

## **U.S. Role in Pak-Afghan Relations: 1973-1978**

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### **Abstract**

*The aim of this paper is to evaluate Pak-Afghan relations during President Sardar Daoud's era (1973-1978) and the nature of U.S. relations with Afghanistan and its role in the development of fluctuating interactions between Pakistan and Afghanistan. This era is known as a detente period in the Cold War, though, both the rivals, U.S. and the former Soviet Union, were struggling to gain world domination. Geographically, Afghanistan was important for the neighboring superpower; therefore, the former Soviet Union was deeply involved in the affairs of Afghanistan, when Sardar Daoud staged a coup against his cousin, King Zahir Shah in July 1973. This development was alarming for the U.S. generally and Islamabad particularly that paved the way for their interference in Afghanistan just to halt the security threats animating from there. Thus, this article discusses the main irritants of Pak-Afghan relations and its causes. Furthermore, it assesses the policy clash between Pakistan and Afghanistan in the first three years of Daoud's tenure and explains how both countries came close to each other. However, it concludes by arguing that the U.S. had a minimal role in that period; however, it was important in the sense that it laid the foundation of the massive involvement of the U.S. in the later years in Afghanistan.*

**Keywords:** Pak-Afghan relations, president Daoud, U.S. role, Pakhtunistan issue, North West Frontier Province (NWFP).

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## **Historical Background**

### **The Early Period**

Historically, the relations between the two neighboring Islamic states, Pakistan and Afghanistan, have never been jovial throughout their diplomatic course of action—except some short-time friendly engagements. Just after the independence, Muhammad Ali Jinnah laid emphasis on genial Pak-Afghan relation by calling both the states as sisters.<sup>1</sup> The aim of this paper is to examine Pak-Afghan relationship during president Daoud's era and the U.S. role in it. It answers the questions regarding Daoud's coup in 1973, the issue of Pakhtunistan between Pakistan and Afghanistan, the clash of interests between the two states, and the overall role of the U.S. in the developments of contentious relations between the two neighboring Islamic states.

Pakistan's first premier, Liaqat Ali Khan offered to discuss the Pak-Afghan bilateral issues including Durand Line,<sup>2</sup> however, the latter did not consider it. On the contrary, Pakistan's entry to the United Nations (UN) was negatively voted by Hussain Aziz, the then Afghan representative to the UN in these words:

We cannot recognize the North-West Frontier as part of Pakistan so long as people of North-West Frontier have not been given an opportunity free from any kind of influence and I repeat, free from any kind of influence to determine for themselves whether they wish to be independent or to become a part of Pakistan.<sup>3</sup>

The Pakistani stance was that they got its independence from the British Empire; therefore, Afghanistan had to lay its case to Britain rather than Pakistan. Moreover, The Line (Durand) was drawn by the consent of the British and Amir Abdurrahman of Afghanistan in 1893. Though, before partition, Afghanistan had discussed this case with the British government, nevertheless; they had refused to do any change in Durand Line.<sup>4</sup> Later on, the Afghan government, after late recognition of Pakistan in the next year, acquired transit-trade facilities.<sup>5</sup> Then again, in 1949 it was the Afghan government that helped and supported the

Southern Pakhtunistan state that was set up in Waziristan, and Mirza Ali Khan known as Faqir of Ipi\* was declared its ruler.<sup>6</sup> The act of recognition to the Pakhtunistan state by Afghanistan was taken as an intrusion in the internal affairs of Pakistan.

Thus, legitimacy of Durand Line and Pakhtunistan issue along with some other undermined the ties between Pakistan and Afghanistan from the very inception of Pakistan. These two states had been unsympathetic towards each other for decades.<sup>7</sup> Already fractured relationship was further fissured when in 1953, Sardar Muhammad Daoud Khan was appointed as premier of Afghanistan by his first cousin, King Zahir Shah. Daoud was a sturdy adherent of Pakhtunistan issue. He also had inclination towards the Communist ideology, therefore, the non-aligned Afghan foreign policy slowly and gradually moved towards Russia.<sup>8</sup> Later on, Pakistan's joining of SEATO and CENTO, American sponsored security alliances, paved the way for further split.

Afghanistan being a weak state having fragile economy and frail military strength, intensely needed support from a superpower, for which she requested the U.S. in the early 1950s. The Afghan Prime Minister Sardar Muhammad Daoud sent his brother to the U.S. in October 1954 to request John Foster Dulles, the then U.S. secretary of state, for military support.<sup>9</sup> Nonetheless, the U.S. rejected the request because Afghanistan was not listed among states important for the U.S. foreign policy objectives. Thus, Afghanistan went into the laps of former Soviet Union for military aid in January 1955 and Pakistan into opposite camp i.e., SEATO in 1954 and CENTO in 1955. That development provided an opportunity to the former Soviet elites to enlist Afghanistan on their side as it could serve the interests of both erstwhile Soviet Union and Afghanistan. The then Secretary of the Communist Party, Khrushchev and the then Prime Minister, Bulganin visited Kabul and started a new chapter in Soviet-Afghan relations. The former Soviet Union provided military and economic assistance and rendered political backup over the Pakhtunistan issue to lynch Pakistan as it was in the opposite capitalist bloc.

In 1955, when Pakistan implemented 'One Unit' structure of governance, it was severely opposed by Afghanistan on the account of its claim over 'Pakhtun' territory.<sup>10</sup> The anti-Pakistani and pro-Pakhtunistan stance and speeches of the Afghan leaders instigated a mob to attack Pakistani embassies in Kabul, Jalalabad, and Kandahar in April 1955.<sup>11</sup> In response, a mob in Peshawar also attacked the Afghan consulate. The relations became stark between both the states and the diplomatic ties were shut down. Pakistan, for the sake of punishing Afghanistan, blocked the transit trade passing through Karachi and Khyber Pass.<sup>12</sup> However, the former Soviet Union provided Afghanistan the transit facilities along with economic assistance to cover the losses.<sup>13</sup>

### **Iskander Mirza and General Ayub Khan**

Iskander Mirza after becoming the president of Pakistan in 1956 restored the diplomatic relations and transit trade with Afghanistan.<sup>14</sup> Both states went to make their relations friendly; Iskander Mirza and the then Pakistani Prime Minister Hussain Shaheed Suhraworthy paid official visits to Afghanistan in 1956 and 1957 respectively.<sup>15</sup> Both these visits were reciprocated by the Afghan rulers. Sardar Daoud, the then Prime Minister of Afghanistan, paid visit in 1956, while King Zahir Shah made his visit in 1958.<sup>16</sup>

General Ayub Khan managed a military coup in Pakistan and gained power in October 1958. The very next year, he invited the Afghan Foreign Minister, Muhammad Naim, to Pakistan; and called upon him to abandon a hostile policy towards Pakistan. Numerous steps were taken by both states for the improvement of relations such as visits. Despite immense efforts, the relations deteriorated, especially when the Afghani Prime Minister and King made speeches in support of Pakhtunistan in September 1959.<sup>17</sup> In reaction, Ayub Khan warned Afghanistan that the integrity of Pakistan would be preserved at any cost.

Already unembellished relations deteriorated further, when the Soviet Premier Khrushchev visited Afghanistan, in which he extended Soviet support for Afghan claims against Pakistan in

March 1960. He also announced a five-year package for Afghanistan (1960-65) with the condition that the Russians advisors would be given utmost places in Afghan ministries.<sup>18</sup> After having support of former Soviet Union, an Afghan contingent with the support of Afghan army crossed the Durand Line to Bajaur on September 23-24, 1960. It interfered in a local dispute between the Khan of Khar and the Nawab of Dir<sup>19</sup> that made the relations between the two countries worse. In reaction Pakistan closed its consulates in Qandahar and Jalalabad and demanded the Afghan government to close its trade operation as well as consulates in Peshawar, Parachinar, and Quetta.<sup>20</sup>

In March 1963, King Zahir Shah dismissed Premier Sardar Daoud from his office.<sup>21</sup> Daoud's dismissal was a ray of hope for Pakistan as he was a staunch supporter of Pakhtunistan. Thus, ill-fated period of Afghanistan-Pakistan relations (1953-1963) came to an end with Daoud's dismissal.<sup>22</sup> The foremost reason behind Daoud's end was his stringent anti-Pakistani attitude which King Zahir Shah did not like.<sup>23</sup> Henceforth, Pak-Afghan relations were restored in the result of Tehran Accord in May 1963 arranged by the Shah of Iran that ended the 22-month long closure of diplomatic and trade ties.

The new Afghan Prime Minister Musa Shafiq wanted to mend relations with Pakistan while resolving the core issues.<sup>24</sup> However, like all his predecessors, he was neither ready to talk over the Pakhtunistan issue nor wanted to resolve it. In 1965, M. Hashim Maiwandwal became Prime Minister; during his three-year term, the relations were normal.<sup>25</sup> The head of both states, Ayub Khan and Zahir Shah visited Kabul and Islamabad respectively.<sup>26</sup> The period 1963-1973 was comparatively peaceful; Afghanistan remained neutral during 1965 and 1971 Indo-Pak wars. During both these wars, Zahir Shah's statements were remarkable, stating that Pakistan should not worry about its western orders.

After the crisis-led elections of 1970 and dismemberment of Pakistan, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto became the president. He paid his first state visit to Afghanistan in late December 1971 aiming to improve relations with the neighboring country. Nonetheless,

despite this goodwill gesture, the Afghan government celebrated the 'Pakhtunistan Day' on September 1, 1972. On July 17, 1973, Sardar Daoud gained power in Afghanistan in a coup while ousting his brother-in-law, King Zahir Shah from the government.<sup>27</sup> Daoud had the support of the Russian-trained military officers;<sup>28</sup> and proclaimed Afghanistan as a republic.

### **Daoud's Bloodless Coup**

Since 1919, King Zahir Shah was the 5<sup>th</sup> ruler being deposed in Afghanistan in 1973. Earlier, King Aman Ullah, King Inayat Ullah, Emir Habib Ullah Khan had been deposed from their positions while King Muhammad Nadir had been assassinated. In 1971-72, the failure of the parliamentary regime plus drought in the country paved the way for a bloodless coup.<sup>29</sup> On July 17, 1973, King Zahir Shah was on a visit to Italy with his family when the monarchy was overthrown by his first cousin Sardar Muhammad Daoud<sup>30</sup> with the support of the *Parcham* faction of Peoples Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA).<sup>31</sup> Thus, *Parcham* faction got an opportunity to increase their say among political and military bureaucracy on the behest of Russia.<sup>32</sup> On the other hand, the *Khalq* faction of the PDPA opposed Daoud's coup because of him giving key roles to the *Parchamites*.<sup>33</sup> Daoud proclaimed Afghanistan as a republic and became its first President as well as Prime Minister.<sup>34</sup> Sardar Daoud's coming into power was alarming for Islamabad.<sup>35</sup> Since Daoud had always stalwartly supported the cause of Pakhtunistan, extended unconditional support to Baloch rebels, and gave them refuge in Afghanistan, therefore, relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan deteriorated.<sup>36</sup> Similarly, the coup made Ford and Nixon administration in the U.S. thoughtful as it brought pro-Soviet leader into power.<sup>37</sup>

However, dismemberment of East Pakistan from the West Pakistan as a significant development again brought fundamental change in the relationship between Afghanistan and Pakistan. After this disintegration in late 1971, Pakistan sought friendly relations with the neighbors including Afghanistan. Therefore, in late December 1971, President Zulfikar Ali Bhutto paid an official visit to Afghanistan, aiming to normalize relations with its neighbor. Despite this visit,

Sardar Daoud continued the strong pro-Russian and anti-Pakistan policies. Daoud wanted Afghanistan to expand its boundaries up to the River Indus as was before the Durand Line agreement.<sup>38</sup> Zulfikar Ali Bhutto had a serious apprehension about Daoud's anti-Pakistani attitude. Hence, he wanted to counter this security threat to the integration of Pakistan. Opportunity was provided by Daoud when he commenced his communist reforms as the religious leaders and groups turned against him. Islamabad exploited the situation against Daoud by supporting the religious leaders in terms of money and weapons. Since Daoud tackled the religious groups with iron hand so Professor Burhanuddin Rabbani and Gulbadin Hikmatyar took refuge in Pakistan in 1974<sup>39</sup>. By supporting these leaders, Pakistan had the opening to pressurize the Afghan government to quit their anti-Pakistani stance as well as the Pakhtunistan issue.

### **The Durand Line and Pakhtunistan Issue**

Afghanistan gained much international attention during the great game between the British and the Russians in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. After the 2<sup>nd</sup> Anglo-Afghan war of 1878-80, the Durand Line was demarcated by the British and the then Amir of Afghanistan, Amir Abdur Rahman on November 12, 1893. The Durand Line agreement was negotiated by the Mortimer Durand and Amir Abdur Rahman of Afghanistan for four weeks in Kabul.<sup>40</sup> The British Government in India offered Rs. 600,000 as an annual subsidy to the Afghan Amir which was happily accepted. Hereafter, this treaty was confirmed by Habibullah Khan, the son of Amir Abdurrahman in 1905 and then by his grandson Amanullah Khan by the treaty of Rawalpindi in 1919.<sup>41</sup> Furthermore, it was ratified by Nadir Shah in 1930.<sup>42</sup> The Durand Line issue had been raised by the Afghan government with the British before their eminent departure from India, however, they rejected it.<sup>43</sup> Since the inception of Pakistan, Afghanistan again raised the issue of Pakhtunistan and Durand Line. This was the factor that Afghanistan opposed Pakistan's membership in the UN. In June 1947, the Afghan premier Muhammad Hashim Khan said: "If an independent Pakhtunistan cannot be established then the

frontier province should join Afghanistan.”<sup>44</sup> The Afghan claim was a threat to Pakistan’s security and integration.

Among the Afghan leadership, Sardar Muhammad Daoud Khan served as first Prime Minister, 1953-63, and later as a president before the Sour revolution from 1973 to 1978. He remained the strong supporter of the Pakhtunistan. President Daoud once remarked: “British did a wrong many years ago and we have been fighting to rectify it. Until that is done the struggle will continue.”<sup>45</sup> Afghanistan illogically argued that the Pakhtuns of the then NWFP were given a limited choice to either join India or Pakistan while refrained from the option to remain united with Afghanistan or establish their own homeland.<sup>46</sup> In NWFP the Red shirts’ leader Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan was encouraged by the Afghan government to spoil the situation in the favor of Afghanistan or to raise a slogan for an independent Pakhtunistan state. Even Afghanistan considered the Durand line agreement null and void. For this they had three main assumptions in Afghanistan: first, the Durand Line agreement had been imposed on Afghanistan by the British Government. Secondly, the agreement was for a hundred years that expired in 1993. Lastly, the agreement had been concluded with the British India not with Pakistan, so it was null and void after the British withdrawal from the Subcontinent.

There are solid answers for these questions. In the negation of imposition of the Durand Line agreement, Sir Percy Skyes, the biographer of the signatory of the treaty, Mortimer Durand has said in his book that the Amir Abdurrahman had set up a special *Darbar* for the delegation, led by Mortimer Durand after signing the treaty of the Durand Line and greatly praised the British and proclaimed to his ministers that the British were their friends.<sup>47</sup> That event was attended by the two sons of Amir Abdurrahman and four hundred military personnel and tribal chiefs. To quote Mortimer Durand, Abdurrahman said on the occasion:

He (Amir) made a really first-class speech beginning, ‘Confidence begets confidence, trusting his safety and that too, of his Mission to my care, I have protected him.’ He then urged



his people to be true friends to us and to make their children the same. He said that we did them nothing but good and had no designs on their country. After each period of his speech, there were shouts of 'Approved! Approved!' on this occasion he was a great orator.<sup>48</sup>

Secondly, if the agreement was for a hundred years, no document with the provision of a hundred years exists. Afghans have always failed to provide that document to justify this claim.<sup>49</sup> Lastly, the Afghan claim that the treaties signed with the British are null and void after their departure is also a bare violation of the international law.<sup>50</sup> Article 62 of the Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties explains:

It is accepted by all that whenever a new country or state is carved out of an existing colonial dominion; all the international agreements and undertakings that the previous ruler of the region had entered into would be transferred to the new independent national government.<sup>51</sup>

Being a by-product of the Durand Line issue, Pakhtunistan issue has always been a foreign policy obsession in Pak-Afghan relations. It has provided for a stalemate which runs even after 69 years of the inception of Pakistan. It has been a core concern for the policymakers in Islamabad as it threatens the integration of the state. Afghanistan was of the view that when the British leave the Subcontinent, it will give choice to the Pakhtuns to either stay independent or choose to be part of Afghanistan.<sup>52</sup> Nonetheless, the British gave the option to either join India or Pakistan. A referendum was held in NWFP, presently Khyber Pakhtunkhwa from July 6-17, 1947. The Congress ministry of Dr. Khan Sahib boycotted the referendum thus the turnout was very low. A total of 289244 votes came in favor of Pakistan while only 2847 were in favor of India.<sup>53</sup> Earlier when the British Government announced the referendum, the Afghan Government sent a message to the British Government in India to give choice to the people of NWFP to decide their fate to either join Pakistan, Afghanistan, and India or to remain independent.<sup>54</sup>

After merging NWFP with Pakistan, few of the former Congress leaders as well as Dr. Khan Sahib agreed to the birth of Pakistan, yet his brother Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan known as Bacha Khan and the Faqir of Ipi of North Waziristan continued their mission for an independent Pakhtunistan.<sup>55</sup> When the 3<sup>rd</sup> June plan was announced, Bacha Khan wrote a letter to Gandhi to include the options of being independent or joining Pakistan for the referendum.<sup>56</sup> An Afghan writer and diplomat Rahman Pazhwak had mentioned in his book the area of “Pakhtunistan” which includes ; Swat, Dir, Buner, Bannu, Chitral, Kohistan, Hazara, Peshawar, Tirah, Bajaur, Kohat, Dera Ghazi Khan, Dear Ismail Khan, Waziristan, Khyber, Pezo, Gomal and Malakand.<sup>57</sup> Afghanistan openly supported those elements in NWFP and Balochistan who were working against the state. Since 1947, all the Afghan leaders extended its full support to the cause of the Pakhtunistan state. Among those leaders, Sardar Daoud was the champion. Daoud after his coup announced that he will support the Pakhtun and Baloch people in their struggle of attaining self-determination.<sup>58</sup>

Afghanistan was supporting India over Kashmir on the other hand India was backing Afghanistan on Pakhtunistan issue to weaken the new state of Pakistan.<sup>59</sup> Louis Dupree points up the Indian involvement in Pakhtunistan issue in these words:

I was amongst those who were in Pakistan and Afghanistan immediately after partition in 1947; I looked into what was happening in Kabul. There was a group of Indians controlling Kabul Radio, and they were the ones who invented the term Pakhtunistan.<sup>60</sup>

Furthermore, a group United Pashtun Front was formed by an Indian minister in Delhi in 1967 to strengthen the Pakhtunistan issue. Another important factor which has also contributed to the Afghan stance over Pakhtunistan issue was its access to the open sea because it is a landlocked state. They have tried to gain the North-Western territory of Pakistan to get access to the Sea. The Afghan Prime Minister in 1947 stated in an interview to the Statesman:

If a sovereign Pakhtunistan cannot be established, the frontier province should join Afghanistan. Our neighbor Pakistan will realize that our country with its population and trade needs an opening to the sea, which is necessary . . . if the countries of the world wish peace and justice . . . it will be easy for us to get an outlet.<sup>61</sup>

All the above-mentioned factors have greatly contributed to the Pakhtunistan issue which had mammoth effects on Afghanistan-Pakistan relations. Although Daoud wanted to resolve this contentious issue between Pakistan and Afghanistan, however, the circumstances did not permit him to do so as he was overthrown by the PDPA in April 1978, and the issue was prolonged.

#### **Pak-Afghan Policies Clash: 1973-1976**

The bloodless coup of July 1973 brought Daoud into power as president as well as Prime Minister of the new republic. He was fully backed by the Pakhtun and Baloch elements in Pakistan working against the government to exploit the Pakhtunistan issue which was a serious concern for Islamabad. Some Baloch and Pakhtun leaders escaping the military crackdown had been given official refuge by Daoud in Kabul. A rally was held in Kabul by the new regime's supporters of Daoud on July 21, 1973, in support of the Pakhtunistan issue.<sup>62</sup> On the other hand, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto had commenced his rule as the result of a power sharing formula. Inter-Services Intelligence Agency (ISI) revealed the planned rebellion against the central government by the National Awami Party (NAP) in Balochistan to Bhutto at that time.<sup>63</sup> For the said purpose, arms had been brought to the Iraqi embassy in Islamabad which were recovered by the government.<sup>64</sup> Subsequently, Bhutto dismissed the NAP government in Balochistan; the NAP government in NWFP also resigned in protest. Thus, the NAP was banned and Wali Khan and some of his colleagues were put behind the bars. Few members of NAP and some Baloch insurgents escaped Afghanistan. Daoud had established training camps for those insurgents working against the state of

Pakistan where 10000-15000 Baloch were trained to fight a guerilla war against the state of Pakistan.<sup>65</sup> Daoud also named a main square in Kabul city as Pakhtunistan *Chowk* . Due to Daoud's communist policies, the clergy in Afghanistan was alarmed. In 1972, a Theology Professor of Kabul University, Burhanuddin Rabbani reorganized the Jamaat-i-Islami Afghanistan which had been set up in the 1960s. The party leaders were inspired by the thoughts of Maulana Moududi and the thinkers of Muslim brotherhood of Egypt.<sup>66</sup> The policy makers in Islamabad thought Rabbani would be the best choice to be used against the pro-communist regime of Daoud who was fueling the Pakhtunistan issue. After the Daoud coup, Jamaat-i-Islami resisted against Daoud's secular policies; consequently, Daoud planned the arrest of Rabbani; subsequently he escaped to Pakistan. Rabbani was supported by the ISI financially as well as his followers were given military support and training.<sup>67</sup> Ahmad Shah Massoud and Gulbadin Hekmatyar were the followers of Rabbani who played a significant role in Afghanistan in the latter period.

An Afghan cell was set up in Pakistan's Foreign Office to counter the issues emerging from Afghanistan as well as to mobilize some elements to conduct intelligence in Afghanistan.<sup>68</sup> The Pakistani embassy in Kabul was financially supporting 1331 Afghan family members whose family leaders escaped to Pakistan.<sup>69</sup> On the other hand, Daoud's support had continued to the Baloch and Pakhtun separatists.<sup>70</sup> In a reaction to the Balochistan issue, Daoud also did not attend the Islamic summit organized by Bhutto in Lahore in February 1974. Besides, when the NAP was banned and its leaders were arrested, Afghanistan showed its great reservations on the issue which further deteriorated the ties between the two states. On September 25, 1974, Daoud wrote a letter to the UN General Secretary to establish a commission for the investigation of Balochistan situation. In October 1974, Bhutto visited Moscow and sought support to settle the dispute lingering between Pakistan and Afghanistan.<sup>71</sup>

During September 1973 and June 1974, three unsuccessful coups were attempted against the Daoud regime which had

been supported by the Savak\*, the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and Pakistan's ISI.<sup>72</sup> In early 1974, the Reza Shah Pahlavi of Iran with his vested ambitions extended a huge economic support—released \$40 million easy terms credit of the \$2 billion, ten year monetary aid plan.<sup>73</sup> The September 1973 coup led to the arrest of former Prime Minister, Hashim Maiwandwal including the Chief of Air Staff, two Lieutenant Generals, a member of *Wolesi Jirga* and five army Colonels.<sup>74</sup> The second coup was attempted in December 1974. This one was led by two *Parchami* religious clerics: one from Heart and the other was from Northern Afghanistan backed with some junior military personnel. The third coup attempt was unveiled when a large number of arms and ammunitions were seized at Kabul airport from a cargo plan.<sup>75</sup>

It was Bhutto's Afghan policy which brought Daoud to the table with Pakistan otherwise in early times he was a hardliner regarding Pakistan. Naseer Ullah Babar, the then associate of the Afghan policy during Bhutto regime stated:

We had a small operation in Panjshir in August 1975, a time when there were so many bomb attacks in Pakistan, probably by the Afghan insurgents. So, we thought we must give a message to Afghan Ruler Daoud and I personally advised Mr. Bhutto to do something. ... We also wanted to assess the level of training of these people who had been training since 1973.<sup>76</sup>

Two other insurgencies were also carried out by the Pakistani supported Islamists in Badakhshan and Wardak in 1975.<sup>77</sup> Bhutto's forward policy compelled Daoud to come to terms with Pakistan because Pakistan's support to Islamic elements had shaken the foundations of the Daoud regime.<sup>78</sup>

On the contrary, Daoud detached two hundred Soviet-trained officers from their positions. This move was a serious concern for the erstwhile Soviet Union; then President Nikolai Podogorny of Soviet Union paid a special visit to Kabul to put his concerns before the Daoud Government.<sup>79</sup> Furthermore,

Daoud started removing the top-ranked political figures that had affiliation with the *Parchamites*. Besides this, in October 1975, Daoud further dismissed forty Soviet-trained armed forces officers from their positions.<sup>80</sup> All these actions of Daoud were supported by the Shah of Iran and had his full economic and military support. Daoud was coming out of the Soviet influence which was disliked by Soviet Union because it wanted to dictate Daoud in his policies which was no more acceptable for Daoud. On one hand, Daoud was influenced by communism; on the other hand he was a strong nationalist. He was not ready to tolerate any foreign dictation in his internal affairs. During this period, Daoud's Government in Afghanistan had been knotted in his internal issues thus Pakhtunistan issue went into background.

### **Two Years of Pak-Afghan Bonhomie: 1976-1978**

Pakistan from the beginning was in quest to establish friendly relations with its neighbors and the Islamic world. From the very inception of Pakistan, the Afghan rulers have been hostile towards Pakistan while Pakistan preferred to remain friendly.<sup>81</sup> During the last year of Daoud's tenure, he wanted to mend fences with Pakistan, though he remained hostile towards Pakistan in his entire political career. In late 1975, Daoud affirmed that he will not let the Pashtun and the Baloch insurgents to use Afghan soil to get training for fighting the Bhutto regime.<sup>82</sup> The role of the Shah of Iran cannot be overlooked in the normalization of relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan.

Daoud had a serious bitterness with the *Parcham* faction of the communists who later resulted in his ousting and assassination. His significant policy shift was the Helmand water treaty and Pakhtunistan issue to retreat.<sup>83</sup> Daoud's disagreements with the *Parchamites* alarmed policymakers in Moscow because Daoud's policies were becoming Iran-centric instead of Soviet-centric. The Soviet interference was a serious concern for Daoud because he wanted to normalize relationship with Pakistan. The Russians started to oust Daoud at any cost; so the two factions of the PDPA: *Parchamites* and *Khalq* were successfully merged in May 1977. This was a serious setback

for Daoud, and it was hard for him to overcome that situation because the communists had turned against him.

Daoud at that time was under extreme pressure internally as well as externally from the Islamic forces supported by Pakistan. Bhutto wanted Afghanistan to be on the negotiating table to ease tension on its East-Western border as according to Bhutto, Afghanistan and Iran were both vital for Pakistan's security. On the contrary, to counterbalance the Russian influence, Daoud wanted to mend relations with Pakistan.<sup>84</sup> After an earthquake and floods in Afghanistan in 1976, Bhutto generously sent aid to Afghanistan which enhanced cordiality in Pak-Afghan relations. The ministry of Foreign Affairs in Pakistan issued a statement on 7<sup>th</sup> May 1976:

It has been a while that the government of Pakistan has scaled down its radio propaganda against Afghanistan and has also shown solidarity with the victim of the recent flooding and earthquakes. The government of Afghanistan views this as a positive step. In view of this goodwill and in order to resolve the inherent issues of conflict (between the two countries), President Daoud directed the Afghan charge'd' affairs in Islamabad to invite Bhutto to visit Afghanistan.<sup>85</sup>

In mid-1976, both Pakistan and Afghanistan announced to hold talks without pre-conditions on bilateral issues.<sup>86</sup> Consequently, talks were held in Kabul for four days between Daoud and Bhutto—both the states agreed to abandon propaganda against each other.<sup>87</sup> During Daoud's visit to Pakistan in August 1976, he vowed to settle the disputes between the two countries if Pakistan took it seriously. As Daoud's policies were shifting from Russia, the Russians were planning to remove Daoud.

Bhutto was dismissed by General Zia-ul-Haq in a coup in July 1977. Daoud hoped that the new government in Islamabad will keep resolving the mutual issues with Kabul in a good manner. General Zia visited Kabul in October 1977; talks were held between both the states who announced to decide their mutual

issues amicably. During his visit to Pakistan in March 1978, Daoud was willing to recognize Durand Line as a permanent international border between Pakistan and Afghanistan.<sup>88</sup> Additionally, he also agreed to abandon its support for the Pakhtun and Baloch insurgents in return to give Pakistan autonomy of Baloch and Pakhtun in the respective areas.<sup>89</sup>

While at home, Daoud was facing critical situation by the PDPA and other insurgents. The last and the most significant event which paved the way for Daoud's removal was Daoud's direct clash with Brezhnev during his visit to Moscow on April 12, 1978.<sup>90</sup> After this visit, Daoud started to establish close links with Iran, Arab states, and the U.S. Nonetheless, time did not permit him to shape his policies because the situation was out of control for Daoud. Daoud was overthrown and subsequently killed by the communist and pro-Soviet army officers in a coup known as Sour Revolution on April 17, 1978. The military officers who had also helped Daoud coming to powers were involved in the coup.<sup>91</sup> The military officers released the leaders of the PDPA arrested by Daoud. It was the Russian support in all respects that the PDPA succeeded to overthrow Daoud who had turned not only against Russia but also the PDPA.

### **The U.S. Role**

Following the World War II, the Cold War started which divided the world into two blocks: the Western bloc and the Soviet bloc. Afghanistan was a low-profile country for the U.S. and the latter refused to provide military and economic aid to Kabul twice; first in 1950-51 and again in 1954.<sup>92</sup> During this period, Afghanistan remained neutral and did not join the SEATO and CENTO pacts. Afghanistan joined the Bandung process and became a co-founder of Non-Aligned movement along Yugoslavia, Indonesia, and India. This was the reason when the Afghan government requested the U.S. for arms sales and loans in 1956, but the request was rebuffed by Washington. These developments after on paved the way for the Soviet Union's strong influence in the Afghan affairs as it extended aid to Afghanistan after the U.S. refusal. Soviet Union's deep



involvement in the Afghan affairs became a headache for the U.S. in late 1970s when they intervened in Afghanistan.

The main reason for Afghanistan's tilt towards the Soviet Union was to strengthen its military and defense institutions.<sup>93</sup> At that time, their relations with Pakistan were on strained due to Afghanistan's support for the Pakhtunistan issue as well as the Durand Line. Daoud's foreign policy was shaped by two facts: he wanted to balance its relationship with both the blocs during the Cold War. Besides, he wanted to take economic and military benefits in terms of loans and military support from both the blocs by exploiting the situation. The Soviet Union gave Afghanistan military equipment worth of \$25 million in 1955.<sup>94</sup> In addition, the Soviets constructed military bases in Shindand, Bagram, and Mazar Sharif.

However, the then Afghan Prime minister, Musa Shafiq in early 1970s, pushed for the liberalization of the country. His policy seemed to favor the pro-western approach and better relationship with its South-Eastern neighbor Pakistan as well as with pro-American Shah of Iran. This anti-communist and pro-western Prime Minister in Kabul alarmed the Soviet Union. Musa Shafiq even went to change the perception and signed a contract with Iran and established direct relations with Pakistan.<sup>95</sup> Later on, these developments persuaded the Soviets to play their role in the coup in 1973 even though they had been supporting Zahir Shah in Kabul since long. Neither the U.S. nor the pro-American government in Pakistan and Iran played any role to protect and support Musa Shafiq. Thus, we can conclude that Afghanistan remained a low-profile country not only for the U.S. but also for its allies: Iran and Pakistan.

Furthermore, historical documents show that the U.S. wanted a neutral Afghanistan out of the sphere of its rival Soviet Union.<sup>96</sup> We observed the indirect role of the U.S. in the Afghan affairs in mid-1970s having no objection on Pakistan's Afghan policy where the former was supporting the anti-Afghan government rebels. The U.S. has always supported Pakistan on the issue of Durand Line by declaring it an international border between Pakistan and Afghanistan.<sup>97</sup>

## **Conclusion**

Pakistan-Afghanistan relations have never been on the path of ease and conviviality. The mistrust factor has always marred the prospects for betterment. Though many times the states' leaders tried to bridge the differences between both the states, yet the efforts were half-hearted. The fear of hypocrisy has always been dominant which has broadened the trust deficit despite both being Islamic states, geographically linked, and vital for each other. Besides, the Afghan rulers had in mind the past legacy of their forefathers who had ruled over a vast area of Afghanistan including the NWFP. After World War II and with the emergence of nation states, the map of the world changed largely by the demarcation of the new boundaries. South Asia was no exception. However, the Durand Line which has always affected the relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan had been demarcated during the great game between Russia and the United Kingdom in 1893. Since the inception of Pakistan, Durand Line has been a policy obsession not only for Pakistan but also for the Afghan government.

Although, Durand Line and Pakhtunistan issues existed during the King Zahir Shah reign: 1933-1973; nonetheless, these were limited as compared to Daoud's period as president from 1973 to 1978. After the creation of Bangladesh, Pakistan was in a very weak position hence it wanted to have cordial relations with the neighboring states. Bhutto adopted a friendly policy towards Afghanistan in the beginning but with Daoud's ambitions becoming clear, Bhutto started a forward policy. On the one hand, Daoud took advantage of Pakistan's internal political chaos due to the dismissal of the NAP government to support the anti-Pakistani elements, on the other hand, Islamabad started supporting anti-Daoud elements like the Hizb-e-Islami of Afghanistan to use them for the destabilization of Daoud's regime. Consequently, the proxy war was balanced and in the latter half of Daoud's regime, the latter went on the back foot due to the internal chaos in the country. Islamabad succeeded to counterbalance Kabul. Three factors paved the way for Daoud's removal: Daoud's abrupt U-turn from Russia; his anti-Parcham operation in which he ousted hundreds of

military officers who had provided them support during his coup in 1973, and the support of Pakistan to certain elements. There was no balance in Daoud's policies due to Afghanistan's weak economic and military position. The Cold War factor was also dominant in shaping Daoud's policies as the Shah of Iran had started huge financing to end Afghanistan's economic and military dependency on Russia. Furthermore, his policy towards Pakistan in his later years was realistic with an intention to resolve mutual issues including the Durand Line, however, time did not permit him to do so. The U.S. played a minimal role during this period vis-à-vis resolving the issues between Pakistan and Afghanistan. Although the U.S. played a silent role during Daoud's presidency from 1973 to 1978, that silent role and the growing Soviet Union role laid the foundation for the U.S. involvement in Afghanistan. A year later, the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan and the U.S. provided covert and later open support to the anti-Soviet Mujahideen.

## End Notes

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<sup>3</sup> Azmat Hayat Khan, *The Durand Line: Its Geo-Strategic environment*, (Area Study Centre, University of Peshawar and Hanns Seidal Foundation: 2000) p. 187.

<sup>4</sup> Stanley Wolpert, *Roots of Confrontation in South Asia: Afghanistan, Pakistan, India and the Superpowers*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982) pp. 120-121.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p. 120.

<sup>6</sup> Zafar Iqbal Yousafzai, "Politics on Borderland;" *Daily Times*, Lahore, September 6, 2016; also see Surendra Chopra, "Afghan-Pakistan Relations: The Pakhtunistan Issue," *The Indian Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 35, No. 4 (October-December 1974), p. 314.

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<sup>24</sup> Ahmad Shayeq Qaseem, “Afghanistan’s Political Stability,” op. cit., p. 50.

<sup>25</sup> Kamal Matiuddin, *Power Struggle in the Hindu Kush: Afghanistan 1978-1991*, op. cit., p. 22.

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<sup>27</sup> Anees Jillani, “Pak-Afghan Relations: 1958 to 1988,” op. cit., p. 40.

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<sup>48</sup> Tariq Mahmood, "The Durand Line: South Asia New Trouble Spot," op. cit., p. 21.

<sup>49</sup> Zafar Iqbal Yousafzai, "Politics on Borderland," op. cit.

<sup>50</sup> For details see the Vienna Convention on Succession of States on Respect of Treaties (VCSST) have unanimously endorsed *utipossidetisjuris*, which says that bilateral treaties with or between colonial powers pass on to the descendant sovereign states.

<sup>51</sup> For detail see Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties.

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