Amin." According to plan shooting occurred in the Palace on 17 December; Amin was able to escape but his intelligence chief was seriously wounded and was flown for medical treatment to Tashkent, from which he returned six month later to face execution by the Babrak government for treason. For his own safety on 19 December 1979, Amin at his own initiative, moved to the Daulaman Palace, seven miles south-west of the center of Kabul (Bradsher 1985). In really, it made easier for the Soviets to assassinate Amin in an isolated place than in the Presidential Palace.

After the failure of third attempt on 17 December 1979, there was only one option left for Soviet Russia to eliminate Amin, and that was direct military intervention. Nikolai V. Ogarkov, the Chief of the General Staff of USSR, tried to persuade the senior political leaders and the head of the KGB against invasion. While senior general of Soviet military opposed the intervention, the decision in favor of direct military intervention was influenced by the Dmitriy Ustinov (Defense Minister), Andrei Gromyko (Foreign Minister) and Yuri Andropov (KGB Chairman). These three Kremlin leaders, who controlled the key foreign policy institutions, influenced Brezhnev to take the final decision to invade Afghanistan (Mehra 2014). The final decision on 12 December 1979, set the operation to start from 1500 hours on December 25, and to be completed by December 27. Assassinating Hafizullah Amin and replace him with Babrak Karmal was part of the final plan of military invasion, but was not mentioned in the directive signed and released by Ustinov and Ogarkov (Matthews 2011).

### **Reasons for the Soviet invasion**

Although the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan was primarily driven by Afghanistan's strategic location, its natural resources and cold war rivalry between the Soviet Russia and the United States, were some other relevant factors that motivated Soviet leaders to invade Afghanistan.

First, Soviet leaders strongly assumed that Afghan President Hafizullah Amin was a US agent, though such an allegation was not true (Osterman 2003-2004). So, to defend Soviet interest in Afghanistan the only effective way for the USSR was direct military intervention without which “Afghanistan might turn toward the US and even become a base for short-range missiles targeted at the USSR” (Matthews 2011).

Second, Moscow also had a genuine concern about the stationing of US military ships in the Persian Gulf in the fall of 1979 and a potential US encroachment in Afghanistan, because after the fall of Mohammad Reza Shah in Iran United States lost its important strategic position in the Middle East specially the Gulf region and sought a substitute foothold in Afghanistan (Matthews 2011).

Third, In order to “deprive Japan and the West of the Middle East oil” resources, Soviet Russia purported to “acquire strategically advantageous rim lands of the oil producing states as they have done in Ethiopia, South Yemen, Angola and Mozambique, to exercise their control over the oil routes” (Ahmed 1990).

Fourth, Soviet leaders were concerned that, if the PDPA regime collapsed in Afghanistan and the Afghan rebels formed an Islamic Republic on the “periphery of Soviet Central Asia” then it could spread the feeling of independence to other predominantly Muslim countries in Soviet Central Asia. Like Afghanistan, the countries of Soviet Central Asia were important to USSR both for geographical and natural resources. Besides, three potential Islamic Republics (Iran, Pakistan and Afghanistan) would destroy the power of balance in Asia. Considering this issue Moscow decided to use the ‘political turmoil in Iran’ as an opportunity to invade Afghanistan. (Watkins 1963).

Fifth, the reconciliation between the United States and the Communist China, Soviet’s unceremonious expulsion from Egypt by Anwar Sadat and loss of their influence in the Baathist states of Iraq and Syria compelled the Soviet leaders to strongly believe that there was the possibility that Amin might shift to the USA (Ram 2004).

Sixth, the famous “Brezhnev doctrine” expounded by Leonid Brezhnev in 1968 after the invasion of Czechoslovakia, influenced Soviet decision makers to invade Afghanistan. According to the principle of Brezhnev Doctrine, any internal or external threat to a socialist nation was a threat to socialism. So, it was the duty of Soviet Russia to protect that nation from western influence and ideology. The spiraling situation in Afghanistan compelled senior Soviet leaders to uphold the “Brezhnev doctrine” to restore order to preserve socialist rule in Afghanistan (Hilali 2003). Brezhnev, then had been suffering from a variety of ailment, was also confident to pursue military intervention.

Seventh, after the Iranian Revolution and the Shah’s demise US administration was deeply engaged with hostage crisis that was an opportunity for Soviet Russia to invade Afghanistan without any risk of American ground intervention (Israeli 2022).

### **Soviet Military Preparation**

By late November, US intelligence had detected Soviet troop’s mobilization in Turkmenistan. This exercise was taken by Washington as a routine military movement. But the US speculation was wrong, because while attempting to get rid of Amin, the Soviets continued their military preparation for an invasion. On 8 December 1979, an airborne regiment was posted to the Soviet controlled Bagram Airbase. On 20 December, this unit moved with its BMD carriers and assault guns to secure the Salang Pass Tunnel, the Key checkpoint between Kabul and Termez (Khan 1990).

Despite US warning to Moscow on several occasions, Soviet forces of several divisions were preparing for combat in Afghanistan and by 23 December 1979, Soviet military preparation on the Soviet side of Amu Darya was completed (Bradsher 1985). Now, Soviet defense minister Ustinov signed the final directive ordering the troops to “provide international aid to the friendly regime of Afghanistan and to avert possible threat to Soviet Russia” (Matthews 2011). At 11:00 pm on 24 December 1979,



Soviet troops of the 105<sup>th</sup> Airborne started landing at the Kabul airport with the approval of Amin, who could not calculate Soviet intentions (Amstutz 1986). They were followed by troops landing at the Soviet-built military air bases at Bagram, near Kabul and Shindand, one hundred and five kilometers south of Herat in the west, and the American built airport at Kandahar in the south (Bradsher 1985). For two days and nights, as many as 200 flights of AN-125, Am-225 and Il-76s landed in Kabul.

By the morning of Thursday 27 December 1979, about 5000 Soviet troops were landed at Kabul air field (Amstutz 1986). At about 2.30 pm, Amin received a courtesy call from the Soviet Minister of communications, Nikolai V. Talyzin who had arrived in Kabul on 24 December for a friendly visit. At About 7:00 pm, the Soviet armed units began to move into Kabul and by 7:15 pm, Soviet troops dressed in Afghan uniforms captured major government buildings, political institutions including central communication hubs. Amin was joyful after hearing that Soviet forces entered the capital. He still believed that Soviet armies were there to help his regime. But he was in a nightmare. At 7.30 pm, Soviet troops destroyed Kabul's central communications complex (Arnold 1981). About the same time, Soviet forces started Operation Storm-333 by attacking Darulaman Palace that was still defended by Afghan soldiers, loyal to Amin. After a night of valorous fighting, during which Amin was shot down by a group 'A' officer and subsequently blown up by a grenade, Soviet army occupied the central part of Kabul city. (Bradsher 1985). In the morning of 28 December, General Yuri Drozdov, leader of Operation Storm-333 arrived at the Darulaman Palace and made it his headquarters. On the same day of 1979 two motorized rifle divisions began crossing the Amu Darya River to complete the occupation of Afghanistan. By the end of December 1979, in fact, over the Christmas, the Soviet troops were in full control of the major towns, airfields and highways, and by the next mid February, 85,000 Soviet troops equipped with 1750 tanks, 2,200 artillery and 400 aircrafts were firmly stationed in Afghanistan (Amin 1982). Upon receiving intelligence reports to this effect, Jimmy Carter's National Security Advisor, Zbigniew Brzezinski, wrote to the President: "We now have the opportunity of giving to the USSR its Vietnam War (Morini 2010).

In the early morning of 28 December 1979, following Amin's death, Kabul Radio broadcast a message from Babrak Karmal which announced the formation of a new government under his leadership. Karmal took over as the new Prime Minister and Chairman of the Revolutionary Council of Afghanistan. The Soviets and Karmal administration criticized Daud, Taraki and Amin, and identified Amin as CIA agent. It was now clear that as head of the government Karmal's position was fully dependent on Soviet support. On the same day, Brezhnev sent Karmal a congratulatory message and justified the Soviet action by stating that the USSR was obligated to send military help under the provision of the Soviet-Afghan Friendship Treaty of 5 December 1978 and the Article 51 of the UN Charter which provides legal rights to individual or collective self-defense when threatened by outside aggression. In this case Moscow justified its military intervention to defense Afghanistan from possible threat from the United States, Pakistan and China.

#### **Section-VI: Effects of Soviet Invasion and Occupation**

The Russian invasion and subsequent military occupation of Afghanistan was strongly condemned by the international community. US, China, Western and Muslim countries, non-aligned nations, regional groups, associations and other individual countries- all condemned the invasion strongly and devised their policies according to their interests. Being an international organization United Nations was also highly critical of the Soviet actions. On 14 January, the UN General Assembly passed a resolution protesting the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan by a vote of 104–18. The fall of Mohammad Reza Shah in Iran at the beginning of 1979 and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan forced the United States to reframe its priorities in the Persian Gulf region, where its strategic interests were in imminent danger (Hasoon and Joudah 2021).

After the invasion, National Security Advisor Brzezinski advised President Carter to respond aggressively to it. To create a 'Soviet Vietnam' in Afghanistan and to put Afghanistan under its sphere of influence on 10 January 1980, the Carter administration began sending arms and lethal weapons to the Afghan resistance (Israeli 2022). On 23 January 1980, in his State of the Union Address President

Carter stated that, “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” (Carter 1980). The Carter administration also increased its defense budget to implement the Rapid Deployment Force, and postponed the arms control discussions with Moscow. Carter also delayed the procedure to ratify the SALT II treaty.

In less than a week, President Carter announced a series of embargo against the Soviet Union. He also took bilateral initiatives to strengthen political and military resistance against the Soviet aggression. For this purpose, Carter improved US relation with China. For an effective intervention in the Afghan crisis, the US needed cooperation from third world countries. In this respect, Washington looked to Pakistan. To consolidate Pakistan’s support he promised renewed military and economic assistance to Pakistan. At that time Pakistan’s President General Ziaul Haque and his officials also expressed their concern and anxiety about Soviet-Indian connection that a pro-Indian government in Afghanistan represented a serious threat to Pakistan (Krickus 2011).

Although the announcement of military and economic assistance to Pakistan created serious misunderstanding both in and outside the United States, it was through the Pakistani Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) that the US aid was delivered to the Afghan Mujahidin. Pakistan was happy to provide the Afghan Mujahidin with a safe haven that enabled them to continue the war against the Soviet Russia. The US aid program known as “Operation Cyclone” later expanded under President Ronald Reagan, who called the Soviets as “an evil empire” (Imran & Xiaochuan 2015). By supplying the insurgents with dangerous weapons including Stringer anti-aircraft missile system, the US was gradually ‘giving to the USSR its Vietnam war.’ During Reagan era, \$300 million were proposed as aid package for Pakistan (Imran and Xiaochuan 2015). By 1988, the United States had increased annual monetary and arms support for the Mujahidin to approximately \$700 million (Dudik 2009).

The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan had far reaching consequences for both Afghanistan and the Soviet Russia. Soviet leaders, who “did not consider the historic, religious, and national particularities of Afghanistan”, believed that the “military undertaking would be quick and decisive” and that after stabilizing the Afghan government partly replacing Amin with the moderate Parcham ruler Soviet soldiers would be out within several months or maximum one year ” (Matthew 2011). But the ‘prospect was endless’. Soviet Red army had to face widespread opposition from the Afghan Mujahidin (Bradsher 1985) as Afghanistan was not Hungary or Czechoslovakia. In the immediate aftermath of the Soviet intervention, great uncertainty grasped Afghanistan. During the conflict, the Afghan people were the war’s most obvious victims. Soviet Red army was brutal towards Afghan women and children. Some Soviet soldiers ‘compared their roles in Afghanistan to that of the Nazi army in the World War II’ (Reuveny and Prakash 1999). By the end of 1979, about 400,000 Afghans had fled to Pakistan and 200,000 to Iran. In 1990 the number of Afghan refugees in Pakistan reached to 3.3 million and Iran 2.9 million (Mooney 1982). Nearly two million Afghans became internal refugees- displaced persons with no regular means of survival (Khan 1990). By the end of 1980s, the entire infrastructure of Afghanistan was destroyed (Lenczowski 1980). The massive refugee influx was a heavy burden for both Iran and Pakistan. Pakistan had to spend \$1million a day from its own resources to support the Afghan refugees (Khan 1990). About one million Afghan civilians and combatants were killed during the war (Morini 2010).

During the early period of the war the Soviet Army did achieve some initial success against the large scale attack of the anti-government forces. When the mujahidin abandoned their large-scale tactics and began to conduct guerrilla warfare, the Soviet forces soon realized that it could not defeat and destroy small guerilla groups even by the frequent use of modern Soviet weapons (Matthew 2011). Officially, some 14,833 Soviet soldiers died and many more injured during the Soviet-Afghan War (Morini 2010).

The invasion caused irreversible internal conflicts between the Soviet Republics and the Soviet government. Economically Russia became very weak. In October 1985, Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev realized the decade long Soviet intervention as a 'historical mistake'. So he decided to withdraw Soviet troops gradually from Afghanistan. At the same time, to turn the tide of the war, in 1986 Moscow replaced President Babrak Karmal with Mohammad Najibullah, the head of Afghan Secret Police, Khad. During Najibullah's visit to Moscow in July 1987, he was told by Gorbachev that "I hope you are ready in twelve months because we will be leaving whether you are or not" (Khan 1990). Under the diplomatic framework of the Geneva Peace Accords of April 1988 the full withdrawal of Soviet troops was finally completed on 15 February 1989. Although the Geneva Agreement opened the way for the withdrawal of Soviet troops, it failed to bring peace in Afghanistan. Both the USA and Soviet Russia continued their respective military assistance to the Mujahidin and the government forces until the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. From 1989 to 1991 Afghanistan witnessed a wave of mass unrest and civil war. During this period, Afghan communist government faced serious counter attacks from Afghan Mujahidin (Lenczowski 1980). Najibullah, the last communist leader of Afghanistan, tried his level best to "diminish differences with the resistance and appeared prepared to allow Islam a greater role as well as legalize opposition groups, but any moves he made toward concessions were rejected out of hand by Mujahidin" (Bold 2001).

After the fall of Soviet Union in December 1991, Moscow officially stopped all its aid for Afghanistan and left the scene. US also lost all its interest in Afghanistan and discontinued its military assistance to the Mujahidin and urged upon Pakistan, Iran and Saudi Arabia to do likewise (Europa World Year Book 1998). Without the Soviet support Najibullah's government fell immediately and on 18 April 1992, Najibullah was forced to hand over power to a coalition of Afghan Mujahidin groups, but the country was rocked by an atrocious civil war. The civil war provided the strategic environment within which a new opposition group Taliban, well-equipped than other Islamic groups, emerged and took over the country in 1996. Although the Soviet withdrawal of Afghanistan brought an end to the cold war, the end of the cold war brought in both negative and positive impact to international relations (Yilmaz 2008). A new concept of the so called New World Order was born under the leadership of the USA. Many scholars considered the Gulf War of 1991 as the first test of the New World Order.

In order to prevent a Soviet victory in Afghanistan throughout the 1980s, Washington and its allies fervently depicted the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan as a war between Communism and Islam. As a result throughout the war Afghanistan "became a magnet for young foreign Muslims eager to spread Islamic revolution" (Boyd 2002). Thousands of young Muslims from different Afro-Asian countries came to Afghanistan to join the war against the Soviet Union. Among those Muslim fighter recruits were Abdullah Azzam, a Sunni Islamic scholar from Palestine, and Osama bin Laden, a member of a very rich Laden family originally from Yemen.

When in September 1996 Pakistani-created Taliban captured Kabul and executed the former President Nazibullah, the United States had shown some interest to the Taliban with a "mixture of sympathy and trepidation" for its geo-political, geo-strategic and geo-economic interest in Central Asia (Colley 2002). The US Oil Company UNICOL, tried to negotiate with the Taliban authority for a 1040 mile long energy pipeline route through Afghanistan to transport gas from Turkmenistan to Pakistan (Mooney 1982). The Taliban was also much more interested in pursuing a good relation with the United States. But the Taliban's strict Islamic regime and continued defense of Osama bin Laden complicated US relation with the former. The US claimed to have strong evidence that Osama bin Laden continued terrorist activities against America under the Taliban shelter. United States, therefore, not only distanced itself from the Taliban, but also supported UN embargos on Afghanistan. The attack on World Trade Centre and Pentagon in USA on 11 September 2001 created a new danger for the Afghan Taliban, who had given shelter to Osama bin Laden. When the Taliban refused to hand him over, the USA invaded Afghanistan, toppled them and chased Bin Laden out of the country. Consequently, the USA decided to stay in Afghanistan, to help rebuild and modernize the country (Cox 2022). But the implication of the US military intervention was finally dreadful and shameful.

#### **Section-VI: Conclusion**

The invasion of Afghanistan, the final foreign military intervention of the Soviet Russia before its eventual collapse in 1991, was a ‘historic mistake’. The geopolitical struggle between Great Britain and Tzarist Russia for influence in Afghanistan continued into the 20th century and after the Second World War this struggle transformed into the cold war rivalry between the Soviet Union and the United States. Although from 1921 Soviet Russia was engaged in effort to establish its influence in Afghanistan (Wilber 1962), it actually had been designed to bring Afghanistan under its hegemony since the World War II. To achieve this goal during the post war years the USSR expanded huge military and economic assistance to Afghanistan. Due to the cold war rivalry with USSR over the same period the United States also extended its assistance to Afghanistan (Lenczowski 1980). After the communist revolution in 1978, it certainly appeared that the Soviet Union had finally won the Great Game but the PDPA that overthrew the Daud government soon faced a nationwide rebellion because most of the Afghans were actually against the idea and policies of the PDPA government. In order to maintain its control over Afghanistan, Soviet Union provided economic and military assistance to PDPA regime.

After the communist revolution in Kabul, although US policymakers had no clear agenda on dealing with the situation in Afghanistan, the invasion in December 1979 gave the USA an ideal ground to fortify its influence and military presence in the Middle East and South Asia (Lowenstein 2016). It also gave the USA an opportunity to take the revenge of Vietnam War. However, under the Geneva Accord of April 1988, the Soviet withdrawal was completed on 15 February 1989, ‘sealing the most humiliating defeat for Russia since it began expanding into Central Asia in 1552’ (Boyd 2002). Afghanistan returned to its nonaligned status. The invasion also prompted the devastating fall of the Soviet Union and Communism in Eastern Europe. Subsequently, the events of 11 September 2001 forced the United States to declare war on terror and consequently Washington decided to attack Taliban-ruled Afghanistan. The consequences of US military intervention in Afghanistan in pursuit of the War on Terror with the support of NATO and over 40 countries, that have been subject to criticism, was also painful and shameful for the USA. Like their British predecessors, the failure of two superpowers in Afghanistan reaffirmed that whenever great powers have tried to make Afghanistan a colony, they have always been defeated.

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