AFGHANISTAN: PROSPECTS FOR STABILITY IN RELATION TO GEOSTRATEGIC DYNAMICS IN CENTRAL AND SOUTH ASIA

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ORGANIZATION PROTOCOLS FOR STABILITY IN RELATION TO CULTURAL AND POLITICAL DYNAMICS IN CENTRAL AND SOUTH ASIA

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Declaration

I hereby declare that this is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge, it contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due acknowledgement is made in the thesis.

Ahmad Shayeq Qassem

Date: 26 October 2007
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Abstract

Political stability has always been a central theme of policy for all governments and political systems in the history of modern Afghanistan. Since its inception in the mid-nineteenth century, the country experimented with a diverse succession of political systems and state ideologies matched by few other countries' political histories. In the span of less than nine decades since independence in 1919, the Afghan state was substantially restructured at least a dozen times. Its official character underwent changes from being a vassal entity of a foreign power to adopt a plethora of successive/simultaneous identities including: a progressive monarchy; a peasant emirate; a conservative monarchy; a republican regime; a communist state; an Islamic state; an Islamic emirate; and finally the current Islamic Republic of Afghanistan. Within these political systems, the governments and ruling elites reformed and readjusted some of their policies so as to make them more conducive to political stability. Yet political stability, at best, remained a dream unrealised in Afghanistan.

Despite the multiplicity of successive changes, elements of continuity can be deciphered in the foreign relations of all the political systems in modern Afghanistan. It is some of these constant themes that are responsible for the chronic instability of the country. The country has had a complex history of relations with its neighbours, particularly, in Central Asia and South Asia. Although its foreign policy orientations have fluctuated between friendship and tension with bordering nations, it has never been on good terms with both regions simultaneously. The nature of Afghanistan's relations with Central and South Asia is one of the most important factors that impact on the political stability/instability of the country.

On the other hand, the domestic politics of Afghanistan influence its relations with the neighbours. In order to understand the imperatives of long-term stability in the country sufficiently, a holistic approach to the study of both the concept of political stability and the interactive nature of the relevant endogenous and exogenous factors is needed. A repeated failure by the Afghan governments and their various major-power patrons to grasp the need for implementation of a holistic approach is largely responsible for the chronic instability of the country.
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Stability in Afghanistan has eluded the Afghans as well as many concerned foreigners most of the time since the consolidation of the modern Afghan state in the mid-nineteenth century. The country’s history is replete with long but intermittent periods of instability that alternated and diluted the achievements of each period of relative calm in which the inhabitants of this region tried hard to rebuild their lives. In ancient eras, marauding invaders traversed its territory from all directions many times over, leaving a trail of unsettling consequences that altered its established patterns of relations and disrupted its stability. Equally, Afghanistan produced its own conquerors that raided the surrounding regions and built great empires centered in the territory of what came to be known as ‘Afghanistan’ in modern times.

Following the advent of British and Russian colonialism in South and Central Asia from the mid-eighteenth century, the people of Afghanistan had to fight at least three major wars against Britain and many skirmishes with both Britain and Russia in what most of the Afghan historians have termed as struggle for independence. Yet after Afghanistan’s independence in 1919 and the decolonization of both Central and South Asia, the country’s stability still continued to be fragile.

The people of Afghanistan share many ethno-linguistic, cultural and historic ties with all the neighbouring countries. These linkages have created strong cross-border affinities between Afghans and the peoples of surrounding nations. Yet despite the cross-border affinities, the Afghan state has had a history of uneasy relations with its neighbours, particularly with those in Central and South Asia. Why has Afghanistan not been able to develop sufficiently amiable relations with its Central and South Asian neighbours, and how has the character of these relations affected the internal stability of Afghanistan? The thesis draws on a comprehensive definition of the concept of political stability to demonstrate the fragility of the Afghan state throughout its modern history. The nature of Afghanistan’s relations with its neighbours in Central and South Asia have continuously influenced the country’s political stability. As a landlocked country, dependent on foreign assistance for maintaining a modicum of state apparatus, Afghanistan will always remain unstable so long as it does not resolve the causes of friction with the neighbouring countries. In turn, some of the tensions with the neighbours in large part stem from the very character of the modern Afghan state as an over-centralized, ethno-nationalistic political entity. The thesis will argue that unless some of the basic characteristics of the
modem Afghan state are reformed and relations genuinely improved with the neighbouring countries, mere security-centric policies will fail to achieve real stability in the country.\footnote{Apart from the bordering nations in Central and South Asia, two other neighbours, namely Iran and China, also have significant influence in the political stability of Afghanistan. The thesis mentions these countries where necessary in the context of Afghanistan’s relations with Central and South Asia. A detailed discussion of the nature of Afghanistan’s relations with these countries is beyond the scope of this thesis, however.}

In the context of the thesis, the study of Afghan-Central Asia relations prior to the independence of Central Asia in the early 1990s is mainly an analysis of Afghanistan’s relations with the Soviet Union. The reason for this is obvious; as part of the Soviet Union, Central Asia did not have an independent foreign policy. To the extent that political stability of Afghanistan could be said to have been affected by the nature of its relations with its northern neighbour, the attitude of the Soviet leadership and administration in Moscow towards Afghanistan had a central role in it. What the native leaders and peoples of Central Asia, particularly those from the neighbouring units of Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan, might have thought about the imperatives of foreign policy towards Afghanistan remained largely irrelevant to what actually took place in terms of relations between Central Asia and Afghanistan. For example, by invading Afghanistan in 1979, the Soviet forces based in Central Asia played a central role in one of the most unstable periods of Afghanistan’s modern history. Yet the people and leaders of Central Asia had little input in the processes leading to the Soviet decision to invade. Similarly, the discussion of Afghanistan’s relations with South Asia until 1947 focuses on the country’s interactions with British India. Subsequently, Afghan-Pakistan relations will be discussed in detail.

It is worth mentioning that the character of Afghanistan’s relations with Central and South Asia is not the only factor which influences the dynamics of political stability in the country. Iran, India and the United States, for example, are all important countries with significant influence in Afghanistan. Nor are the country’s foreign relations the only determinants of its internal stability. Many authors have tried to explain the internal causes of chronic conflict in Afghanistan. Nazif Shahrani, for example, has highlighted the incompatibility of a centralized political system, borrowed from the European colonial model, with the self-governing political culture of various ethno-linguistic communities in Afghanistan as a source of internal conflict.\footnote{M. Nazif Shahrani, ‘The Future of the State and the Structure of Community Governance in Afghanistan’, in William Maley (ed.), Fundamentalism Reborn? Afghanistan and the Taliban, (London: Hurst & Co., 1998), pp. 212-242.} Amin Saikal has spoken about the role of polygamic-based rivalries within the ruling dynasties of Afghanistan since the early
nineteenth century as a source of internal strife. David Edwards has argued that Afghanistan’s ‘political chaos’ stems from the self-contradictory nature of three distinct moral systems underpinning its political culture. In his view, interaction among the three incongruent moral systems including the universalistic teachings of Islam, the indigenous code of conduct such as those related to the concepts of Nang or Ghairat, and a centralized political system emulated from European kingship models, produces internal discord. As is often the case with many other countries, and in substantiation of theories advocating the inseparability of domestic politics from international relations, the study of Afghanistan’s foreign relations cannot be done without undertaking a good measure of research into domestic politics of the country. Thus, the thesis discusses the internal politics of Afghanistan to the extent that they affect, or are affected by, its foreign relations.

As an abstract concept in political science, the discussion of political stability goes as far back into history as the discipline remembers. Almost all the traditions of Western political thought starting from the ancient era to contemporary times have concerned themselves with the issue. Plato’s aristocracy, Aristotle’s ‘best possible state’, Thomas Hobbes’ discussions in Leviathan, Rousseau’s egalitarianism, Marx and Engels’s analyses of class conflict are all concerned about political stability. Debate about imperatives of political stability connects a wide range of traditions within Western political thought. It is present in what Dessauer calls ‘inherited concepts’, denoting the understanding of stability in ancient Greek city states; it is inherent in the ethical laws proposed by Judaic traditions; in the debate about the necessity of secularism and ensuring of checks and balances in Western liberal political thought; in the emphasis on social integration advocated by some French thinkers; and in the thirst for classless society of communism.

Similarly in the realm of International Relations theory, prominent schools of thought such as Realism, Idealism, Liberalism, Neo-Liberalism, Neo-Conservatism and Constructivism are all concerned about stability of the international political system. The realists advocate

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6 For details see Bernard Russell, History of Western Philosophy (London: Routledge, 1995).
7 For details see Frederick E. Dessauer, Stability (New York: Macmillan, 1949).
balance of power between nation-states, or alliances thereof, as the key to international peace and stability. Other schools of thought variously put emphasis on international law and institutions, collective security, universality of liberal democratic values, international economic interdependence and the power of ideas as some of the important factors affecting international stability.

Stability as a subject of academic interest is one of the most intractable concepts in Political Science. Like many other theoretical notions in social sciences, academic consensus on the exact definition of stability is hard to achieve due to sheer subjectivity of the concept. However there are a number of themes in the relevant literature which, if taken together, could provide for an inclusive set of criteria that would allow us to reach at a comprehensive definition of the concept. Hurwitz has used some of these themes to come up with a basic definition of political stability, which will be adhered to for the purpose of this thesis. In his view, political stability means ‘the absence of violence, governmental longevity, the absence of structural change, legitimacy, and effective decision-making’. It is obvious that these aspects of stability cannot be understood in absolutist terms; rather the ratio of their pervasiveness as against the extent of opposite conditions will determine the degree of stability. Absence of violence in a society, for example, is a utopian concept, as is the absence of structural change, and the concept of legitimacy, extremely relative, for that matter. In order to understand Hurwitz’s definition fully, it is essential to discuss each one of these themes in some detail and relate them to the situation in Afghanistan historically.

The most common theme in the study of political stability is concerned with the frequency and intensity of civil strife and absence of political violence in a given polity. In this regard, Russett and Bunselmayr developed a rudimentary way of measuring the relative level of political stability in different countries by counting the number of deaths directly as a result of intergroup violence per 1,000,000 units of population. While not without merits, the
Introduction

technique is evidently an insufficient indicator of political stability; for there could be many political actions that may not necessarily lead to a loss of life, but which could undermine the stability of a political system. As Claude Ake observed, members of a society support or undermine a political system in so far as they obey or disobey the laws which it produces. ‘If the incidence of violations of law continues to increase, political authority eventually atrophies’ – political system is destabilized. Therefore, mere counting of fatalities cannot be a sufficiently-reliable indicator of political stability in a country.

In regards to the definition of political stability related to civil strife, a more useful attempt was made by Ivo K. Feierabend and Rosalind L. Feierabend, who invented a scale of 0 (extremely stable) to 6 (extremely unstable) ratings for eighty-four nations over a time span of seven years (1955-1961). They defined the concept of stability vs. instability as:

[The] degree or the amount of aggression directed by individuals or groups within the political system against other groups or against the complex of officeholders and individuals and groups associated with them. Or, conversely, it is the amount of aggression directed by these officeholders against other individuals, groups or other officeholders within the polity.

Hence, the Feierabends define instability in terms of aggressive behaviour which ensues from ‘systemic frustration’ in a political system. Systemic frustration in turn results from the disparity of ‘social want formation’ being bigger than ‘social want satisfaction’. In the words of Duff and McCamant, ‘the system … must have the power and ability to meet the demands and needs of the society as well as the flexibility to adjust to changing circumstances’. Aggressive behaviour might be inhibited by devices associated with the notion of punishment in the frustration-aggression formula. It could also be ‘displaced’ against targets other than the perceived agents of frustration —i.e. scapegoating the minorities or a foreign threat. In Feierabends’ view, however, a polity where coercive methods are the prime means of solving problems is not stable. A stable polity is capable of relieving systemic frustration through constructive methods. Hence, the availability of a

plethora of political, administrative, entrepreneurial and other devices that induces non-aggressive and non-violent behaviour for addressing problems becomes an essential requisite of political stability.\(^\text{17}\)

In view of this definitional theme, the discussion of whether or not Afghanistan was stable politically at any particular period of time becomes a highly subjective one. It could be argued with good justification that the country’s domestic politics has often been marred by coercive and violent problem-solving methods historically. However, the question of just about how much violence — if it could be quantified at all — would be enough to qualify a country as unstable, still remains a subjective issue. Answering this question at the minimum would require a comparative study of Afghanistan in relation to other countries. In Feierabends’ study, during 1955-1961, Afghanistan’s stability rating stood at 4 in the scale of 0 to 6, which indicated its place more on the instability side of the continuum. This is an interesting finding because it contradicts the general view of Afghanistan being one of the most stable countries during 1930s-1970s. Irrespective of the extent to which Afghanistan experienced stability, or lack thereof, at any particular period of time, the concept of violence in the sense understood above is an integral part of any discussion of political stability.\(^\text{18}\) Therefore, to the extent that manifestation or inhibition of violence in Afghanistan could be connected to the nature of Afghanistan’s interactions with Central and South Asia, the thesis will argue that the country’s political stability/instability was affected by its relations with these regions.

A second definitional element of political stability is related to the longevity of government. Russett has developed a relatively simple way of measuring the average level of stability over a given period of time.\(^\text{19}\) Number of years over a selected period of time divided by the frequency of succession of what Russett calls ‘chief executive’, gives an indication of how stable that system has been on average in that period. ‘Chief executive’ in this context is the political figure who wields real executive authority as opposed to the nominal ones in some political systems. Russett is aware of the shortcomings of his approach. In many instances, he admits, the government or even the regime could change without causing the replacement of the chief executive. In communist systems, the head of state is less significant than the general secretary of the communist party. In some countries the head

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\(^{18}\) Dessauer’s concept of stability embraces security and peace, reinforcing Feierabends’ views about absence of violence being an integral part of stability. See Frederick Dessauer, Stability, pp. 104-105.

\(^{19}\) Bruce M. Russett and Robert Bunselmayer, World Handbook of Political and Social Indicators, pp. 101-104.
of state is a titular figure and the real executive authority lies with the head of the
government while in other countries the inverse of this is true. It is difficult to determine
which of these two offices is more relevant to the analysis of stability at a given instance in
a particular country. By the same token, some political systems have assigned shorter, and
others longer, terms of office for their chief executives. This further complicates a
comparative study of stability in different political systems. Russett believes, however, that
an attempt to address these reservations will raise more questions than they could answer.

Hurwitz criticizes Russett’s approach for its failure to make a distinction between legal and
illegal successions of heads of a state. The objection is well-founded because preservation
of stability in itself needs continues accommodation of non-fundamental changes that
would allow a political system to keep pace with the requirements of time and space. In the
words of Edmund Burke, ‘[A] state without the means of some change is without the
means of its conservation’. Russett’s approach is useful, however, if the actual frequency
of government succession or head of state in a given polity is counted against its ideal rate
as enshrined in the relevant legal provisions of that polity. The frequency of snap-elections
and incomplete terms of office, even if they occur within constitutional provisions, is a
useful indicator which could point to the incongruence of a country’s political culture with
its political institutions; the wider the cleavage the less stable a political system.

If the frequency of both constitutional and unconstitutional changes in the office of the
head of state alone would be considered in the period between Afghanistan’s independence
in 1919 and the overthrow of the Taliban regime in late 2001, a headcount of the
occupants of the position will yield a total of 17 heads of state including Kings, Emirs,
Presidents and interim military and non-military rulers in Kabul alone. That is 17 changes
in the office of the head of state over a period of 82 years; excluding many other violent
and non-violent claimants on leadership outside Kabul. On the face of it, the average
turnover rate of 17 heads of state over 82 years (4.8 years on average) seems a good record.
Nonetheless, the fact that few of these heads of state relinquished power in a normal
fashion and since most of them were either pressured into leaving office or violently
overthrown by internal and/or external forces, points to political instability in Afghanistan.
However these statistics are viewed, the thesis will rely on the dynamics of interaction

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20 Leon Hurwitz, ‘Contemporary Approaches to Political Stability’, p. 453.
22 For a discussion of the concept of political culture and its usage in relation to various political systems
23 A full list of the Afghan heads of state since 1919 is given in Appendix 1.
between Afghanistan’s relations with Central and South Asia on the one hand and the
durability of the Afghan heads of state and prime ministers’ tenures on the other, as
evidence of the impact of the country’s relations with these regions on its political stability.

Drawing on the arguments advanced by Lipset and Needler, Hurwitz believes that
legitimacy of the political system and its outputs in the eyes of public is another criterion
used by scholars to define stability.24 Indeed, not only the legitimacy but also the
effectiveness of political system is often associated with the degree of its stability by many
writers. Ernest Duff and John McCamant, for example, maintain that ‘in a stable political
system, the members of the system consider it to be both legitimate and effective’.25 In
Lipset’s words ‘legitimacy involves the capacity of the system to engender and maintain the
belief that the existing political institutions are the most appropriate ones for the society’.26
Needler posits legitimacy, and therefore stability, in the constitutionality of a political
system accompanied by its capacity to allow genuinely for general political participation and
to affect economic growth.27

Lipset and Needler’s sentiments about the constitutionality and appropriateness of
institutions in public eye find resonance in Dessauer’s description of the ‘normative
systems’ as a foundation of stability, which he classifies into three categories of ethical,
customary and legal rules.28 The latter also appreciates the relevance of economic growth
and public participation to political stability. However, he does not believe that economic
growth and public participation would necessarily strengthen political stability at all times.
Progress, including economic growth, he believes, could become incompatible with
stability if the two are ‘undefined and refer comprehensively to the whole of social
conditions’. In specific fields, however, progress does not logically exclude stability.
Increased economic output and better education, for example, do not unavoidably threaten
stability of the government and continuity of full employment. Similarly, while increased
public participation in the political processes can help a political system better develop its

24 Leon Hurwitz, ‘Contemporary Approaches to Political Stability’, p. 455. For Needler’s discussion of
the topic see Martin C. Needler, ‘Political Developments and Socioeconomic Development: The Case
pp. 889-897.
25 Ernest A. Duff and John F. McCamant, ‘Measuring Social and Political Requirements for System
Stability in Latin America’, pp. 1125.
26 Seymour Martin Lipset, ‘Some Social Requisites of Democracy: Economic Development and Political
see Seymour Martin Lipset, Political Man: The Social Bases of Politics (London: Heinemann, 1960),
p. 77.
27 Martin C. Needler, ‘Political Development and Socioeconomic Development: The Case of Latin
America’, pp. 889-897.
28 Frederick Dessauer, Stability, pp. 144-171.
self-regulatory mechanism, essential for ensuring continuity under changing circumstances, it could also unsettle the forces of public inertia that maintain stability under certain conditions.²⁹

Linking legitimacy with the study of political stability evidently has its share of criticisms just as the above two other criteria do. There is only a fine line between the concept of legitimacy as one of the wellsprings of a stable political system and its existence as the identifier of whether or not such stability exists within a country. As is the case with Needler’s analysis, proponents of this approach generally cannot resist sliding down the slippery slope of indulging in a discussion of liberal democracy as a measure of how legitimate a government and its decisions are among public. Availability or lack of liberal democracy is of course an insufficient identifier of stability in any given polity. Equally problematic is the extreme relativism of democracy and its connection with legitimacy, which renders the task of measuring political stability all the more difficult. For the purposes of the thesis, however, it is enough to know that the legitimacy of a polity—stemming from the perceived extent of its adherence to normative systems, its role in affecting economic mobility for better or for worse, and its propensity to increase or limit public participation in politics—is related to the political stability of the society in which it operates.

Applying this criterion to Afghanistan once again reveals its political fragility, for there have hardly been any significant periods in the modern history of the country when all the political elites and citizenry have accepted the legitimacy of the political system and its outputs unequivocally. Indeed, many political systems and leaderships of Afghanistan came to prominence because of support mainly from the colonial powers, the Soviet Union, Pakistan and, currently, the United States and other international forces. The dynamics of politics in Afghanistan have always played in such a way that relative consolidation of power is attained in the immediate wake of a new regime coming into existence on the back of strong foreign support or outright intervention. However from the moment such a regime comes to power, the political landscape is rendered fertile for the seeds of dissent which finally culminates in the removal of the leadership and the regime altogether. Therefore, at best the country has seen only intermittent stability since the nineteenth century.

²⁹ Ibid, pp. 106, 137-140.
Another approach to the study of political stability draws attention to the importance of the basic structural arrangements in a polity. Hurwitz agrees with the relevance of this approach to the study of political stability; however, he dissects it further to highlight imprecision in its application. He poses the questions as to what actually constitute basic structural arrangements in a political system, and to what extent can small variations occur before it could be admitted that a basic structural change has taken place? Furthermore, he questions the sheer dichotomy of the approach by saying: 'a country will either be free of structural change, in which case it is classified as “stable”’, or its basic patterns are changed, in which case it is classified as “unstable”’.

In other words, are we to attribute political instability exclusively to change in basic structural arrangements of a polity, or could scope be made for the causal effects of less fundamental changes as well?

The notion of basic structural arrangements becomes more intelligible through Dessauer’s discussion of its equivalent — foundations of a society. He admits that there are no standard variables attributable to the foundations of a society. ‘It may be representative government or private property or freedom of trade or sacramental order of life [determined by religion].’ However, they become apparent at critical times when, attacked by change, the prospect of their loss provokes fear and uncertainty in the minds of people whose reaction in turn undermines political stability. Dessauer’s choice of the word ‘attack’ in his analysis of the foundations of society is important. It denotes the quickness with which change is introduced.

In Dessauer’s view, an attack against the foundations of a society is not the only means of shaking political stability. Radical change, even if not directed against foundations of a society, can also destabilize a political system. ‘Stability has to depend on the actual changes being few, slow, and not fundamental.’ Hence, radical change is that which, by virtue of its sheer quantity and speed, could frighten people and overwhelm their fortitude. From this it could be deduced that an attack against the foundations of a society, or the fundamental character of a polity, is essentially a radical undertaking because it contains both elements of radicalism, i.e. enormity and swiftness. However, not all radical measures are directed against foundations of a society.

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50 Leon Hurwitz, ‘Contemporary Approaches to Political Stability’, p. 457.
51 Frederick Dessauer, Stability, p. 126.
52 Ibid, p. 125.
Dessauer's analysis of the foundations of society could go some way to address Hurwitz's criticism about imprecision in the concept of the basic structural arrangements. Accordingly, any attribute of a political system that, while threatened by change, provokes backlash by the society, could be among its basic structural arrangements. Political instability can also ensue from radical changes that might not necessarily be aimed at changing the basic foundations of a political system.

Claude Ake's deductive analysis of basic structural arrangements of a polity and their relevance to stability can help further clarify the subject. Ake starts his analysis by clarifying some of the ingredients of political structure. In his view, 'political behaviour is any act by any member of a society that affects the distribution of power to make decisions for that society'. Political behaviour takes place in an organized society as opposed to a society where contacts are random, and behavioural variations infinite. Members of an organized society live in the context of shared expectations which help provide a basis for predictability of behaviour. The congeries of standardized shared expectations are called 'political roles'. The network of political roles constitutes political structure — the basic structural arrangements of a political system. Since political roles act to control the flow of transactions and communications among political actors, we can refer to political structure as the 'system of political exchanges'. Finally political stability is:

... the regularity of the flow of political exchanges. ... Alternatively, we might say that there is political stability to the extent that members of society restrict themselves to the behavior patterns that fall within the limits imposed by political role expectations.

Viewed from this perspective, Afghanistan's modern history seems replete with instances of basic structural changes. Since Afghanistan's independence in 1919 alone, the country experimented with many different political systems possessing completely distinct constitutions and normative practices such as the official flag and emblem, official title of the state and foreign policy orientations. Major radical changes which disrupted continuity of the Afghan political system during this period included the independence from British suzerainty in 1919, the overthrow of Amanullah's reformist regime, the brief rule of Habibullah-e-Kalakani and his execution by Mohammad Nadir, the monarchy of the Musahiban brothers and assassination of Mohammad Nadir, Mohammad Daoud's coup and his republican regime, Daoud's bloody end and the rule of the pro-Soviet PDPA.
regime, the overthrow of the PDPA regime by the Mujahideen and establishment of the
Islamic State of Afghanistan (ISA), ascension of the Taliban-Al-Qaeda regime and, finally,
the current Islamic Republic of Afghanistan as the successor to the Transitional
Administration and Interim Administration headed by Hamid Karzai since late 2001.

Finally, mention should be made of another approach to the study of political stability,
which draws on the pattern of relations between the political system and the society in
which the system operates. Hurwitz uses the title 'political stability as a multifaceted social
attribute' to underline the multiple variables which proponents of this approach use to
explain stability/instability.\textsuperscript{35} He criticizes the advocates of this approach for failing to
define stability rather than explaining its sources. Hurwitz’s criticism notwithstanding,
however, the proponents of this approach have spoken lucidly about manifestations of
stability/instability. Duff and McCamant, for example, speak about symptoms of political
instability in the following words:

Instability may be reflected in increased repression by the authorities, by violent or
nonviolent demonstrations, by runaway inflation, by coups d’etat, by civil war, or ultimately
by social revolution. The nature of the manifestation depends on the political culture, the
peculiar balance of political forces, the sequence of events, and the decisions of key actors.
Violent social revolution is the most definite and unambiguous manifestation of system
instability … Instability produces pressures which in a democracy will be met by a policy
that gives in to all demands and leads to inflation while in a dictatorship the demands are
suppressed, coming to the surface only in the form of anomic demonstrations. On other
occasions instability may remain latent or unexpressed.\textsuperscript{36}

This approach — since it infers the manifestation of stability/instability from multiple
indicators and attributes its causes to a variety of factors rather than any single one — is
more or less a synthesis of various other approaches. Duff and McCamant draw attention
to the pattern of state-society relations with which Feierabends’ frustration-aggression
formula, explained earlier, was familiar. ‘The demands that the population places on its
political system are of two types’, they assert. One is ‘political-political’ and the other is
‘political-economic’.\textsuperscript{37} Duff and McCamant’s discussion of the political and economic
demands is reminiscent of the debates, mentioned earlier, by Lipset, Needler and Dessauer
in relation to the legitimacy of a political system. In their study of the imperatives of

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item \textsuperscript{35} Leon Hurwitz, ‘Contemporary Approaches to Political Stability’, p. 458.
\item \textsuperscript{36} Ernest A. Duff and John F. McCamant, ‘Measuring Social and Political Requirements for System
Stability in Latin America’, pp. 1125.
\item \textsuperscript{37} Ibid, pp. 1127.
\end{itemize}
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political stability, they underline the importance of political participation, societal welfare, economic growth, reasonably equal income distribution, broad-based institutionalization of politics and the adaptive capacity of the political system to changing circumstances.

In his case study of the stable democratic political system in Norway, Eckstein also finds a range of overlapping causative features, rather than any single factor, for political stability. They include: continuity of the political system including its capacity to adapt to changing circumstances; legitimacy of the political system, which not only precludes the chances of anti-system dissent but also evokes active support for, and commitment to, the political system as a whole from the population; effective decision-making which demonstrates the political system’s ability not only to make consensus-based policies but also to implement them competently; and finally the genuineness, rather than superficiality, of the participatory institutions and processes of the political system.38

In a separate study, Eckstein develops his theory of congruity between the patterns of government authority with that of the society in which it operates as a basis of political stability. Comparing two different countries in the interwar period, namely the United Kingdom and Weimar Germany, he concludes that Britain was much more stable than Germany because its political system mirrored, largely accurately, the pattern of authority in the British society — British political culture, including its social stratification, and the shape of political and non-political institutions such as the political parties, pressure groups, friendly societies, clubs and business organisations. On the other hand, Weimar Germany, in Eckstein's view, was an ‘unalleviated democracy’ with a ‘plebiscitary President’, superimposed on ‘a society pervaded by authoritarian relationships and obsessed with authoritarianism’.39 At the time, though the German political system was justifiably recognised as the most perfect democratic system, it did not produce stability because the system was not congruent with the society in which it operated.

Eckstein combines his studies of a stable democracy — emphasizing the ‘persistence of pattern, decisional effectiveness, and authenticity’ rather than superficiality of the democratic system— with his theory of the congruence of authority patterns — stressing the need for the political system to accurately reflect the patterns of authority in the society. He maintains that there is no such thing as a pure democracy or a pure totalitarian system;

much the same as there is no absolute congruence or incongruence in the patterns of authority between the state and society. The difference is rather in the degree of participatory governance to which a political system adheres and its ability to fulfill at least the minimum requirement of state-society congruence, namely a pattern of ‘graduated resemblances’. Political stability is militated on the degree of participatory governance being congruent with the pattern of authority in the society.  

Arend Lijphart is another political scientist who subscribes to the study of political stability as a multifaceted social attribute. In his study of political stability in the Netherlands, Lijphart draws on lessons from multiple approaches reminiscent of those we have covered above. He defines a stable political system (democracy) as the ‘one in which the capabilities of the system are sufficient to meet demands placed upon it’. Stability of a political system, he suggests, depends on more than its coercive capability to maintain a stable order. Rather it should be able to resolve problems, tensions, and conflicts, before they pile up to threaten the system. Lijphart studies ‘cabinet stability’ of the Dutch political system from 1848 to 1965. Further dividing this period into four distinct episodes of 1848-1868, 1868-1918, 1918-1945 and 1945-1965, he calculates the rate of turnover of key government leaders including prime ministers, finance ministers, ministers of internal affairs and ministers of foreign affairs for each timeslot separately. Lijphart believes that a stable country is characterized not only by a lack of negative indicators such as violence, revolutions, coups and political movements opposed to the political system as a whole but also by positive indicators in the form of continuity of the constitutional order, government longevity, active social support for the political system and the ability of the political system to make effective decisions which could penetrate the society. Lijphart’s approach for the study of political stability synthesizes elements from other approaches variously emphasizing civil strife, government longevity and basic structural changes, as studied earlier.

Relying on Hurwitz’s definition of the concept of political stability as explicated in our discussion above, the thesis will endeavour to discern the impact of Afghanistan’s relations with Central and South Asia on aspects of political stability in the country. In other words, the thesis will focus on how the nature of Afghanistan’s relations with the two regions, in

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42 Ibid, pp. 71-77.
different periods of its modern history, impacted on the country's domestic political violence, the longevity of its government, changes in the character of its political system, legitimacy of the political system and its capacity for effective decision-making.

It is perceptible from the outset that Afghanistan's relations with Central and South Asia have not followed a consistent pattern in its modern history. The strength of its friendship and political ties has fluctuated between the two regions in various periods of its history, depending on the saliency of different issues involved in relations. In order to convey an accurate understanding of the country's relations in the context of history, the thesis is divided into six chapters.

Chapter one studies the existence of historical, ethno-linguistic and cultural ties between Afghanistan and its neighbours in Central and South Asia. It also covers the dynamics of Afghanistan's relations with Central and South Asia under the Russian and British colonial domination until mid-twentieth century. The emergence of Afghanistan as a result of the colonial powers' rivalry, the consequences of that rivalry for Afghanistan's relations with its Central and South Asian neighbours and the impact of the character of these relations on the internal stability of the country will be analyzed. Using primary rather than secondary sources, the chapter will attempt to clarify some of the misunderstandings common to earlier works about the nature of border disputes between Afghanistan and its neighbour in South Asia. It will also construct the full picture of, and analyze in the light of the evolving body of international law, the position of Afghanistan with respect to its borders with Central and South Asia; something which no earlier work has done yet.

Drawing on primary sources not cited by earlier works, Chapter two studies Pashtun ethno-nationalism and the origins of the Pashtunistan dispute between Afghanistan and Pakistan. It covers Afghanistan's relations with Central and South Asia from the partition of the British India in 1947 until the late 1970s. It focuses on how the interplay of the Afghan domestic and foreign policies with the then-prevalent geostrategic environment in the region impacted on the country's relations with Pakistan, leaving profound consequences for the political stability of Afghanistan.

Chapter three analyses Afghan-Soviet relations in the context of a three-pronged strategy, encompassing military, reconstruction and diplomatic efforts, by the leaderships of the two countries to effect political stability in the country, and the reasons for the failure of these efforts during the 1980s. It will also study the impact of the Soviet occupation of
Introduction

Afghanistan on the nature of Afghan-Pakistan relations and its ultimate implications for the prospects of political stability in Afghanistan.

Chapter four analyses the difficulties and dilemmas inherent in the Mujahideen government’s policies, the nature of its relations with independent Central Asia and Pakistan, and the impact of these relations on the political stability of Afghanistan. It also studies critically the prevalent notion, among sections of the media and academic community, that the Taliban had brought stability to the country.

Chapter five critically examines the process of stabilization of Afghanistan since late 2001. It will examine the authenticity of some of the assumptions that have been made about the domestic imperatives of political stability in the country.

Finally, in view of the misperceived notions of stability discussed in the preceding chapter, Chapter six critically studies the regional economic cooperation policies of the Afghan government and the emerging dynamics of Afghanistan’s relations with Central and South Asia. Consequently, the implications, for political stability of Afghanistan, of the new dynamics of relations will be explained. The thesis will end with a conclusion.
Chapter 1

CHAPTER ONE

Afghanistan’s Historic Relations with Central and South Asia

Early History to Colonial Era

For many reasons, a serious academic discussion of Afghanistan cannot escape the necessity of briefly reviewing the country’s early history. It enables the researcher to see how the Afghans view their own history and relate themselves to the peoples of these two regions rather than what some traditions of scholarship ascribe to them in this regard. Ghulam Mohammad Ghubar, the Afghan historian and political activist, strongly criticized Orientalism for allegedly misrepresenting the history of Afghanistan as though it had started in the eighteenth century when the British and Russian colonial systems established themselves in South Asia and Central Asia.¹ Mir Mohammad Sediq Farhang, another prominent historian, diplomat and political activist, believed that a proper understanding of the history of Afghanistan did not lend itself well to the usual classification of historical epochs by Western historians into the Ancient, Medieval, Renaissance and Modern eras.² He divided it into three unique periods: the Ancient era, covering the period from the birth of Zoroaster to the advent of Islam, the Islamic era, encompassing the period from the spread of Islam to Afghanistan’s independence from British suzerainty in 1919, and the Contemporary era which has been ongoing since the country’s independence in 1919. Jamil Hanifi, an accomplished Afghan anthropologist, has not only vehemently challenged the popularized version of the Afghan history and society as a colonial-era construct; he is also disdainful of even many Afghan academics who have accepted it uncritically.³ Amin Saikal, a well-known Afghan academic, believes that the unqualified glorification of the erstwhile Afghan ruler, Abdul Rahman, by some scholars is hardly warranted.⁴ In the words of Sayed Askar Mousavi, a prominent Afghan academic, ‘[Orientalism], which gave a view of Afghanistan through one keyhole into the country, the Khaibar Pass on the Northwest Frontier, was initiated by the first encounter of British India with Afghanistan’.⁵

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¹ Ghulam Mohammad Ghubar, Afghanistan Dar Maseer-e Tareekh [Vol. 1 in Persian], (Tehran: Inqelab Publications Centre, 1362 Solar Hijra Calendar).
Afghanistan has had a long history of relations with her neighbours in Central and South Asia. For millennia the region has acted as the meeting place of four ecological and cultural regions including South Asia, Central Asia, Middle East and the Far East. The country closely relates to Central and South Asia by geographic propinquity, shared history and culture, and ethno-linguistic affinities. She shares; 2,430km border with Pakistan; 1,206km border with Tajikistan; 137km border with Uzbekistan; 744km border with Turkmenistan; 936km border with Iran and; 76km border with mainland China. The inhabitants of Afghanistan share common ancestry and ethnic origins with both Central and South Asia, traced in most cases as far back as the history remembers.

While the origin of Afghanistan in its present territorial shape is more recent, it needs to be emphasized that numerous empires and political entities were built by various invaders and the indigenous peoples of the region centered on present land of Afghanistan right from the ancient times through the Islamic era, continuing until the dawn of European colonial expansion across Central and South Asia. What is important in all these political entities is that almost all of them invariably either encompassed the whole or great parts of modern Afghanistan in conjunction with the whole or parts of one or more of her present neighbours in Central and South Asia. Jonathan Lee, for example, rejects the notion of Amu Darya’s being a natural boundary between Afghanistan and Central Asia as a nineteenth-century construct. The Afghan leaders often take a deep historic view of their cultural, linguistic and religious ties which closely bind Afghanistan with its Central and South Asian neighbours irrespective of the borders separating them today.

The theories of Indo-Aryan migrations through Central Asia and Afghanistan to northern India during the second and first millennia BC suggest the existence of a common racial

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7 *CIA The World Factbook* – Afghanistan, 16 May 2005.
8 ‘As early as the beginning of the first century B.C, the lands of the Hindukush, the Pamirs, and the mountainous region of modern Tajikistan were inhabited by one and the same people, the Bactrians, who formed the mighty ancient state of Bactria. These common ancestors of the left-bank and right-bank Tajiks together formed part of the Greco-Bactrian kingdom, Takharistan, and other Central Asian states of antiquity and the middle ages. George Grassmuck and Ludwig W. Adamec (ed), *Afghanistan: Some New Approaches* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1969), pp. 69-70. Ghubar says ‘As long as the history remembers the [Pushtuns] have been living in the east of Afghanistan and around the Suleiman ranges’. G. M. Ghubar, *Afghanistan Dar Maseer-e Tareekh*, [Vol. 1], p. 308
root at least since the second millennium BC for the populations of Afghanistan, Central Asia and South Asia. The discovery of ancient cities and cultural artifacts at Kapisa, Bagram, Ai Khanoum, Shibirghan, Yemshi, Nengarhar, Gardiz and Qandahar during 1940s-70s, confirms the existence of intense cultural and commercial relations between Afghanistan, the Indian subcontinent, Central Asia, China, Greek and Roman civilizations since ancient times.\(^{11}\)

The shared political history of Afghanistan with its Central and South Asian neighbours goes back at least to the sixth century BC when the region of Afghanistan up to the river Sind, in what is Pakistan today, became part of the Achaemenid Persian Empire. Subsequently, in the fourth century BC the whole region became subject to Alexander The Great’s invasion after he defeated the Achaemenid Persians. Upon Alexander’s death, the northern part of the Hindukush and parts of Central Asia gradually came to be ruled by local Graeco-Bactrians and the southern part was lost in 305 BC to the Maurya dynasty under the great Indian emperor Chandragupta. During the reign of Ashoka (273-232 BC), a convert Buddhist of the Maurya dynasty, Buddhism came to Afghanistan from India.\(^{12}\)

A succession of various dynasties and rulers including Scythians, Parthians and Kushans of Central Asian origin thereafter ruled Afghanistan. The Kushan dynasty, centered inside Afghanistan, was particularly expansive in that they built an empire to include what is now Pakistan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, the whole of northern India and parts of northwest China.\(^{13}\) International trade and interaction flourished during the Kushan dynasty along the famous Silk Road which passed through Afghanistan, and the result was a vital and dynamic expression in Afghanistan of a civilization born out of a confluence of the South Asian, Central Asian, Iranian, Chinese and Greek cultures. The Kushan dynasty was replaced by the Persian Sassanid dynasty in the third century AD which, except for a brief interruption by the White Huns of Central Asia towards the end of the fourth century AD, ruled Afghanistan until the Islamic era.\(^{14}\)

In the middle of the seventh century, Islam spread to the north and west of Khurasan through the west and northwestern regions of Herat and Sistan. Many Afghan historians view their country as successor to the Islamic-era Khurasan which included all of today’s

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12 Ibid.
13 Ibid. Also see Mirza Shukoorzada, Tajikan Dar Maseer-e Tareekh [In Persian] (Tehran: Allhuda International Publications, 1373 Solar Hejra Calendar).
14 G. M. Ghubar, Afghanistan Dar Maseer-e Tareekh, [Vol. 1]. Also see M. M. S. Farhang, Afghanistan Dar Panj Qarn-e Akheer [Vol. 1].
Afghanistan and some parts of today’s Central Asia, Pakistan and Iran. Kabul remained under Brahman rulers until the ninth century when it was overrun by Yaqoob Lais Saffarid who established the Saffarid dynasty as the first Islamic country independent of the Abbasid Caliphate’s direct rule based in Baghdad. The Persian language, which had developed in the eighth century through the intermarriage of the Middle Persian/Pahlavi with local languages of Bactrian, Soghdi, and Takhari, was adopted as the official language of Afghanistan instead of Arabic. In subsequent centuries the Persian language and literature and scholars from Khurasan, had great influence in the Central Asia as well as South Asia. Gradually, Persian came to be adopted as the official language in government, trade and intellectual life in a wide region extending from Istanbul to India in the eastern wing of the Islamic world.

Among the earliest indigenous dynasties of the region of today’s Afghanistan and Central Asia during the Islamic era, the Tahirids (821-872) Saffarids (872-910), Samanids (892-999), Ghaznavids (962-1148) and Ghaurids (1150s-1200s) are notable. During their rule the region became the centre of learning and intellectual innovation. The Persian language made great strides, and Islam provided the heterogeneous people of the region with a sense of unity and hugely contributed in the development of its trade and international relations. Islam also made the region part of a greater cultural entity, helping its people to interact with many other regions on that basis. The cities of Balkh, Herat, Bukhara, Naishapur and Merv were all developed during this period.

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15 According to both Ghubar and Farhang, the name ‘Afghanistan’ does not appear in any historical records prior to the thirteenth century AD when it was for the first time used by Safi Herawi in his history of Herat to denote the Pushtun regions around the Sulaiman mountain ranges straddling today’s south-eastern Afghanistan and north-western Pakistan. Even as late as the mid-nineteenth century, Kabul rulers preferred to be addressed as the rulers of Khurasan rather than Afghanistan. It was the British colonial authorities of India who insisted in using the name Afghanistan while addressing the rulers of Kabul. In a letter dated 16 August 1838, the British India Viceroy, Lord Auckland, used the name Afghanistan to denote the territorial extent of Shah Shuja’s domains. Thereafter the name gained increasingly more currency and formal status in the wake of the British colonial domination of the Kabul rulers. G. M. Ghubar, Afghanistan Dar Maseer-e Tareekh [Vol. 1], pp. 309-310. M. M. S. Farhang, Afghanistan Dar Panj Qarn-e Akheer, [Vol. 1], p. 31. Also see Sayed Asfar Mousavi, The Hazaras of Afghanistan: An Historical, Cultural, Economic and Political Study. A review of the British colonial records also reveals that until mid-nineteenth century all the treaties and agreements signed between the Britain and the Saduzai and Mohammadzai rulers address the latter as the rulers of Kabul rather than Afghanistan. See C. U. Aitchison, B.C.S, A Collection of Treaties, Engagements and Sanads, Vol. XIII, (Calcutta, Government of India: Central Publication Branch, 1933).


Based in Ghazni and Ghor respectively, the Ghaznavids and Ghaurids had extensive interactions with the peoples of South Asia. Several times they invaded what now constitutes Pakistan and large parts of today’s India. In 1008, the Ghaznavids defeated a confederacy of Hindu rulers in Peshawar, and extended their territory as far south as Lahore. The Ghaurids followed the Ghaznavids’ footsteps. By the end of the twelfth century, they had expanded their rule over Delhi, Ajmer, Bihar, Bengal and most of northern India.

In broad terms, the invasions of India by the Muslim rulers from the region of Afghanistan had two important aims; economic and religious/political. They were the most important means of securing material resources such as war booties, vassalage tributes and taxes necessary for the maintenance and expansion of their empires. Campaigns against the non-Muslim rulers of India also stemmed from a sense of religious duty on the part of the Muslim rulers to spread Islam among the peoples of India. This in turn helped bolster the Muslim rulers’ prestige and ethical legitimacy in the eyes of their Muslim subjects and the Muslim world in general. When Sultan Mahmoud Ghaznavid was recognised as an independent sovereign by the Abbasid caliphate in 999 AD, he vowed to lead a *Jihad* expedition every year into India. He toppled the Ismaili kingdom of Multan which was in alliance with the Fatimid dynasty in Cairo — the Shiite rival of the Abbasid caliphate. His expeditions against the Hindus fired the imagination of the Islamic world, sanctified him as a saintly warrior among his subjects, and secured him many honourific titles from the Abbasid caliphate. The Ghaznavid’s downfall came in the hands of the Turkmens from Central Asia, the Seljuqs, who captured most of the northern and western regions of Afghanistan between 1038 and 1043.

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21 Many Muslims in Afghanistan and South Asia believe that because of his services to the cause of Islam in the form of *Jihad*, Mahmoud became a *Wali* (saint) and *Mustajab-ud-Du’a* (holy man whose prayer, whenever he makes one, is instantly answered by god). This view is repeatedly reinforced by the Ghaznavid’s official historian, Abul Fazl Baitaqui, as well. See Saeed Nafisi (ed), *Tareekh-e-Baitaqui* [Vol. 1 in Persian] (Tehran: Miainan Publishing, 1342 Solar Hijra Calendar), pp. 38-72. Also see Clifford Edmund Bosworth, *The Ghaznavids: Their Empire in Afghanistan and Eastern Iran* 994-1040, pp. 241-268.
The Ghaurid dynasty (1148-1214), based in the Ghor province of today’s Afghanistan, led the second wave of Muslim invasions from Afghanistan into India. They made even more determined efforts to spread Islam among the peoples of India. Among the Ghaurid rulers, the names of Sultan Ghyiasuddin Ghaurid and Shihabuddin Ghaurid, and the rulers of Turkish origin in Delhi, namely Qutbuddin Aibaq and Shamsuddin-ul-tutmish, are noteworthy. Ghyiasuddin ruled from Ghor while his brother, Shihabuddin invaded India several times in the tradition of his Ghaznavid predecessors. ‘Qutbuddin [followed] the routine of Muslim conquerors in India, namely, enslaving, converting, destroying and looting as well as building mosques out of the ruins of Hindu temples’. He built one of the most magnificent Muslim monuments, the Jami Masjid in Delhi, in the history of Muslim rule in India. Shamsuddin entrenched the Muslim rule and built the Qutb Minar (Qutb minaret), another wonderful monument, in Delhi. He was given the title ‘Aid of the Commander of the Faithful’ by the Abbasid caliphate in Baghdad.

At the beginning of the thirteenth century, the Ghaurid domain in most of Afghanistan came under Khwarazm Shah of Central Asian origin, only to be shortly overthrown by the Mongol armies of Genghis Khan, who sacked and plundered Central Asia, the region of Afghanistan and Iran alike. It was not before long that the region had to face the shared experience of another conquest in the hands of Tamerlane/Timur (1336-1405) of Central Asia, who ruled from his grandiose seat of empire in Samarqand in today’s Uzbekistan. In some 15 military campaigns from 1370 to 1405, Timur carved out an empire stretching from the Indus River to the Black Sea, covering all of today’s Pakistan and Central Asia. In 1398, Timur invaded the Indian subcontinent through the Khyber Pass, subjugating Sind, Punjab and Delhi. He also sought to sanctify his invasion by the legitimating power of religion:

My object in the invasion of Hindustan is to lead a campaign against the infidels, to convert them to the True Faith according to the command of the Prophet (on whom be the blessing of God!), to purify the land from the defilement of misbelieve and polytheism, and overthrow the temples and idols, whereby we shall be Ghazis and Mujahids, champions and soldiers of the Faith before God.

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23 The Turkish rulers of Delhi rose to prominence as soldiers of the Ghaurids. After assuming the sultanate of Delhi, however, they effectively became sovereign rulers in their own rights.
25 Ibid, p. 82.
26 Ibid, p. 150.
Under Timur’s successors, in what is known as the Timurid renaissance, major Khurasan and Mawarannahr cities such as Samarqand (in today’s Uzbekistan), Herat and Balkh (in today’s Afghanistan) and Merv (in today’s Turkmenistan) once again emerged as great crossroads of commerce, cultural interaction and architectural innovation.27

In 1504, Zahir ud-Din Mohammad Babur of Central Asia captured Kabul with the army he had raised mainly in the Tajik region of Badakhshan which straddles today’s northeast Afghanistan and southern Tajikistan. In order to secure material and financial resources for the maintenance and expansion of his rule, Babur set out to capture India in the tradition of his predecessors from Central Asia. ‘The great advantage of Hindustan … is the amount of gold, coined and uncoined, which may be found there’, he said.28 He toppled the Lodi dynasty —Pushtun Muslim rule in Delhi— in 1526. Subsequently, when he faced a more formidable force of the Hindus and the Lodis combined, he assumed the Islamic warrior title, Ghāzi, and famously gave up drinking wine to reinforce his own image as a sincere Muslim leader fighting a jihād against the ‘infidels’.29 He addressed his demoralized army in these words:

Noblemen and soldiers! Every man that comes into this world is subject to dissolution. … God Most High has been gracious in giving us this destiny, that if we fall we die martyrs, if we conquer we triumphs in His Holy Cause. Let us swear with one accord that, by the Great Name of God, we will never turn back from such death, or shrink from the stress of battle, till our souls are parted from our bodies.30

Babur’s resort to the sanctifying power of Islam was instrumental in defeating the Hindu-Lodi alliance and the consolidation of the Mughal rule in India and major parts of Afghanistan, including Kabul.

During the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries, Afghanistan was divided into three parts. The northern region was ruled as part of the Uzbek Shaibani dynasty of Central Asia. The eastern region, including Kabul, formed part of Mughal India. The western region became part of Safavid Persia.31 The region of today’s Afghanistan became a battleground of

influence between the three rival forces. It was not until 1747 that the foundations of a central authority reemerged under Ahmad Shah Abdali, whose assumption of power marked (for the first time in the history of the region) a decisive shift of politico-military power from other ethnic groups to the Pashtuns.32

Ahmad Shah, born in Multan in today's Pakistan, was the founder of the Durrani Empire centered in Qandahar. Beginning in 1748, he embarked on a series of military campaigns into India. He established sway over the whole of today's Afghanistan, Pakistan and northern India including Delhi. Ahmad Shah's invasions of Mughal India brought him substantial bounties and kept his tribal warriors busy in foreign wars rather than among themselves — both essential for stability of his seat of power in Qandahar.33 The Durrani Empire received over 75.5 percent of its tax revenues from its Indian provinces (excluding Peshawar).34 Ahmad Shah's campaigns weakened the Muslim rulers of India against their Hindu Maratha rivals. The Marathas became so strong that they twisted control of Punjab from the Durrani Empire and threatened the Mughal dynasty in Delhi which had accepted Ahmad Shah's suzerainty. Indian Muslim leaders appealed for help from the Durrani ruler. Declaring *Jihad* on the Marathas, Ahmad Shah rushed to retake Punjab and help his beleaguered coreligionists in Mughal India. He dealt a lasting blow to the power of Marathas in 1761 in Panipat, securing for himself the prestigious title of *Ghazi* among the Muslims.

Towards the end of Ahmad Shah's reign, the rise of Sikh power in Panjab had been destabilizing for the Durrani rule in the east of the country. In the aftermath of Ahmad Shah's campaigns against the Mughal India and the Marathas, the Sikhs had found it opportune to fill in the power vacuum left by them.35 In 1781, the Sikhs revolted and wrested control of Multan, only to be shortly defeated by the Durrani ruler. Influential landlords and provincial chieftains of Sind and Kashmir refused to pay their land taxes to Kabul. However the Durrani ruler had subdued them all by 1787. Ahmad Shah was succeeded by his son, Timur Shah, who ruled the country from 1773 to 1793. During this period, despite an increased tendency by the centrifugal forces of tribal leaders and some provincial governors to break away from the central government, the Durrani Empire remained intact and much the same as he had inherited it from his father. The country's

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32 For more details see Amin Saikal, *Modern Afghanistan.*
capital was shifted from Qandahar to Kabul with Peshawar becoming the winter capital of the empire.

The Durrani Empire started to crumble during the reign of Zaman Shah (1793-1800), Timur Shah’s son and successor. It unraveled due to the interplay of intra-dynastic rivalries over royal succession, the dispute with Persia (Iran) over the province of Khurasan, and the active manipulation of these issues by the East India Company which had firmly established itself as the strongest force in India by then. Zaman Shah was keen to invade India in the tradition of his grandfather. The Mughal ruler, Shah Alam II, and other Indian Muslim leaders also urged him to invade India to contain the growing power of the Hindus and the British. Zaman Shah went to Peshawar and Punjab and made war preparations several times, only to be drawn back to Herat, Qandahar and Kabul due to instabilities born out of internal rivalries, the Iranian threat against the province of Khurasan, and the skillful British diplomacy which effectively combined these internal and external dangers against his authority.  

Farhang wonders indignantly as to why the Afghan ruler, while facing such evident dangers at home, was so eager to invade India:

It is amazing that despite the tensions with Iran ... [and instabilities in Herat and Qandahar], Zaman Shah could decide to leave Herat and Qandahar behind and move with his army towards Peshawar, therefore exposing Khurasan to [a grave] threat. The only reason that one could think of for this [irrational] move is the excessive love and eagerness on the part of the King to conquer India and its fairy tale riches. ... Zaman Shah ... left Qandahar for Peshawar out of an obsessive craze to conquer India.

However, when viewed in the backdrop of a long tradition by the Muslim leaders of Central Asia and Afghanistan to consecrate the legitimacy of their rule by waging 

| Jihad against the ‘infidels’ in South Asia, it is easy to understand why Zaman Shah had such an obsession to invade India. The contents of a letter sent sometime before June 1800 by Zaman Shah’s Prime Minister, Rahmatullah Khan, to the Iranian Prime Minister, Haji Ibrahim, could shed some light about the importance which the Durrani ruler attached to the religious aspect of the invasion.

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37 M. M. S. Farhang, *Afghanistan Dar Panj Qarn-e Akheer* [Vol. 1], pp. 193 and 197. [Indented text has been translated from Persian by the researcher].
The pretext under which the Shah of Iran is seeking to wage war [in Khurasan and Herat] is in reality motivated by the mischievous infidel English. If in the past two years [the Shah of Iran would not have colluded with the English] to prevent us from invading India, we would have cleaned out half of that country by now.\textsuperscript{38}

Like all its predecessors during the Islamic era, the Durrani Empire also faced challenges against its stability from Central Asia. The challenge came mainly from the khanate/emirate of Bukhara which supported the people of the Lesser Turkistan — northern provinces of today’s Afghanistan — in their many revolts against the Durrani rule. In 1767-68, the people of Badakhshan and Bakh revolted against the Durrani. Ahmad Shah sent a \textit{Lashkar} from Qandahar to suppress the revolt. This prompted the Emir of Bukhara, Abdul Aziz Khan, to mass its own \textit{Lashkar} in support of the rebels. In response, Ahmad Shah led another \textit{Lashkar} from Qandahar to meet the Bukharan challenge. A major war between the two armies was averted, however, when ‘out of Islamic feeling, His Majesty Ahmad Shah proposed peace’ to the Bukharan Emir.\textsuperscript{39} The peace did not last long, however, as the rebellion by the northern provinces became a recurring theme of contention between the two countries. The new Bukharan Emir, Mir Masoum Shah Murad (1785-1800) and the Durrani rulers, Timur Shah and Zaman Shah, fought many battles over the northern provinces of Balkh, Badakhshan, Qonduz, Aqcha, Merv and the rest of the Lesser Turkistan.\textsuperscript{40}

Despite all the instabilities manifest in popular revolts, violence and suppression of dissent in northern provinces by the Durrani rulers, and the Bukharan support to the rebels in the north, the final blow to the Durrani Empire —changes in the basic character of the political system— did not come from Central Asia. Unlike its predecessors, the Durrani Empire disintegrated under the pressure of external forces from South Asia and Iran in collusion with its internal tensions. In April 1809, the East India Company signed the Treaty of Amritsar with Maharaja Ranjit Singh (1780-1839), Zaman Shah’s handpicked governor of Punjab, in which the Sikh ruler undertook not to expand his domain southeast of the Sutlej River in return for British support to expand his territory to the northwest. As

\textsuperscript{38} M. M. S. Farahang, \textit{Afghanistan Dar Panj Qarn-e Akheer} [Vol. 1], p. 192. [Indented text has been translated from Persian by the researcher].

\textsuperscript{39} The quoted text is a translated from Persian used by Faiz Mohammad Kateb. Kateb was the court historian during the reign of Emir Habibullah (1901-1919. He chronicled the reigns of all Durrani kings from Ahmad Shah Abdali (1747) to Emir Habibullah (1919). Faiz Mohammad Kateb, \textit{Seraj-ut-Tawareekh} [Vol. 1 in Persian] (Kabul: Royal Government Press, 1952), p. 27. Also see G. M. Ghubar, \textit{Afghanistan Dar Maseer-e Tareekh} [Vol. 1], p. 371.

the Durrani rulers were steeped in their internecine conflicts in Kabul, Herat, Qandahar and Peshawar, Ranjit Singh became so powerful that he annexed large parts of the Durrani domains in northern India in the span of little over than a decade — Attock Fort (1812), Multan (1818), Kashmir (1819), Dera Ghazi Khan and Dera Ismail Khan (1821) and Peshawar (1823).41

Meanwhile in Kabul, Zaman Shah was overthrown by his brother Shah Mahmoud who ruled from 1801 to 1803. Shah Mahmoud was overthrown by his step brother, Shah Shuja-ul-Mulk who ruled from 1803 to 1809. Shah Mahmoud returned to depose Shah Shuja-ul-Mulk and rule again from 1809 to 1818. Parallel to the conflict among Timur Shah’s sons, another conflict arose between the royal clan, the Saduzais, and the Mohammadzais which was the second most influential clan in the Durrani rule. Another conflicts erupted between the two main Pushtun confederates in Afghanistan, the Durranis and the Ghilzais. After much bloodshed and further disintegration of Afghanistan, the conflicts finally resulted in the demise of the Suduzai rule and the ascendancy of the Mohammadzai clan under Emir Dost Mohammad in 1826. The East India Company and Ranjit Singh were involved in most of these conflicts on the side of one or the other of the various protagonists. It was natural, therefore, that the main Saduzai claimant to the throne, Shah Shuja-ul-Mulk, would seek refuge in India under the protection of the East India Company and its ally, Ranjit Singh.13

Afghanistan and Colonialism in Central and South Asia

The expansion of colonial Britain in South Asia and the Tsarist Russia in Central Asia left Afghanistan as the middle ground on which the dynamics of colonial power rivalry (The Great Game/Tournament of Shadows) were played in the nineteenth century.44 The

44 The earliest usage of 'The Great Game' as a term to denote the Anglo-Russian rivalry in Central Asia in the nineteenth century is generally ascribed to Arthur Connolly, an East India Company official who was executed on charges of espionage by Emir Nasrullah Khan of Bukhara in 1842. The term was popularised by the British author, Rudyard Kipling (1865-1936), in his spy novel, Kim, written in 1901. The term ‘Tournament of Shadows’ was used in Russia to describe the same strategic conflict. For more details see Martin Evans (ed), The Great Game, Britain and Russia in Central Asia (New York: Rutledge, 2004). Karl Ernest Meyer and Shareen Blair Brysac, Tournament of Shadows: The Great Game and Race for Empire in Central Asia (Washington D.C.: Counterpoint, 1999). Peter Hopkirk, The Great Game: The Struggle for Empire In Central Asia (New York: Kodansha International, 1992).
earliest signs of the Great Game came about in the context of a Franco-British rivalry where Russia and Iran were also against Britain. In 1801, Napoleon Bonaparte and Tsar Paul I (1796-1801) of Russia agreed to a Franco-Russian military expedition that would converge at Astrakhan and move to Iran with the consent of the Shah of Iran, pass Herat, Qandahar and Bolan Pass in Afghanistan, to occupy the Indus valley at present-day Pakistan. But owing to the Tsar’s assassination in the same year, the expedition never materialized. However, Britain continued to view the French as a threat to their colonial possessions in India and initiated policies to neutralize it.\(^{45}\)

For this purpose, in June 1809, British India dispatched Mountstuart Elphinstone, the first British diplomatic representative —Envoy Plenipotentiary— to the court of the Durrani King, Shah Shuja-ul-Mulk, while he was in his winter capital, Peshawar. The two sides signed an agreement in which the Afghan ruler undertook to deny passage to the purported Franco-Iranian alliance through the Afghan territory. Article three of the agreement stipulated that ‘the King of Cabool [sic] permit no individual of the French to enter his territories’. In return, Article two of the agreement provided that the ‘British State … shall hold themselves liable to afford the expenses necessary for the above-mentioned service to the extent of their ability’.\(^{46}\) Shah Shuja might not have appreciated the significance of this agreement fully at the time, yet it was a harbinger of the basic structural changes which the Afghan political system rapidly underwent in subsequent years. The Durrani ruler, direct successor to Ahmad Shah through Timur Shah and Zaman Shah, was contemptuously addressed as ‘the King of Cabool’, and foundations were laid for supporting the Afghan ruler in return for his agreement to cede the right to conduct independent foreign policy — an understanding similar to the political arrangements between the British authorities and several quasi-independent princely states in India.\(^{47}\)

A more assertive aspect of the British policy came to be known as ‘Forward Policy’, aimed at ensuring enough leverage with the weak Afghan rulers to forestall the Russians from moving south of the Amu Darya towards India.\(^{48}\) There were three main points in the early British forward policy proposed by Sir Henry Rawlinson (1810-1895); occupation of Quetta, subsidizing the Afghan ruler and establishing resident British mission in Kabul to

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48 V. Gregorian, *The Emergence of Modern Afghanistan*, pp. 91-98.
exercise direct influence over the country. Later on the forward policy advocates espoused even more ambitious plans than this early proposal. They viewed the Hindukush mountain ranges as a natural boundary for British India against Russia. Therefore, they wanted the southern parts of the Hindukush to be completely annexed by British India.

In 1835, Lord Melbourne’s Whig government was formed in Britain in which Henry John Temple Palmerston was appointed Foreign Secretary. George Eden – later on, Earl of Auckland - was appointed Governor-General of India, who received the following instructions from Palmerston on 25 June 1836:

To watch more closely than has hitherto been attempted the progress of events in Afghanistan, and to counteract the progress of Russian influence. ... the mode of dealing with this very important question, whether by dispatching a confidential agent to Dost Mohammad of Kabul merely to watch the progress of events, or to enter into relations with this Chief, either of a political or merely in the first instance of a commercial character, we confide to your discretion as well as the adoption of any other measures that may appear to you desirable to counteract Russian influence in that quarter, should you be satisfied. ... that the time has arrived at which it would be right for you to interfere decidedly in the affairs of Afghanistan. Such an interference would doubtless be requisite, either to prevent the extension of Persian dominion in that quarter or to raise a timely barrier against the impending encroachments of Russian influence.

In November 1836, Captain Alexander Burnes was dispatched to Afghanistan apparently to secure commercial concessions in Afghanistan for Britain. But his mission’s real objective was political. He had come to urge the Afghan Emir to conclude a friendship and cooperation agreement with Ranjit Singh. However, during negotiations Dost Mohammad insisted that Britain help him regain the Peshawar valley from the Sikh ruler. In Auckland’s view, Dost Mohammad’s insistence on regaining Peshawar had led to the failure of the mission. Moreover, Britain’s suspicions had grown over Dost Mohammad’s relations with Russia. During Alexander Burnes’ stay in Kabul, a Russian mission, led by Captain Vitkevich, arrived at the court of Dost Mohammad through Iran. Even before its arrival in Kabul, the mission had been sighted in Iran by the British officials. The delegation came to

49 Louis Dupree, Afghanistan, p. 404.
51 Martin Ewans, Afghanistan: A New History, pp. 36-37. Generally the Whigs in Britain supported the policy of Masterly Inactivity and the Tories supported the Forward Policy. The First Anglo-Afghan War was launched by a Whig government, however. V. Gregorian, The Emergence of Modern Afghanistan, pp. 105-108.
Chapter 1

Afghanistan in response to an earlier appeal in 1835 by Dost Mohammad for Russian help against Shah Shuja and Ranjit Singh. The purpose of the mission was to promote alliance between Dost Mohammad and the Shah of Persia against Kamran Mirza, the allegedly pro-British ruler of Herat.  

Consequently, a tripartite treaty was signed between the British government, Ranjit Singh and Shah Shuja in which Shah Shuja reaffirmed Ranjit Singh’s sovereignty over all the previous Durrani domains that the Sikh ruler had annexed. He also ceded any claims on the province of Sind which was now ruled by independent rulers aligned to the British. Although Article six of the treaty stipulated that ‘each party shall address the other on terms of equality’, but the agreement as a whole was hugely humiliating which bonded Shah Shuja subservient both to the British and the Sikh ruler. In return, however, the agreement provided for a framework to help Shah Shuja regain the throne in Kabul.

Thus, the First Anglo-Afghan war was launched against Dost Mohammad under the pretext that he was collaborating with the Russian-aligned Iran and that he was responsible for the failure of the Burnes’ mission. Auckland issued the Declaration of War from Simla on 1 October 1838, after accusing Dost Mohammad of a sudden and unprovoked attack against a British ally, Ranjit Singh. The war was waged despite Dost Mohammad’s acknowledging unqualified subservience to the British, as evidenced from his letter to Auckland in which he wrote: ‘I hope Your Lordship will consider me and my country as your own’. Over 21,000 British and Indian troops marched to Kabul. Dost Mohammad fled and sought asylum in Bukhara, and Shah Shuja was restored to the throne. The false sense of stability which possessed the British force at the easy victory could not be better described than in the analysis of the episode by the India Office Records of the British Library, which is the most authoritative repository of relevant sources on the matter.

They settled in to all appearances as an occupying force. Families were sent for, political officers appointed to the regions outside Kabul. Far from appearing ready to depart now that their mission had been accomplished, it seemed rather that the country had been


It is clear, therefore, that by shoving Shah Shuja with the force of arms into Afghanistan, the British had failed to grasp the full dimensions of legitimacy as an important pillar of political stability. They seem to have overestimated the role of what Dessauer has termed the ‘customary’ system of political legitimacy which affects ‘stabilisation by tradition’.

It led them to assume that simply because Shah Shuja was ‘a scion of the original Afghan royal house’, the Afghans would welcome him as the rightful claimant. Little did they think of the long history of Afghanistan in which even the most powerful rulers had sought to consolidate their rule, and therefore to stabilize the politics they had established, by resorting to the affective power of religious faith or what Dessauer terms the ‘ethical systems’ —‘the authority of revelation or conscience or reason … [which] appeals to our emotions or to our reason and speaks through the mouth of those prophets, leaders, teachers, and poets whom we follow in freedom.’ Hence, despite the coercive capacity at the disposal of the new political system vested in the military power of the occupation force, it was far less stable than its predecessor.

Being a native of Afghanistan, Shah Shuja appears to have appreciated the affective aspect of legitimacy among the Afghans. In private meetings with Afghan leaders, he expressed frustration at the continued presence of the British forces and tried to dissociate himself from them. He did not allow the British forces to seek refuge in the fortified Bala Hesar, least it would have further reinforced the common perception that he was the puppet of an ‘infidel’ power. Finally, he even declared *jihad* to shore up his ‘ethical’ standing among the population, and refused to evacuate Kabul along with the British forces. For the King and his political system to be saved, however, these measures came too late.

The First Anglo-Afghan War is known too well to require full description here. It might suffice for our purpose to state that the episode from its very beginning was one of

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56 The First Anglo-Afghan War, 1838-42, *The British Library,* http://www.bl.uk/collections/afghan/summary1838to1842.html, accessed 07 August 2007. Sir William Macnaughton was the British envoy to Afghanistan who was killed during the First Anglo-Afghan War.

57 Frederick Dessauer, *Stability,* pp. 147-150.


59 Frederick Dessauer, *Stability,* pp. 144-147.

extreme instability in all its aspects highlighted by Hunvitz’s definition of the concept. Violence, governmental longevity, basic structural changes, legitimacy of the political system and the capacity of the political system for effective decision-making, as understood by our elaboration of these aspects of the definition, were all affected by the character of Afghanistan’s relations with its South Asian and Central Asian neighbours. The instabilities were precipitated mainly by the British-Russian rivalry. Subsequently, Afghanistan’s South Asian neighbour got directly involved in the affair.

At the conclusion of the First Anglo-Afghan War, Dost Mohammad—who had recrossed the Bukharan border earlier, joined the Afghans’ anti-British uprising in the north, declared *Jihad* against the British to shore up his popular image, and then surrendered himself to the British to be sent into exile in India—was released back to assume his throne in Kabul in 1842.61 In the course of the next twenty one years until 1863, he busied himself fighting and subduing the popular uprisings in the Lesser Turkistan which received support from Bukhara. During this period, Dost Mohammad subdued Bamian, Balkh, Aqcha, Sar-i-Pul, Shibirghan, Khulm, Maimana, Qonduz and even Herat in the west. These provinces at the time were either independent principalities professing allegiance to Bukhara or parts of the Bukharan territory proper.

Jonathan Lee maintains that the British supported Dost Mohammad’s campaigns in Lesser Turkistan mainly for two reasons. It was revenge against the execution of the British agents, Lieutenant Arthur Connolly and Colonel Charles Stoddard by the Emir of Bukhara, Nasrullah Khan, in 1842. The British also wanted to preempt any takeover of the Lesser Turkistan by rival powers; ‘the more the Afghans take the less there will be for either Russia or Persia’.62 The Afghan ruler sealed his closeness with British India by signing the Treaty of Friendship and Alliance with the East India Company, in 1855, in which he was referred to as the ‘Walee of Kabul, or the governor of Kabul.’63 In January 1857, he signed another treaty in which the British undertook to pay him an annual subsidy of 1.2 million Indian rupees and supply him with even more weapons than they had theretofore done.64 This assistance was to continue as long as there was a threat against Herat from Iran. In view of the fact that Dost Mohammad’s total annual revenues at the time were no more

61 For details see G. M. Ghubar, *Afghanistan Dar Maseer-e Tareekh* [Vol. 1], pp. 539-572.
than 3.9 million Indian rupees, the British subsidy was a significant help for consolidation of his rule. 65

Hence, the dynamics of Afghanistan’s relations with Central and South Asia continued to influence political stability of the country. By supporting the uprisings in the northern provinces, Bukhara contributed directly in civil strife which is the most common theme in the study of political stability. Similarly, British India supported the Afghan political system’s capability to suppress the uprisings and to consolidate its rule over territories in the north and west. In effect the character of Afghanistan’s relations with South Asia allowed Kabul to enhance its capability for affecting political violence and to implement its decisions in areas it did not control in the past.

After Dost Mohammad’s death in 1863, his many sons fought among themselves over succession. Since they were all governors and rulers of various provinces, the country plunged into civil war. Among them Mohammad Afzal, the governor of Lesser Turkistan, Mohammad Azam, the governor of southeastern provinces, and Sher Ali, the governor of Herat, were notable. In the infighting Sher Ali came out victorious, Mohammad Azam sought refuge in British India, Mohammad Afzal was captured but his son, Abdul Rahman, was given sanctuary in Bukhara. Subsequently, Abdul Rahman and Mohammad Azam both returned from their sanctuaries to topple Sher Ali and put Mohammad Afzal on the throne in 1867. Afzal died shortly of natural causes and Azam assumed the leadership. Sher Ali persuaded the Viceroy of British India, Lord John Lawrence (1864-1869), to support him against his brothers. The assistance of two hundred thousand Indian rupees and three thousand rifles helped Sher Ali back to power; his adversaries again fled to Bukhara and Iran. 66

Sher Ali ruled in Afghanistan for the next decade. During this period, he tried unsuccessfully to get the British, Bukharan and the Russian authorities to guarantee that after his death they would support no leadership claimant other than the crown prince. He also sought and secured substantial economic and military assistance from British India several times. In return for the recognition of his crown prince and an agreement for more regular subsidies, British India wanted the Afghan Emir to allow resident British mission, staffed by European officials, in Kabul and British agents near Afghan northern frontiers to monitor the possible threats to South Asia of Russian advances in Central Asia. Whereas

British India did have an official representative of Muslim confession in Kabul, the Afghan Emir did not want non-Muslim European representatives lest their presence would have provoked ordinary Afghans and the Russians.⁶⁷

In July 1878, a Russian delegation, led by General Stoletov, arrived in Kabul. Stoletov carried a letter from Konstantin Petrovich von Kaufman, the Governor-General of Turkistan, to Sher Ali. In the letter Stoletov had been praised as a trusted representative of Kaufman to discuss the issues of interest with the Emir. In reality the dispatch of this delegation had much to do with Russia’s negotiations with Britain, Germany, Austria-Hungary, the Ottoman Empire, France and Italy in the Berlin Congress of 1878.⁶⁸ In the Berlin Congress, the other participants were pressing Russia to reconsider the terms of the Treaty of San Stefano, concluded in 1878 between the Ottoman Empire and Russia, by means of which Russia had greatly increased its influence in the Balkans. In order to reduce the pressure, particularly from Britain, Russia resorted to intrigues in Afghanistan to unsettle the British. However, while the delegation was still in Afghanistan, the Berlin Congress successfully produced the Treaty of Berlin, and the Russians lost interest in pursuing their initiative in Kabul any further.⁶⁹

Suspicious of the Russian diplomacy, in September the same year British India dispatched its own mission headed by Neville Chamberlain and assisted by Peshawar Commissioner, Major Louis Cavagnari. The mission was not allowed entry to Afghanistan on the border. British India issued an ultimatum for Afghanistan to allow its mission, and finally invaded the country, when it did not. Sher Ali fled to northern Afghanistan, hoping he would receive assistance from the Russian authorities in Central Asia. To his disgust, Kaufman advised him to make terms with British India.⁷⁰ In Kabul, Mohammad Yaqoob, the Emir’s son who had troubled relations with his father, was installed and made to sign the Gandumak Treaty in May 1879. The treaty forbade Afghanistan from having relations with any foreign country except Britain; transferred the administration of Sibi, Pishin, Kurram and the Khyber Pass, to British India; provided for the presence of resident British envoy

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in Kabul, and agents along the northern frontiers; and promised an annual subsidy of six hundred thousand rupees to the new Afghan Emir.\(^1\)

However, barely a month had passed, after the British resident envoy, Louis Cavagnari, had established his presence, when he and his staff were massacred and the British mission burned to the ground in an uprising by Kabul residents and sections of the Afghan army. Fearing for his life, Mohammad Yaqoob contacted influential leaders in and around Kabul and expressed his desire to join a \textit{Jihad} against the British who had only recently started withdrawing from Jalalabad and Qandahar.\(^2\) The incident led to the Second Anglo-Afghan War (1878-1880).

While a full description of the war is beyond the scope of this thesis, for the purpose of our interest in the study of political stability, it might suffice to state that the period once again was that of extreme instability in all its aspects. The British invaded Afghanistan with all the violence of a revengeful invasion force. Armed Afghans flocked to Kabul from the provinces, and the war was fought in Kabul and at several points along the route to Maiwand in Qandahar. At the first opportunity before the invasion force could arrive in Kabul, the Afghan Emir delivered himself to the British, resigned from his position and went into exile in British India. Abdul Rahman sought permission from the Tsarist authorities in Central Asia to enter Afghanistan and assume the leadership in Kabul. Permission was granted, and Abdul Rahman declared \textit{Jihad} from northern Afghanistan against the British. Another \textit{Jihad} against the British was declared in Qandahar by a second claimant to the throne, Mohammad Ayub who was also a brother of the sacked Emir. The declarations of \textit{Jihad} once again boasted the ethical legitimacy of the leadership claimants, whose ranks were swollen by public support. Notwithstanding their \textit{Jihad}, however, the two figures maintained secret correspondence with the British to secure the leadership in Kabul for themselves.\(^3\)

\(^2\) M. M. S. Farhang, \textit{Afghanistan Dar Panj Qarn-e Akheer} [Vol. 1], p. 351-354.
\(^3\) Abdul Rahman once divulged to his chiefs the text of a letter he had received from the British authorities in which he had been invited to assume the leadership in Kabul. The chiefs, fired with \textit{Jihad} sentiments, advised him to write back with a strongly-worded refutation of the offer. However, Abdul Rahman continued his correspondence secretly, fearing that it would undermine his credibility among his supporters. M. M. S. Farhang, \textit{Afghanistan Dar Panj Qarn-e Akheer}, [Vol.1], pp. 365-375.
The real winner in the Second Anglo-Afghan War was Abdul Rahman who became Emir of Afghanistan in 1880, ruling over the country until his death in 1901. With assistance from Britain, Abdul Rahman effectively instituted Afghanistan in the geographic shape it is found today. Under his leadership, Afghanistan as a political entity underwent some of the basic structural changes which had destabilizing consequences for the political system. The country’s borders were established; the demographic composition of the northern and central provinces was radically altered as Abdul Rahman transferred large numbers of his opponents, the southeastern Ghilzai tribes, to the north and drove large numbers of the Shiite Hazaras out of, and scattered them within, the country; rapid centralization of the political system was undertaken; *Jihads* were waged against the native inhabitants of the country, including the non-Muslim people of Kafiristan in the east and the Shiite Hazaras of the central highlands; and the power of the clergy was reduced as they were made dependent on government by confiscating their sources of revenue, such as the *waqf* properties, associated with religious institutions. The policies generated armed conflicts almost all over the country; on the one hand between the state and the society, and on the other within the society among various ethnic and religious groups.

Abdul Rahman had close relations with British India. He agreed to follow British advice on foreign policy and refrain from establishing direct relations with any other country. British India abandoned its policy of having resident mission and reverted back to the practice of having a Muslim representative in Kabul. Over forty percent of state expenditure under Abdul Rahman was funded by Britain, a significant portion of which came in the form of direct deliveries of massive quantities of weapons and ammunition essential for consolidation of his rule. Abdul Rahman was aware that his close relations with British India tarnished his image —undermined the stability of his political system—, ‘as it made him look like a British vassal’. To counter the negative public perception, he shrewdly justified the British assistance on religious grounds by claiming that he was exacting *Jazia* from the British.

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78 *Jazia* is a form of tax in a Muslim country on non-Muslims, in lieu of *Zakat* which is tax incumbent upon Muslims.
Hence, the political stability/instability of Afghanistan was influenced considerably by the nature of its relations with Central and South Asia during Abdul Rahman’s reign. British India was keen to help the Afghan state withstand possible threats posed by the southern advance of the tsarist Russia from Central Asia, and exercise control over anti-British elements along its southeastern border. For this purpose, the British provided grants which were instrumental for maintaining and enabling the Afghan state to pursue a ‘coercion-intensive’ policy of centralization, or ‘internal imperialism’. The political violence by the state generated civil strife both against the political system and within the society. On the other hand, by suppressing government opponents all over the country, foundations were laid for more effective decision-making in terms of the enforceability of state policies. Close relations with British India also had its negative aspects, as it undermined the moral legitimacy, and therefore the stability, of the political system. The Afghan ruler, however, sought to bolster the legitimacy of his rule as an important aspect of political stability, by making use of ethical systems, such as the concepts of jazia, jihad and divine authority of the ruler.

It is difficult to conclusively establish whether political stability was strengthened or weakened during Abdul Rahman’s reign. The political system certainly gained some stability because it experienced an improved rate of government longevity, enhanced its capacity to implement its decisions and largely succeeded in pacifying the anti-state violence. On the other hand, the fundamental changes in the character of the political system and the society, the political violence unleashed by the state, and the precarious legitimacy of the political system among the public as evidenced by many popular uprisings against it, all pointed to manifestations of instability. Irrespective of any subjective opinion by observers about the ratio of stability/instability during this period, the role of Afghanistan’s relations with Central and South Asia in the dynamics of its internal stability was evidently significant.

Abdul Rahman died in 1901 and was almost peacefully succeeded by his son, Habibullah, who largely pursued his father’s foreign policy of seeking friendship with British India and avoiding direct contacts with the tsarist Central Asia. In the context of Afghanistan’s relations with Central and South Asia, no event of significance, which could markedly alter the state of internal political stability/instability, took place during most of Habibullah’s reign (1901-1919). Whereas the public remained largely calm either as a consequence of what Rubin terms ‘a consolidated [but] terrorized state’ left by his father, or the effect of

Dessauer’s ‘power of inertia’, reformist circles within the ruling elites and the small intelligentsia certainly did not appreciate Afghanistan’s closeness with British India.\(^{80}\) While other motives cannot be completely ruled out in the assassination of Emir Habibullah in 1919, frustration of the reformist circles due to his policy of neutrality and lack of initiative to attain independence by seizing the opportunity which the outbreak of the First World War had presented, was certainly a strong factor in it.\(^{81}\) In view of the theoretical discussions of political stability, assassination of the head of state clearly constitutes a manifestation of political instability because it is tantamount to coup d’etat, political violence, and illegal termination of the office of a head of state and of a government. Hence, once again an instance of political instability in Afghanistan was affected by the nature of its relations with South Asia.

Habibullah’s assassination triggered some conflict over succession between his son, Amanullah, who was in Kabul, and his brother, Nasrullah, in Jalalabad. Amanullah swiftly outmaneuvered and imprisoned Nasrullah and a number of other ruling elites, and declared independence from Britain. Soviet Union was the first to recognise Afghanistan’s independence, but Britain refused to concede. Amanullah declared *Jihad* against British India, waging the Third Anglo-Afghan War, at the conclusion of which Britain recognised Afghanistan’s independence. ‘This bold act in defence of Islam and a Muslim nation earned Aman-Allah \(\text{i}i\) the title of ghurū (Islamic victor/hero), provided him with much needed legitimacy for his rule, and made him enormously popular within Afghanistan and beyond’.\(^{82}\) Amanullah also professed support both to the Khilafat movement (1919-1924), launched by Indian Muslims in support of the Ottoman Empire in the aftermath of the World War I, and to the Muslim ‘Basmachi’ movement that was fighting the Soviet subjugation of Central Asia in the 1920s. In reality, however, Amanullah’s claims were primarily intended to boost his popularity, and legitimacy, in Afghanistan and in Central and South Asia.\(^{83}\)

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Amanullah was inclined towards closer relations with the Soviet Union. The treaty of friendship and good neighbourly relations, signed in February 1921 between Afghanistan and the Soviet Russia, was the first of its kind with a foreign country since Afghanistan’s independence. It provided for: an annual subsidy of one million roubles and setting up of telegraph lines and other unspecified technical assistance; untaxed transit through Central Asia of any goods the Afghan government would purchase in the Soviet Union or beyond; opening of Afghan and Soviet consulates in each other’s territory, including five Afghan consulates based in Soviet Central Asia. The friendship treaty also recognised the independence of Bukhara and Khiva and promised to return the ‘frontier districts which belonged to [Afghanistan] in the last century’.

In August 1926, the Russo-Afghan Peace Pact was signed in which the Afghan government undertook to deny its territory to anyone engaged in anti-Soviet activity. The treaty was clearly against Central Asian ‘Basmachis’, who had crossed into Afghanistan to escape Soviet persecution. An air route was established between Kabul and Tashkent in accordance with two agreements signed in November 1927 and March 1928 consecutively. Amanullah employed Russian personnel in his air force, which serviced the air route from the Afghan side. Hence, through friendship with the Soviet Union, Amanullah sought to recuperate what his government had largely missed as a result of its troubled relations with British India —subsidies, technical and military assistance and uninterrupted transit. Although it is difficult to establish the definite impact of these agreements on various aspects of political stability in Afghanistan, there is no doubt that they were all intended to help Amanullah consolidate his government in the face of British hostility in South Asia, and in return for his cooperation against the Muslim insurgency in Central Asia.

Rebellions which erupted against Amanullah’s regime in the southeastern regions of Afghanistan from 1924 onwards have been studied by many authors. Some have put more emphasis on the role of internal factors —violent reaction from a conservative and tribal
society against reforms introduced by the government. Others have drawn attention to the crucial role of subversion by British India in the revolts. The truth of the matter may lie in Dupree’s astute observation: ‘the British role in the revolt is not clear, but Amanullah’s outspoken anti-British attitude and his acceptance of Soviet technicians made him a prime target for overthrow by the British.’ Though the southeastern revolts considerably weakened Amanullah’s regime, its overthrow was accomplished by Habibullah-e-Kalakani and his supporters from the Shumali plains and Kohistan north of Kabul. Some Afghan historians have insinuated that perhaps Kalakani was also supported by the British. So far there has been no documentary evidence, however, to substantiate the claim, nor did Kalakani’s subsequent rule lend much credence to the hypothesis.

During Kalakani’s brief rule (January-October 1929), the Afghan state was engaged in major conflicts on many fronts. In the north, the Russians armed and dispatched one of Amanullah’s loyal followers and Afghan envoy to Moscow, Ghulam Nabi Charkhi, to help Amanullah back to power. Soviet Russia was also against Kalakani because the latter openly called for and supported the liberation of Bukhara from under Soviet domination. Before his departure into self-exile in Italy in May 1929, Amanullah himself remained in Qandahar region from where he organised several unsuccessful campaigns to retake Kabul from Kalakani.

British India was no fan of Kalakani either. It supported Mohammad Nadir, Amanullah’s former Minister of War, who entered south-eastern Afghanistan along with a large tribal Lashkar he had raised, with the connivance of the British authorities, among the Waziri tribes in the Waziristan region. In October 1929, Nadir’s tribal army managed to depose Kalakani who retreated to the town of Jabal-ul-Saraj north of Kabul. Soon after assuming

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90 Louis Dupree, Afghanistan, p. 449.
power in 1929, Nadir substantially transformed the nature of Afghan domestic politics as well as its foreign policy. He established an ethno-centric political system in which his immediate family formed the core of the political power, followed by the Mohammadzai clan behind which tribal Lashkars from southeastern regions formed the backbone of the military. He tried to co-opt some of Amanullah’s supporters and friends in order to consolidate his government. But those who refused to cooperate, or opposed his leadership, were punished severely. Although Nadir was not the first Afghan ruler to neutralize his potential opponents under shady pretexts, he stood out in punishing entire families and associates of his victims.\(^{96}\)

In foreign policy, Nadir favoured closer relations with Britain; notwithstanding the fact that Soviet Union was the first to recognise the new Afghan monarchy.\(^{97}\) Nadir discontinued Amanullah’s policy of support to the independence movements, including that of the Pushtuns, in British India.\(^{98}\) In 1931, British India supplied him with over ten thousand rifles, five million rounds of ammunition and £180,000 in cash.\(^{99}\) The British assistance was instrumental in enabling Nadir to consolidate his regime against popular resistance especially in the northern provinces. Nadir admitted these figures in later years only when he realized that the Afghan public had become a simmering arena of rumor and suspicion about his secret dealings with British India.\(^{100}\) The small urban intelligentsia hardly approved of Nadir’s closeness with British India either. Two major assassinations—one by an Afghan student in Berlin killing Nadir’s brother and Ambassador to Germany, Mohammad Aziz, on 06 July 1932, and another by a former graduate of the Habibia High School who killed three members of the British Legation on 06 September 1933 in Kabul—were both conducted in protest against ‘the ever-present suspicions of undue British influence in the country’.\(^{101}\) Despite misgivings about the ethical legitimacy of Mohammad Nadir’s monarchy in Afghanistan, closeness with British India had its advantages since it acted as a coercive guarantor of his dynastic rule. In 1938, for instance,

\(^{96}\) One such family was that of Ghulam Nabi Charkhi who was murdered in the presence of Mohammad Nadir on 8 November 1932. The incident is particularly notorious among the Afghan historians for the manner in which it was carried out. Farhang, for example, maintains that the whole affair was so gruesome that it provoked the friendly British representative, W. K. Fraser-Tytler, to strongly criticize Nadir. M. M. S. Farhang, *Afghanistan Dar Panj Qarn-e Akheer*, [Vol. 1], p. 603. Nadir threw the entire Charkhi family including his brothers, his uncles, his cousins, all their children, women and elders into the prison for the rest of their lives. Some of them were executed subsequently. G. M. Ghubar, *Afghanistan Dar Maseer-e Tareekh*, [Vol. 2], pp. 116-118.

\(^{97}\) M. M. S Farhang, *Afghanistan Dar Panj Qarn-e Akheer* [Vol. 1], p. 596.


\(^{100}\) M. M. S Farhang, *Afghanistan Dar Panj Qarn-e Akheer* [Vol. 1], 595

the British India army and air force helped dispel the large Mahsud and Waziri Lashkar which had crossed the Durand Line to oust Nadir’s son and successor, Mohammad Zahir, in favour of Amanullah.\(^\text{102}\)

Nadir was also determined to remove any causes that would provoke the Soviet Union against his government. The presence of half a million Central Asian refugees in northern Afghanistan was one such issue. In the interregnum period between Amanullah’s fall and Nadir’s ascension, Kalakani’s policy of support to Central Asian insurgents had resulted in an upsurge of anti-Soviet activity in the region.\(^\text{103}\) In June 1930, Soviet troops advanced forty miles into northern Afghanistan in pursuit of Central Asian insurgents.\(^\text{104}\) Nadir moved to expel the Central Asians from the north. The most significant insurgent leader, Ibrahim Bek, was driven out in the early 1930s across the border to Central Asia, where he was captured and executed by the Soviet authorities.\(^\text{105}\) Nadir also dealt with the people of the northern provinces with a heavy hand. Large numbers of them were forcibly evacuated, and their lands awarded to members of the Waziri and Jaji tribes who had helped him to power. Much as Nadir tried to establish a strong centralized political system, his reckless manipulation of ethno-linguistic politics created major gaps in Afghanistan’s national unity, and therefore its political stability.\(^\text{106}\)

Nadir’s assassination in 1933 by Abdul Khaliq, a teenage student who was determined to revenge the political murder of his guardian and mentor, Ghulam Nabi Charkhi, demonstrated the incompatibility of political stability with coercion-based politics as discussed in the introduction to this thesis. The stability of Mohammad Nadir’s political system suffered from the dilemma of ethical, customary and legal legitimacy among the supporters of both Amanullah and Kalakani. The harsh treatment meted out to the Muslim insurgents of Central Asia and the violent suppression of northern provinces left the political system with little ethical legitimacy among the northerners. Although Nadir successfully manipulated ethno-linguistic politics to create a strong tribal base of support

\(^{102}\) G. M. Ghubar, *Afghanistan Dar Maseer-e Tareekh* [Vol. 2], pp. 118-120.


\(^{104}\) M. M. S. Farhang, *Afghanistan Dar Panj Qarn-e Akheer* [Vol. 1], p. 596.


for his rule in the southeastern regions of Afghanistan, his friendship with Britain precluded him from supporting the Pushtun struggle for independence in British India. He did not live long enough to witness what this policy of seeking friendship with Britain at the expense of Pushtun struggle for independence would have entailed for his ethical legitimacy among the Pushtuns of Afghanistan who felt strongly about their co-ethnics across the border.

Hence, the period between 1919 and 1933 was marked by many symptoms of political instability. Some of these symptoms included: assassination of two heads of state (Emir Habibullah in 1919 and Mohammad Nadir in 1933); violent overthrow of two consecutive heads of state and the entire political system (Amanullah and Enayatullah and their dynastic regime in 1929); execution of another head of state (Kalakani in 1929); war against a foreign power in South Asia in 1919 (Third Anglo-Afghan War); two limited military invasions by another foreign power from Central Asia in 1929 and 1931 respectively (Soviet Union first against Kalakani and then against the 'Basmachis'); civil strife and political violence within the society and between the society and the political system (these occurred almost throughout the period); many basic structural changes in the character of the political system (Amanullah, Kalakani and Nadir all brought basic structural changes in what they inherited from their predecessors).

Border Disputes

The most important legacy of the colonial domination of Central and South Asia for the stability of Afghanistan was the delimitation of its borders with the two regions. Although some aspects of the border issues have been studied by other authors, the topic is far from exhausted. Misunderstandings abound in many earlier discussions of the Durand Line dispute as most of the earlier works rely on secondary sources. There is a need to fully explore the nature of the dispute in a consolidated single analysis; something that the available literature has failed to produce so far. Our discussion of the topic will rely substantially on primary sources --- both from Afghanistan and the India Office Records of the British Library --- where other authors have misunderstood aspects of the subject. Regarding the borders, Maley's concise observation takes us to heart of the issue:

107 This section was part of the researcher's article previously published in a refereed journal. See Ahmad Shayeq Qassem, Afghan-Pakistan Relations: Border Controversies as Counter-terrorist Impediments, *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, Vol. No. 61, Issue No. 1, March 2007, pp. 65-80.
The degree of consent given by power-holders within Afghanistan to the processes by which Afghanistan’s boundaries were fixed is highly debatable. The borders between Russia and Afghanistan were largely demarcated through Anglo-Russian negotiations in 1873 and 1887, and the legitimacy of the Durand Line – drawn in 1893 between India and Afghanistan – was to be a major source of friction after the partition of the Indian subcontinent in 1947.

Three major elements of the border issues are driven home in these comments. First, sheer subjectivity of the extent to which Afghanistan approved of the methods used to determine her borders. The Afghan government and some Afghan historians use this to question the legitimacy of the Afghan-Pakistan border. Second, the northern borders of Afghanistan were largely determined by major powers without Afghanistan’s participation in the relevant processes. Third, the only Afghan border bilaterally determined between Afghanistan and its neighbour—British India—is interestingly the only boundary which Afghanistan disputes.

The Afghan borders were all drawn up in the second half of the nineteenth century in order to keep the territory of Afghanistan as a buffer between the British Empire and Russia. The need to establish the boundary regimes was precipitated by the southward advance of Russia in 1885 and its imminent threat against Herat. This prompted Britain to propose the setting up of a joint boundary commission to demarcate Afghanistan’s borders with Central Asia. The two countries negotiated a settlement, without bothering to invite Afghan representatives in the commission. The proposed line ran from Zulfiqar on the Hari Rud to Khoja Saleh on the Amu Darya. The basic data which the two countries used for border demarcation was taken from Alexander Burnes’ account of his well-known exploratory journey through Afghanistan to Bukhara during 1831-1833. Burnes’ report states that the Afghan Emir’s jurisdiction reached up to Khojab Saleh, or Haji Saleh, the point from where he had crossed the Amu Darya. The joint boundary commission in 1886 located several points with that name including a border post, a river fort, a ferry point and several villages. The Russians tried to take advantage of the imprecision to gain more
territory in Panjdeh, in return for a concession to recognise the boundary along the Amu-Darya.\footnote{112}

There is little agreement between various scholars about the Afghan Emir’s attitude toward delimitation of this border which gave away the Afghan-claimed oasis of Panjdeh to Russia. Some assert that Abdul Rahman was content with the arrangement as a necessary price for the boundary commission to demarcate the border, while others maintain that he was unsatisfied but there was little he could do against a consensus reached between Britain and Russia. It is also maintained that Abdul Rahman accepted some of the arrangements in return for increased annual subsidies from British India.\footnote{113} In order to forestall a possible Russian encroachment towards Chitral through Wakhan, the Afghan-China border was similarly demarcated between Britain and Russia at the Pamir Convention of 1895 in which the Chinese refused to participate and the Afghans were not invited. China finally recognized and demarcated this border bilaterally with Afghanistan in 1964.\footnote{114} Hence all the northern boundaries were fixed prior to 1896 except an ‘amazing oversight’ which had failed to define the boundary along the Amu Darya itself. This led to some disputes about on which bank of the river did exactly the border lay. Finally in 1926 the mid-channel (thalweg) of the river amicably became the official border between the USSR and Afghanistan.\footnote{115}

In Saikal’s view, the people of Afghanistan never ceased hoping that some day in future the Russian-annexed territories of Panjdeh and Merv would eventually be returned back.\footnote{116} A Soviet offer to return these territories did come up within the provisions of the Afghan-Soviet treaty of friendship in 1921, article 9 of which reads:

\begin{quote}
In fulfilment of and in accordance with the promise of the Russian Socialist Federated Soviet Republic, expressed by Lenin as its head to the Minister Plenipotentiary of the Sovereign State of Afghanistan, Russia agrees to hand over to Afghanistan the frontier districts which belonged to the latter in the last century, observing the principles of justice and self determination of the population inhabiting the same. The manner in which such self-determination and will of the majority of the regular local population shall be
\end{quote}

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expressed shall be settled by a special treaty between the two States through the intermediary of Plenipotentiaries of both parties.\footnote{117}

Despite the admission by the Soviet authorities of the possibility of Afghan sovereignty over parts of Central Asia and their willingness to consider handing over these areas to Afghanistan, no Afghan government seems to have actually followed up the matter any further. Therefore, apart from minor differences which arise from time to time due to the changing course of the Amu Darya waters which alters the physical location of the border, Afghanistan has no border disputes with any of its Central Asian neighbours.\footnote{118} Unlike its stance regarding the status of its border with Pakistan, Afghanistan does not challenge the validity of the processes which determined its northern borders. The apparent discrepancy in the Afghan position is possibly due to a combination of three main reasons, all of which in turn have implications for the political stability of the country.

First, Afghanistan’s rejection of the Durand Line cannot be de-linked from its desire to have unfettered access to the sea which is essential for its economic development and modernisation. Such a motivation does not exist in relation to the location of any of its northern borders as Central Asia itself is a landlocked region. Lack of direct access to the sea has had significant impact on the country’s economy and its modernisation. The country is not only heavily dependent on its neighbours for the bulk of its import and export trade, it also has to rely on their goodwill to allow for the import of equipment needed for development projects.\footnote{119} Controlling Afghanistan’s access to the Indian Ocean had always been one of the most effective means in the hands of British India to pressure Afghanistan whenever it wanted.\footnote{120} In the early 1900s, British India put pressure on Emir Habibullah for renegotiation of the previous treaties by blocking the transit of arms through India. In the aftermath of the Third Anglo-Afghan war, Britain again used this leverage to punish Amanullah’s government for initiating the war.\footnote{121} During 1922-1924, British India blocked the delivery of French arms and ammunition which Amanullah’s government had purchased in France.\footnote{122}

\footnote{118} Interview with Dr. Mohammad Fazel Saifi, Director of the Central Asia & Eastern Europe Department, *Ministry of Foreign Affairs*, Kabul, 07 December 2005.
\footnote{119} V. Gregorian, *The Emergence of Modern Afghanistan*, p. 11.
\footnote{120} Martin Ewans, *Afghanistan: A New History*, pp. 90-91.
\footnote{122} Louis Dupree, *Afghanistan*, p. 447.
Second, while the Pushtun rulers of Afghanistan could relate to their co-ethnics in Pakistan affectively and politically, they had less in common with the Turkmens, Uzbeks and Tajiks of Central Asia. The Pushtun political elites in Afghanistan have always been conscious of the significance of support from their co-ethnics in consolidation of the Afghan political system in which they hold a position of preponderance. Reflecting accurately on that mood, the Afghan historian, Mohammad Ali Khan, commented that the demarcation of the Durand Line deprived Afghanistan of 'a quarter of a million people of military age'.

Hence, to accept the return of Central Asian territories 'which belonged to [Afghanistan] in the last century' would be tantamount to affecting a substantial demographic alteration in the multiethnic makeup of the society in Afghanistan. This would in turn threaten one of the basic structural arrangements of the modern Afghan political system —stability of Pushtun dominance.

Third, despite the Soviet authorities' conceding the validity of Afghan jurisdiction over parts of Central Asia, the Afghans might not have deemed it wise to follow up the matter any further out of fear that their powerful northern neighbour may not have appreciated it subsequently. Upcoming sections will show that Afghanistan did not challenge the validity of its south-eastern border so long as a strong power remained the other main party to the issue. At the earliest signs that a relatively weaker power, Pakistan, was going to inherit the border from its powerful predecessor, Afghanistan jumped at the opportunity to advance its claims.

A detailed discussion of Afghanistan-Iran borders is outside the scope of this research. It may suffice to say that Afghanistan’s western border was largely determined through four arbitral awards, three of them by the British government and the fourth one by the Turkish government. The first British arbitration occurred in 1872; the second, through the years 1888 to 1891; the third, through the years 1896 to 1905; and the last arbitration was carried out by the Turkish government in 1934-1935. Although some differences continued to linger on between the two countries over sharing of the Helmand river waters until 1970s, the physical location of the border was not disputed by either of them.


The most contentious boundary, however, has been the Afghan-Pakistan border originally based on an agreement in 1893. It is the country’s longest border, running southwardly from east to west. Before discussing the text of the agreement itself, it is useful to have a brief background of the circumstances under which it was signed.

The Durand Line

In 1885, during the tenure of Viceroy Lord Dufferin in India, Abdul Rahman paid a state visit to British India where he was received warmly by the Viceroy. However Abdul Rahman did not have the same level of good relations with Lord Lansdowne who succeeded Dufferin in 1888. Lansdowne admonished him for his ‘barbarities’ against his subjects, pressured him to accept British officers on his northern frontier, urged him to have a telegraph line laid to Kabul and advised him to abstain from any policies that would provoke Russia. Some authors believe that Abdul Rahman did not take the new Viceroy’s posture well and therefore he started intriguing with the border tribes, prompting British military expeditions in 1889 and 1890 against some of the more intransigent tribes. This in turn provoked a tribal backlash against the British, prompting Lansdowne to propose the dispatch of a mission to Kabul to delimit the Indo-Afghan border. Other, mostly Afghan, authors contend that the British deliberately stirred up inter-tribal violence to set the stage for assuming the role of arbiter between the Pushtun tribes and to prepare the ground for the delimitation of the border with Afghanistan. Thus, there are two completely different views on aspects of Anglo-Afghan relations and the causes of inter-tribal and anti-British violence along the tribal territories during 1888-1893.

Similarly there is little agreement on Abdul Rahman’s attitude about the British proposal for dispatching of a delegation to Kabul to negotiate the delimitation of the borders. Some writers believe that Lansdowne had been pressuring Abdul Rahman since 1888 to receive a British delegation but he had successfully resisted the pressure by making many plausible excuses over the years. Yet others maintain that Abdul Rahman had requested the British to send an envoy for negotiations to sort out their differences. He had been fearful of steady British push into Afghan territory by means of road and railway construction

Minister, Musa Shafiq, concluded an agreement with Iran, which resolved the dispute over sharing of Helmand waters permanently. Amin Saikal, Modern Afghanistan, pp. 168-172.

125 See Martin Ewans, Afghanistan: A New History, pp. 76-79.
126 Ibid.
127 G. M. Ghubar, Afghanistan Dar Maseer-e Tareekh [Vol. 1], p. 687.
pointed towards Qandahar and Kabul. Hence the Emir was eager for the border to be established, hoping that a clear understanding about the status of the border would stop further British encroachment into his territory.  

Whatever his initial attitude, it is generally agreed that by the time the British mission was to travel to Kabul, the Emir was pleased to receive them warmly. The delegation, headed by Sir Mortimer Durand, visited Kabul and signed the Durand Line agreement with the Afghan Emir before departing in November 1893. The agreement provided for a demarcation line running from Chitral and Baroghil Pass up to Peshawar, and from there up to *Kab-i-Malik Siyāb*. Some authors believe that Abdul Rahman was initially reluctant to sign this document, but he eventually conceded when his annual subsidy was increased from 1.2 million to 1.8 million Indian Rupees, besides the assurance that he could freely import arms and ammunitions through British India. The actual demarcation took until 1896 to be completed. It cut across the Pushtun land. Since the British were in control of the main passes, it also gave them the ability to control and block the migration routes of nomads.

While some have criticized the Durand Line as an arbitrary border which divided the Pushtuns without much regard to their cultural, ethnic and linguistic affinities, there are others who challenge this notion. John C. Griffiths, for example, argues that the Durand Line ran arbitrarily along a topographically convenient foothill and cut through the Pushtun land without much regard to ethnic and tribal affinities. However, this view is challenged by Sir Olaf Caroe who maintains that the Durand Line was by no means arbitrary in that it broadly followed tribal boundaries, separating those tribes that had economic links to Peshawar, Kohat, Bannu, Tank and Quetta from those with economic links to Afghanistan, having Kabul, Ghazni and Qandahar as their market towns. Only in two cases - the Mohmands and the Waziris – was a tribe divided. The Mohmands, he maintains, were already divided even before the Durand Line was drawn. The upper section Mohmands were affiliated more to Lalpura and Jalalabad in Afghanistan than to Peshawar in today's Pakistan. These sections were given to Afghanistan. In the Mohmand case, Caroe states further, an offer was later made to the Afghan government with a view to a definition of

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the Durand Line more in its favour, but the offer was never taken up. In regard to the Waziris, a small portion of the Waziris living in Birmal was left on the Afghan side of the Durand Line, but the great bulk of them remained in British India. In fact long before the British or the Sikhs appeared on the scene, and even before the creation of the Durrani Empire, the western Pushtun tribes (mainly the Durransis and Ghelzais) and the eastern Pushtun tribes (mainly the Yusufzais, Mohmands, Bengash, Khataks, Afridis and Orakzais) had pursued different alignments. The westerners had been subjects of Safavid Persia, and had become Persianized whereas the easterners were subjects of the Mughal Empire of India.¹³⁴

The British have always believed that the Durand Line was a negotiated agreement. They would cite Abdul Rahman’s public adherence as well as his favourable references to it in his autobiography as evidence of this. The Afghans contend that it was signed under duress. Some Afghan authors have also attempted to challenge the authenticity of these parts of Abdul Rahman’s autobiography.¹³⁵

Fraser-Tytler speculates that Abdul Rahman, unfamiliar with reading maps, perhaps did not understand the implications when the Durand Line was shown to him on the map but he was too proud to say so and therefore he signed the document.¹³⁶ Forrest maintains that Abdul Rahman signed the treaty but he did not sign the official maps which indicated the border. He further asserts that the Afghan Emir disliked the boundary because it damaged his authority and prestige, and he strove to prevent its demarcation.¹³⁷ This view seems a little out of touch because no one, neither Abdul Rahman nor Mortimer Durand, did actually sign on the maps.¹³⁸ The signatures would have been on the 1893 agreement and several other documents, concluded between various Afghan and British boundary commissions until 1896, which describe the demarcation line in much detail.

Quoting secondary sources, Dupree maintains that the first mention of the Durand Line as an international frontier occurs in the 1919 Treaty of Rawalpindi signed by Amanullah.

¹³⁴ Olaf Caroe, The Pathans, pp. XVIII, XX, 381-383, 419 and 436.
¹³⁵ M. H. Kakar, A Political and Diplomatic History of Afghanistan.
¹³⁶ W. K. Fraser-Tytler, Afghanistan: A Study of Political Developments in Central Asia and Southern Asia, p. 189.
¹³⁸ The map is available in five giant sheets in the British Library, India Office Records, Ref L/PS/7/73 (I)-(V). The researcher has viewed the maps. They are not signed. It is true that Abdul Rahman made favourable references to the signing of the Durand Line Agreement. His subsequent speeches to Kabul notables and his courtiers even suggest that he launched a public awareness campaign about the goodness of the agreement after signing it. See ‘Letters from India, January – March 1894’, British Library, India Office Records, Ref. L/PS/7/73 & Z/L/PS/7/20.
where paragraph 5 states, ‘the Afghan government accepts the Indo-Afghan frontier accepted by the late Emir [Habibullah].’\textsuperscript{139} Dupree further asserts that the Anglo-Afghan Treaty of 1921 also refers to the boundary but none of these treaties could be said to have resolved fully the question of the Durand Line as an international frontier. Moreover, in his opinion, a supplementary 1921 letter from the British representative to the Afghan Foreign Minister made it even more ambiguous whether the Durand Line actually constituted an international border. Kakar plunges deep into speculative reasoning and selective quotes from secondary sources to disprove the validity of the 1893 treaty.\textsuperscript{140} He even asserts that the word ‘boundary’ has never been used in the Durand Line Agreement.\textsuperscript{141} Both Dupree and Kakar’s assertions are simply untrue. The 1893 agreement alone refers to the line as an international frontier no less than six times and as a boundary at least two times.\textsuperscript{142}

From the above it is evident that a plethora of academic debate runs into the controversial nature of the Durand Line as an international boundary. Factually inaccurate and contradictory statements by various scholars and a general tendency on the part of the Afghan as well as Pakistani authors to support the respective positions of their countries have made it difficult for the two countries to have a clear understanding of the nature of this border. In the Afghan government, historically the more articulate opponents of the Durand Line have sought to discredit it by quoting foreign authors who might not necessarily be well-informed on the issue but whose views as foreign academics could blow, rightly or wrongly, an air of dispassionate objectivity into the debate. The official position of the Afghan monarchy during the 1950s-70s was given by Abdul Rahman Pazhwak, a prominent Afghan diplomat and author whose rich career included the directorship of the Afghan official news agency, Bakhtar, ambassadorships to India, West Germany, the UK, and Permanent Representative of Afghanistan to the United Nations. His well-written treatise, officially published and issued by the Afghan Royal Embassy in London in 1960, is peppered with quotes from foreign academics to justify the intransigent position of his government.\textsuperscript{143} Similarly, Pakistani officials have endeavored to justify their government’s position by largely drawing on secondary sources.\textsuperscript{144} Therefore, an objective

\textsuperscript{139} Louis Dupree, \textit{Afghanistan}, p. 485.
\textsuperscript{140} M. H. Kakar, \textit{A Political and Diplomatic History of Afghanistan}, pp. 177-192.
\textsuperscript{141} Ibid, p. 179.
\textsuperscript{144} See, for example, Tariq Mahmood, \textit{The Durand Line: South Asia’s Next Trouble Spot} [Masters Degree Thesis], (Monterey, California: Naval Postgraduate School, 2005)
 textual analysis of the relevant documents signed between Afghanistan and British-India is essential in order to have a clear understanding of the subject.

The Afghans generally challenge the continued legitimacy of the Durand Line as an international frontier along four major themes: validity of the Durand Line beyond 1993; imposition of the 1893 treaty under duress; legitimacy of Pakistan as the inheritor of the border; and arbitrariness of the border which has divided the Pushtuns. The upcoming sections will discuss the merits of these arguments on the basis of relevant documents, historical records and international law.

Is the Durand Line agreement time-bound?

The most widespread factor which drives most Afghans to question the continued legitimacy of the Durand Line as an international frontier is informed by a notion that the agreement of 1893 was valid for only one hundred years.\(^\text{145}\) They maintain that the legality of the Afghan-Pakistan border lapsed in 1993 at the completion of the 100-year period. However, no document has ever been produced to substantiate such a claim. There is absolutely nothing in the 1893 agreement or in the subsequent documents between the British and Afghan boundary commissions which completed border demarcations until 1896, to indicate that the border was determined for only one hundred years.\(^\text{146}\)

There is another aspect of the agreement which renders it time-bound in a different way though, and that could be found in the history of British-Afghan relations after Emir Abdul Rahman’s death in 1901. Soon after Habibullah ascended the Afghan throne, the British Viceroy, Lord Curzon, pressured him to visit India for discussions including renegotiation of the Durand Line agreement. Habibullah did not want to visit India, pleading that he was satisfied with all the treaties his father had signed before. But Curzon insisted that the previous treaties had been signed with the person of Abdul Rahman, which had to be renewed by the new Emir. Britain stepped up pressure by preventing the transit of arms through India and withholding of subsidies. Finally a British envoy, Sir Louis Dane, was dispatched to Afghanistan in late 1904 with a draft treaty to renegotiate. Habibullah produced a draft treaty of his own, which merely reaffirmed the previous

\(^{145}\) Interview with Afghanistan’s First Vice President Ahmad Zia Massoud, Kabul, 16 February 2006.
understandings with the late Emir. They both signed the treaty and the transit of arms and subsidies, including the arrears, were resumed.147

The Dane-Habibullah treaty was simply the renewal of the Durand Line and all the other previous agreements with the British India. The official title of the treaty reads: ‘Treaty with Emir Habibulla [sic] Khan continuing the Agreements which had existed between the British Government and Emir Abdur Rahman Khan’. Part of Habibullah’s undertaking in this treaty reads:

His Majesty Habibullah does hereby agree to this that, in the principles and in the matters of subsidiary importance of the treaty regarding internal and external affairs and of the engagements which His Highness, my late father ... concluded and acted upon with the Exalted British Government, I also have acted, am acting and will act upon the same [Durand Line] agreement and compact, and I will not contravene them in any dealings or in any promise.148

Thus, by Britain’s own admission, the Durand Line agreement was valid only during the lifetime of Emir Abdul Rahman. The document was renewed, however, with the person of Emir Habibullah in 1905, remaining valid until the Third Anglo-Afghan War in 1919.

In the aftermath of the third Anglo-Afghan war, an Afghan peace delegation visited Rawalpindi and signed a document titled ‘Treaty of Peace between the Illustrious British Government and the Independent Afghan Government’ on 8 August 1919.149 This treaty and its Annexure recognised Afghanistan’s independence but held it responsible for the ‘aggression’, confiscated subsidy arrears owed to Habibullah, discontinued payment of any further subsidies and cancelled all the previous British-Afghan agreements including the ones that allowed Afghanistan to freely import arms through the territory of the British India. More importantly, article five of the treaty stated that ‘The Afghan Government accepts the Indo-Afghan frontier accepted by the late Emir [Habibullah]’. Therefore, for the first time the status of the Durand Line as an international frontier was transformed from being temporarily valid during the lifetime of every consenting Emir to one of a permanent border between two sovereign independent countries.

147 Martin Ewans, Afghanistan: A New History, pp. 81-82.
The treaty of Rawalpindi was merely a peace agreement to affect cessation of hostilities and to regulate the immediate relations between the two countries. It was followed up by a renewal of talks leading up to the dispatch in January 1921 of the British Mission to Kabul under Sir Henry Dobbs, ‘charged with the task of negotiating a treaty which would place future relations between Britain and Afghanistan on a permanent foundation’.

A new agreement titled ‘Treaty between Great Britain and Afghanistan establishing Friendly and Commercial Relations’, superseding the Treaty of Rawalpindi, was signed on 22 November 1921 in Kabul between the two countries —ratifications exchanged in Kabul on 6th February 1922. In this agreement, the Afghan government again recognized the Durand Line as a permanent international border. Article II of the agreement stipulates: ‘The two High Contracting Parties mutually accept the Indo-Afghan frontier as accepted by the Afghan Government under Article V of the Treaty concluded at Rawalpindi on the 8th August 1919’.

However Article XIV of the 1921 agreement renders it liable to unilateral renunciation by either of the parties anytime after the expiry of three years from the date of its signature and subject to a one-year grace period from the date of its refutation in the following words:

The provisions of this Treaty shall come into force from the date of its signature, and shall remain in force for three years from that date. In case neither of the High Contracting Parties should have notified twelve months before the expiration of the said three years the intention to terminate it, it shall remain binding until the expiration of one year from the day on which either of the High Contracting Parties shall have denounced it.

Afghanistan under King Amanullah never denounced the agreement. Subsequently, in fact, King Mohammad Nadir also reaffirmed it on 6th July 1930 through an exchange of diplomatic notes in London between Shah Wali Khan, the King’s brother and diplomatic representative to the UK, and Arthur Henderson, the British Foreign Secretary.

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150 W. K. Fraser-Tytler, Afghanistan: A Study of Political Developments in Central Asia and Southern Asia, p. 198.
Some scholars maintain that the recognition of the Durand Line as an international frontier was a necessary price Amanullah had to pay to gain independence. An attachment to the Anglo-Afghan Treaty of 1921, containing a letter from the British representative to the Afghan Foreign Minister, admits the Afghan government’s interest in the affairs of the Pushtun tribes beyond the Durand Line as matter of fact rather than as a legal right.

As the conditions of the frontier tribes of the two Governments are of interest to the Government of Afghanistan I inform you that the British Government entertains feelings of good will towards all the frontier tribes and has every intention of treating them generously, provided they abstain from outrages against the inhabitants of India.

This can in no way lend support to Dupree’s earlier observation that the border was vague. The British authorities have made it absolutely clear many times over that the Durand Line was where Afghanistan’s sovereignty ended. Many authors believe, however, that the admission of Afghanistan’s interest in the welfare of the tribes on the Indian side of the Durand Line contributed to encourage Afghan interference across the border even after establishment of full diplomatic relations between the two countries.

The question of coercion

The second most important factor which, in the Afghans’ eyes, cuts through the Durand Line’s legitimacy is a pervasive perception among the Afghans that the 1893 agreement was forced on Abdul Rahman under threats of war and blockade. This assertion, however, has been challenged by many non-Afghan scholars. They maintain that the Afghan Emir had been fearful of steady British push into Afghan territory by means of road and railway construction pointed towards Qandahar and Kabul. Hence the delimitation of borders was welcomed because it would stop further British encroachment.

Abdul Rahman has made favourable references to the Durand Line agreement in his memoirs which does not support the contention that he signed the agreement in fear of

British threats. Moreover, after signing the agreement, he held a huge royal court in Kabul for the Afghan tribal chiefs and government officials in which he extolled the agreement as an achievement for Afghanistan. The agreement was endorsed by the Afghans who attended the occasion, where Sir Henry Mortimer Durand was also present. Afghan historians, nonetheless, have rejected the speech and the Afghans’ response as being stage-managed.

In view of the aforesaid, the notion of the Durand Line being imposed against the Afghan Emir’s will is at best contestable. Even if the Afghans’ claim could be substantiated, it may not necessarily detract from the legal status of the Durand Line as a legitimate international frontier. At the minimum there could be at least two lines of argument against Afghanistan’s historical position. First, contrary to popular misperceptions, the 1893 treaty was not the only relevant document to the status of the border between Afghanistan and the British India. Any dispute about the legality of the Durand Line will have to reckon with the relevance of at least four other agreements signed successively in 1905, 1919, 1921 and 1930, where Afghanistan repeatedly undertook to recognize the Durand Line as its international frontier. It would be difficult to dismiss all these agreements as being forced on Afghanistan. Second, political history of the establishment of modern states is in fact replete with instances of a certain measure of pressure and coercion inherently being involved in the origins of almost all the national borders in the world. If unilateral revisionist aspirations of every nation based on the role of outside coercion in delimiting their borders in the past were to be afforded recognition, the world would plunge into turmoil.

Furthermore, it needs to be remembered that no other country, not even India or the former USSR, has ever taken the Afghans’ position on the Durand Line seriously. On the contrary all the major countries and international organisations, including the US, UK, the UN and the Muslim world in general recognised the Durand Line as a legitimate international frontier subject to international law.

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159 Excerpts of Abdul Rahman’s speech could be accessed from the British Library’s India Office Records at L/PS/7/73 and Z/L/PS/7/20. Its Persian version is given by G. M. Ghubar, *Afghanistan Dar Maseer-e Tareekh* [Vol. 1], p. 689-690.


Succession of States

Historically a third pillar on which Afghanistan has laid its case to reject the continued legitimacy of the Durand Line as an international boundary is the claim that with the partition of the British India in 1947, all the agreements with that country became null and void. This position of the Afghan government was officially communicated to the British government shortly before Pakistan became an independent nation. In a meeting with the British Secretary of State in London on 31 July 1947, Prime Minister Shah Mahmoud maintained that since the Anglo-Afghan Treaty of 1921—to which the British had always referred to denote the significance of the Durand Line as an international boundary—had been signed with the British Government, the Afghan government would no longer regard it valid after the transfer of power to Pakistan. It became a consistent official theme of argument by the Afghan government to theoretically free itself of any obligation in regard to the recognition of the international border with Pakistan, thereafter.

However, it would be very difficult for Afghanistan to sustain such a position credibly under international law. The Vienna Convention on Succession of States in Respect of Treaties (VCSSRT) recognises the permanency of borders in state successions. Article 11 of the VCSSRT on Boundary Regimes states that "[a] succession of states does not as such affect: (a) a boundary established by a treaty; or (b) obligations and rights established by a treaty and relating to the regime of a boundary." The VCSSRT was created in 1978, entering into force only in 1996 long after Pakistan was born. Article 7 of the Convention concedes that it is not retroactively applicable. Nor is Afghanistan a signatory to this Convention. However that does not impinge on the validity of the VCSSRT as a codified body of international law, ratified by sufficient number of nations to make it applicable. The fact that the VCSSRT has been codified attests to the presumption that its provisions do not contravene the discernible rules of Customary International Law, which continues to govern all questions related to the succession of states not regulated by the VCSSRT. Hence, Afghanistan cannot expect support in great amounts from international law, customary or codified, if the country decided to challenge the status of the Durand Line as an international frontier before the International Court of Justice.


163 Rahman Pazhwak, An Article on Pakhtumistan: A New State in Central Asia. Also the resolution of the Afghan Parliament in 1949 which denounced the Durand Line as an “imaginary line” was informed by the assertion that the Durand Line agreement was extinct after the British India had ceased to exist.

Division of the Pushtuns

The fact that the Durand Line runs through the Pushtun heartland, dividing them between Afghanistan and Pakistan, has been a major source of criticism by the Afghans as well as many foreign scholars. The border is alleged to have arbitrarily divided the Pushtun nation without much regard to their strong ethno-cultural and linguistic affinities. Therefore, the moral legitimacy of the border between Afghanistan and Pakistan has been called into question.

The argument seems insecure for many reasons, however. As indicated earlier, the notion of the Pushtuns forming a single nation has been strongly challenged on historical grounds. For most of their history, the Pushtuns are said to have been divided on many levels. Even before the advent of British colonialism in the Indian subcontinent, the western Pushtuns tended to be generally associated with and ruled by the Safavid Persia while the eastern Pushtuns had been more inclined towards and ruled by the Mughal India. Moreover the many Pushtun tribes and sub-tribes have rarely been united sufficiently to form a single nation. Apparently the only period when the great mosaic of the Pushtun tribes achieved a semblance of unity was during Ahmad Shah Abdali’s rule (1750s-70s), under whose strong and charismatic leadership they managed to form a sort of Pushtun confederation unprecedented in their history. However, the precarious Pushtun unity during this period owed its existence as much to Ahmad Shah’s strong leadership as it did to the many campaigns he launched to subdue India and other non-Pushtuns. Some scholars have in fact suggested that one important aim of Ahmad Shah’s many foreign campaigns was to keep the Pushtun tribes constantly busy with external enemies so as to prevent internal strife among them.

The Durand Line is said to have broadly followed tribal boundaries, separating those tribes that had economic links to cities and towns in Afghanistan than those with links to cities and towns in today’s Pakistan. Only in two cases - the Mohmands and the Waziris - was a tribe divided, argues Sir Olaf Caroe. The Mohmands were divided even before the Durand Line. Many of the upper section Mohmands were more affiliated to Lalpura and

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Jalalabad than to Peshawar. These sections were given to Afghanistan. In the Mohmand case, a further offer was later made to the Afghan government with a view to a definition of the Durand Line more in its favour, but the offer was never taken up. In regard to the Waziris, a small portion of them living in Birma was left on the Afghan side of the Durand Line, but the great bulk of them remained in India.\footnote{Ibid.}

Besides, it needs to be remembered that the Pushtuns are not the only ethnic group that have been divided by Afghanistan’s boundary regimes. The Tajiks, Uzbeks and Turkmens have also been divided along the northern borders of the country. Nor are Afghanistan’s borders unique in cutting through ethno-cultural and linguistic affinities, there are many other socially and racially cohesive groups in the world that have been divided along national frontiers.

From the above it is clear that the Durand Line is the only Afghan border determined bilaterally between Afghanistan and its erstwhile neighbour, yet ironically it is also the only boundary which Afghanistan disputes. As much as the exact legal status of this border has been a contentious subject, the foundations on which the Afghans have historically based their arguments are precarious at best. Inaccessibility of relevant information about the legal circumstances of the boundary has contributed to a strong sense of national self-righteousness and self-assertion on the issue in Afghanistan. As a result no Afghan leader has ever been able to deal with the problem on an objective basis, fearing public censure and disgrace where compromise is needed.

Conclusion

To a large extent, political stability of Afghanistan has often been intimately related to the dynamics of its interactions with Central and South Asia. The majority of the rulers and dynasties which ruled over Afghanistan hailed from these two regions. Almost every kingdom, dynasty or empire that was built on the ruins of its predecessor constituted abrupt changes in the basic structural arrangements of the political system. Each one of these political systems was built around the preeminence of a particular ethnic group, centered in a different location with distinct symbolic insignia such as the dynastic flag and emblem — all constituting changes in basic structural arrangement of the political system.
The influence of Central Asia in the changes of political systems in Afghanistan during the Islamic era was so preponderant that it has been dubbed as ‘a thousand years of Central Asian imperialism’ by the American anthropologist, Louis Dupree.\textsuperscript{171} The successions of dynasties and rulers in Afghanistan were almost invariably accompanied by political violence both between the belligerent forces and by the victorious party in the form of suppression of those who were perceived to be associated with the old rulers. At times the violence assumed huge proportions. Similarly, within these dynasties, violent power rivalries among various claimants of throne were often a recurring phenomenon, especially after intra-dynastic successions. The capacity of the dynasties for effective decision-making — not necessarily in the sense of decisions being consensus-based, but in terms of the political systems’ ability to enforce their decisions — was significantly influenced by their relations with Central and South Asia. Their ability to raise armies and maintain control over their domains depended largely on war booties, human resources and taxes which they exacted from both regions. The Muslim rulers who raided India from Afghanistan also viewed their campaigns, particularly against the non-Muslims, as a means of bolstering their legitimacy among their Muslim subjects in Afghanistan and beyond. They demonstrated the rulers’ devotion to what Dessauer has termed ‘ethical systems’ as a pillar of the legitimacy, and therefore stability, of their dynasties.\textsuperscript{172}

In the colonial era —early nineteenth to mid-twentieth century— all state successions in Afghanistan took place in the context of rivalry between colonial powers dominating Central and South Asia. Most of these successions were affected either directly or indirectly by the nature of Afghanistan’s relations with South Asia at its relevant period. Similarly, political violence and civil strife, which constitute some of the clearest manifestations of political instability, were affected by the nature of Afghanistan’s relations with the two regions. Hence, the nature of Afghanistan’s relations with Central and South Asia had always been a determinant of political stability in the country at least until mid-twentieth century.

The colonial domination of Central and South Asia hugely influenced the emergence of modern Afghanistan since the Afghan borders were all determined during this period. The processes which determined the Afghan borders are all open to controversy, yet the Afghan government has only challenged its border with South Asia. The selective way in

\textsuperscript{171} Louis Dupree, \textit{Afghanistan}, p. 312.
\textsuperscript{172} Frederick Dessauer, \textit{Stability}, pp. 144-147.
which the Afghan government treats the legitimacy of its borders is related more to considerations of internal political stability rather than the validity of its case.
After the withdrawal of the British from India in 1947, two interrelated policy themes — ethno-nationalism of the ruling elite and economic development of the country— dominated the character of Afghanistan’s foreign relations which in turn affected its internal political stability. The influence of ethno-nationalism was most prominent in Afghan-Pakistan relations, and the Afghan government’s desire for economic development and modernisation greatly defined the character of Afghan-Soviet relations. Collectively, they determined the nature of Afghan foreign policy in a major way. In order to understand fully the nature of the Pushtunistan issue between Afghanistan and Pakistan, it is essential to study its origins in detail. Although some previous academic works have acknowledged the pernicious effect of Pushtunistan dispute on Afghan-Pakistan relations, none has so far explored its origins sufficiently which inevitably bear on the justifiability of the two countries’ respective positions on the issue. This section will use some important primary sources from the India Office Records of the British Library to investigate the origins of the topic, and its impact on the political stability of Afghanistan during 1940s-1970s. Subsequent sections will study the influence on internal political stability of the growing economic, political and military ties with the Soviet Union during the same period.

Afghan-Pakistan Relations: Genesis of the Pushtunistan Issue

Partition of the British India in 1947 had far-reaching consequences for Afghanistan’s foreign relations. The nature of Afghan-Pakistan relations right from the birth of that nation significantly influenced the Afghan foreign policy in subsequent decades. The creation of Pakistan as a Muslim nation was the manifestation of a concept long cherished by some of the most prominent Indian Muslim leaders since the time of Sir Sayyid Ahmad

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2 The researcher has also viewed archival documents from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) of Afghanistan, and found nothing contradictory to the sources used from the British Library.
3 This section was published as part of the author’s article in a refereed journal previously. See Ahmad Shayeq Qassem, ‘Afghan-Pakistan Relations: Border Controversies as Counterterrorist Impediments’, *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, Vol. No. 61, Issue No. 1, March 2007, pp. 65-80.
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Khan (1817-1898). However, it was the poet-philosopher Dr. Mohammad Iqbal (1877-1938) who unequivocally called for the creation of a separate Muslim state and even suggested its geographic shape in his 1930 presidential address to the Muslim League in Allahabad-India. The geographic contours of his Muslim nation encompassed the provinces of Punjab, NWFP, Sind and Baluchistan, as elucidated in this address:

I would like to see the Punjab, the North-West Frontier Province, Sind and Baluchistan amalgamated into a single State. Self-government within the British Empire, or without the British Empire, the formation of a consolidated North-Western Indian Muslim State appears to me to be the final destiny of the Muslims at least of north-west India. ... Indeed, the Muslims of India are the only Indian people who can fitly be described as a nation in the modern sense of the word.  

In 1933, the name ‘Pakistan’ was coined by an Indian Muslim student, Chaudhri Rehmat Ali, in Cambridge University. PAKISTAN was an acronym, each letter of which stood for a constituent part of his envisaged nation: P for Punjab, A for Afghan (North-West Frontier Province and possibly southeastern Afghanistan), K for Kashmir, S for Sind and TAN for Baluchistan.  

The creation of Pakistan as an independent state represented the embodiment of a belief in the nationhood of the Indian Muslims. The depth of intellectual gratitude to Iqbal’s notion of Muslim nationhood in creating this new state could be understood from the comments of Mohammad Ali Jinnah, the founder of Pakistan: ‘To me he was a personal friend, philosopher and guide and as such the main source of my inspiration and spiritual support’. Given the important role of Islam in the history of Afghan-India relations, the Indian Muslim leaders admired and looked up to Afghanistan for support in their struggle for nationhood. Iqbal, for example, recited many Persian poems in praise of Afghanistan, its history, its people and its various cities and regions. His poems about the significance of

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7 Stanley Wolpert, Roots of Confrontation in South Asia, p. 104. Ihsan Aslam, ‘The History Man: Rehmat Ali’s Impossible Dream’, Daily Times, 12 August 2005. It is noteworthy that the Persian or Urdu variant of PAKISTAN does not include the letter I. Furthermore, Rehmat Ali did not favour inclusion of East Bengal as part of his envisaged new nation of Pakistan.

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Afghanistan’s solidarity with other Muslims of Asia in attaining nationhood are well-known among the Afghans:

Asia is a body of water and earth
Its decay will corrupt Asia
So long as the heart lives the body is free
Body and heart pledge to same values
The strength of faith stems from unity

The Afghan nation is the heart of the body
Its conquest being the key to subjugation of Asia
Else the body is mere hay in the way of wind
The heart dies of rancour and lives by faith
When unity manifests itself, nation emerges

The Indian Muslim leaders in general and the first generation of the Pakistani leaders in particular had high expectations from Afghanistan as a Muslim country. In early 1950s, the Pakistani leaders also suggested the idea of a pan-Islamic confederation between Pakistan, Afghanistan and Iran as a way of resolving the emerging border disputes between Afghanistan and Pakistan and strengthening the three countries’ stability. The Shah of Iran welcomed the proposal and assured Pakistan that his country would study it. Afraid of being dominated by its bigger neighbours in a confederation, the Afghan government under Prime Minister Shah Mahmoud flatly rejected the proposal out of hand.10 Far from reciprocating Pakistan’s conciliatory overtures, Afghanistan was the last to recognise this new nation officially and the first to strike against its territorial integrity by laying claims on what Pakistani leaders considered as an inalienable part of their territory. In this way, the Afghan monarchy’s call for Pushtunistan, rather than traditional pan-Islamism, began to dominate the two countries’ relations right from the earliest times of Pakistan’s creation and this in turn affected Afghanistan’s overall relations with the outside world from the mid-twentieth century onwards.

As early as 1944, when it was becoming increasingly evident that Britain was leaving India, the Afghan monarchy initiated diplomatic presentations with the British authorities

expressing its interest in the future of the Pushtuns of the North-West Frontier Province (NWFP) in India. However, the Afghan rulers were bluntly rebuffed by Britain on the grounds that it was an internal affair of India. In the lead up to the partition of British India, the Afghans continued to raise this issue in many discussions with the British representatives in Kabul, claiming they were under public pressure to take the matter up with Britain. Initially, the Afghan government’s show of concern about the future of Pushtun tribes was based and justified in the context of the common ethnic and cultural background of the Pushtuns inhabiting both sides of the border rather than non-recognition of the Durand Line as an international frontier. Accordingly, to the extent that it related to the political destiny of the Pushtuns after the partition of the British India, the Afghan government objected to the arrangements and procedures which the British Government instituted to transfer power from British jurisdiction to the indigenous peoples of the subcontinent.

The arrangements for the transfer of power were announced in a statement by Prime Minister Clement Richard Attlee on 3 June 1947 in the British Parliament. It came on the heels of the main Indian political parties’ (Congress Party of India and the Muslim League Party) inability to work in unison within the Indian Constituent Assembly to draft a constitution for the whole of an undivided independent India. The Muslim League representatives did not join the Constituent Assembly since their demand was for a separate Muslim nation. However, the representatives of the North-West Frontier Province, who were affiliated with the Congress Party, did participate in the constituent assembly. In this respect, paragraph 2 of Mr. Attlee’s announcement read as follows:

The Majority of the representatives of the Provinces of Madras, Bombay, the United Provinces, Bihar, Central Provinces and Berar, Assam Orissa and the North-West Frontier Province, and the representatives of Delhi, Ajmer-Merwara and Coorg have already made progress in the task of evolving a new Constitution. On the other hand the Muslim League Party, including in it a majority of the representatives of Bengal, the Punjab and Sind, as also the representatives of British Baluchistan, has decided not to participate in the Constituent Assembly.

Consequently, since the majority of the representatives of Bengal, Punjab, Sind and Baluchistan did not participate in the Constituent Assembly of India, the British had to introduce a procedure to ascertain ‘the wishes of the people of such areas’ on the issue whether their Constitution was to be framed by the existing Constituent Assembly or a separate Constituent Assembly consisting of the dissenting members. For this purpose among the other provinces, the procedure for Punjab was such that its Provincial Legislative Assembly (excluding the European members) was asked to meet in two separate parts on the basis of Muslim majority and non-Muslim majority districts. If a simple majority of either part of the divided Legislative Assembly decided in favour of partition, the province would be divided. In the event of partition being decided upon, each part of the Legislative Assembly was to determine further, on behalf of the areas they represented, as to which Constituent Assembly their representatives should join. Furthermore, in anticipation of the partition of Punjab, provision was made for the North-West Frontier Province (NWFP) to reconsider its decision of participating in the Constituent Assembly of India because a divided Punjab was ultimately to cut it from India. Hence, paragraph 11 of the statement read:

The position of the North-West Frontier Province is exceptional. Two of the three representatives of this Province are already participating in the existing constituent Assembly. But it is clear, in view of its geographical situation, and other considerations, that, if the whole or any part of the Punjab decided not to join the existing constituent Assembly, it will be necessary to give the North-West Frontier Province an opportunity to reconsider its position. Accordingly, in such an event, a referendum will be made to the electors of the present Legislative Assembly in the North-West Frontier Province to choose which of the alternatives [joining the existing Constituent Assembly or a separate one] mentioned in paragraph 4 above they wish to adopt. The referendum will be held under the aegis of the Governor-General and in consultation with the Provincial Government.

A similar offer was also made to British Baluchistan, which had elected its representatives who, however, had not taken their seats in the Constituent Assembly of India.

As for the Tribal Territories of the NWFP, however, the Statement of 3 June 1947 made a different provision asserting that ‘agreements with tribes of the North-West Frontier of India will have to be negotiated by the appropriate successor authority’. Similarly, the

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15 Ibid.
Indian Princely States outside of British India were not directly affected by the statement of 3 June 1947. Their destinies were deferred to the British ‘policy towards Indian [Princely] States contained in the Cabinet Mission Memorandum of 12th May 1946, [which] remained unchanged’. At the end of the announcement it was promised that ‘the Governor-General will from time to time make such further announcements as may be necessary in regard to procedure or any other matters’ for carrying out the transfer of power arrangements.16

In regards to the future of the NWFP, the British authorities did not, however, sit idle and let the events to overtake them. In early 1947, not long after the Constituent Assembly of India had started its work, the British Governor of NWFP, Sir Olaf Caroe (1946-1947), urged Dr Khan Sahib’s Congress government in NWFP and Abdul Ghafar Khan – leader of the Congress-aligned Khudai Khidmatgar Party and brother of the Chief Minister, Dr Khan Sahib – to call for the establishment of an independent Pushtunistan. The move was made by the Caroe with the clear knowledge that an independent Pushtunistan would be neither viable economically nor would it be supported by the British Government. But, far from being a fan of Pushtunistan, his real intention was to drive a wedge between the NWFP secular leaders and the Congress Party of India. Once the NWFP representatives had repudiated the Constituent Assembly of India, a referendum in the Muslim majority Province would easily decide in favour of joining Muslim Pakistan.17 A confidential cable on 22 May 1947 – not long before Mr. Attlee’s statement - from Sir Olaf Caroe to Sir David John Colville, the Governor of Bombay (1943-1948), is instructive in this respect:

The interesting local development in the political field is that my Ministry and Abdul Ghaffar Khan have started propaganda on a theme which I advised them to take up some months ago: that of a Pathan national [North West Frontier] Province under a coalition if possible, and making its own alliances as may suit it. When I put it to them then they professed what amounted to fury at the mere suggestion. There is a good deal in the theme itself, and the appeal is a far more constructive one than that of Islam in danger. The switch-over has probably come too late, but to my mind it is a strength, and not a weakness, that Pathanistan cannot subsist financially or otherwise on its own legs. The weakness is that the Pathans have hitherto been too divided among themselves to set up a stable State, and where they have ruled they have ruled as conquerors of alien populations.

16 Ibid.
17 In his book, Olaf Caroe gives the ratio of Muslim to non-Muslim population in the NWFP as 94% to 6% during 1940s. As Governor, he was well-aware of where the Muslims’ sentiments would lie in regards to the Partition. Olaf Caroe, The Pathans, p. 434.
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They themselves had always been in a state of anarchy right through history until we came and put them in order. (Afghanistan is not really a Pathan State at all). 18

There is some evidence to suggest that even as late as 10 May 1947 the Khudai Khidmatgar leaders had been at best reluctant to object to the proposed referendum and the formula of Two State Solution. 19 But, in view of the NWFP Governor’s political intrigues evident from the excerpts of the telegram above, it is clear as to why the Frontier Congress Party – which had of late started using the Khudai Khidmatgar Party as a distinct official name – argued that the restriction to only two alternatives in the Statement of 3 June 1947 was not acceptable to them. It made a dramatic volte-face ‘against joining Hindustan and issue for them [was] between (a) Independent Pathanistan and (b) joining new Constituent Assembly for Pakistan’. 20 Accordingly, the provision concerning the Governor-General’s intention to make future announcements was seized upon to press for a further announcement to provide for the institution of a separate Constituent Assembly for NWFP with a larger number of members. The Khudai Khidmatgar leaders hoped that such separate Constituent Assembly with larger membership would eventually put them in a stronger position to make good bargain with Pakistan. They asserted that with only two options of India and Pakistan on the table, they would advise their followers against taking part in the referendum. 21

Two days after the Statement of 3 June, the Chief Minister of the NWFP, Dr. Khan Sahib, had a meeting with the Governor-General (Viceroy) in which the former ‘stated categorically that the NWFP would never join Pakistan’. The Governor-General explained the impracticality of a third option for the NWFP and even Nehru’s opposition to any special treatment of this province which would have opened a Pandora’s box of similar demands by other British Indian provinces. Dr. Khan Sahib requested Governor-General to replace Sir Olaf Caroe, the British Governor of NWFP, because he was suspected of

19 The Governor-General had informed the Khudai Khidmatgar leaders about the availability of only two options and the proposed referendum as late as 10 May 1947 in advance of the 3rd June statement. The Khudai Khidmatgar leaders were at best reluctant to object to the proposal. For more details, see the two following documents, and their footnotes, in conjunction with each other: Nicholas Mansergh (ed), The Transfer of Power, Vol. 11, Document No. 65, ‘Confidential Telegram from Sir Olaf Caroe (NWFP) to Rear-Admiral Viscount Mountbatten of Burma’, 4 June 1947. Nicholas Mansergh (ed), The Transfer of Power, Vol. 10, Document No. 384, ‘Telegram from Rear-Admiral Viscount Mountbatten of Burma to Pandit Nehru’, 10 May 1947.
21 Ibid.
pro-Muslim League sentiments which made him unsuitable to run the referendum. This was promptly done to Dr. Khan Saheb’s satisfaction. The Chief Minister did not trust the Indian Civil Service personnel either. To win his trust, the Governor-General made alternative arrangements where he appointed British army officers to help run the referendum; a decision fully endorsed by Dr. Khan Saheb. At the end, the nationalist Chief Minister assured the Governor-General of his full cooperation in organizing the plebiscite; even though it included neither the option of independence nor that of integration with Afghanistan.22

The Afghan government, however, was either unaware, or unappreciative, of the intricacies of issues surrounding the issue of Pushtunistan. It wanted all the Pushtuns ‘living between the Durand Line and River Indus’ to be also given the options of independence and/or amalgamation into Afghanistan. Afghan official media suggested that the case be referred to the UN. The Afghan Foreign Minister, Ali Ahmad, summoned the British representative in Kabul to express the same sentiments. He also requested permission from the British representative to announce that the NWFP would not be coerced to join Pakistan or India against the wishes of its people.23 The Afghan representative in London conveyed the same message to the British Foreign Office. He stated that in view of the Statement of 3 June the Afghan Government had to make an official representation to the British Government to allow to the NWFP the options of independence or joining Afghanistan. The British Foreign Office assured the Afghan Minister that their official proposal to this effect, if they made one, ‘would be given due consideration by H.M.G’.24

From the excerpts of diplomatic negotiations between the two countries and official correspondence within the British government, it appears that at this early stage the Afghan government had not fully shaped all the dimensions of its argument in a strong persuasive case. Even as late as 23 June 1947, the Afghan government was still stressing the common ethnicity of the Pushtuns on both sides of the Durand Line as the sole justification for its

22 Nicholas Mansergh (ed), The Transfer of Power, Vol. 11, Document No. 81, ‘Record of Interview between Rear-Admiral Viscount Mountbatten of Burma and Dr Khan Sahib’, 5 June 1947. Sir Olaf Caroe was indeed replaced consequently. For more details see Ibid, Documents No. 96, ‘Telegram from Mountbatten to Caroe’, 6 June 1947. Also see Ibid, Document No. 310, ‘Confidential Telegram from Caroe to Mountbatten’, 23 June 1941. Jafari notes that the idea of separate Pushtunistan was supported neither by the British nor the Muslim League nor the Congress Party of India. Gandhi was the only Congress leader who apparently sympathized with the cause of separate Pushtunistan. Hasan Ali Shah Jafari, Indo-Afghan Relations, p. 88.


belligerent stance. The Afghan leadership argued that it did not consider the Pushtuns to be Indian; therefore it wanted them to be given the freedom to decide their own future. At the time the Afghan government did not challenge the validity of the Durand Line on the basis of coercion or succession of states, as discussed above. The British authorities, on the other hand, were concerned about the ‘political, economic and security implications’ of an independent Pushtunistan for the region, had they given in to the Afghans’ demand.\(^{23}\) The Afghan government wanted to urgently send a high-powered delegation to India to hold talks with the British Governor-General, Lord Mountbatten, Nehru, Jinnah, Dr. Khan Sahib, Abdul Ghaffar Khan and other Indian leaders.\(^{20}\) Fearing that it would give de facto recognition to the legitimacy of Afghan claims on NWFP, the visit was prevented until well after the referendum had been conducted, and Pakistan instituted.\(^{27}\)

British authorities believed that the Afghans’ assertions were merely ‘irredentist’ claims unjustified on legal or rational grounds. They were convinced that the media campaign in Afghanistan was officially-inspired, that the full scope of the Afghans’ territorial interest included all the territories between the Durand Line and the Indus River including those inhabited by non-Pushtuns, and that the Afghans’ real ambition was the amalgamation into Afghanistan, rather than any interest in political freedom, of these areas. They also suspected that a diversionary ‘objective of Afghan government [was] to forestall public attention in Afghanistan from the internal situation’ – the social, political and economic challenges discussed at the beginning of this chapter. Thus, the British Government responded strongly negatively to what it regarded as unwarranted interference by a foreign government over matters beyond its territorial jurisdiction.\(^{28}\) Following are some samples of the British attitude towards the Afghan government at the time:


\(^{27}\) Ibid, Document No. 342 ‘Secret Telegram from Sir Olaf Caroe to Mountbatten’, 25 June 1947. Also see Ibid, Document No. 377, ‘Immediate Telegram from H.M. Minister at Kabul to Government of India, External Affairs and Commonwealth Relations Department’, Kabul 27 June 1947. The British representative was not supporting independence for Pushtunistan. He was merely encouraging the British Government to allow the Afghan government to make such a statement for public consumption only.

\(^{28}\) Ibid, Document No. 395, ‘Telegram from the Government of India, External Affairs and Commonwealth Relations Department to Secretary of State’, 29 June 1947. Ibid, Document No. 431, ‘Secret Telegram from the Government of India, External Affairs and Commonwealth Relations Department to the Secretary of State’, 30 June 1947. Ibid, Document No. 453, ‘Immediate Telegram from the Secretary of State to H.M. Minister at Kabul’, 1 July 1947. In regards to the Afghan government’s tendency to use the Pushtunistan issue as a diversionary tactic, there are many authors who believe that even as late as 1960s and 1970s Mohammad Daoud also kept the Pushtunistan tension alive with Pakistan to provide a diversionary channel for the frustration of the small the intelligentsia at his repressive policies. See Richard Newell, ‘Foreign Relations’, in Louis Dupree and...
...the territory between the Durand Line and the Indus is solely India's concern. The historical grounds on which Kabul now claims a special interest in them would if pushed back far enough chronologically justify India's claiming Afghanistan.29

H.M.G. have given full and sympathetic consideration to the representations made by the Afghan Minister. They are bound to point out, however, that these representations relate to an area which forms an integral part of India and is recognised as such by the Afghan Government in the Anglo-Afghan Treaty of 1921. ... The statement of policy in regard to India made by H.M.G. on 3rd June was issued with the assent of the leaders of the principal political parties in India and has since been endorsed by responsible Indian opinion. ... While therefore H.M.G. readily appreciate the friendly interest which the Afghan Government naturally feel in the future constitutional structure of the territories on their southern frontier and the feelings of kinship arising from ties of blood and religious affinity which the Afghan people share with many of the inhabitants of those territories, they cannot admit the right of any foreign government to intervene in matters which are the sole concern of the inhabitants of the territories in question.30

Furthermore, the British warned that it would stop the economic and military assistance which it had hitherto continued to provide to the Afghan government. They sought to enlist the support of the US against the Afghans' pro-Pushtunistan agitation, though the US did not show much interest beyond encouraging the Afghans to meet the Viceroy which they had already requested anyway. The British also made an attempt to play on the Afghans' fears by reminding them that the 'Soviets would be only too ready to take advantage of tribal disturbances to further their designs' in the north of the country.31 Such threats could do little to change the Afghans' mind, however. They received the Pushtun nationalist leaders from NWFP in Kabul, reinforcing the British and Muslim League suspicions that the Afghans' campaign was waged in collusion with the Congress Party.32


As expected, on 23 June 1947, Abdul Ghaffar Khan strongly urged his people at a large public gathering in Bannu to boycott the referendum. On 24 June, he issued a statement calling on members of the Khudai Khidmatgar and other supporters of free Pushtunistan not to vote in the referendum. He also lashed at Jinnah and the Muslim League for taking ‘full advantage of the communal issues involved’ (Muslim religious sentiment) and complained against the Viceroy for his inflexibility to accommodate the option of a free Pushtunistan. Hence, Abdul Ghaffar Khan rejected the referendum with two main objections against it: the exclusion of a free Pushtunistan and the manipulation of Muslim religious sentiment where the Pushtuns, predominantly Muslim, were expected to chose Pakistan as against India. Ghaffar Khan did not challenge the credibility of the referendum on its own merits. After all he knew that the referendum was going to be conducted under the watch of his brother, Dr. Khan Saheb’s pro-Congress nationalist government in the NWFP.

The proposed referendum was held on 6 July 1947 in which an overwhelming majority of the participants in NWFP chose to join Pakistan. As per the Statement of 3 June, the referendum offered the choices of joining India or Pakistan to the Settled Districts and the tribal areas were free to negotiate their future relations with the successor authority. The Khan brothers and the Afghan government declared the referendum unsuccessful, though many others may not agree with that observation. Dupree notes that even Maulana Kalam Azad, who was a friend of the Khan brothers as well as a prominent member of the Congress Party of India, did not think that their boycott was successful. In the referendum, despite the call for boycott, over 55.5% of eligible voters participated, out of which 55% voted for Pakistan and 0.5% voted for India. This figure could be more meaningfully understood if assessed against the background of voter turnout in 1946 Provincial Elections of the NWFP, in which 68% of the eligible voters had participated. Given the fact that the number of eligible voters in the referendum was confined to only the electors of the incumbent Legislative Assembly in the NWFP (eligible voters in the previous year’s Legislative Assembly elections of the NWFP), the referendum registered a 12% decline in voter turnout. The relatively lower turnout, of course, cannot exclusively be attributed to the effectiveness of Abdul Ghaffar Khan’s campaign either.

In the five Tribal Agencies a *Loya Jerga* was organized in which all the tribal groups agreed to join Pakistan. The Afghan government objected to the procedure, stating that the choice for independence had not been given to the Tribal Agencies. It insisted that the Tribal Agencies should have been treated on par with the Indian Princely States and allowed to opt for initial independence if they so desired. As per the Statement of 3 June 1947, the 500-odd Native or Princely States outside of the British India, unlike NWFP which was part thereof, had three alternatives namely joining India, Pakistan or remaining independent for a short while until they could decide to join either India or Pakistan. In the Afghan government's view, the choice of temporary independence could have at least given birth to an independent Pushtunistan which may or may not have joined Afghanistan later on. After all, argued the Afghans, the tribes had separate agreements with the British Government, and therefore functioned as independent nations, with relations regulated by the Ministry of States and Frontier Regions of the central government in Delhi.  

After the referendum, the Afghan Prime Minister, Shah Mahmoud, finally had a meeting with the Secretary of State in London, en-route to the US on 31 July 1947. According to the British authorities, he again reiterated the familiar arguments about the Afghan character of the inhabitants of the [NWFP] in the meeting. However, this time he additionally argued that since the Anglo-Afghan Treaty of 1921 had been signed with the British Government, the Afghan government would no longer regard it valid after the transfer of power to Pakistan.

Hence, the position of Afghanistan in regards to the issue of Pushtunistan boils down to four major claims. Three of these claims emanate from its stance on the status of the Durand Line. They include: First, the notion that the Pushtuns form a nation irrespective of where they lived; Second, the Durand Line was forced upon the late Emir Abdul Rahman in 1893; Third, Pakistan could not be a legitimate successor to the British India in respect of the treaties pertaining to the status of the Durand Line as an international border. Additionally, Afghanistan rejects the 1947 plebiscite and the subsequent tribal *Jerga*

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as invalid since they did not include the options of independence and/or amalgamation into Afghanistan of the Pushtun regions of Pakistan.  

As was the case with Ghaffar Khan, the Afghan government would find it hard to challenge the validity of the 1947 plebiscite on its own merits because the British authorities demonstrably went to great extents at the time to hold it credibly. On that basis, Afghanistan cannot seriously reject the validity of the tribal Loya Jirga either, since for all its inherent shortcomings as an essentially parochial institution, it is what the Afghan state has historically used to validate its own decisions numerous times. In an attempt to give a moral justification for its pro-Pushtunistan campaign, the Afghan monarchy also advanced the argument that the Pushtuns formed a suppressed nation within Pakistan who needed to be liberated. The history of independent Pakistan does not lend support to this argument however. Pushtun elites had been entrenched strongly enough within the Pakistani power structures to produce the first Commander-in-Chief of the country, Marshal Mohammad Ayub Khan. Later on he won the further distinction of being the first coup leader and Marshal Administrator of Pakistan. Indeed the Pushtun elites have always been one of the most powerful ethnic communities in Pakistan’s body-politic.

On the origins of the call for Pushtunistan, it is interesting that the available literature has not yet established the British governor’s connection in agitating it. It seems that the Afghans pursued a policy theme which was originally impelled, cleverly manipulated and ironically also opposed by British colonial authorities in 1947 in order to make Pakistan a viable state out of the Muslim majority region of British India.

Pushtunistan: A Foreign Policy Obsession

The issue of Pushtunistan poisoned the Afghan-Pakistan relations from the very beginning of Pakistan as an independent nation. The first remarkable expression of this came through Afghanistan’s decision in September 1947 to vote against the admission of Pakistan to the UN. In this way Afghanistan won the distinction of being the only country, out of 55 UN

37 For the perspective of the Afghan government on Pushtunistan see Rahman Pazhwak, An Article on Pakhtunistan. For a perspective from a USSR scholar on Pushtunistan see R.T. Akhramovich, Outline History of Afghanistan after the Second World War (Moscow: Nauka, 1966), pp. 68-86.
39 Rahman Pazhwak, An Article on Pakhtunistan.
member states at the time, to oppose Pakistan’s entry in the UN. Nor did Afghanistan recognise the state of Pakistan until 1948, nearly one year after that nation was born. This was also due to Afghanistan’s territorial claims against Pakistan. Some scholars have pointed out that, although late, the recognition of Pakistan nonetheless amounted to a formal forfeiting of such claims which was in return for Pakistan’s reopening of trade route to Afghanistan.\footnote{Stanley Wolpert, *Roots of Confrontation in South Asia*, pp. 120-121}

Following the partition, as a Muslim country Pakistan found it relatively easier to rule the tribal areas. The regular army was withdrawn, amnesties were offered and the Tribal Agencies were treated as autonomous entities within Pakistan.\footnote{Martin Ewans, *Afghanistan: A New History*, pp. 105-109.} Yet Afghanistan continued with its Pushtunistan agitation. In July 1949, the Afghan parliament (*Shura-e-Milli*) declared the Durand Line Agreement, and all the other previous agreements concluded with the former British India, null and void.\footnote{G. M. Ghubar, *Afghanistan Dar Maseer-e Tareekh*, Vol. 2, pp. 262-263.} Across the Durand Line, the Faqir of Ipi was declared President of the Independent Pushtunistan by a Waziri tribal gathering. Again Afghanistan won the distinction of being the odd country to recognise the independent Pushtunistan.\footnote{Amin Saikal, *Modern Afghanistan*, pp. 117-120.}

In 1950 and 1951, tribal incursions took place across the Durand Line from Afghanistan, leading to border clashes, bombing of Afghan villages by Pakistani planes, severance of diplomatic relations and a blockade on import of fuel supplies through Pakistan.\footnote{Martin Ewans, *Afghanistan: A New History*, pp. 105-109.}

In November 1954 Pakistan officially announced a controversial administrative measure known as the One Unit Plan. The plan envisaged to merge the western provinces of Baluchistan, the NWFP, Sind and Punjab into a single administrative unit named West Pakistan. In the Legislative Assembly the West Pakistan was to have party with the more populous but disadvantaged province of East Pakistan — the independent state of Bangladesh since 1971. The Afghan government, however, saw the move from a different perspective. Even though the Tribal Agencies were not incorporated into West Pakistan, Prime Minister Daoud (1953-1963), nevertheless, condemned the plan as the first step towards an eventual liquidation of Pushtun autonomy in Pakistan. Forceful government propaganda against Pakistan led to demonstrations on both sides of the border. In March 1955, a Kabul mob vandalized the Pakistani Embassy tearing down its flag. Other mobs ransacked the Pakistani consulates in Jalalabad and Qandahar. A retaliatory mob attacked
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the Afghan consulate in Peshawar. Diplomatic and trade relations were severed by Pakistan.

Afghanistan mobilized its reserves for war. The two countries agreed, however, to submit to arbitration by an international commission consisting of Egypt, Turkey, Iraq, Iran and Saudi Arabia. The commission produced no definitive results but Saudi Arabia and Egypt in separate reports blamed the Afghan government’s intransigence for the failure of the commission. At the height of tensions Afghanistan convened a Loya Jirga of 360 people which unanimously supported the government’s demand for a plebiscite in the Pashtun areas of Pakistan. Pakistan stepped up its own propaganda through Peshawar Radio, posing the question whether the Afghan Pashtuns would also be allowed to join an independent Pashtunistan.

The border was closed for almost five months with debilitating effects on Afghanistan’s economy. In the end, Afghanistan had to give in. The Afghan Foreign Minister, Mohammad Naim, took the initiative to restore diplomatic relations in a formal flag hoisting ceremony over Pakistan’s Embassy in Kabul. Yet despite the resumption of diplomatic relations after the flag raising ceremony in 1955, overall relations with Pakistan continued to be haunted by the Pashtunistan issue.

In 1958 Marshal Ayub Khan, himself a Pashtun, came to power in Pakistan through a military coup. This was a blow to the Afghans’ claim that the Pashtuns did not have control over their own destiny. In early 1959, the Afghan Foreign Minister, Mohammad Naim, visited Pakistan for bilateral talks which did little to improve relations. On his return, the propaganda war was again stepped up in both countries. As relations soured further, Afghanistan announced, towards the end of 1960, that it would no more extend the residence permits of the Pakistani nationals in Afghanistan.

Meanwhile, the Soviet-assisted modernization of the Afghan military enabled the government to exercise more control over the hitherto autonomous tribal areas in late 1950s. This was resented by the tribes who revolted against the Kabul government. In November 1959, not being able to withstand the modern Afghan army, several thousand Manghal tribesmen crossed the border into Pakistan. Pakistan used their plight to paint

48 W. K. Fraser-Tytler, *Afghanistan: A Study of Political Developments in Central Asia and South Asia*, Chapter V.
49 Ibid.
Afghanistan with the same colour which the latter had thus far tried in its Pushtunistan propaganda—highlighting Afghanistan's suppression of Pushtun tribesmen. Marshal Ayub Khan opposed the Afghan government's plans to develop road networks into the border regions. He viewed the military implications of these development projects as a threat to Pakistan. On 20 December 1959, riots broke out in Qandahar against the government's removal of Muslim veil restrictions from Afghan women. In March 1960, Prime Minister Daoud held Pakistan responsible for the instabilities in the southern provinces and accused it of subversive propaganda against the reforms undertaken by his government—development of roads and emancipation of women.  

In September 1960, Afghanistan used a local tribal quarrel involving the Nawab of Dir and the Khan of Jandul in Bajaur across the border from Kunar province to promote its Pushtunistan campaign by sending in a tribal army allegedly supported by the elements of regular army in civilian guise. The Afghan government hoped that the agitation and instability would give prominence to the issue of Pushtunistan which the Afghan foreign minister could then bring up to the attention of the UN General Assembly in the same month.  

However the Bajauris resented the Afghan intrusion and united to fight against it. The tribal army was thrashed and the remainder, quarreling among themselves in intense tribal rivalry, returned to Afghanistan. The incident proved an embarrassment to Afghanistan. Again in May the following year, in response to a request for assistance from the Nawab of Dir and Khan of Jandul, another major Lashkar incursion took place in the same area from Afghanistan. This time the Pakistani air force also joined the fray and repulsed the tribal army. Small scale incursions, however, still continued afterwards. Pakistan for its part used the incident to depose the Nawab of Dir and, with the consent of Bajauris, to assert its direct authority over Bajaur to an extent which it had never enjoyed in the past. Some authors believe that the whole incident proved a further slap to Afghanistan because once again the case of cross-border nationalism had been disproved.  

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51 The Nawabs and Khans were semi-autonomous local rulers acting as links between the Government of Pakistan and the local people.  
52 W. K. Fraser-Tytler, Afghanistan: A Study of Political Developments in Central Asia and South Asia, Chapter V.  
On 15 August 1961, Pakistan announced that it wanted to close its consulates in Jalalabad and Qandahar. It also demanded the closure of Afghan consulates and trade missions in Peshawar, Quetta and Parachinar. Kabul reacted by giving Pakistan one week from 30th August to withdraw its decision or face a severance of diplomatic relations. The ultimatum was ignored and a breakdown of diplomatic relations ensued from 6th September. Pakistan requested Britain to handle its diplomatic interests in Afghanistan. Kabul scoffed at the idea, viewing Britain to be pro-Pakistan. Subsequently, the Saudi Embassy took charge of representing Pakistan’s diplomatic interests in Afghanistan. The United Arab Republic (Egypt) represented Afghanistan’s interests in Pakistan. The diplomatic breakdown had devastating effects on Afghanistan’s economy, not least because almost 45% of its state revenues came from the customs duties. Foreign exchange reserves were exhausted; inflation and shortages became a problem.

In fact the demand for the closure of the Afghan consulates was tantamount to a blockade on transit trade since these offices were responsible for issuing the necessary documentation to make the transit of goods possible through Pakistan. Afghanistan lost tremendously in state revenues coming from tariffs on trade. This and the high tariffs on imports and exports in turn seriously hurt the country’s long-term goal of industrial development because it was dependent on a large-scale import of industrial goods and equipment from overseas.

The closure of border damaged the Afghan rural economy, threatening the fruit growers and merchants with the loss of the 1961 fruit crops. Similarly, it undermined the in-transit flow of aid and development programmes of the USA and other Western countries, amounting to millions of dollars. Many important projects such as the Spin Boldak-Qandahar road, improvements in the Helmand Valley Project and construction of the Kabul University were pending the delivery of heavy machinery and equipment stranded at Pakistani warehouses. Over 8,000 tons of gifted wheat rotted in Pakistani warehouses and

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55 Martin Ewans, *Afghanistan: A New History*, pp. 114-119. After coming to power, the Musahiban family introduced taxation policies which either favoured or completely exempted the landed aristocracy and livestock herders in the southeaster regions from tax payments. The policy was consistent with the Nadiri family’s aim of consolidating Pushtun support for the monarchy. Instead, tariffs on exports and imports by the trading class had been increased, who in turn passed it on consumers. The land and livestock taxes were levied as fixed amounts of currency that almost did not take account of the impact of inflation over time. For example in 1972 the two potentially greatest sources of national wealth, including agriculture and livestock, yielded a miniscule one percent of total state revenues. See Anthony Hyman, *Afghanistan under Soviet Domination*, 1964-81 (London: Macmillan, 1982), pp. 31-32.
many other US, UN and other NGO programmes were also affected adversely. Although Pakistan officially announced that it was honouring its international obligations on transit-trade, but with no Afghan consular or trade offices in Pakistan it came to a standstill and the border was closed by Afghanistan.57

The blockade also severely affected the Pushtun trucking companies in Pakistan, which had almost monopolized the transport of goods between the two countries. Before the blockade more than a hundred trucks carried around 1,000 tons of grapes each day from Afghanistan to Pakistan. With the border closure, however, the cross-border transport sector was sitting idle. In 1961, Pakistan also decided to stop the movement of nomads across the border. This was an unpopular decision among the Pushtuns on both sides of the border. In Dupree’s view the cross-border restrictions on nomadic movements ‘gave the Pushtunistan issue a regional and international respectability it had never before enjoyed’.58

In late 1961, Daoud called for military mobilization which brought the two countries to the brink of a major war. Meanwhile, Daoud was hoping that the US would put pressure on Pakistan to resolve the tensions because the border closure had put the US development programmes at risk.59 This emanated from Daoud’s assumption that the US development programmes were mainly the symptoms of US strategic interests in Afghanistan. For his part Ayub wanted the US to support Pakistan’s stance on Kashmir. In the midst of all these geostrategic rivalries, the Afghan economy suffered severe depression. In 1962, the Afghan government signed an alternative transit agreement with Iran. The route connected the seaport of Khuramshahr via Tehran, Mashhad, Herat and Qandahar to Kabul. It was a long and expensive route used by the USAID and some Afghan merchants.60 Although the transit agreement was signed with Iran, but Afghanistan’s request from the US to help upgrade the route was not entertained by the Kennedy administration.61

57 Louis Dupree, Afghanistan, pp. 538-554.
58 Ibid.
59 According to Amin Saikal the US projects in Afghanistan were designed to provide Afghanistan with sufficient economic diversification as to prevent it from total dependency on the USSR. Therefore Daoud was hoping that the border closure, which had undermined the US projects in Afghanistan, would force the latter to help resolve the Pushtunistan issue out of its own strategic interests. Amin Saikal, Modern Afghanistan, pp. 128-132. Also see Patrick J. Reardon, ‘Modernisation and Reform: The Contemporary Endeavour’, in George Grassmuck and Ludwig W. Adamec (ed), Afghanistan: Some New Approaches, pp. 160-173.
61 Amin Saikal, Modern Afghanistan, pp. 128-132. Alternative transit route via the USSR will be discussed later.
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The crisis strengthened King Zahir’s hand to get rid of his rival, Mohammad Daoud, who was made to step down in 1963. In the following decade, a succession of Afghan governments tried to normalize relations with Pakistan by deemphasizing the issue of Pushtunistan. The Shah of Iran invited the Afghan and Pakistani delegates to Tehran in May 1963 for negotiations. After a 22-month long disruption of transit, an agreement was reached with Pakistan on 28 May 1963 to resume commercial, consular and diplomatic relations.

In the area of foreign relations, the most notable efforts, during 1963-73, were made by Prime Minister Musa Shafiq (December 1972-July 1973). Shafiq was determined to resolve the outstanding problems with Pakistan. Yet, the Pushtunistan issue had become such that no Afghan leader could easily escape it. Even when emphasizing the need for better Afghan-Pakistan ties, Shafiq needed to profess loyalty to the cause of the Pushtun ‘self-determination’:

Having a common history, cultural and racial ties, the people and Government of Afghanistan want the Pushtunistan issue, a remnant of colonial days and which is the only political difference between Afghanistan and Pakistan, to be solved through peaceful means so that the People of Pushtunistan may be given the right to self-determination.

With Daoud’s coup in 1973, relations soured further again. Daoud’s rivalry with his cousin, King Mohammad Zahir, and his pro-Pushtunistan stance were two important factors that prompted him to seize power in 1973. In December 1971 Pakistan was defeated by India which resulted in the rebirth of Bangladesh. Pakistan’s weakness encouraged Afghan ambitions for Pushtunistan to reemerge. Disdainful of Mohammad Zahir’s attempts to preclude him from power by means of a new constitution in which members of the royal house did not hold political office, unhappy with Prime Minister Musa Shafiq’s foreign policy and confident of Pakistan’s vulnerability, Daoud seized power by overthrowing the political system altogether.

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62 For intra-court rivalries between Mohammad Daoud, Mohammad Naim and Mohammad Zahir see Amin Saikal, Modern Afghanistan.
64 Amin Saikal, Modern Afghanistan, pp. 171.
On 11 August 1974, Afghanistan registered a strong protest with the Pakistani Embassy in Kabul about the alleged breach of Afghanistan’s airspace by Pakistani airplanes. Another important development in Afghan-Pakistan relations in 1974 was the exodus of Baluch refugees across the border into Qandahar. On 7 September 1974, Daoud sent a letter to the UN Secretary General condemning the Pakistani government’s use of force against the ‘freedom-seeking’ Baluchis and requested the UN to interfere in the matter. In response Bhutto sent his own letter to the UN Secretary General on 1 October 1974, where he rejected Daoud’s claims and accused him of interfering in the internal affairs of Pakistan. Again in late December 1974, Bhutto sent another letter to the UN Secretary General and complained about Afghan interference in the internal affairs of Pakistan. The Afghan Deputy Foreign Minister, Wahid Abdullah, in an interview with the *Sunday Times* of London, called the Afghan-Pakistan frontier as illegal and artificial.⁶⁶

Daoud carried on with a new round of anti-Pakistan belligerence over the issue of Pakistani Pushtun (as well as Baluch) self-determination which he characterized as an incontrovertible right. Kabul reenergized its financial and military aid to Pakistan’s secessionist Pushtun and Baluchi movements, causing a steep decline in relations.⁶⁷ This prompted the US-aligned Shah of Iran to declare that his country was not going to tolerate any further disintegration of Pakistan after the creation of Bangladesh in 1971. The Shah even promised to assist the Bhutto government against secessionist activities in Baluchistan and the NWFP, by exerting pressure on Kabul and by providing arms to Pakistan in contravention of the US embargo.⁶⁸

Internally, while elevating the pro-Soviet People’s Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) members to important positions, Daoud conversely focused on crushing the increasing influence of the Islamic movement in the country. In December 1973 a coup plot was uncovered in the army instigated by the Afghanistan Muslim Youth Movement (AMUM), whereupon some of its leaders were arrested. In June 1974, the Interior Ministry headed by Faiz Mohammad, a well-known member of the Parcham faction of the PDPA arrested some 200 members and sympathizers of the MUM. By this time, some fifty leaders and members of the Islamic group including Burhanuddin Rabbani and Gulbuddin

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⁶⁸ The US wanted to strengthen Pakistan’s armed forces so that that it could defeat the insurgency on its soil. However, due to the US embargo imposed in response to Pakistan’s nuclear programme, it could not do so directly. Helping it through Iran was a way round the embargo. Amin Saikal, *Modern Afghanistan*, pp. 173-178.
Hekmatyar had already fled to Peshawar. They were welcomed not only by like-minded Islamic circles and members of Jama'at-i-Islami Pakistan, but also by the more secular-minded Prime Minister of Pakistan, Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto.69

Once Daoud had consolidated power, as early as 1975, he moved to normalize relations with Pakistan, as he now wanted to reduce his dependence on the PDPA and the USSR.70 In this, he also hoped to open the way for substantial aid from the oil-rich Gulf States and Iran, with whom Pakistan enjoyed good relations. This led to the 1976 direct talks between Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto and Daoud in Kabul. In their direct discussions, although the question of Pushtunistan was not resolved, an atmosphere of amity and goodwill and a commitment on both sides to pursue peaceful negotiations in the future was engendered. Finally, the relaxation of relations between Afghanistan and Pakistan and Daoud’s willingness to respect the March 1973 Afghan-Iranian Agreement resulted in the Shah of Iran’s promise of some US$2 billion for the Seven-Year Development Plan (1976-1983). The pledge, however, remained largely unfulfilled, and as late as 1978 Iran had disbursed only about US$10 million of the promised aid.71

Haqshenas has pointed out the internal factors which helped improve relations in later years of Daoud’s presidency. In 1976, Afghanistan experienced severe flooding and earthquakes which brought much suffering to the ordinary Afghans. Bhutto seized the opportunity to show goodwill towards the Afghan people by expressing sympathy via Pakistan radio and sending consignments of aid in April 1976. On 8 April 1976, the Afghan official Anis newspaper ran a positive commentary about Bhutto’s comments which, in Haqshenas’ words ‘surprised everyone’. Subsequently the Afghan Foreign Ministry issued a statement on 7 May 1976 in which it said:

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 victims 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


70 The dependence on the USSR and the PDPA will be discussed in detail later.
President Daoud directed the Afghan Charge d'affairs in Islamabad to invite Bhutto to visit Afghanistan.\textsuperscript{72}

The thaw in relations also continued under General Zia-ul-Haq, who seized power in Pakistan in July 1977. On 10 October 1977, he held negotiations with Daoud in Kabul. Zia invited Daoud to visit Pakistan which the latter did on 4 March 1977. After his visit, Daoud was even more committed to an amicable resolution of all outstanding issues with Pakistan as a necessary price to reduce Afghanistan's dependence on the Soviet Union. On his return to Kabul, Daoud made the following statement about his discussions with the Pakistani leadership:

\begin{quote}
We fully understood each other's points of view and realized the extent of our common destinies. ... We fully appreciate that in this unstable world our friendship and brotherhood constitutes a prerequisite to our two countries' progress and prosperity.\textsuperscript{73}
\end{quote}

Thus was the Afghan government's hitherto ethno-nationalist acrimony transformed into a remarkably congenial posture with overtones of Islamic fraternity towards Pakistan.

It is clear from the above that many aspects of political stability in Afghanistan were affected by the character of the country's relations with Pakistan, which came to be largely defined by the issue of Pushtunistan from 1950s to 1970s. Due to the acrimonious nature of Afghan-Pakistan relations, violent demonstrations erupted, border clashes took place, air strikes were carried out within the Afghan territory and there were threats of full-scale war with a foreign country. Collectively, these could be categorized as political violence/civil strife which occupy an important place in the definition of political stability. The Afghan state was subjected to economic blockades, diplomatic humiliations, and negative propaganda by a foreign country. In effect, these were instruments of pressure poked at the ability of the Afghan state for effective decision-making and its legitimacy in popular perceptions —both constituting important aspects of political stability. Similarly, although the political violence against members of the Mangal tribes or the leaders of the Islamic movement were not directly caused by the nature of Afghan-Pakistan relations, the support and sanctuary given to them was tantamount to undermining the legitimacy, security and the ability for effective decision-making of the Afghan political system.

\textsuperscript{72} Nasri Haqshenas, \textit{Dasayes Wa Jenayat-e Roos Dar Afghanistan}, p. 435. (Excerpts translated from Persian by the researcher).

\textsuperscript{73} Ibid, pp. 459-466 (Excerpts translated from Persian by the researcher).
Afghan-Pakistan relations partially affected at least two government successions and two dramatic changes in the fundamental character of the political system during this period. In the theoretical discussion of political stability, these constitute elements of what are known as ‘government longevity’ and changes in the basic structural arrangements of a polity. Daoud’s premiership in 1953 and his fall in 1963 were partially influenced by the nature of Afghan-Pakistan relations. The outright rejection of the Durand Line by the Afghan parliament in 1949 and Daoud’s republican coup in 1973 were both dramatic changes to the basic character of the modern Afghan state. The first struck at the territorial shape of Afghanistan as a country and the second dramatically changed the political system from a monarchy to a republic.

**Afghan-Soviet Relations: Development and Stability**

The Cold War provided the context in which Afghanistan’s hostility against Pakistan, the country’s disenchantment with the United States, and its diplomatic failure to win over the Muslim world to support its stance on Pushtunistan, brew to move it towards the Soviet Union. Although the foundations of the Afghan monarchy’s foreign policy had been laid with a tilt towards the West and suspicion about the Soviet Union, in the 1950s-70s its international alignments underwent a complete metamorphosis.

Afghanistan first sought to engage the US in its development projects. A flagship US-assisted development venture, the Helmand Valley Project (HVP), was conceived as early as 1946. The UN Preparatory Mission to Afghanistan in 1950 warned against the economic soundness of the HVP. It also suggested that on a cost-benefit criteria basis, initiating irrigation projects in the north of the country along the Amu Darya had much better prospects for success. Similarly, the Afghan Minister of the National Economy, Abdul Majid Zabuli and the US Bureau of Reclamation engineers made it known that the project held little value on economic grounds. Nevertheless, the project consumed 25% of the allocated US aid and 19% of the Afghan government budget from 1946 to 1963.74

By drawing the US into Afghanistan through development work, the Afghans envisaged that its political support would come as a corollary to engrained economic interest. However, far from strengthening relations, incompetence in the HVP caused considerable

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rift between the US and Afghanistan. The project did not yield what had been expected of it in terms of the amount of lands irrigated for the settlement of tens of thousands of nomads. Nor was it going to be completed within the timeframe and costs originally promised. There were accusations and counter-accusations by the two governments on the responsibility for the inefficiency. This made Daoud determined to diversify and expand economic ties with other countries, including with the Soviet block.

Nick Cullather has highlighted the existence of possible domestic ethno-political motives behind the monarchy’s support for the HVP:

The [Afghan] government planned to use these new settlers as a death squad to crush the uprisings of non-Pushtun people of the west, southwest and central part of the country. … [To the US], the Helmand project offered a way to counter Soviet influence by giving Daoud what he wanted, a Pushtun homeland. … [To the Afghan government], settling Pushtun nomads in a belt from Kabul to Kandahar [sic] would create a secure political base for the government …

While the reality of such motives cannot be completely discounted in view of the Afghan monarchy’s inclination to manipulate ethno-politics for consolidation of its rule, it is difficult to see what alternatives it could have possibly used to settle the nomads without exacerbating ethnic tensions internally and complicating its foreign relations. Had it gone along with the UN suggestion to initiate such a project in northern provinces, in all likelihood it would have invited a strong reaction from the Soviet Union against the US involvement near its borders, and much antagonism from the people of the northern provinces against settling of the nomads in the region — instead of helping political stability in the country, the project would have threatened it by provoking civil strife and possible foreign retaliation.

78 According to Saikal ‘the non-coercive component of the mechanism of state domination was particularly significant in Afghanistan: even with a modern army and police force at its disposal, the central government preferred to secure the compliance of autonomous social units, particularly the Pashtuns [sic] tribes, by channelling rentier income to them’. Amin Saikal, Modern Afghanistan, p. 169.
In early 1950s, the US forged close military, economic and political ties with Pakistan, Iran and Turkey, leading to the eventual incorporation of these states into the Western system of regional alliances such as the South-East Asian Treaty Organization (SEATO) in 1954 and the Baghdad Pact in 1955 and its successor the Central Treaty Organization (CENTO) in 1958. Pakistan's alliance with the West brought it economic, military and diplomatic support. Afghanistan also endeavoured to attract Western and US assistance. It had invited French experts to explore oil deposits in northern Afghanistan. The US was also involved in building a strategically important highway between Qandahar and Pakistan border. Moscow regarded these developments as part of an elaborate US and Western alliance plan to encircle the USSR. On 7 August 1952, the Soviet representative delivered an aide-memoire to the Afghan government, objecting to the presence of Western specialists near the Soviet border. It warned about aggravation of good neighbourly relations between the two countries. On 8 September 1952, Kabul assured the Soviet leader, Joseph Stalin, that all Westerners would be removed from the northern border zones and that no anti-Soviet activity would be allowed in the Afghan soil.\(^79\)

Having lost its greatest supporter, British India in 1947, Afghanistan appealed to the US also for supply of arms and military assistance several times during 1948-1953. The Afghan government's sense of urgency for modernisation of the armed forces stemmed primarily from the need to establish a strong central government and to strengthen the country's position vis-à-vis Pakistan. In effect the Afghan government viewed the availability of strong coercive capacity to neutralize the possibilities of anti-state violence, whether coming from within or outside the country, as a key requirement for continuity of the political system — political stability. Prime Minister Shah Mahmoud visited Washington for this purpose in 1951. But the US showed little interest in supplying arms to Afghanistan, suspecting they would be used against Pakistan.\(^80\)

The crisis in Afghan-Pakistan relations led Afghanistan to gradually move away from the West and the Islamic world which generally supported Pakistan. Parallel with the tensions over Pushtunistan, the Afghan-Pakistan transit trade also suffered. The Afghan government needed to diversify its trade and transit routes to ease pressure on its foreign trade. In 1950, a Soviet-Afghan trade agreement was signed which provided for the barter of Afghan wool and cotton against petroleum and other commodities from the Soviet Union. Within two years, trade had doubled and the Soviet Union was supplying

\(^79\) Amin Saikal, Modern Afghanistan, pp. 117-120.
Afghanistan with essential commodities such as petroleum, cement and cotton cloths. These were mainly imported from South Asia previously.\(^1\)

In 1953, in the wake of the Soviet leader, Joseph Stalin's death in the Soviet Union, and Mohammad Daoud's assumption of premiership in Afghanistan, the Afghan-Soviet relations were elevated to new heights. Stalin did not have much enthusiasm for the Third World whose leaders he had spurned once as the 'lackeys of imperialism'.\(^2\) His belief in socialism in one country had aimed to consolidate the communist power within the USSR rather than going out to proselytize the Third World towards communism. He was succeeded by a collective leadership in the USSR where Nikita S. Khrushchev gradually asserted his ascendancy. Khrushchev was inclined to have a more engaging and interactive foreign policy. He saw strategic and economic advantages in relations with the Third World. In 1955, the Non-Aligned Movement was established in Bandung (Indonesia) where Afghanistan participated as a founding member. Khrushchev saw new opportunity here. He developed a new theory of international relations, which, besides conceiving the possibility of peaceful coexistence between socialist and capitalist countries, also theoretically aligned the socialist and developing countries together in a zone of peace. This theoretical innovation freed the Soviet foreign policy from the restrictions of Stalin era communism and opened up the way to direct engagements between the USSR and the developing world.\(^3\)

From the Afghan side, Mohammad Daoud's premiership had significant impact on Afghanistan's foreign relations. He had been dissatisfied with Shah Mahmoud's performance on key issues with implications for political stability of the country — sluggishness of the Helmand Valley Project, obsolescence of attempts at securing military assistance from the US, and perceived softness on the issue of Pushtunistan.\(^4\) The Afghan monarchy recognised the need for a more dynamic leadership if it was to ensure political

\(^4\) Louis Dupree, *Afghanistan*, p. 499-512. Reardon also maintains that Daoud's seizure of power was in response to dissatisfaction against Afghanistan's foreign policy – Pushtunistan issue, Helmand Valley project and US refusal to provide military supplies. The central government needed a strong military as an effective bulwark against the centrifugal forces in the countryside. The shift in Afghanistan's foreign policy was conditioned by the cold war and the country became the first recipient of Soviet foreign aid programme which began at the time. On January 27, 1954, a US$3.5 million was given to Afghanistan at three percent interest rate over an eight-year period. In 1954 in negotiation with the US Afghanistan made a final bid for US military supplies with no success. Patrick J. Reardon 'Modemisation and Reform: The Contemporary Endeavour', in George Grassmuck and Ludwig W. Adamec (ed), *Afghanistan: Some New Approaches*, pp 155-158.
stability in the face of unsettling pressures emanating from heightened domestic expectations for more political openness and changed international circumstances ushered in at the conclusion of the Second World War. Taking a leaf from the lessons given by most political scientists interested in the study of political stability, the monarchy moved to adapt to the changed circumstances by replacing Shah Mahmoud with Mohammad Daoud in 1953.

Prime Minister Daoud tried one last time to negotiate arms supplies with the US, but his efforts were unsuccessful. A number of main reasons were responsible for the failure of negotiations with the US. The Afghans were urged by the US to join the Baghdad Pact which they were not prepared, or unwilling to do, unless the US had guaranteed Afghanistan’s security in the event of a Soviet invasion. The US was reluctant to help Afghanistan on suspicion that such arms would be used against Pakistan which had by then become an important ally of the US. Both Iran and Pakistan were apparently opposed to supply of arms to Afghanistan. The US was unwilling to commit itself to the defence of Afghanistan. It deemed Afghanistan to be of little strategic value yet difficult to protect in view of its harsh terrain and long border with the USSR.

Daoud turned to the USSR and its allies for economic and military assistance. In 1954, the Soviet Union committed to help Afghanistan in the construction of two silos in Kabul and Pul-e-Khumri, paving of Kabul streets and construction of gas production and pipeline facilities in northern Afghanistan. In 1955, Afghanistan concluded an agreement with Czechoslovakia, a member of the Warsaw pact, for the supply of arms worth US$3 million. In the same year, an Afghan-Soviet transit agreement was signed in which the two countries granted each other the right of free transit of goods through their territories. Daoud was aware that the imperative to secure economic and military assistance from the Soviet Union entailed a major swing in foreign policy orientation of the Afghan monarchy at least in public perceptions. In the interests of political stability, there was a need to secure legitimacy for such a change, in public perceptions, of the character of the Afghan state. Thus, he convened a Loya Jirga to get a strong public endorsement for a firm military


relationship with the USSR. In the *Loya Jarga* he effectively played with public emotions about the issue of Pushtunistan, and refusal by the US to supply arms. He won the delegates’ approval for the alternative of securing help from the Soviet Union.  

In December 1955, the Soviet Prime Minister Nikolai Alexandrovich Bulganin and the First Secretary of the CPSU Central Committee, Nikita Khrushchev, visited Kabul on the invitation of the Afghan King, Mohammad Zahir. During the visit, Bulganin announced his support to Afghanistan’s position for a plebiscite in the Pushtun areas of Pakistan and approved a US$100 million long term development loan to Afghanistan. The loan was to be used on joint projects by the Soviet-Afghan technical teams, and repaid in barter goods with a 2% interest rate over a 30-year period in 22 equal installments—a very soft loan as regarded by many authors. It went on to finance Afghanistan’s First Five-Year Plan which was announced by Daoud’s government on 19 August 1956, during the Independence Day celebrations. During the visit the two countries also signed an agreement for a ten-year extension of the 1931 Soviet-Afghan Treaty of Neutrality and Non-Aggression.

In 1956, the joint Soviet-Afghan survey teams took up several collaborative projects. These included two hydroelectric plants of Pul-e-Khumri and Naghlu, three automotive repair and maintenance workshops of Jangalak, Herat and Pul-e-Khumri, a strategically important road from Imam Sahib on the USSR border in the north to Kabul including the three-kilometer Salang tunnel, the Bagram airbase, improvements of the Kabul airport, three irrigation dams of Pul-e-Khumri, Jalalabad and Naghlu, a laboratory in Kabul, a fertilizer

89 Martin Ewans, *Afghanistan: A New History*, pp. 111-113. It should be noted that the Silos were primarily used to conserve grain and produce bread for the Afghan armed forces and security institutions.

90 The Soviet leadership’s support of Afghanistan on the issue of Pushtunistan in 1955 was in total contrast to its views in early 1950s. Antony Hyman notes that the USSR was contemptuous of Afghanistan’s stance about Pushtunistan in early 1950s. It regarded the Afghan monarchy’s call for self-determination in Pakistan as a hypocritical policy by a feudal-bourgeois class which had denied the same rights to some of its own citizens. Anthony Hyman, *Afghanistan under Soviet Domination*, pp. 41-48.


92 Before requesting aid from the USSR, Afghanistan had first appealed for the same amount (US$100 million) from the US towards the First Five-Year Plan, only to be told that such sweeping commitment was against the US laws and that each project had to be considered for funding on its own merits. Marvin Brant, ‘Recent Economic Development’, in Louis Dupree and Linnet Albert (ed), *Afghanistan in the 1970s*, pp. 91-95. Daoud is quoted to have said: ‘When we decided that Afghanistan must progress into the 20th century or perish, we first turned toward the United States for aid, because we believe in the American ideology. … After all, we members of the Royal Family were all trained in the West and have adopted Western ideas as our own’. Louis Dupree, ‘An Informal Talk with Prime Minister Daoud’, *American Universities Field Staff Reports, South Asia Series*, 3 (1959), pp. 17-20.

factory in Imam Sahib and the Alchin bridge north of Qunduz. These are mostly the type of projects which aim to address the challenge of what Duff and McCamant call the 'political-economic' demands in their discussion of political stability as a multifaceted social attribute, elaborated in the introduction.

The US$100 million loan agreement was in fact the initial commitment by the USSR in what proved to be a long-term military and economic programme of assistance for Afghanistan. Additionally the Soviet Union and its Comecon (Council for Mutual Economic Assistance) allies, including East Germany, Czechoslovakia, Poland and Hungary stepped in to renovate the Afghan armed forces with the first arms-supply contract worth US$25 million in Soviet credits. From 1957 onwards subsequent agreements provided for US$436 million in grants and loans over the following 15 years. Through 1960s-1970s, the Soviet aid to Afghanistan consistently remained between 50 to 60 percent of the total foreign aid received during this period.

The closure of Afghan-Pakistan border in 1961, further reinforced Afghan-Soviet cooperation on transit-trade. On 16 September 1961, Foreign Minister Mohammad Naim visited Moscow to request its help in easing the fallouts of the Afghan-Pakistan tensions on his country's transit-trade. The Soviet leaders agreed to airlift the Afghan fruit crops. Further, a new Soviet-Afghan agreement was signed in November which provided for a major increase of transit facilities through the USSR. Through the months of October and November, each day, at least 13 Soviet aircraft took off from Kabul to airlift around 100 to 150 tons of grapes to the USSR. The Afghans were grateful for this timely show of friendship by the Soviet Union. As the border closure continued through 1962-1963, the volume of grapes airlifted was increased but the credits paid to Afghans by the USSR per ton were reduced.

The Soviet Union of course had its own strategic motives in providing assistance to Afghanistan. Khrushchev was clear about it when he wrote:

"Take for example our policy toward Afghanistan. I went there with Bulganin, who was then head of our delegation on our way back from India. ... It was also clear that America

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was courting Afghanistan. In its desire to encircle us with military bases, America will throw itself all over a country like Afghanistan, appearing to give that country economic aid . . . It was clear to us that the Americans were penetrating Afghanistan with the obvious purpose of setting up a military base. ...The amount of money we spent in gratuitous assistance to Afghanistan is a drop in the ocean compared with the price we would have had to pay in order to counter the threat of an American military base on Afghan territory. Think of the capital we would have had to lay out to finance the deployment of our own military might along our side of the Afghan border.98

Hence, Afghanistan used the superpower rivalry to affect internal political stability through enhancement of its coercive capacity and amelioration of the economic situation. It also sought to shore up its position against the perceived threat to its political stability of the growing strength of Pakistan by resorting to what the realists may call the balance of power in international relations.99 In doing so, however, Afghanistan effectively made its stability heavily dependent on the goodwill of a more powerful neighbour, the Soviet Union, since the latter was allowed to penetrate many institutional variables of political stability in the country.

Daoud’s departure in 1963 was not viewed favourably by the Soviet Union. In a diplomatic exercise often construed around the world as a signal to mark displeasure when a country does not approve of a particular development in another country, the USSR recalled its senior diplomats from Kabul for consultations.100 Daoud’s five successors attempted to diversify the country’s economic relations so as to stem the rapid slide towards dependence on the Soviet Union. Mindful of the possible economic benefits from Iran as the strongest regional power in the aftermath of the February 1971 OPEC Conference, Prime Minister Shafiq tried to promote friendly ties with that country by settling the long-running Helmand River dispute with Iran. He broke up with his predecessors’ practice of visiting Moscow as their first foreign destination. Instead he invited Nikolai Podgorny, the Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet and the nominal Head of State of the USSR, to Kabul. The visit took place in May 1973 against the backdrop of some earlier ‘hitches’ in Afghan-Soviet relations. Afghanistan had not entertained the Soviet proposal to establish a cultural centre in Kabul similar to the one that had been already established by

99 For more on balance of power in International Relations theory see Hans Morgenthau, Politics among Nations. For a discussion of ‘Stabilization by Balance’ in domestic politics see Dessauer, Stability, pp. 127-136.
100 Louis Dupree, Afghanistan, pp. 561-565.
the USA. It had cold-shouldered the USSR’s plan to erect bridges across the Amu Darya or build a railroad from Kabul to the Hairatan terminal.  

Notwithstanding their assurances of mutual understanding and friendship, the two leaders’ meeting did not augur well for the future of relations. Podgorny reiterated the Asian Collective Security System (ACSS) doctrine which Leonid Ilyich Brezhnev, General Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, had first propounded in 1969. The Soviet leaders knew that Afghanistan was not interested in the ACSS at all for many reasons. It called for the inviolability of the existing international frontiers. This ran against Afghanistan’s stance on Pushtunistan and the Durand Line. The ACSS was essentially meant to counter China, an important neighbouring country, and Afghanistan was not interested to complicate its relations with that country. The Soviet leaders were aware that Afghanistan had little interest in joining international security arrangement especially if they impinged on its expressed position of neutrality between the major powers.  

In another sign of the Soviet leadership’s growing displeasure with Afghanistan, Podgorny did not repeat the traditional Soviet verbal support of Pushtunistan. Despite efforts by Daoud’s successors to improve relations with the non-communist world and reduce dependence on the USSR, Afghanistan found it very difficult to move away from the decades-long development policies that had already made the USSR’s involvement too ingrained not only in the economic but also the political institutions of the country. Afghanistan went on to conclude numerous further agreements with the Soviet Union in various economic, trade, technical, cultural, educational and military fields.  

Foreign debt repayment increasingly became one of the major drains on the Afghan economy. Until 1965, foreign debt repayment was running up to US$7 million annually. But within five years it rose to US$25 million, equivalent to almost 30 percent of the country’s total export earning at the time. Since the bulk of the Soviet aid was in the form of loans rather than grants, nearly two-thirds of repayments were due to the Soviet Union, which had committed almost US$900 million in civil aid (around 60 percent of total non-military foreign aid) and around US$300 million in military loans to Afghanistan from 1957.

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102 During a visit to Kabul in May 1969, The Soviet Premier, Alexei Kosygin, had said in a joint statement: ‘the Soviet side praises Afghanistan’s line of neutrality and non-alignment which creates important conditions for the achievement of tasks related to Afghanistan’s progress and development, and whose earnest observation has earned Afghanistan respect of the peace-loving countries throughout the world’. Amin Saikal, *Modern Afghanistan*, p. 140.
104 For a full list of the projects see Ibid, p. 257. Also see William Maley, *The Afghanistan Wars*, pp. 77-78.
to 1972. From 1967 onwards, an increasing part of debt to the USSR was being repaid in the form of natural gas exported from the gas fields of Sheberghan to the Soviet republics of Central Asia.

While the Afghan-Pakistan hostility and the Cold War atmosphere provided the milieu in which the USSR could ingrain its influence in the economic fields, public disenchantment with the political system and internal rivalries within the Afghan royal house created a fertile ground for a political component of the Soviet influence. Disillusionment with the political system gained momentum by the inability, or unwillingness, of the monarchy to channel in constructively what Feierabends have called 'social want formation' as discussed in the introduction. As 'political-political' demands, to use Duff and McCamant's terminology, increased throughout 1950s-1970s by the society, the monarchy, instead of genuinely engaging in policies that would help relieve 'systemic frustration' through constructive methods, sought to introduce superficial reforms so as to retain the real levers of power in the hands of selected few. In the words of one expert, even the so-called decade of democracy (1964-73), arguably the era of reforms, produced little more than the 'public exhibition of a few hollow “democratic” procedures'. The most fundamental reform initiative—promulgation of the 1964 constitution—was primarily tailored to strengthen the power of King Mohammad Zahir by excluding rival members of the royal household, particularly Mohammad Daoud and Mohammad Naim, from holding political office. Similarly, by refusing to sign the Political Parties Bill, the King effectively stymied the prospects for the emergence of important political institutions that would contribute to political stability by inducing non-aggressive behaviour for addressing problems.

105 Anthony Hyman, Afghanistan under Soviet Domination, pp. 23-35.
106 Problems of financial corruption were compounded by state-sponsored nepotism, which saw patron-client relations overwhelm competence and dedication as routes to advancement. In the military, young non-elite Pushtuns in the officer corps found their road to promotion and choice assignments blocked by the old inner circle of Pushtuns with close connection to the royal family'. William Maley, The Afghanistan Wars, p. 16. Maley further observes: 'The vulgarized precepts of Marxism-Leninism were a heady brew for circles of Afghanistan’s urban youth, and their leaders. Even without Soviet inspiration, a Marxist movement of sorts would surely have taken shape in Afghanistan. But at key points, the history of the movement which did develop was critically influenced by the Soviet pressures, facilitated by the scale of the Soviet presence in Afghanistan following the Khrushchev-Bulganin visit'. William Maley, The Afghanistan Wars, pp. 21-22. Amin Saikal explains the Soviet role in the emergence of the PDPA in these words: [After Prime Minister Daoud’s resignation] 'the post-Khrushchev Soviet leadership had reasons to become concerned about the Afghan developments. ... From the mid 1960s, the Soviet leadership postulated that economic and military aid should be accompanied by an effort to help the development of an indigenous pro-Soviet communist party in the recipient country'. Amin Saikal, Modern Afghanistan, p. 159.
108 For details see Amin Saikal, Modern Afghanistan, pp. 133-168.
Hence in the 1960s, many political movements committed to the overthrow of the political system—advocating radical change in the basic character of the polity—took shape in Afghanistan. Communist and Islamic movements were the most influential among them. The main pro-Soviet communist party was the People’s Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA), officially formed in January 1965. PDPA leaders, including Nour Mohammad Taraki and Babrak Karmal, both had contacts with the Soviet Embassy well before the party was formed. The PDPA worked in the streets and the parliament as a political movement. It also worked as a subversive force by both recruiting new followers and mobilizing and organizing the Soviet-trained personnel in the armed forces. Emergence of the Islamic movement was a challenge both to the ethical legitimacy of the political system and its foreign policy orientation which had made it possible for pro-Soviet communists to infiltrate the economic, political and security institutions of the country. As a network of Islamic-oriented individuals opposed to the pro-Pushtunistan and pro-Soviet policies of Mohammad Daoud, the Islamic movement came into being in the 1950s. In 1965, the Jamiat-e-Islami of Afghanistan (Islamic Society of Afghanistan) and its youth affiliate, Nahzat-e Jawanan-e Musulman-e Afghanistan (Afghanistan Muslim Youth Movement), was formed in Kabul University. In a country where the Islamic credentials of the political system, in terms of both its commitment to defend Islam and personal piety of the ruling elite, is construed by the public as a cornerstone of its legitimacy, the Islamic movement was fast becoming a party of the masses.

Thus, while on the one hand the close Afghan-Soviet cooperation had strengthened the Afghan military and facilitated economic development, on the other it had made the government less popular in the society as evidenced by the emergence of a strong movement opposed to the political system and its policies. In the context of political stability as a multifaceted social attribute this meant that while both the retributive capacity of the political system to inhibit aggressive behaviour and its ability to affect social welfare were enhanced as a result of the Soviet assistance, its ethical legitimacy, which constitutes another important aspect of political stability, was actually reduced. Apart from the growing power of anti-system dissent, which most studies of political stability as a multifaceted social attribute are concerned with, the leftist and Islamic movements often clashed violently with each other as well. The violence and mutual antipathy were not

109 Anthony Hyman, Afghanistan under Soviet Domination, pp. 54-57.
confined to the pro-Soviet communists and the Islamic movement; there was also another influential anti-system communist party, *Shula-i-Jawid*, which clashed with, and regarded both with equal indignation.\textsuperscript{114}

In 1973 the monarchy was overthrown in a successful coup d’
état by Daoud and the *Panham* faction of the PDPA. The fact that the Afghan society as a whole received the overthrow of the monarchy largely with indifference points to the lack of what Lijphart defines as ‘positive indicators’—active social support for the political system—as discussed in the introduction. Declaring Afghanistan a republic, Daoud changed the basic structural arrangements of the political system. The new regime, dominated by pro-Soviet communists, violently suppressed the Islamic movement, forcing some of its leaders to flee to Pakistan. The Islamic movement attempted a popular uprising against the new regime. It had some success in the northeast, but eventually it failed and many of its cadres were executed. While there is no evidence to suggest direct Soviet role in the overthrow of the monarchy, indirect connection between this symptom of political stability/instability and the nature of Afghan-Soviet relations is clear from the fact that it was accomplished with the help of pro-Soviet and PDPA elements in the armed forces and the government.\textsuperscript{115}

Finally, when Daoud turned against the PDPA and sought to diversify his government’s relations so as to ease up dependence on the Soviet Union, another coup was carried out by the PDPA which violently consumed the head of state and his entire family in 1978. The events surrounding the communist coup have become clearer with the passage of time. Earlier works on the topic drew heavily on speculative reasoning to establish whether or not the USSR had a direct hand in the coup. Some authors suggested that the USSR had foreknowledge of the coup because it recognised the new regime one day before (on 30 April) the PDPA takeover was officially announced (on 1 May) in Kabul.\textsuperscript{116} A major theme by many authors maintains that the USSR had a strong motive to sponsor a communist coup because in the later years of Daoud’s presidency, Afghanistan was moving away from the Soviet orbit.\textsuperscript{117} There were those who found it hard to believe that the Soviet leadership did not know about the communist coup given the heavy presence of Soviet military

\textsuperscript{117} Abdul Samad Ghaus, *The Fall of Afghanistan*.
officers and trainers in Daoud’s armed forces. Similarly, since the Soviet Union helped unite the two factions of the PDPA barely seven months prior to the coup, this has led some authors to speculate that it was in preparation for the seizure of power by the Afghan communists in 1978.

These arguments have been duly rejected, however, by recent writings based on the declassified archival documents made available so far from the former Soviet Union. Now it is safe perhaps to say that the USSR did not trigger the communist coup directly. Nevertheless, the indirect link between the nature of Afghan-Soviet relations and the fundamental change in the character of the Afghan political system is once again clear. These symptoms of political instability would not have possibly occurred had it not been for the close Soviet-Afghan cooperation which had made the penetration of economic, political and security institutions of the country possible for the pro-Soviet PDPA.

### Conclusion

Two interrelated dominant themes, ethno-nationalism and economic development, largely defined the shape of Afghanistan’s relations with South Asia and the Soviet Union during 1950s-1970s. Promotion of the Pushtunistan issue by Afghanistan was in significant contrast to the spirit of its relations with South Asia historically where religion, rather than ethno-nationalism, had played a central role in the past. As much as the Afghan ruling elites might have felt strongly about the justness of their pro-Pushtunistan policy, historical records and international law may not lend support to the rationality of the Afghan position; not to mention the fact that it harmed Afghanistan’s stability and made it highly dependent on the Soviet Union. Based on a comprehensive assessment of the various aspects of political stability, it would be difficult to establish conclusively whether Afghanistan was a stable or unstable polity during the 1950s-70s. However, there is no doubt that the nature of Afghanistan’s relations with Pakistan and the Soviet Union significantly influenced its political stability/instability. Political violence, government longevity, basic structural changes in the political system, legitimacy of the political system and the ability of the political system for effective decision-making were all influenced to varying degrees by the character of Afghanistan’s relations with its northern and southeastern neighbours.

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118 See, for example, Henry Bradsher, *Afghanistan and the Soviet Union*, pp. 82-83.
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Political violence was manifest in armed foreign incursions, violent demonstrations, inter-group clashes, government suppression and coups d'état. At least two government successions (1953 and 1963) were caused partly by the nature of Afghanistan’s relations with Pakistan, and two radical changes in the basic structural arrangements of the political system, namely the leaps from monarchy to the republican and to the communist systems, were caused at least indirectly by the character of Afghanistan’s relations with the Soviet Union. Similarly, to the extent that a political system’s traditional foreign policy orientation and boundary regimes could be defined as basic structural arrangements of that polity, major changes in these aspects of stability were also caused by the dynamics of Afghanistan’s relations with Pakistan.

While the legal legitimacy of Mohammad Zahir’s monarchy, and both customary and legal legitimacy of Daoud’s republic were questionable to the growing ranks of dissention in society on account of internal political factors, their ethical legitimacy was certainly affected by the nature of these polities’ relations with the Soviet Union and Pakistan. The degree to which the Afghan political systems adhered to the perceived imperatives of ethno-nationalism in relation to Pakistan might have influenced their acceptability to the ethno-nationalists. However, their burgeoning ties with the Soviet Union and adversarial relations with Pakistan was a barometer of their diminishing ethical legitimacy to one of the fastest growing political forces, the Islamic movement, in the country.

In the context of the study of political stability as a multifaceted social attribute, the Afghan political system’s ability for effective decision-making was influenced by the spirit of its relations with both Pakistan and the Soviet Union. Economic blockades and granting sanctuary to the anti-state elements from Afghanistan, were two main areas where the Afghan polity’s ability to affect economic development and inhibit aggressive political behaviour by coercive means was constrained by the nature of its relations with Pakistan. On the other hand, however, these capacities of the political system were strengthened by its close cooperation with the Soviet Union. It is evident, therefore, that the political stability of Afghanistan, as understood in the context of this thesis, was significantly influenced by the nature of its relations with the Soviet Union and Pakistan during 1950s-1970s.
CHAPTER THREE

Soviet Occupation and Transformation of Afghan-Pakistan Relations

The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and its aftermath provoked a groundswell of interest in both the media and academia about Afghanistan throughout the 1980s. Military occupation received most attention followed by commentaries about the cultural programmes which sought to 'sovietise' the Afghan society. This chapter, however, analyzes the Soviet policy in Afghanistan as a three-pronged integrated strategy, involving military, reconstruction and diplomatic efforts, undertaken primarily to achieve political stability in Afghanistan. Further, it will study the transformative influence of the Soviet occupation on the nature of Afghan-Pakistan relations and its implications for the political stability of Afghanistan beyond the 1980s.

The Soviet Invasion: Political Stability by Coercion?

As always, the Soviet Union was the first country to extend formal recognition to the new Afghan regime on 30 April 1978.\(^1\) Whether or not the Soviet leadership approved of the coup was immaterial, once the PDPA had seized power. The USSR had been presented with a fait accompli by the PDPA leaders and it found it imperative and expedient to help consolidate the new Afghan regime. Thus, within six months of the coup, over 30 agreements, worth more than US$14 billion, were concluded between the USSR and Afghanistan. These were augmented by 25 more agreements with other COMECON countries. The number of Soviet advisors increased to 700 by June and 2000 by November 1979.\(^2\) Their influence increased greatly in the Afghan armed forces where they took an active part in the planning and implementation of the security and military operations. Among the initial influx of the Soviet advisors there were many Central Asian Tajiks, Uzbeks and Turkmens who were apparently phased out later on in order to prevent them from being exposed to the growing religious and nationalistic intensity of the Afghan resistance.\(^3\)

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On 5 December 1978, Nour Mohammad Taraki, the first communist President of Afghanistan, and Brezhnev signed a 20-year friendship and cooperation agreement in Moscow. Article 4 of the agreement stipulated that the signatories ‘shall consult with each other and take by agreement appropriate measures to ensure the security, independence, and territorial integrity of the two countries’. The agreement provided for a bilateral framework to justify the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in subsequent year.

By committing to support the new regime in Afghanistan, the Soviet Union entangled itself in a quagmire which proved too expensive for it in the decade to come. The communist credentials of the Afghan government coupled with its radical and harsh policies led to widespread resentment among the public. Yet, instead of moderating its doctrinaire approach to government, the Afghan regime led by the Khalq faction of the PDPA and mainly dominated by Hafizullah Amin, instituted a reign of terror and oppression to force the Afghan people into submission. Parallel to this, the Khalqis also tried to get rid of the Parcham faction in the government with whom they had been reconciled only several months previously under Soviet pressure.

The Khalq-Parcham rivalry stemmed mainly from their different approaches to the institution of a communist state rather than any credible difference in the degree of loyalty they professed to communism. The Khalq leadership was a predominately Ghilzai Pushtun faction whereas the Parcham boasted a wider multiethnic urbane membership led by a ‘Persianised’ Durrani Pushtun whose father had served the Afghan monarchy as a military General in the previous decades. The ethno-social composition of the two factions also reflected on their policies: the Khalqis proved much more rough and radical Marxists than the Parchamis who exhibited traits of moderation and adjustment in their political behaviour. However, the Khalq faction eventually gained the upper hand after the 1978 coup, executing or expelling many of the Parcham members from the government. Thus, the continuity of the nascent communist regime was jeopardized under growing strain from within as well as by hostility coming from the people in general. The USSR saw these developments with much concern and advised moderation to the Khalqi regime.

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Public resentment proved a breeding ground for armed resistance. As the military and economic aid grew from the Soviet Union, so did the Afghan insurgency against the Kabul regime. In March 1979, the city of Herat rebelled against the government and in the process over forty Soviet advisors and their dependents were massacred. The USSR’s first reaction was an alert to its Ferghana division in Uzbekistan which would have presumably intervened had the direct threat to the Soviet citizens spread on a wider scale elsewhere in Afghanistan. The Herat uprising convinced the Soviet leadership to provide more military assistance to the Kabul government. Thus in late March, Soviet cargo planes loaded with tanks, armoured personnel carriers, and more importantly, the Mi-24 Hind helicopter gunships were delivered to Afghanistan. The gunships were among the latest and most sophisticated Soviet weaponry which apparently required Soviet personnel to operate and maintain until Afghans were fully trained years later. Also Mi-6 helicopters and more MiG-21 fighter-bombers were provided to the Afghan government.\(^7\)

The Herat uprising and deteriorating security prompted the USSR to dispatch high-powered military delegations to take stock of the situation. The first of these delegations was headed by General Aleksey Alekseyevich Yepishev who arrived in Kabul on 5 April 1979.\(^8\) General Yepishev had played a leading role in the 1968 Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia. He had visited that country in 1968 under somehow similar circumstances and had advocated a Warsaw Pact military intervention to prevent the loss of Soviet political control there. In mid-August 1979, another high-ranking Soviet military delegation visited Kabul and stayed there for nearly two months. The 50-member strong delegation was headed by General Ivan G. Pavlovskiy, the commander of all USSR ground forces. He had planned and commanded the invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968.\(^9\) It is highly unlikely that the presence of these senior delegations, led by Soviet Generals with such backgrounds, would not have alerted Hafizullah Amin, had he really been opposed to the invasion as some authors have tried to suggest.\(^10\)

On 1 September 1979, President Nour Mohammad Taraki traveled to Havana to participate in the Non-Aligned Nations Conference. On his way back, he stopped in Moscow. During his discussions with Kremlin leaders, he was pressured apparently to get

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\(^7\) Henry Bradsher, *Afghanistan and the Soviet Union*, pp. 102-103.


rid of his deputy, Hafizullah Amin, mend differences with Babrak Karmal, who along with his Parchami colleagues had been forced into exile in the Soviet block by the Khalqis, and widen up the base of his government by sharing power with the Parchamis. Furthermore, he was apparently tasked by the USSR leaders to prepare the ground for a Soviet military intervention. Soon after Taraki returned to Kabul, Soviet military buildup started in Central Asia in preparation for the invasion.

Besides military help, the Soviet Union also dispatched an experienced career diplomat, Vasily S. Safronchuk, to advise the PDPA regime along the path of more moderation and to urge it to broaden its public support by including non-communists in the government. Safronchuk worked as part of the USSR Embassy, but he was widely recognised to have independent influence and authority directly derived from Moscow. Meanwhile, the Soviet leadership was in favour of finding an alternative to Amin whose policies had antagonized the population. Nour Ahmad Etemadi, a former Ambassador to Moscow and Prime Minister (1967-1971), who had been thrown into prison by the new regime, was apparently one favourite candidate. The Soviet Embassy had reportedly approached him in the prison to discuss the matter. However, he was allegedly murdered by Amin in the prison to pre-empt the plan.

Most popular version of events which led to the killing of Taraki generally maintains that Amin had got wind of the news about the Brezhnev-Taraki understanding about his removal. By taking the initiative to arrest some of Taraki's supporters, he tried to present the Soviet Union once again with a fait accompli. However, Taraki's supporters were allegedly given asylum in the Soviet Embassy. Taraki summoned Amin to the Presidential Palace on 14 September 1979. Amin was reportedly reluctant to meet his President, but agreed only after receiving assurances of safe conduct by Ambassador Alexander Puzanov. On entering the Presidential Palace, Amin fell into an ambush which he survived. In retaliation, he arrested and killed Taraki and declared himself President of the country. Subsequently, Amin's foreign minister, Shah Wali, accused Puzanov of complicity.

in the anti-Amin conspiracy and requested that he be recalled which the Soviet Union complied with.\(^{15}\)

Throughout 1978-1980, the anti-communist resistance in Afghanistan grew stronger even as the government tried harsher measures to suppress it. Meanwhile the Parcham-Khalq rivalry and factional rivalry between Taraki and Amin supporters weakened the government to the extent that its continuity in the face of the insurgency became a cause of concern to the Soviet leadership.\(^{16}\) Possible collapse of the PDPA regime would have been very embarrassing and costly to the Soviet Union on political, economic and strategic levels. It would have cast doubt on the myth of invincibility of communism, undermined international confidence in the USSR’s ability to protect its friends, and blown away the influence which the Soviet Union had gained through its effective policy of economic assistance and political patronage over several decades in Afghanistan.

At the time of the Soviet invasion, and for a long period thereafter, some commentators viewed the invasion as the climax of a long-held Soviet objective to gain access to the Persian Gulf and the Indian Ocean.\(^{17}\) They argued that the occupation of Afghanistan brought the Soviet Union yet one more step closer to the realization of its cherished goal of having a stranglehold on the significant oil supplies, to the West, through the Straits of Hormuz in the Persian Gulf. In their view, this would have been accomplished by the Soviet military presence in the Shindand Airbase of Herat, which was only 200 miles from the Straits of Hormuz. Similarly it has been argued that access to mineral resources of Afghanistan was also a factor which made the invasion attractive to the Soviet leadership.\(^{18}\)

However, over the past decade, the validity of arguments advocating the existence of a compelling strategic ground for the invasion has been discounted. Any discussion of the Soviet invasion’s motives need to be preceded by an acknowledgment of the fact that after seizing power, President Taraki and his deputy, Hafizullah Amin, repeatedly requested the USSR to send combat Soviet personnel to Afghanistan.\(^{19}\) Their requests became even more desperate in the wake of the Herat uprising of March 1979, when they appealed to Soviet

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\(^{16}\) Anthony Arnold, Afghanistan: The Soviet Invasion in Perspective, pp. 96-97.


\(^{19}\) David N. Gibbs, ‘Reassessing Soviet Motives for Invading Afghanistan’, pp. 239-263.
leaders to send troops to Afghanistan in a major way. But after careful deliberation about the pros and cons of such a move, the Soviet leadership formally rejected the request on 20 March 1979.²⁰ It should also be noted that throughout the occupation of Afghanistan by the Soviet Union, their biggest air force presence was in the Bagram Airbase north of Kabul rather than Shindand or Qandahar airbases which were closer to Iran and Pakistan. Their fighter-bomber jets in Afghanistan, mainly Su-22, Su-25 and Mig-23, were not strategic bombers that would have threatened the Straits of Hormuz in the Persian Gulf. Nor were they among the most advanced Soviet jets at the time that could have an easy ride over the Iranian or Pakistani airspaces. Similarly, the Afghan air force used Mig-21 and Su-22 multipurpose jets, which did not have the capability for missions over the Pakistani or Iranian airspaces.²¹

New research reveals that the Soviet leadership’s decision was more influenced by the USSR’s predicament in Amin’s harsh and distrustful rule than other considerations. While the Soviet leadership had grown suspicious of Amin’s possible links with the United States, they did not want his communist regime to be overthrown by the resistance either. They had been concerned about the stability of not only Afghanistan but also of Central Asia, in the event of a Mujahideen takeover of power in Kabul. Therefore, in spite of misgivings by some of the Politburo members of the CPSU, the USSR’s decision to intervene in Afghanistan appears more as an act of desperation to stabilize a crumbling client political system. Other factors might have reinforced the decision for invasion, including Brezhnev’s personal feeling of insult by Amin murdering Taraki and a possible inclination on the part of some of the military leaders to test the Soviet troops and weapons in actual combat.²²

After General Pavlovskiy’s completion of assessment mission in Afghanistan and return to Moscow in October 1979, the Soviet army reserves in Central Asia were brought to active duty in two divisions and put near the Afghan border.²³ Several weeks before the

²¹ Almost a year after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, some prominent academics associated with prestigious US defence institutions, such as the Naval Postgraduate School, asserted that the Soviet Union had supplied Mig-23 fighter-bombers to the Afghan government in 1979. See Jiri Valenta, ‘From Kabul to Prague: The Soviet Style of Invasion’, International Security, Vol. No. 5, Issue No. 2, Autumn 1980, p. 116. However, the fact is that Afghanistan has never received any Mig-23s or Su-25s. The country has never acquired any Soviet jet fighters beyond the Mig-21 and Su-22 class. The Mig-23 and Su-25s used by the Soviet pilots during the occupation years were taken all back to the USSR after their withdrawal from Afghanistan.
deployment of the ground forces, the Soviet military airlifted thousands of its airborne units into key strategic locations in Afghanistan including Kabul. Amin was perfectly satisfied that at long last the USSR had concurred with the request to help his government more actively against the insurgency. Even after the Soviet ground forces had crossed the Amu Darya, Amin was buoyant that they would strengthen his regime. Apparently the only question which had bothered him at that stage was ‘the best way to formulate the news about Soviet military help to [the PDPA regime] for the world’.

The ground deployment came on the eve of the New Year in 1979. The Soviet forces killed the Khalq President Hafizullah Amin and installed Babrak Karmal, in effect empowering the Parcham faction of the PDPA. Amin was demonized as an agent of the CIA and efforts were made by the new government to distance itself from the brutalities of the previous government. The Soviet military strategy for suppression of the Afghan resistance drew heavily on their accumulated experience in dealing with the resistance in Central Asia during 1920s and 1930s. It involved: isolating the resistance from the rest of world by cutting supply lines; depriving the resistance of local support and livelihood by implementing scotch-earth policies leading to depopulation of the countryside; eliminating the resistance through direct military campaigns and assassination of its leadership.

In keeping with this policy, the Soviet and Afghan forces tried hard to block the Mujahideen’s lifeline from Pakistan. They even established outposts equipped with tanks, radar and helicopter landing infrastructure on sections of the Afghan-Pakistan border. However, they had little success in containing the insurgency. As the hostilities continued, the KGB and the KhAD (the Afghan intelligence agency) stepped up sabotage and subversion on the Mujahideen’s supply routes and Pakistan through offer of bribes to tribal elements along the border. The policy had only limited success in terms of creating hurdles against continues flow of resources to the resistance in Afghanistan.

25 Amin Saikal, Modern Afghanistan, p. 194.
The occupation was not without costs for the USSR either. On average the USSR spent US$15 million a day during the years of its military presence in Afghanistan. It provided at least 11.33 billion rubles worth of military assistance alone to the Afghan security forces during 1980 to 1990. Military equipment provided to the Afghan security forces during this period included hundreds of thousands of infantry weapons, thousands of tanks, other armoured vehicles and artillery pieces including Scud missiles, and several hundred fighter-bomber jets, transport planes and helicopter gunships. Apart from the military costs, the Soviet Union had to incur hundreds of millions more in other expenses for sustaining the Afghan government and economy. Moreover, at least 13,310 Soviet military personnel died during the occupation. Psychological effects of the war was immense on the Soviet soldiers many of whom are said to have suffered from posttraumatic stress disorder back home, many more having become drug addicts in Afghanistan.

Some authors have pointed out that the Afghans’ resistance against occupation contributed to the spirit of freedom in Eastern Europe, Baltic countries and Central Asia who had long been dominated by the USSR. There are also those who believe that the bitter experience in Afghanistan dissuaded the Soviet leadership from further adventurisms in East European countries such as Poland in early 1980s. The Soviet occupation of Afghanistan contributed significantly to the revival of Islamic awareness and anti-Soviet feelings in Central Asia. During 1984-1987, groups of Afghan Mujahideen organized attacks into Central Asia from Afghanistan. They also distributed thousands of copies of the Quran to agitate the Muslim populations of Central Asia against the Soviet Union.

The relevance of Afghan-Soviet relations to political stability in Afghanistan is clear from the above. Soviet occupation was primarily a coercive measure aimed at affecting political stability in Afghanistan. The Soviet leadership was clearly aware of the significance of public perceptions as a cornerstone of political stability. It encouraged the Khalq leadership

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29 Sandy Gall, Afghanistan: Agony of a Nation, p. 142.
32 Diego Cordovez and Selig Harrison, Out Of Afghanistan, p. 72.
36 Alexei Vassiliev, Russian Policy in the Middle East, pp. 260.
to make the government more acceptable to the public by broadening its base and moderating its radical policies. Yet the Soviet leadership does not seem to have appreciated fully the significance of ethical legitimacy which has been based largely on the degree of religiosity of the political system in Afghanistan historically. Underestimating the role of ethical legitimacy in political stability, the Soviet Union undertook a counterproductive invasion of the country. The direct involvement of the atheist Soviet system in propping up the PDPA regime further undermined the latter’s ethical legitimacy, thereby increasing political instability even as increasingly coercive measures were used to suppress anti-regime political violence.

Rebuilding Afghanistan: Non-Military Effort for Political Stability

By implementing a programme of rebuilding based on the Soviet experience in Central Asia in the 1920s-1940s, the USSR effectively attempted to follow a parallel track, in addition to the military occupation, to bring about political stability under the PDPA rule. Some authors have used the term ‘sovietisation/sovietization’ to denote a pejorative connotation to the Soviet reconstruction process that sought to reshape Afghanistan in a Soviet model. They have also pointed out that these programmes were counterproductive because they lacked indigenous roots. Though the idiom reflects relatively accurately on the overall nature of Soviet reconstruction effort in Afghanistan in the 1980s, it does not capture the basic objective of the Soviet policy in implementing such programmes. Furthermore, it does not address the question of why such counterproductive policies could be implemented forcefully in Central Asia in 1920s-1940s, but not in Afghanistan in the 1980s. After all the Central Asians had also put up fierce resistance against Sovietisation of their societies.

The Soviet reconstruction policies involved introduction of wide-ranging social, political and economic initiatives to strengthen the PDPA regime. In order to ‘indigenize’ the process, the Soviet and PDPA governments needed to create a large pool of Soviet-educated personnel for the Afghan government. Therefore, one of the earliest initiatives was to greatly increase the number of Afghan students sent to the Soviet Union and other

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socialist block countries. As a result, the number of Afghan students sent to socialist countries rose from 4,000, in late 1979, to over 7,000, in early 1981. In 1985, the number of Afghan students in the Soviet Union alone was estimated around 25,000, and the two countries had agreed to keep up a steady stream of at least 1,500 Afghan students per year to the USSR. Among them were also many young Afghan children who undertook various short and long term courses. Many were meant to remain in the Soviet Union for over ten years until they completed school and higher education. At the end of such a long period, they would expectedly be acculturated in the USSR to ensure a consolidated pool of loyal future communist leaders for Afghanistan. Significant numbers of these children were also sent to the Soviet Central Asian republics of Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan and Tajikistan. By 1986, over 90,000 Afghan students and trainees had taken Soviet-run courses either in the Soviet Union or in Afghanistan.

Furthermore, boarding educational institutions such as Panweslygab-e-Watan (Fatherland’s Nursery) were established for orphans where they underwent more vigorous indoctrination than their counterparts in normal schools. In the same vein, the school curricula in Afghanistan were replaced to accord to Soviet standards. The economic, educational and cultural progress achieved in Central Asia was portrayed as a model to be followed by Afghanistan. Numerous Afghan religious delegations were taken to Central Asia to impress them with the Soviet-sponsored Islamic gatherings and conferences of Muslim religious leaders in the Soviet Union. Organic links were instituted between the newly-created Afghan Ministry of Religious Affairs and Soviet-sponsored Muslim religious institutions in Central Asia.

Drawing on the Soviet experience in Central Asia, efforts were also made to restructure interethnic relations in the country. One aspect of this programme was perhaps best signified by the slogan ‘national and cultural rights to be ensured’ for the ethnic minorities. This meant that the mosaic of ethno-linguistic communities in Afghanistan would be encouraged to promote and use their own languages. Many authors have pointed out that the policy aimed at reducing grass-roots communication to a bare minimum by undermining the Persian/Dari language which is the main language and the lingua franca of

43 Antonio Giustozzi, War, Politics and Society in Afghanistan, p. 55.
all the peoples of Afghanistan.45 Instead, Russian would have become the common language of various ethno-linguistic groups in the same way that it had become in Central Asia in the earlier decades.46 While such suspicions were not unfounded given the precedence of Soviet policies and their ultimate effects on Central Asia, it could also be argued that another aim of the linguistic policies was to boost the communist political system’s popularity, and therefore its stability, among all ethnic groups.

On the economic front also the new regime tried to reshape the country in the image of Soviet Central Asia. Soon after the 1978 coup, some 300,000 poor and landless peasant families were given properties confiscated from the rich landowners. In conjunction with the land reforms, some 1,300 peasants’ cooperatives, which fulfilled the same role as the USSR’s collective farms, were established. In 1980, workers unions and trade unions in the shape of such Soviet organisations were established. These economic institutions were designed to affect increased centralised economic control, with a view to strengthening the PDPA regime’s rule over the country.47

The Soviet Communist Party helped reorganize the PDPA in its own image and trained its cadres in how to run the government. Its membership was increased from 41,000 in 1980, to 205,000 in 1988.48 An Institute of Social Sciences was established under direct auspices of the Central Committee of the PDPA in Kabul to train socialist cadres for the Afghan government. Increased efforts were made to expand the grassroots communist organisations, such as the Sawman-e Peshahangan-e Afghanistan (Afghanistan’s Pioneer Organisation) on the model of Soviet Pioneers, and the Sawman-e Democratic-e Jawanan-e Afghanistan (Democratic Youth Organisation of Afghanistan or DYOA) on that of the Soviet Young Communist League (Komsomol), to indoctrinate the new generation and extend the social base of the PDPA.49 The DYOA’s membership registered manifold increase – 20,000 in 1980 to 200,000 in 1986.50 New institutions, such as the Soviet-Afghan Friendship Society and friendship chambers in many of the Afghan ministries and government enterprises, were opened.

50 Antonio Giustozzi, War, Politics and Society in Afghanistan, p. 252.
Soviet Central Asia played a significant role in all aspects of the rebuilding efforts. Due to cultural and linguistic affinities, many educators, teachers, writers, specialists and supervisors were sent from Central Asia to Afghanistan to help in the process. Also much published materials flooded the country from Central Asia. In the words of Rasul Amin, Central Asia was used as a ‘conduit for Sovietisation’ of Afghanistan. Yet, unlike the results in Central Asia, the reconstruction effort did not succeed in strengthening the communist regime. As in Central Asia, the programme was admittedly counterproductive because it lacked sufficient indigenous roots. But more importantly, the reconstruction effort failed in its aim of strengthening the communist regime because the Soviet and Afghan forces did not succeed in isolating Afghanistan from the South Asian and Middle Eastern regions; something which they had accomplished against the Central Asian ‘Basmachis’ in the 1930s.

In addition to the obvious military significance of the supply lifelines from Pakistan and Iran against the military occupation, the role of these two Muslim countries in ensuring the triumph of Muslim political thought against the communist ideology cannot be overestimated. Just as it played the role of a conduit for Western military assistance to the Afghan resistance, it also linked the Afghan Mujahideen with a wide array of Islamic organisations, movements and prominent individuals from all over the Muslim world. Besides, the Mujahideen factions in both Pakistan and Iran established their own cultural, educational and religious institutions which were flooded by Muslim educational materials from the Middle East and other Muslim countries. Hence, if the PDPA sent tens of thousands of Afghan students to the Soviet Union, the Mujahideen could recruit their cadres from among the millions of Afghan refugees living in a charged religious environment in Pakistan and Iran. They also had the support of tens of thousands of religiously-motivated foreign Mujahideen who linked up with the Afghans through Pakistan and Iran.

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The Soviet-sponsored reconstruction efforts during the rule of the PDPA in Afghanistan were primarily aimed at affecting basic structural changes to transform the pattern of state-society relations in Afghanistan. The institutional rebuilding and the cultural programmes sought to transform the Afghan society in such a way that it would become more accommodative of the communist political system. In other words, their goal was to harmonize the political-political demands of the society with the character of the political system —thereby ensuring more political stability. Similarly, the implementation of the Soviet-sponsored economic policies of the PDPA regime went in tandem with the perceived requirements of political stability in the country. While the Khalqi leadership initially introduced radical socialist policies and rushed to centralize the national economy, each of its Parchami successors, including Babrak Karmal and Najibullah, progressively moderated their predecessors’ doctrinaire approach to economic management. Apart from the possible economic imperatives of such policies, they also sought to regain the confidence of the propertied class in order to take the sting out of the insurgency. In other words, the Soviet-sponsored policies of the PDPA on the economic field were also adjusted so as to affect political stability in the country.

Proximity Talks: Diplomatic Effort for Political Stability

In the context of Afghanistan, the term ‘proximity talks’ is used to describe the marathon process of negotiations in Geneva from 1982 to 1988 between Afghanistan and Pakistan under the auspices of the United Nations. The modality of proximity talks was such that it allowed the two countries’ respective delegations to negotiate through the intermediary of the UN representative without having to see each other directly. It was designed to allay the concerns of the Pakistani government which claimed that direct negotiations with the PDPA regime would amount to its recognition officially; something which President Zia was not prepared to concede.54 It is worth mentioning that throughout the 1980s Pakistan had a functional Embassy with accredited Charges d’Affairs in Kabul. Nevertheless, President Zia had little interest in a negotiated settlement of the conflict in Afghanistan because the Afghan conflict had helped strengthen his regime.55 Moreover, he was strongly against the PDPA government.

55 Diego Cordovez and Selig Harrison, Out Of Afghanistan, pp. 165-174.
Pakistan’s mission to the UN always played a key role in rallying support at the UN General Assembly to condemn the invasion. It lobbied for the appointment of a UN Special Representative for Afghanistan who would convene trilateral meetings between Pakistan, Iran and Afghanistan. However, Afghanistan was only interested to hold separate bilateral meetings with Pakistan and Iran without the UN involvement. The Soviet Union was also against the appointment of a UN Special Representative to Afghanistan. The UN Secretary-General, Kurt Waldheim, announced the appointment of Javier Perez de Cuellar as his ‘Personal Representative’ to Afghanistan in 1981. When Afghanistan later on accepted the modality of talks to be trilateral, Pakistan backtracked from its earlier position and turned down the proposition because by then it had begun negotiating with the US on a major military assistance programme. However, under UN pressure, both Pakistan and Afghanistan gradually came round to accept the mechanism of proximity talks, which started between the two countries in 1982 at Geneva.

The launch of negotiations came in the same year as the death of the hard-line Soviet leader, Brezhnev, who was succeeded by Yuri V. Andropov as GSCPSU in November 1982. Andropov was well aware of the multidimensional nature of political stability. In 1983, he sent his representative, Colonel Anatoly Tkachev, to broker a truce with the main resistance commander, Ahmad Shah Massoud. In doing so, the new Soviet leadership effectively recognised the legitimacy of the Afghan resistance as a popular movement rather than a retrogressive reactionary force bent on stemming the march of a proletariat revolution spearheaded by the PDPA in Afghanistan. Tkachev acknowledged that the invasion of Afghanistan was a blunder undertaken on the wrong presumption that the Afghan resistance simply stemmed from an unholy alliance between the external imperialism and the internal reactionary forces. He admitted that the previous Soviet leadership had underestimated the genuine and popular nature of the rebellion. Hence, in addition to encouraging the Afghan-Pakistan indirect negotiations, Andropov made serious attempts to reach a settlement in Afghanistan whereupon the Soviet troops could have been withdrawn from Afghanistan at the earliest opportunity. He had come to the conclusion that the continued occupation of Afghanistan was not only counterproductive to its own political stability but was also doing considerable diplomatic, social and economic damage to the USSR. The short tenure of Andropov’s hard-line successor,

56 Ibid, pp. 73-88.
57 Saleh Mohammad Registani, Massoud Wa Azadi [in Persian], (Kabul: Massoud Foundation, 2004).
58 Riaz M. Khan, Untying the Afghan Knot, pp. 105-107.
Konstantin Chernenko (February 1984 – March 1985), did not make much impact either way.

Subsequently, Mikhail Sergeyevich Gorbachev’s tenure (1985-1991) brought significant changes to the Soviet policy in regard to the occupation of Afghanistan. He was convinced of the need to withdraw the Soviet forces, even while acquiescing to his generals’ opinion to finish off the conflict through military escalation in the first two years of his tenure — political stability by coercion.59 Thousands of more spetsnaz soldiers were sent and a celebrated General, Mikhail Zaitsev, was transferred from East Germany to assume the overall command of the Soviet forces in Afghanistan. Yet as early as 1986, a reappraisal of the Soviet policy in regards to Afghanistan and global politics could be detected from Gorbachev’s statements. In his report to the 27th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in April 1986, he referred to the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan as a ‘bleeding wound’. He acknowledged the imperative of improving Soviet-Pakistan relations as an essential element of his foreign policy in the region and a necessary requirement to effect political stability in Afghanistan.60

Gorbachev’s government deviated from the longstanding Soviet and Afghan position which, until then, advocated that the withdrawal of the Soviet forces would be covered by a separate Soviet-Afghan bilateral agreement rather than within the framework of an agreement that would come out of the proximity negotiations between Afghanistan and Pakistan. The USSR also agreed to become a co-guarantor of the settlement which effectively put the US on notice to show similar goodwill towards UN-sponsored negotiations. Another major obstacle against the successful process of the Geneva negotiations was the Afghan President, Babrak Karmal. He was against the withdrawal of Soviet forces. He was offended by Pakistan’s refusal to hold direct negotiations with his government. He was convinced that Pakistan would renege on its commitments even if the Soviet troops withdrew.61 The Soviet leadership had been urging Karmal to broaden the popular base of his government by bringing in non-communist personalities, but he would not seriously heed the advice. To add to his woes, the Soviet leadership viewed Karmal as a lazy demagogue unfit for the fast changing circumstances after the assumption of power by Gorbachev. At last, the Soviet leadership forced Karmal out of power in favour of

Najibullah, who had headed the feared Afghan intelligence, KhAD, previously. Karmal stepped aside with a grudge against his erstwhile benefactor, the Soviet Union, whose ‘global interests’ he blamed for his downfall. In May and November 1986, he resigned from both his official positions as General Secretary of the PDPA and President respectively.\(^{62}\)

Besides encouraging the necessary adjustments in the character of the PDPA regime, such as the cooption of non-PDPA members, moderation in the sovietisation reforms and emphasis on respecting the religious and cultural sensitivities of the Afghans, the Soviet leadership also sought to contact the Mujahideen leaders in order to convince them about the need to come to terms with the Afghan government. The first meeting of some of the Mujahideen leaders, including Burhanuddin Rabbani and Sebghatullah Mojaddadi, took place with the First Deputy Foreign Minister of the USSR, Yuli M. Vorontsov, in Taif from 3 to 5\(^{th}\) of December 1988. Yet the meeting produced no commitment towards any role for the members of the PDPA regime in a post-communist government.\(^{63}\)

Throughout the process of the proximity negotiations, the Soviet Union as well as Pakistan each tried to influence the formation of a new political order in Kabul, where their respective protégés would have major influence in the future. The Soviet Union contended that the PDPA regime was a reality which could not be simply overlooked, and Pakistan advocated the formation of an Islamic government preferably dominated by the Hezb-e-Islami of Hekmatyar. As always, the issue of the Durand Line was a persistent bone of contention during the Geneva negotiations. The Afghan leaders feared that Pakistan was attempting to incorporate such wordings in the text of the final agreement that would amount to the recognition of the border by Afghanistan.\(^{64}\) Pakistan attempted to use the indirect negotiations as a diplomatic track, in parallel to its direct support to the Mujahideen, to push for a post-communist Afghan political system where the PDPA role would be non-existent or at least reduced to irrelevance.

Four main issues were discussed through several rounds of the proximity negotiations, at the end of which the Geneva Accords, formally known as the Agreements on the Settlement of the Situation Relating to Afghanistan, were signed on 14 April 1988. They


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included: non-interference and non-intervention in the internal affairs of one another between Afghanistan and Pakistan; a declaration by the Soviet and US governments as the co-guarantors of the agreement; the return of the Afghan refugees from Pakistan; and the interrelationship between these four instruments of the agreement which stipulated the order of their implementation against the phased withdrawal of the Soviet troops from Afghanistan.  

In spite of the Geneva Accords, Afghan-Pakistan relations witnessed little improvement. As of November 1988, barely few months after the signing of the agreement, Afghanistan alone had lodged more than 85 official protests against Pakistan’s violations of the accords with the United Nations Good Offices Mission in Afghanistan and Pakistan (UNGOMAP). The Soviet forces verifiably withdrew from Afghanistan by May 1989; however Pakistan’s interference and support to the Mujahideen did not stop. Nor did the Mujahideen have to uphold any provisions of the Geneva Accords, as they were not a party to it. Given the significant role of ethical legitimacy as an aspect of political stability in Afghanistan, it was highly unrealistic on the part of the UN negotiator to expect the Mujahideen to cooperate with the ‘godless’ PDPA elements simply because the latter had an agreement with Pakistan. Similarly, the supply of arms from the Soviet Union to the PDPA regime and from Pakistan to the Mujahideen continued largely unabated since the Geneva Accords had not proscribed arms shipments. 

In addition to the ethical reservations on the part of the Mujahideen about the Geneva Accords, its failure to put Afghanistan on the course of stability could be attributed to a number of other technical factors as well. The negotiations did not attempt to address the most serious issues, the Durand Line dispute and the Pushtunistan issue, which had damaged Afghan-Pakistan relations even before the Soviet invasion. Diego Cordovez, the UN mediator in proximity talks, intimated in his account of the negotiations that at times he did not appreciate the full implications of the Durand Line dispute in his diplomatic efforts. The international guarantees, without a sanctioned regime of deterrence to ensure  

65 Riaz M. Khan, Untying the Afghan Knot, pp. 95-99. For the full text of the Geneva Accords see Diego Cordovez and Selig Harrison, Out Of Afghanistan, pp. 389-397. 
68 Diego Cordovez and Selig Harrison, Out Of Afghanistan, pp. 124-125.
strict adherence to the terms of the agreement, could hardly prevent repeated violations by the belligerent parties. The provision about the return of Afghan refugees was highly symbolic, as the bulk of the Afghan refugees had escaped both persecution and the harsh economic conditions in Afghanistan. Many of them were affiliated with the seven Mujahideen factions in Pakistan that opposed the continuity of the PDPA influence in any form whatsoever in the future political system. Last but not least, the survival of the PDPA as the main powerbroker in Kabul could hardly hold any prospects of improvement in Afghan-Pakistan relations because the PDPA regime had always been close to India and anti-Pakistan.

Thus, despite the long and exhaustive process of negotiations through the UN intermediary to prepare the ground for the end of hostilities and stabilization of Afghanistan, the final result was a few pages of legalistic documents that remained largely irrelevant to the future progress of events in the country. The Soviet leadership under Gorbachev had already made a decision to withdraw its forces from Afghanistan with or without the Geneva Accords. The Geneva Accords were used by the Soviet leadership merely as a face-saving exist strategy that allowed its forces to leave Afghanistan, while ensuring that the PDPA control of the government remained intact. In other words, the proximity talks formed a third pillar of the Soviet strategy to ensure the stability of a client political system in Afghanistan. No wonder the subsequent events, finally culminating in the overthrow of the PDPA regime in 1992, occurred largely outside the purview of the Geneva Accords and other UN initiatives.

Disintegration of the PDPA Regime

Barely few months after the collapse of the Soviet Union in late 1991, the last PDPA government, led by President Najibullah, disintegrated in mid-April 1992. The Afghan regime was weakened by both the collapse of the Soviet Union and the internal tensions which had divided the government and its security apparatus. The fall of the Soviet Union effectively severed the one lifeline which had enabled its client regime to maintain the

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loyalty of regional power-holders until 1992." Without the Soviet support, Najibullah tried to bolster his control of the government by resorting to ethno-politics which ultimately proved counterproductive. Early in 1992, he issued orders to reshuffle some of the senior Tajik and Uzbek military officers in northern provinces and replace them with loyal Pashtun officers mainly from his southern home region of Paktya, Paktika and Khost provinces. Some of the northern military commanders who were ordered to return to Kabul included Major General Momin (Tajik), Commander of the Hairatan Garrison, Major General Juma Nazimi (Tajik), Commander of the 18th Division, Brigadier General Helaluddin Helal (Tajik), Commander of the Mazar Airbase and Major General Ahmad Yar, Commander of the Interior Ministry forces in the Balkh Province. The reshuffle plan was not limited to these officers. Najibullah hoped to undermine the power of Lieutenant General Abdul Rashid Dostum (Uzbek) as well. This was to be achieved later through the collaboration of the newly-appointed officers and some of the former Hezb-e-Islami militias who had joined the communist regime in the north."

Most of the Tajik and Uzbek officers, including Major General Mumin and Brigadier General Helal, defied Najibullah’s authority. Instead of going to Kabul, they built up fortifications in the port-town of Hairatan against possible government reprisal. Lt. General Dostum and Major General Mansoor Nadiri (Ismailia Shia) joined in the rebellion against the communist regime. The rebel officers sought help from Ahmad Shah Massoud, who had already established an Islamic civil-military administration in a number of the northern provinces he had wrested out of Kabul’s control. Concurrently, the Pashtun leadership of the PDPA, including the Defence Minister, Aslam Watanjar, Interior Minister, Raz Mohammad Paktin, the Vice President, General Mohammad Rafi, and the Chief Commander of the Northern Zone, Juma Atsak aligned themselves with the Hezb-e-Islami of Hekamatyar."

This is how Najibullah lost control of the government and the northern provinces, not as a result of the ‘cobbling together’ by Iran of the ‘Northern Alliance’ as some academics have inaccurately alleged." The Northern Alliance — United Islamic Front for the Salvation of Afghanistan (UIFSA) — came into existence many years later in the wake of the Taliban..."
advances in northern Afghanistan. Halliday and Tanin have observed that the importance of the aid cut-off from the Soviet Union was only secondary, and that the main factor which caused the PDPA regime to crumble suddenly was the internecine factionalism within the PDPA leadership. While not without merits, this view, however, ignores the fact that factionalism had for a long time been a feature of PDPA politics. It also seems to ignore the nonmaterial role of the Soviet Union as an awe-inspiring superpower which helped maintain the Afghan regime’s outward cohesiveness despite its internal frictions. Had the Soviet Union not collapsed earlier to give way to the Tajik, Uzbek and Turkmen states in Central Asia, it is doubtful that the PDPA military commanders could have rebelled in the north against the authority of its client regime in Kabul.

This rapid unfolding of events in Afghanistan overtook the UN peace plan which called for an interim administration comprising members of the Afghan expatriates in the West, the Mujahideen groups in Pakistan and Iran, and members of the communist regime of Najibullah. By mid-April 1992, while Massoud had amassed his forces at the northern gates of Kabul, awaiting the Mujahideen leadership in Peshawar to form an interim government that would assume power in Kabul, Hekmatyar was already sneaking his fighters into key positions in Kabul with the help of the Pushtun PDPA leaders and military officers. In late April, Massoud gave orders to his 10,000-strong force to enter Kabul. The entry of the Mujahideen to Kabul marked the ultimate triumph of the Islamic movement against the PDPA regime.

Pakistan Transformed

Afghans are fighting the war for Pakistan. We must support them. American interest has been regenerated because of Afghanistan. Let us cash in on this. President Zia-ul-Haq.

During the 1970s, Pakistan was reeling under the effects of US economic sanctions due to concerns about its nuclear programme. But as soon as the 1978 communist coup took place in Afghanistan, Pakistan’s government saw an opportunity for itself to persuade the US to lift the sanctions. High ranking Pakistani officials started urging the US government

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80 Rizwan Hussain, Pakistan and the Emergence of Islamic Militancy in Afghanistan (Hampshire: Ashgate, 2005), p. 115.
to forgo its past reservations about Pakistan and pay attention to the threat which a Soviet client regime in Afghanistan posed to its foreign policy objectives in the region. They were pushing the US government to recognise the 'historic readjustment' which had occurred in the region where the needs of facing the new Soviet challenge supposedly far outweighed the rationale for economic and military sanctions on Pakistan.\(^*\) In effect, Pakistan was trying to position itself as the regional bulwark against communism. The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, and the Iranian Revolution which overthrew the US-allied Iranian monarchy and replaced it with Ayatullah Khomeini’s Islamic regime in 1978, put Pakistan firmly in place to manipulate US fears about possible further Soviet incursion into South Asia and the Middle East.\(^*\)

For its part, the Khalqi regime of Afghanistan, attempted to revive the Pushtunistan issue immediately after seizing power.\(^*\) Yet with the exodus of the Afghan refugees fleeing to Pakistan and Iran, gone were the times when the Afghan governments could orchestrate instability at will in the Pushtun areas across the border. With a fast-swelling population of the Afghan refugees as well as the leadership of the insurgency on its soil, Pakistan was now in a position to foment rebellion in Afghanistan rather than the other way around.\(^*\) President Zia-ul-Haq did not become happy when Daoud was overthrown. Of late, Daoud had indicated his willingness to resolve the Afghan-Pakistan enmity on all issues including the border dispute and the Pushtunistan. Nevertheless, Zia decided to talk with the new Afghan leadership. Even as Taraki and Amin tried to hold him off, he insisted and went to Kabul and offered to talk over any outstanding problems. He met Taraki on 9 September 1978 in Kabul, but it did not induce any promising signs for the two countries’ relations in future. Again in September 1979, Zia and Taraki met on the sidelines of the non-aligned summit in Havana. Facing increased threats to the stability of his regime and the important role of Pakistan in it, Taraki appeared more conciliatory this time. He offered to recognise the Durand Line if Pakistan would agree to seal it against insurgent infiltration. Zia suggested that Afghanistan could just as well seal its side of the border, which was a difficult task. Taraki invited Zia to visit Kabul but before long the host was overthrown by his deputy Hafizullah Amin.\(^*\)

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\(^{83}\) Rizwan Hussain, *Pakistan and the Emergence of Islamic Militancy in Afghanistan*, p. 98.


Amin tried to improve relations with Pakistan by toning down the Pushtunistan rhetoric. The Afghan foreign minister, Shah Wali, invited Pakistan's foreign minister, Agha Shahi, to visit Kabul. Agha Shahi procrastinated his visit. Amin was soon killed in the wake of the USSR invasion. In fact, Pakistan had little interest in mending ties with the PDPA government. President Carter had issued a secret directive on 3 July 1979 to assist the Afghan Islamic movement. Pakistani leaders had begun to see the political, economic and strategic advantages in the existence of a Soviet-installed communist regime in Afghanistan. The Soviet invasion flung the US government into action to take preventive measures against any prospects of further USSR inroads into South Asia and the Middle East. Carter requested President Anwar Sadat of Egypt to supply Soviet-made weapons to the Mujahideen, which, if captured, could not be tracked to the US. President Carter authorized the CIA to carry out a covert assistance programme to the Afghan resistance, which was to be funded in parity by the US and Saudi Arabia. Pakistan agreed to serve as a conduit for the delivery of military and financial assistance to the Afghan Islamic resistance—the Mujahideen. By 1991, the value of the US and Saudi assistance to the Mujahideen had reached US$10 billion.

In return for agreeing to become a conduit for the delivery of assistance, Pakistan exacted substantial price from the US government. David McGiffert, then US Assistant Secretary of Defence for International Security Affairs, reveals that in the course of negotiations the Pakistanis were more interested in using the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan to strengthen their own military capabilities against India than they were concerned about a threat from Afghanistan.

What they were really after ... was tanks, and high-performance aircraft like the F-16. It was perfectly clear that their orientation as far as equipment was concerned was what would be useful on the Indian border. They weren't very interested in the sort of things we thought they needed to secure the Afghan border.

Soon after the invasion, President Carter lifted the arms embargo and offered US$200 million in military and another US$200 million in economic aid, over a period of two years

87 Rizwan Hussain, *Pakistan and the Emergence of Islamic Militancy in Afghanistan*, 111.
89 Rizwan Hussain, *Pakistan and the Emergence of Islamic Militancy in Afghanistan*, p. 119.
90 Diego Cordovez and Selig Harrison, *Out Of Afghanistan*, p. 57.
to Pakistan. Confident that the US did not have much choice but to rely on Pakistan, President Zia dismissed the offer as ‘peanuts’.\(^1\) The Pakistani government wanted ‘several billion dollars in aid to modernise its defences’.\(^2\) A year later, on 15 September 1981, the Reagan administration rewarded Pakistan with a US$3.2 billion aid package for a six-year period, beginning on 1 October 1982. Of the total sum, US$1.5 billion was military, and the remaining US$1.7 billion economic assistance. In addition Pakistan was allowed to buy forty F-16 jet fighters, valued at around US$1.1 billion, from the US.\(^3\) Also the People’s Republic of China significantly increased its military assistance to Pakistan to counter the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan.\(^4\) Saudi Arabia and other Middle Eastern countries proved at least as great a source of economic support as the West in general to the Afghan Mujahideen. Around 30 to 50 percent of the US aid meant to the Afghan Mujahideen never reached its intended recipients but was skimmed off by Pakistani authorities.\(^5\)

When in May 1985 a visiting US government delegation put to President Zia the idea of supplying antiaircraft Stinger missiles to the Afghan Mujahideen, President Zia reportedly ‘hemmed and hawed’ about the advisability of such a move. Later, he changed his mind and urged the United States to first supply Stingers and Sidewinder air-to-air missiles to Pakistan armed forces and only then he would be ready to consider whether the Afghans should receive it. In July the same year, the United States delivered over twenty Stingers and a larger number of Sidewinder missiles solely to the armed forces of Pakistan.\(^6\) Supply of Stinger missiles to the Afghan Mujahideen started a year later in 1986. Pakistan also used the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan for the benefit of its military nuclear programme. As Sultan Mohammad Khan, then Pakistan’s Ambassador to the US, said: ‘we made the connection between Afghanistan and the nuclear question clear many times, in many ways’.\(^7\) President Zia had made it clear publicly many times that Pakistan would become a conduit for assistance to the Afghan Mujahideen only if the US dropped opposition to its nuclear programme. In 1981, the Reagan administration gave the necessary clearance

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\(^7\) Ibid, pp. 57 and 66.
certificate to the Congress about Pakistan's nuclear programme. In 1982, the requirements of the Symington Amendment were waived exceptionally in the case of Pakistan's nuclear programme so as to allow the delivery of the US economic and military aid package to the country. The waiver of the Symington Amendment in favour of Pakistan enabled Zia's government to acquire nuclear weapons capability.98

During 1986-1987, President Zia demanded the delivery of the Airborne Warning and Control System (AWACS) planes from the US under the pretext that they were needed to monitor the incursions of the Soviet and Afghan aircraft into Pakistani airspace. But many analysts believed that his real intention was to use the planes against India. The US officials were aware of the fact that the Afghan conflict was the main reason binding the US and Pakistan together in an alliance of convenience.99 Pakistani leaders also gave an impression that if they did not support the Afghan Mujahideen, the Soviet forces would next move to subdue Pakistan. They treated Afghanistan as Pakistan's first line of defence against a perceived Soviet threat to South Asia. General Zia was blunt about this when he said: 'We have to [support the Mujahideen]. It is Afghanistan today, but it could be Pakistan tomorrow, you know. Even if it is in fifty years time.'100

The Soviet occupation of Afghanistan brought substantial economic, political and strategic rewards to Pakistan. At the minimum, the country received US$7.5 billion worth of direct US economic and military assistance during 1980-1988. Pakistan was able to master the nuclear technology, modernize its military, silence the Pushtunistan agitation, and circumvent domestic international pressure due to its poor human rights records and lack of democracy, all under the cover combating the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan.101 The Soviet occupation of Afghanistan also consolidated General Zia's military dictatorship, as the Pakistanis rallied behind his strong leadership to meet the perceived threat of further Soviet encroachment into South Asia. The military junta used its support to the Afghan Mujahideen and its alliance with Pakistani Islamic parties to acquire legitimacy in the eyes of the Pakistani public.102

98 A.Z Hilali, 'The Costs and Benefits of the Afghan War for Pakistan', p. 293.
100 Sandy Gall, Afghanistan: Agony of a Nation, pp. 30.
Ideational Transformation

The nature of Afghan-Pakistan relations in the 1980s offers an empirical validation of the Constructivist Theory of International Relations which maintains that ideational structures are at least as important as the material structures in explaining the dynamics of global politics. While the Western, Arab and Chinese assistance in the 1980s enhanced Pakistan's military, economic and strategic capabilities in the region, the newly acquired capabilities in turn transformed the ideational structure and self-image of the Pakistani leaders in relation to Afghanistan. Whereas until the 1970s all that Pakistan's Afghan policy could hope for was to ensure that relations with Kabul were good enough to prevent the latter from pushing its irredentist claims too far. With the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan, however, Pakistan's foreign policy objectives in Afghanistan became more ambitious. Pakistani leaders were now determined to completely dominate Afghanistan so that not only it would never revive its irredentist claims or hook up with India to pose a threat to Pakistan, but it would go a step further to actually support Pakistan against rival India. President Zia's statement, quoted in 1988 by Selig S. Harrison, is noteworthy in this regard:

We have earned the right to have a friendly regime [in Afghanistan]. ... We took risks as a frontline state, and we won't permit it to be like it was before, with Indian and Soviet influence there and claims on our territory. It will be a real Islamic state, part of a pan-Islamic revival that will one day win over the Muslims in the Soviet Union, you will see it.

In this short statement, Zia effectively elucidated three main criteria which would inform the position of Pakistan in regard to the political stability of Afghanistan in the future. The criteria included: 1- how close Afghanistan would be with India and the Soviet Union; 2- how committed the country would be to its traditional position on the Pushtunistan and the Durand Line; 3- how good it would be in facilitating commercial and cultural links between Pakistan and Central Asia? Any future political system in Afghanistan that could meet the criteria as favoured by Pakistan would be supported. If it did not meet the criteria


in accordance with the wishes of the Pakistani regime, it would be destabilized. General Zia and the ISI envisaged a ‘strategic realignment’ of Afghanistan with Pakistan in a pan-Islamic confederation which would stand up against the Hindu-dominated India and eventually facilitate the breakup of Central Asia including Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and possibly Turkmenistan from the Soviet Union.

With these intentions in mind, the Pakistani military regime made a common cause with the Islamic parties of Pakistan, particularly the Jamaat-e-Islami Pakistan of Pakistan, to promote the most radical Islamic organisations in Afghanistan. The military-Islamic alliance had another aspect as well. Since all the major Islamic parties of Pakistan were dominated by the Pushhtuns, their rising influence as a result of their cooperation with the military regime would mean that the influence of the Pushhton nationalist parties in the Pushhton regions of Pakistan would be reduced. For Afghan-Pakistan relations this meant that the rules of the game were completely reversed. Whereas in the past the Pushhton leadership of Afghanistan patronized the Pushhton nationalist forces in Pakistan, in the post-1970s the Islamic Pushhton leadership of Pakistan would patronize the Afghan Islamic Pushhton leadership in Afghanistan.

In the 1980s, the Jamaat-e-Islami Pakistan Pakistan, led by Qazi Hussain Ahmad, assumed the role of a godfather organization in relation to the Hezb-e-Islami of Gulbuddin Hekmatyar. Moreover, the Pushhtuns gained even greater influence within the Pakistani security and state institutions in the 1980s. Both the longtime foreign minister of Pakistan Sahebzada Yaqub Ali Khan (1982-1987, 1988-1991 and 1996-1997) and the Director of the ISI, General Akhtar Abdul Rahman (1980-87), for example, identified themselves as Pushhtuns. According to a well-informed Pakistani expert, over 34 percent of Pakistan’s top military brass hailed from a Pushhton background in the 1980s. Thus, the patronage of radical Islamic organizations among the Pushhtuns became the most important instrument by means of which the Pakistani military regime could project its proxy power in Afghanistan. Pakistan used the Mujahideen’s political leadership, particularly Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, to shape events in Afghanistan. The seven Mujahideen parties based in Pakistan received arms and assistance from the West and the Arab world through Pakistan government. Pakistan skillfully used its leverage as resource manager to the Mujahideen to buy compliance and build influence in Afghanistan. Those of the Mujahideen commanders,

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107 Rizwan Hussain, Pakistan and the Emergence of Islamic Militancy in Afghanistan, p. 106.
such as Ahmad Shah Massoud, who refused to be controlled by the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) and the Pakistani generals, were not treated well and assistance was withheld from them.\textsuperscript{108} The ISI and other elements of the Pakistani security apparatus trained over 80,000 Mujahideen fighters during the 1980s. Moreover, the Pakistani intelligence and military personnel directly took part, advised and commanded some of the Mujahideen’s operations inside Afghanistan.\textsuperscript{109}

Confident about Pakistan’s significant influence in Afghanistan through proxies and its hugely boosted military capabilities, General Mirza Aslam Beg, Zia’s former deputy and successor as Chief of Army Staff (1988-1991), constructed the doctrine of ‘strategic depth’ against India. In the words of an informed Pakistani expert, the doctrine of strategic depth:

\ldots stressed the need for a dispersal of Pakistan’s military personnel and assets in Afghanistan well beyond the offensive capabilities of the Indian military. Pakistan’s geographic width was considered inadequate for a prolonged defence against India. In this context post-Soviet Afghanistan was considered an ideal choice for Pakistan to gain strategic depth.\textsuperscript{110}

After the eruption of the Kashmiri insurgency in 1989, which was originally a symptom of the Kashmiri Muslims’ disgruntlement with the Indian government, and Pakistan’s acquisition of military nuclear capability in the early 1990s, this purely conventional military view of the strategic depth evolved further to accommodate the requirements of Pakistan’s unconventional proxy conflict in Kashmir against India.\textsuperscript{111} Training camps were established in the Pushtun regions of Afghanistan to prop up Pakistan-sponsored insurgency groups, particularly the Jamaat-e-Islami Pakistan-affiliated Hezb-ul-Mujahideen, which fought the Indian security forces in the Jammu and Kashmir region of India. Hence, in the span of almost a decade, the nature of Afghan-Pakistan relations had been completely transformed materially as well as ideationally. Pakistan had become enormously influential in Afghanistan. Its leaders viewed Afghanistan and its leadership as a subsidiary appendix to Pakistan and its leadership, which had to be reshaped towards attainment of Pakistan’s strategic objectives in both Central Asia and South Asia. Such an ideational transformation was inevitable to clash with the self-perception of some of the more independent minded


\textsuperscript{109} Rizwan Hussain, \textit{Pakistan and the Emergence of Islamic Militancy in Afghanistan}, p. 122.

\textsuperscript{110} Ibid, p. 172.

leaders of Afghanistan, thereby affecting the political stability of the country profoundly in the future.

Conclusion

In the history of independent Afghanistan, the decade of 1980s stands out as an era in which the dynamics of Afghanistan’s relations with Central and South Asia impacted on the political stability of the country more directly than ever before. The Soviet occupation of Afghanistan was a coercive measure with the primary aim of boosting the political stability of a client regime in Afghanistan. The direct involvement of the Soviet Union in the political stability of Afghanistan was confined not only to coercive measures; it also included a comprehensive programme of reconstruction and diplomatic initiatives that augmented the coercive action. Utterly devoid of ethical legitimacy, however, the Soviet occupation was extremely counterproductive. It aggravated political violence between the state and society to unprecedented proportions, constituting a massive national uprising, and precipitating systematic and widespread suppression of anti-system dissent in society by the government. The Soviet occupation force was directly involved in the suppression of the anti-system dissent, and Pakistan was involved directly in inciting such dissention. The political violence cost Afghanistan more than one million lives, an equal number of handicapped and over five million refugees in foreign countries.\(^{112}\)

The rate of governmental longevity, which constitutes another aspect of political stability/instability, was also affected by the nature of the country’s relations with the USSR and Pakistan both directly and indirectly. Out of the four successive heads of state during the PDPA regime, the Soviet Union was heavily involved in the events leading to the murder of the first (Taraki), overthrew and killed the second (Amin), and pressured the third (Karmal) to resign. The political system disintegrated totally, when the last PDPA head of state (Najibullah) could no more exercise effective authority over its various parts which had been precipitated partially by the collapse of the Soviet Union earlier. The hostile nature of Afghan-Pakistan relations influenced these events indirectly.

The PDPA regime, itself drastically alien to the values of Afghan society, introduced radical social, economic and political programmes — fundamental structural changes— that further reinforced political instability in the country. In essence, the incongruence of authority patterns between the state and society, to use Eckstein’s terminology, was made worse by the introduction of radical government policies. These programmes were inspired by the Soviet model and adjusted by the Soviet and Afghan leaderships in accordance with the requirements of political stability in Afghanistan. Pakistan on the other hand played an instrumental role in thwarting these programmes and destabilizing the Afghan political system.

The fact that the Afghan state looked up to the Soviet Union as a role model and a source of military, economic, political and moral support, was in itself a central contributory factor to its instability, since the existence of such a relationship between the two countries could find little justification in the context of prevalent social perceptions in Afghanistan about the imperatives of ethical legitimacy associated historically with the Afghan polity. By facilitating a social atmosphere, saturated with religious fervor, for millions of Afghan refugees and rebels, Pakistan played a vital role in sustaining the illegitimacy of the Afghan regime in public perceptions.

Throughout the 1980s, the Soviet Union attempted to improve the Afghan government’s ability for effective decision-making which constitutes an important aspect of political stability as discussed in the introduction. By providing massive military assistance, the Soviet Union enhanced the Afghan government’s coercive capacity so that it could inhibit anti-system aggressive behaviour through the use of devices associated with the notion of punishment. Economic assistance and reconstruction were aimed at meeting the ‘political-economic’ demands of society, and the continuous Soviet pressure on the PDPA government to broaden its support base was in effect informed by the need to make the political system’s decisions more consensus-based and therefore more effective.

The nature of Afghan-Soviet relations in the 1980s, which could be described largely in reference to the three-pronged approach for political stability in Afghanistan, transformed the status quo in Afghan-Pakistan relations. In addition to the obvious military, economic and strategic advantages that accrued to Pakistan as a consequence of the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan, the ideational transformation of the Pakistani leadership about how they related themselves to Afghanistan significantly altered the dynamics of relations...
between the two countries which in turn augured discernable uncertainties for the prospects of the political stability of Afghanistan in the future.
CHAPTER FOUR

Stability and the Islamic State of Afghanistan (ISA)

The period from 1992 to 1996, when Kabul was a major scene of political violence between the ISA (or the Mujahideen government) and its opponents, has been studied by many authors. However, this period is also one of the least understood in modern Afghan history. As Maley observed:

It is all too often depicted as a period of unmitigated despair during which undisciplined ‘warlords’ seemingly determined to establish that they were even less appetising than the communist regime, battered each other for no obvious purpose at hideous cost to the civilian population. … The vocabulary of ‘tribal warfare’, of honour and ‘revenge’, and of the ‘blood feud’ is deployed to give a semblance of anthropological respectability to such claims.¹

Maley makes important points by drawing attention to the ‘failure of the elite settlements’ as the main catalyst for conflict, the ‘symbolism of Kabul’, which made the capital city a battleground of competition between various militias, and the fact that the extent of civil strife and political violence during 1992-1996 was significantly lower in Afghanistan than in the 1980s.² There are also other authors who have largely avoided the tendency for oversimplification in their various analyses of the challenges to political stability during the rule of the ISA. Rubin observes that the ISA, unlike most of its predecessors since the mid-nineteenth century, was the first regime that did not benefit from the colonial and Cold War era practice of ‘building a foreign aid-funded, Muslim-led [sic], centralised buffer state’ in Afghanistan.³ Left in the lurch, therefore, the political system had to wage an uphill struggle for consolidation of its rule. Saikal speaks about the difficulties which the government faced in gaining political legitimacy from a nation-wide cross-section of the multicultural Afghan society.⁴ Dorronsoro draws attention to the alliances of political convenience between various factions that crystallised itself in two opposing camps coalescing around the Jamiat-e-Islami and Hezb-e-Islami as the main protagonists. He maintains that the civil strife in the country was ‘not “primitive” or “tribal”, but strongly

¹ William Maley, Afghanistan Wars, p. 194.
political. Ethnic identification and tensions play a part, but the country’s warring parties invoke and feed these to mobilise supporters.5

The current chapter will, however, study the political stability of Afghanistan during the 1990s from a fresh perspective. It will analyse the impact of the ideational transformation of Pakistan’s military and Islamic leadership, and their clientelist relations with the main opponents of the ISA, including the Hezb-e-Islami and the Taliban, upon the political stability of Afghanistan. It will investigate the nature and constraints of the ISA’s foreign policy in Central and South Asia and their impact on the political stability of the ISA regime. The chapter will further study the peace and stability of the Taliban regime, in view of its domestic policies and relations with Central Asia.

The ISA and Pakistan

Despite receiving the US and Arab largess through Pakistan, when it came to the crunch of ousting the communist regime and translating its superior material resources into power in Kabul, the Hezb-e-Islami proved a dismal failure. On the contrary, the Jamiat-e-Islami, the main rival of the Hezb-e-Islami, played a central role in the collapse of the PDPA regime and dominated the post-communist political order in Afghanistan. The Jamiat-e-Islami was neither radical nor favoured by Pakistan.6 Massoud, as the main powerbroker within the Jamiat-e-Islami and the ISA, had a troubled history of relations with the security agencies of Pakistan. He had been a strong critic of the ISI’s role in trying to control the Mujahideen; a position that had cost him a blockade on delivery of assistance by the Zia regime.7

Before entering Kabul, Massoud attempted to alley Pakistan’s concerns that its bitter critic, and not its favoured Mujahideen faction, was going to dominate the post-PDPA political system. In anticipation of the imminent downfall of the PDPA regime in April 1992, the non-Pushtun leadership of the government had urged Massoud to enter Kabul, declare a state of emergency and head a government to the exclusion of the Mujahideen leadership in Peshawar. The new government was to be made up mainly of the Mujahideen commanders and the anti-Najibullah rebels who had contributed to the downfall of the regime from within. Massoud rejected the proposal out of hand and invited the Mujahideen

6 For details about the discursive orientations and the relations of the various Sunni and Shiite Mujahideen organisations with Pakistan and Iran see Asta Olesen, Islam and Politics in Afghanistan, pp. 274-295. Olivier Roy, Islam and Resistance in Afghanistan, pp. 127-138.
7 See, for example, Sandy Gall, Afghanistan: Agony of A Nation, p.132.
leadership to form a transitional government to assume power in Kabul. Why did Massoud not accept to become the head of state? In Rubin’s view, Massoud’s fiercely independent personality and his commitment to the national unity of Afghanistan prevented him from assuming such a position. Had he entered Kabul and headed a government as proposed by the remnants of the PDPA regime, not only he would have become dependent on these forces but also he would give more credence to Hekmatyar’s strategy of playing on Pashtun ethnic fears.

In addition to what Rubin has discussed, it is important to note that there were other considerations in Massoud’s mind as well. Massoud’s deference to the Mujahideen leadership in Pakistan amounted in fact to an olive branch which he held out not only to his bitter opponent, Gulbuddin Hekmatyar; it was also a gesture of goodwill and reconciliation towards Pakistan. Massoud had recognised the influence of the Pakistani Islamic leaders, particularly that of the Jamaat-e-Islami, on the Hizb-e-Islami leadership and in the security agencies of Pakistan. In a bid to prevent the imminent prospect of conflict between various Mujahideen factions, he hooked up with both Hekmatyar and Qazi Hussain Ahmad, leader of the Jamaat-e-Islami Pakistan, in a tripartite radio conversation and appealed to the latter to dissuade Hekmatyar from attacking Kabul. However, Hussain Ahmad was non-committal and Hekmatyar did not agree with a peaceful transition of power which the PDPA leadership was willing to vouchsafe. Furthermore, Massoud was acutely aware of the necessity of the ethical legitimacy of the political system not only as an imperative of political stability but also as a matter of religious conviction. He was not prepared to share power with the pro-communist forces that he and his fellow Mujahideen had fought to defeat for almost two decades.

In late April 1992, in what came to be known as the ‘Peshawar Accord’, six of the seven Mujahideen groups in Peshawar agreed to establish a Transitional Council headed by Sibghatullah Mojaddadi, the leader of the National Islamic Salvation Front faction, to assume power in Kabul. In the transitional council, Hekmatyar was offered the post of Prime Minister while the defence portfolio was given to Massoud. After initially appearing to agree to the arrangement, Hekmatyar subsequently dissented and refused to travel to

10 Massoud’s recorded radio conversation from his base in Jabl-ul-Saraj with Hekmatyar in Logar and Qazi Hussain Ahmad in Pakistan one day before Massoud’s forces entered Kabul in April 1992. Interview with Mohammad Zahir, a longtime aide to Ahmad Shah Massoud, who actually recorded the tripartite radio conversation, Kabul, 23 November 2005.
11 Interview with Saleh Mohammad Registani, a longtime aide to Ahmad Shah Massoud, Kabul, 03 January 2006.
Kabul with the rest of the council members accompanying Mojaddadi. The civilian government in Pakistan was clearly in favour of the Peshawar Accord which enjoyed the backing of an absolute majority of the Mujahideen factions based in Pakistan. Pakistan’s foreign ministry declared full diplomatic and political support to the transitional council irrespective of whether or not Hekmatyar was going to join it. Later on, Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif visited Kabul on an invitation by Mojaddadi, the President of the Afghan Transitional Council. Food supplies were delivered from Pakistan to Kabul, and the Pakistani Prime Minister pledged an initial aid package worth of US$20 million to Afghanistan.

There is no reason to doubt the genuineness of these friendly gestures by Nawaz Sharif’s civilian government. A Kabul government made up of the majority of the Mujahideen factions, whose political leadership had long resided in and regarded Pakistan as their second home, was more than anything that the UN initiative could ever deliver to Pakistan. Inclusion of Massoud in the transitional government and his friendly overtures towards Pakistan should have reassured the Pakistani leadership even further to continue on the path of strengthening the new government in Kabul and urge those who remained outside to join it. After all, without winning Massoud’s friendship, Pakistan could not have hoped to realise its cherished goal of linking up with Central Asia easily because the land routes to that region passed through territory under his control and that of his allies including Ismail Khan and Dostum.

However, soon it became clear that the real powerbrokers in Pakistan had little interest in mere friendly overtures by the ISA leadership. The military and Islamic leadership of Pakistan were ready to forgo the economic advantages they could possibly gain from friendly relations with Kabul and throw their support behind the Hezb-e-Islami which did not control even a single important city in Afghanistan. The ISI and the Jamaat-e-Islami were determined to replace the ISA with a political system that would be dominated by the Hezb-e-Islami which had been the main beneficiary of Pakistani patronage in the previous

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decade. They supplied truckloads of fresh arms and ammunition soon after Burhanuddin Rabbani had assumed office. Qazi Hussain Ahmad’s pro-Hekmatyar position was strong enough to make him break away from the government of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif soon after Pakistan had recognised the new Afghan regime.

With the ISI and the Jamaat-e-Islami’s support, the Hezb-e-Islami was able to play an effective spoiling role to deny the ISA an opportunity to establish its authority throughout the country. In doing so, he employed the strategy of large-scale shelling of the capital from 1992 until 1995. Parallel to its support of the Hezb-e-Islami, the ISI was also determined to destroy such essential economic and military infrastructure that had a direct impact on the stability of Afghanistan. In the bazaars of Peshawar, price tags were put on the Soviet-era vestiges of economic and military hardware that could be scavenged from Afghanistan. An unknown amount of equipment including, industrial machinery, electricity poles, airplanes and tanks were destroyed by the ISI collaborators and many poor Afghans, and sold for scarp in Pakistan.

Afghan-Pakistan relations in the early 1990s clearly demonstrated that after years of turmoil in Afghanistan, Pakistan was not satisfied with the emergence of an Afghan political system that asserted its independence; even if it sought friendship with Pakistan. By supporting the forces opposed to the ISA, Pakistan helped keep significant parts of south-eastern Afghanistan out of state control. This allowed the ISI to establish training centres for the insurgent groups fighting the Indian rule over the state of Jammu and Kashmir. The most important insurgent group active in Kashmir, and with training centres in areas dominated by the Hezb-e-Islami, was the Hezb-ul-Mujahideen which was affiliated with the Jamaat-e-Islami.


In later years Massoud complained about the Pakistani military regime’s lack of genuine interest in the stability of Afghanistan: ‘There is no doubt that the neighbouring nations have some [legitimate] interests in our country. I am confident that majority of them have reached the conclusion that their interests are best served by peace and security in Afghanistan. … In relation to Pakistan I must say that in the context of their rivalries with India, the Generals expect more than friendship from us. Had Pakistan wanted only friendship from Afghanistan, there would have been no problem at all between us. Pakistan wants to have a puppet regime in Afghanistan. I have repeatedly said to the Pakistanis that they should not expect us to become their slaves. We can be your best friends; your interests will be best served in our friendship’. Excerpts translated by author from Massoud’s press conference, Dushanbe (Tajikistan), 10 April 2001.
Pakistan. The training centres, weapons and recruits from Afghanistan were instrumental in helping the pro-Pakistan Hezb-ul-Mujahideen carve a niche for itself as the strongest of the Kashmiri insurgent groups in the 1990s.23

Hence, by supporting the Hezb-e-Islami against the ISA, Pakistan was simply behaving in a way that corresponded with the objectives of the ideational transformation of its military leadership. The doctrine of strategic depth in this sense, had improved on its earlier, purely conventional, version of seeking to place Pakistani military assets deep inside Afghanistan so as to protect them against the possibility of a massive Indian strike. The insurgent training centres in Afghanistan were useful since they helped protect Pakistan's policy of plausible deniability about its involvement in the Kashmir insurgency. Furthermore, the Hezb-ul-Mujahideen was able to recruit many Afghans, especially from the south-eastern regions, who went to fight against the Indian forces in Kashmir.

Ideological Foreign Policy

If the aggressive attitude of the Pakistani leaders towards Afghanistan was a powerful ideational factor which created friction between Afghanistan and Pakistan in the 1990s, the Islamic ideology of the ISA in its own right was another such factor which damaged Afghanistan's relations with the newly independent states of Central Asia and beyond. Due to its Islamic ideology, the new Afghan government found it hard to forgo its emphasis on the ethical legitimacy of the state in favour of a pragmatic foreign policy that would help its relations with major powers in the region. While the Kabul government was struggling to defend itself against attacks by the Shura-e-Hamahangi24—which was supported by Pakistan, Uzbekistan and Iran—its attitude towards regional issues, such as the Kashmir insurgency and the civil war in Tajikistan, could be hardly seen as conducive to much friendly relations with India and other Central Asian countries either.

Until almost mid-1990s, the Mujahideen government supported the Tajik Islamic opposition, led by Said Abdullah Nuri and Haji Akbar Turajanzadah, against the ex-communist Tajik government which had grabbed power in 1992 on the back of support from Uzbekistan and Russia.25 It allowed the pro-Islamic movement Tajik refugees in

24 More details about the Shura-e-Hamahangi will come later.
northern Afghanistan to establish training camps from where the militants infiltrated into Tajikistan to fight against the government and the Russian forces stationed in the border regions. The Russian soldiers had been deployed in Tajikistan as the main component of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) forces to which Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan had also contributed a token number of soldiers. Therefore the Afghan government’s policy damaged its relations not only with the government of Tajikistan, it also complicated broader regional relations with Russia and other Central Asian countries whose ex-communist leaders felt threatened by the revival of Islam as an ideology and as a militant force in the region. During 1992-1993, the Russian forces stationed on the Tajik border carried out direct artillery and air strikes in villages inside Afghanistan. The cross-border strikes happened many times, in which hundreds of villagers were killed.

Islamic militancy in Kashmir was another area where the ISA was unable to square up its foreign policy to accord with the troubled nature of its relations with Pakistan. Kabul knew fully well that the insurgency in Kashmir was supported actively by the ISI and the Jamaat-e-Islami Pakistan against India. They were also aware of the presence of training camps which the ISI and the Hezb-ul-Mujahideen (the main Kashmiri insurgent group affiliated to the Jamaat-e-Islami) were running in the Hezb-e-Islami-controlled parts of Afghanistan for the Kashmiri insurgents. As part of their military training, many of the Kashmiri, Afghan and the Arab fighters who went through these training camps were assigned by the Hezb-e-Islami to fight against the Kabul government as well.

Hence, as far as the Mujahideen government’s relations with India was concerned, the implications of the nexus between the ISI, the Jamaat-e-Islami, the Hezb-e-Islami and the Hezb-ul-Mujahideen amounted to a classic case of the old Afghan axiom ‘the enemy of my enemy is my friend’—meaning that the two governments could have been natural allies against Pakistan. While the main Kashmiri insurgent group was already fighting against Kabul on the side of the Hezb-e-Islami, Kabul was apprehensive to accept India’s offer to


help the ISA against its pro-Pakistan opponents. The ISA even did not go far enough in contrasting its rhetorical position with that of Pakistan and the Hezb-e-Islami on the Kashmir dispute. Whereas Pakistan and its main Afghan proxy, the Hezb-e-Islami, strongly supported the Kashmiri insurgency, the Mujahideen government's position on the subject was at best ambivalent with a good measure of sympathetic bias in favour of the Muslim insurgents. Official Afghan media, including the Kabul TV and Kabul Radio, for example, often dubbed the presence of the Indian troops in Kashmir as Qowa-i-Ishghali or Asaker-i-Ishghali (occupation force or occupation soldiers).

Therefore, although the ISA was resisting Pakistan's proxy war in Afghanistan, it could not rally Pakistan's regional rivals, such as India and Iran, to its cause either. The prominent Iranian specialist on Afghanistan, Dr. Tschanguiz Pahlavan, has commented that the Mujahideen government's fiercely independent policies and its emphasis on 'national pride' were not looked upon favourably by any of the important countries in Afghanistan's neighbourhood. In view of the discussion above, it is appropriate to conclude that Afghanistan's national pride was not the only factor which did not exactly endear the ISA to the regional powers in Central and South Asia. A clearly noticeable inclination on the part of the Mujahideen government to remain loyal to the cause of the supranational Islamic solidarity was at least as much of a divisive issue between Afghanistan and the regional powers as its emphasis on national pride. Part of the reason as to why the ISA found it almost impossible to adopt a more pragmatic policy in Central and South Asia lied in the fact that its constituent parts lacked sufficient cohesion among themselves. Lack of cohesion made the state suffer from what could be called the fragmentation of foreign relations; a natural corollary to what Rubin has called 'the fragmentation of Afghanistan'.

Fragmentation of Foreign Relations

The nature of Afghanistan's relations with Central and South Asia in the 1990s accords well with the theories of international relations dubbed as 'Two-Level Games' by scholars

29 For instance India was interested to revive its old programmes of offering scholarships to Afghan cadets for studying in Indian military institutions. The ISA showed little interest, however, in the programme.
30 Based in Kabul until August 1995, the researcher was a witness to the largely sympathetic coverage of the Kashmir insurgency by the official Afghan media during this period.
who emphasise the inextricability of domestic politics and international relations of states.\(^{33}\)

The internal politics of Afghanistan during this period hugely influenced its foreign relations which in turn came back to affect the country’s political stability. As the central government struggled to establish control over regional power holders, ensuring its monopoly over the foreign relations of the country became a huge challenge in which the ISA could not succeed. The government was made up of a coalition of several factions, each of which had its own domestic agendas and foreign relations independent of the official foreign ministry in Kabul. Furthermore, the alliances between these various factions were in a state of flux and members of the coalition switched sides as and when it suited them best.

On another level, the country was divided between various regional groups and strongmen who pursued their own versions of mini-foreign policies with the neighbouring countries. In the north, Dostum had good ties with Uzbekistan and Russia.\(^{34}\) In the west, Ismail Khan enjoyed good ties with Iran, Turkmenistan and, to some extent, Pakistan. The eastern provinces were controlled by a council of regional commanders based in Jalalabad and led by Haji Qadir and Haji Shamalai who had good connections with Pakistan and the cross-border smuggling mafia.\(^{35}\) The south-eastern regions were controlled by various regional commanders belonging to different Mujahideen factions some of whom had good ties with Pakistan and the others professed loyalty to Kabul. In Paktiya, Paktika and Khost provinces, Jalaluddin Haqqani and Mavlavi Mansoor held sway, the former having longstanding relations with Pakistani security agencies and the Gulf Arab countries. Similarly the Qandahar and Helmand provinces were controlled by various commanders including Mullah Naqibullah, Gul Agha Sherzai and the Akhundzada clan. Kabul was controlled by various factions including: the Rabbani government, which struggled to normalise ties with the neighbouring countries: the \textit{Hezb-e-Islami}, supported by the ISI and the \textit{Jamaat-e-Islami} Pakistan; the \textit{Hezb-e-Wahdat}, supported by Iran, Dostum’s forces, supported by Uzbekistan and Russia; and militias loyal to Sayyaf who had longstanding ties with the Gulf Arab states.\(^{36}\)


There were at least a dozen Sunni and Shiite factions and splinter groups running various ministries and departments in Kabul. Some of these factions had significant military presence in and around Kabul, while others had none. The amount of political power assigned to each group within the government was not necessarily commensurate to their military capabilities. While each faction tended to run its allocated ministry with absolute authority and felt little need to be deferential to the higher office of the President, the burden of defending the city against Hekmatyar’s forces was initially left mainly to Rabbani-Massoud’s Jamiat-e-Islami, Dostum’s forces from the 53rd Division of the old PDPA army and the Shiite forces of the Harakat-e-Islami and the Hezb-e-Wahdat.

Both the Hezb-e-Wahdat and the forces loyal to Dostum had been left out of power-sharing arrangements by the Peshawar Accord. The Hezb-e-Wahdat rejected the Peshawar Accord and demanded at least ten percent share of power in the transitional council. Nevertheless, both these factions initially supported the ISA against the Hezb-e-Islami. Subsequently, however, they both became bitter enemies of the ISA. Friends became foes primarily because the ISA was unwilling to reward them with the necessary prize which their military capabilities warranted. Akin to its foreign policy, the ISA emphasised the ethical legitimacy of the political system over the pragmatic option of keeping its powerful allies on side in domestic politics as well.

Although forces loyal to Dostum had played a vital part in toppling the communist regime and controlled vast amounts of armaments, a large number of battle-hardened soldiers and territory, yet the ISA was averse to recognising it on par with other Mujahideen groups. The government insisted that Dostum and his forces remain subordinate to the Defence Ministry with no claims of representing a legitimate political organisation or any ethnic group. This flew against Dostum’s aspiration to be recognised as the leader of the newly-established Junbish-e-Milli Islami (National Islamic Movement) and the leader of the Uzbek community on par with the Mujahideen factions and leaders. The Junbish-e-Milli Islami also wanted regional autonomy in the northern provinces it controlled. In addition to its own Islamic ideology, which limited the extent and the depth of the ISA’s ties with the secular-oriented Junbish-e-Milli Islami, it was also cautious not to lend credence to Hekmatyar, the ISI, and the Jamaat-e-Islami’s relentless propaganda which portrayed the two sides’ early cooperation as a sell-out to the erstwhile communist foes of the Mujahideen.

Dostum had multiple layers of affinity with the regime of Islam Karimov in Uzbekistan. They were both Uzbeks and former communists. The regime of Islam Karimov was involved in the civil war in Tajikistan broadly along two policy themes. It supported the former communists against the Islamic forces such as the Islamic Renaissance Party. It also backed the ethnic Uzbek rebels within Tajikistan against the government.\(^{39}\) In Afghanistan Dostum’s position represented a mirror image of Uzbekistan’s policy in Tajikistan. After joining up with the \(\text{Hezb-e-Islami}\) and \(\text{Hezb-e-Wahdat}\), Dostum fought against the ISA which was dominated militarily by the Mujahideen forces drawn mainly from the northern Tajik provinces. Dostum centred his own fiefdom in Mazar-e-Sharif where many countries and international organisations, including Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Pakistan, Iran, Turkey, Saudi Arabia and the United Nations, established their consulates and representative offices that directly dealt with the \(\text{Junbish-e-Milli Islami}\) administration.\(^{40}\)

Careful not to lose the support of its Pashtun Sunni allies, including the \(\text{Ittehad-e-Islami}\), led by Abdul Rab Rasool Sayyaf, the \(\text{Hezb-e-Islami Khales}\), led by Mohammad Younus Khales, and the \(\text{Harakat-e-Inqelab-e-Islami}\), led by Mohammad Nabi Mohammadi, the ISA did not treat favourably some of the expectations of the pro-Iranian \(\text{Hezb-e-Wahdat}\) either. The \(\text{Hezb-e-Wahdat}\) wanted official recognition of the \(\text{Fiqhi-Jafari}\) (the Jafari Shiite school of jurisprudence) in the judiciary and regional autonomy in the main Hazara regions of Afghanistan.\(^{41}\) As the main segment of the \(\text{Hezb-e-Wahdat}\), led by Abdul Ali Mazari, increasingly drifted apart from the government, the Shiite-phobic \(\text{Ittehad-e-Islami}\) grew close to it. This in turn further reinforced suspicion and hostility between the \(\text{Hezb-e-Wahdat}\) and the ISA. The \(\text{Hezb-e-Wahdat}\) had longstanding ties with the security agencies and the clerical circles in Iran. Its growing hostility against the government was the determining factor in worsening of Kabul’s relations with Tehran.\(^{42}\)

It needs to be mentioned that neither the \(\text{Hezb-e-Islami}\), nor the \(\text{Hezb-e-Wahdat}\), nor the \(\text{Junbish-e-Milli Islami}\), could safely claim to represent the interests of the Pashtuns, the Hazaras and the Uzbeks entirely. The ISA enjoyed the support of five out of six Pashtun Mujahideen factions, some of them, such as the \(\text{Ittehad-e-Islami}\), continuing to remain part of it until the end. Hekmatyar’s early attempts to play the ethnic card against the ISA had

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\(^{40}\) Barnett Rubin, The Fragmentation of Afghanistan, p. 275.

\(^{41}\) Gilles Dorronsoro, ‘Afghanistan’s Civil War’, p. 50-51.

failed to provoke the Pashtuns. In the words of his former deputy, Qazi Mohammad Amin Waqad, ‘Hekmatyar for four years [fought the ISA from his base] in Chahar Asiab district of Kabul, but could not recruit more than 40 youths from that district’. A splinter group of the Hezb-e-Wahdat, led by Mohammad Akbari, supported the government. A significant Shiite Mujahideen group, Hanakat-e-Islami, led by Ayatullah Mohammad Asef Mohseni, always remained part of the government. Distrusted by the Iranians, however, the Hanakat-e-Islami’s participation could do little to seize the rapidly worsening ties between Kabul and Tehran. There were also many Uzbek and Pashtun Mujahideen who continued to support the ISA in Kabul and the north.

On 1 January 1994, the Hezb-e-Wahdat and the Jumshid-e-Milli Islami joined the Hezb-e-Islami and launched a coordinated attack against the Mujahideen government. Sibghatullah Mojaddadi, who had been forced out of office by Ahmad Shah Massoud after his two-month tenure as the head of state had expired earlier, also supported the new anti-government coalition. The newly-formed opposition adopted the name Shura-e-Hamahangi (the Council of Coordination) which represented the most formidable military threat to the ISA until the arrival of the Taliban. Pakistan, Iran and Uzbekistan played their parts in brokering the Shura-e-Hamahangi alliance between the three different factions that had little in common, ethnically or ideologically, previously.

Apart from the active opponents of the government, some of its own regional governors and supporter also established independent relations with foreign countries, heeding little regard to the policies of the government in Kabul. Ismail Khan, for example, practically established independent ties with Iran, Turkmenistan and Pakistan on behalf of his fiefdom in western Afghanistan. His fiefdom afforded him such independence because the Herat province, which he controlled, brought him substantial custom revenues from trade with Iran and Turkmenistan. At times his relations with Pakistan were exactly opposite of the

acrimonious nature of relations which existed between Kabul and Islamabad. When in early 1994 Pakistan appointed Mr. Sultan Emir Tarar — better known by his nom de guerre, Colonel Imam — as Consul General to Herat, the government in Kabul was not happy to accord him accreditation. Yet Ismail Khan received him over Kabul’s reservations. Subsequently, Colonel Imam played an important part in the rapid advances of the Taliban and the capture of Herat from Ismail Khan. In October the same year, Ismail Khan hosted Pakistan’s interior minister and his accompanying team of Pakistani and foreign officials for negotiations about opening a commercial route between Pakistan and Turkmenistan across his fiefdom, without bothering to consult with the Kabul government.

Similarly, Amir Chughai, a commander of the government-aligned Ittehad-e-Islami, established his own training centres for the Tajik and Uzbek Islamic insurgents who were fighting against governments in their own countries. Chughai also channelled support from both Arab and Pakistani Islamic organisations to the civil war in Tajikistan. Though Chughai’s support to the Central Asian insurgents was not entirely opposed to the policy of the government in Kabul, the government nonetheless had little control over his activities in Central Asia.

Other factions that were insignificant militarily in Kabul included Mahaz-e-Milli Islami (Mahaz), Jabba-e-Nejat-e-Milli (Nejat), Harakat-e-Inqelab-e-Islami (Harakat-e-Inqelab), and the Hizb-e-Islami Khalis. The Mahaz was a relatively more Western-leaning faction, enjoying some support in the southern parts of the country. Its leader, Sayed Ahmad Gailani, hailed from an aristocratic and Sufi-Arab background with close relations with the monarchy of the ex-king Mohammad Zahir. The Mahaz did not have any significant military presence in Kabul. In the ISA, however, an important portfolio, the foreign ministry, was allocated to this faction. The West-leaning tendencies of the Mahaz were looked upon with suspicion by the other elements of the government.

50 Ahmed Rashid, Taliban: Islam Oil and the New Great Game in Central Asia, p. 27.
The Nejat was led by Sibghatullah Mojaddadi who hailed from another clerical family with close ties to the former monarchy of the ex-king Mohammad Zahir. Mojaddadi tried to prolong his tenure as head of state by courting Dostum and likening him to Khalid Bin Walid, one of the most celebrated Muslim military figures and a companion of the Prophet Mohammad in early Islamic history. Since the Nejat did not have its own military force, Mojaddadi hoped to enlist the support of Dostum as a bulwark against Massoud. Massoud did not favour Mojaddadi’s efforts to extend his tenure because it contravened the provisions of the Peshawar Accord which had set his tenure for two months.

The Harakat-e-Enqelab was a traditional and conservative Mujahideen faction which drew its support from the clergy in the south of the country. It did not have any significant military presence in Kabul. Its leader, Maulavi Mohammad Nabi Mohammadi, hailed from the Logar province. Although Mohammadi’s faction was represented in the ISA, he himself spent more time in Pakistan than in Afghanistan. After the advent of the Taliban, Mohammadi and most of his followers joined them. Another faction, the Hezb-e-Islami Khalis, also drew its support from the traditional clergy mainly in the south and eastern provinces of Afghanistan. It did not have any significant military presence in Kabul. However it was represented in the ISA. Mavlawi Mohammad Younus Khalis was initially a member of the Hezb-e-Islami Hekmatyar. He broke away from the Hezb-e-Islami and formed his own faction. He hailed from the Nangarhar province, and had good ties with the Pushtun tribes along the Afghan-Pakistan border.

Therefore, the ISA from the very beginning suffered from inherent weaknesses that curtailed its capacity to function as a coherent actor in internal or external affairs. Growing opposition by the Hezb-e-Islami, Junbish-e-Milli Islami and the Hezb-e-Wahdat, presented it with the combined antagonism of the most powerful factions. The power and influence which these factions enjoyed did not solely rest on their military capabilities. In the media, and to the neighbouring countries which supporting them, the coalition of the Hezb-e-Islami, Junbish-e-Milli Islami and the Hezb-e-Wahdat largely represented the three ethnic groups namely the Pushtuns, Uzbeks and the Hazaras respectively. The way the government related to these factions reflected on the nature of its relations with neighbouring countries including Pakistan, Uzbekistan and Iran. These countries were most heavily involved in the civil strife, and therefore in the political instability of the Afghan state.
The Kabul government’s grip on power was so fragile that it did not have direct control over its transit gateways with the neighbouring countries. The Hairatan-Temez terminal, linking Afghanistan with Uzbekistan, was controlled by Junbesh-e-Milli Islami, the Spinboldak-Quetta and the Torkham routes, connecting Afghanistan with Pakistan were controlled by the Hezb-e-Islami and the Shura-e-Nengarhar respectively, and the Islam Qala-Torghondi route, linking Iran, Afghanistan and Turkmenistan, was controlled by Ismail Khan. The Kabul government was not in full control of even the Sher Khan Bandar, the main river port with Tajikistan, which was controlled by a local commander affiliated with the Ittehad-e-Islami. Under these circumstances, the political stability of the country was a huge challenge which haunted the ISA throughout the 1990s.

Taliban: Pakistan’s Product for ‘Stability’?

The emergence of the Taliban was the manifestation of a complicated set of intertwined geostrategic, political, economic and ethnic factors that preoccupied the Pakistani leaders’ mind about Afghanistan in the 1990s. Akin to the instrumental role of its military and intelligence establishment in ensuring the successes of the Taliban militarily, Pakistan marketed the new force as an agent of stability, with a considerable degree of success, to the world. Pakistani leaders, including Pervez Musharraf, asserted that the Taliban was a purely spontaneous Pushtun movement, which emerged in response to the state of anarchy among ‘warlords’ who had wrecked havoc on Afghanistan. They further argued that in view of the common ethnic ties between the Taliban and Pakistani Pushtuns, and the stabilizing effect which the new force had on the country, it was a matter of national interest and moral duty for Pakistan to support it. Western-based commentators sympathetic to the Taliban at the time went even further to assert that the new movement’s radicalism would remain confined within Afghanistan as it had neither ‘any links to Islam’s international radicals’, nor was it interested in ‘exporting revolution’.

Such an account of the sudden sprout of the Taliban afforded Pakistan a level of plausible deniability about its deep involvement in the project. It ignored the fact that in the 1990s, large parts of Afghanistan were peaceful but the Taliban did not hesitate to attack these

regions. For example, Ismail Khan had established an effective and largely peaceful administration in the western regions where the irregular militias had been disarmed and a security system in which soldiers were conscripted was instituted.\textsuperscript{55} Similarly, the northern Shamali plains and the provinces of Parwan, Kapisa, Panjshir, Bamian, Badakhshan, Jawzjan and Samangan were peaceful, and the northern route up to the Khenjan district was open to the traffic without the sort of harassment which had afflicted the eastern and southern routes to Pakistan. Yet some of the fiercest battles and the scorched-earth policies of the Taliban took place in parts these regions.

The notion of Taliban riding on popular discontent marginalised the fact that the origins of the state of anarchy in Kabul was a direct result of Pakistan’s support to the Hezbi Islami whose indiscriminate bombing of Kabul afforded little chance of political stability for the country. In view of an increasing volume of useful research and relevant official documents, now there is little doubt about the role of Pakistan in creating and sustaining the Taliban.\textsuperscript{56} However, it is essential to understand the relevance of internal Pakistani politics, the perceived geostrategic imperatives and the pivotal role of influential Pashtuns within the Pakistani body politic, in ensuring that Pakistan remained a steadfast supporter of the Taliban. It is also necessary to examine whether the Taliban really brought ‘peace and stability’ as claimed by their spokesmen and Pakistan, and echoed by some commentators.\textsuperscript{57}

The Pakistani Pashtuns and the Geostrategic Interests of Pakistan

Earlier we discussed the simmering differences between the government of Nawaz Sharif with the ISI and the Jamaat-e-Islami over policy issues in Afghanistan. In order to have more control over Pakistan’s Afghan policy, in March 1992 Nawaz Sharif sacked the pro-Hekmatyar Pashtun Director of the ISI, General Mohammad Asad Durrani.\textsuperscript{58} Following

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{58} ‘Chief of Pakistan’s Military Intelligence Replaced’, \textit{AFP}, 03 March 1992. Also see ‘A New Boss for Pakistan’s Spies’, \textit{The Economist}, 07 March 1992.}
on these earlier measures, in early 1993, Prime Minister Sharif announced his plan to reduce the discretionary powers of another Pashtun luminary, President Ghulam Ishaq Khan, through a constitutional amendment. This prompted the latter to dismiss the government. Later on the President's action was found to be unconstitutional by the Supreme Court, which reinstated Sharif's government. However, neither the President, nor the military establishment, respected the court's ruling. Pakistan's Chief of Army Staff, General Abdul Waheed, another ethnic Pashtun, pressured the Prime Minister to step down or the military would topple his government. General Waheed also negotiated with Benazir Bhutto and promised her the next government if she toed the military line. Left in the cold by both the military and the Jamaat-e-Islami, Sharif stepped down in July 1993. Subsequently, general elections were organized in which Bhutto won with the key support of the representatives of the Jamaat-ul-Ulama-e-Islam (JUI) from the Pashtun territories of Pakistan.

On becoming Prime Minister for the second time, Bhutto was facing a policy dilemma in regard to Afghanistan. Pakistan's support to Hekmatyar had made no dint at removing the ISA from Kabul. The indiscriminate bombardment of Kabul had tarnished his and Pakistan's image. He had proved a failure and 'Pakistan's Afghan policy was stranded like a beached whale, directionless and without powerful surrogates in Afghanistan'. The costs were too high for Pakistan. Its leaders were keen to link up with the resources-rich Central Asia, where Pakistan's regional competitors including Iran, Turkey and India had already made inroads. The new PPP government was also hampered by another factor domestically. The Jamaat-e-Islami, which had close ideological and organizational connections with the Hezb-e-Islami and long acted as its patron in Pakistan, was fiercely opposed to Bhutto's government. It would have been self-destructive and impractical for Ms. Bhutto to carry on with the policy of supporting an organization whose benefactor was literally against her government. Given the level of influence which the Jamaat-e-Islami exercised over the Hezb-e-Islami as well as the likeminded officers of the ISI, continuation


of support to the Hezb-e-Islami would have put the PPP government at the mercy of its opponents' cooperation.

On the other hand the new government could not afford to switch Pakistan's support to the ISA, even if it would help the prospects for the Pakistani objective of access to Central Asia. Influential Pushtuns in Pakistan's body politic had already shown their willingness during the PML's government to forgo any such notions of Pakistan's national interests in a show of solidarity with their co-ethnics in Afghanistan. It would have been unwise to test the strength of their affective ties with the fellow Afghan Pushtuns once again. Thus the new government had to find a solution that would address the sense of Pushtun solidarity against the Rabbani government; at the same time helping Pakistan's strategic objectives of linking it to Central Asia, keeping the lid on any revival of Pushtun nationalism and safeguarding the pool of active support in Afghanistan for the Kashmiri insurgency. It was under these circumstances that the first signs of a new force known as the Taliban appeared in Qandahar. Similar to the Hezb-e-Islami which had close connections with the Jamaat-e-Islami, the Taliban had close ideological and organizational linkages with the second most powerful Islamic party of Pakistan, namely the JUI. The JUI, which had played no significant part in the anti-Soviet resistance during the 1980s, was part of Bhutto's government now.

The ISI, as a longtime ally of the Jamaat-e-Islami and the Hezb-e-Islami, was reluctant at the beginning to lend support to the Taliban. Therefore, the interior ministry of Pakistan, under General Naseerullah Babar (Retd.), took charge of brewing this new force. As an ethnic Pushtun, a hero of the 1965 war against India, longtime member of the PPP, and having good connections with the Afghans, he was instrumental in shaping up as well as implementing the new PPP government’s policies in Afghanistan. The switchover from the Hezb-e-Islami to Taliban, initially unsettled some of the longtime allies of the Hezb-e-Islami. The former director of the ISI, Lieutenant-General Hamid Gul, for example, visited Afghanistan in early 1994 and relentlessly shuttled between Rabbani, Hekmatyar and Sayyaf urging them to unite because a dangerous new threat was being conceived in Pakistan against all of them. However, it did not take long for the ‘Pushtun grid in the army high command’, including General Abdul Waheed, chief of the army, Lieutenant-General Ali

During the 1990s, even the Pushtun nationalist parties of Pakistan, which have traditionally opposed both religious radicalism of the Islamic parties and the Pakistani military’s domination of their country’s politics, actually fell in line with the ISI and the Jamaat-e-Islami to support the Hezb-e-Islami in Afghanistan. See Barnett Rubin, The Fragmentation of Afghanistan, p. 272.

Kuli Khan, head of the Military Intelligence, Lieutenant-General Naseem Rana, director of the ISI, and many other influential Pushtun officers and functionaries to pull the full weight of Pakistan’s military and intelligence apparatus behind the Taliban.\(^{65}\)

The role of the Pushtun military and intelligence officers in giving shape to Pakistani policy to support the Taliban was so great that even when the PPP-JUI coalition government was no more in power, the PML government would dare not alter that policy without first attempting to reduce Pushtun influence in the military-intelligence establishment. In October 1998 General Jehangir Karamat, Pakistan’s chief of army staff and an ethnic Pushtun, was made to resign under pressure from the government. In accordance with the principles of seniority in the army, Prime Minister Sharif was expected to appoint General Ali Kuli Khan, another ethnic Pushtun, as the army chief. Yet he was superseded by a much more junior officer, General Pervez Musharraf, because the latter belonged to the Muhajir minority which did not have any significant influence in the army.\(^{66}\) The Pushtun General and another army officer more senior to Musharraf, Lt. General Khaled Nawaz, resigned in protest against the appointment.\(^{67}\) Thereafter, Nawaz Sharif, with a strong majority in the parliament, attempted to bring about policy changes including watering down support to the Taliban. For this purpose he also removed his Pushtun foreign minister, Gohar Ayub Khan. Gohar Ayub Khan’s determined support to the Taliban had complicated the PML government’s relations with the US. It was also a stumbling block against Nawaz Sharif’s efforts to reconcile the Taliban with the ISA.\(^{68}\) Before long, however, the PML government was overthrown in a bloodless coup by General Pervez Musharraf in October 1999.\(^{69}\)

Although the spiritual leadership of the Taliban were made up mainly of religious mullahs, yet far from being an indigenous army of pious madrasa students, the Taliban included many communist Khalqi officers loyal to the ex-defence minister Shahnawaz Tanai, Pushtun communist officers loyal to Najibullah, students from religious seminaries,

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\(^{65}\) Ibid, p. 86.


\(^{67}\) Zahid Hussain, ‘Pakistan: Ambushing the Army’, India Today, 19 October 1998.


members of the *Hezb-e-Islami* and the *Harakat-e-Enqelah*, officers and paramilitaries from Pakistan’s army, the ISI and the extremist *Sepah-e-Sahaba* group, and some Pushtun tribal chiefs and drug smugglers.\(^70\) In addition to their connections with Pakistan’s military, intelligence and religious establishment, the Taliban were also linked closely to, and represented the interests of, the smuggling mafia across the Afghan-Pakistan border. Later on they developed business ties with Asif Ali Zardari, Ms. Bhutto’s husband, and made an alliance with Dostum in northern Afghanistan.\(^71\)

With the key support of Pakistan’s military-intelligence establishment, smuggling mafia and religious parties, and financial backing by Saudi Arabia, the Taliban made significant military gains in the south and east of the country. In these regions, the *Hezb-e-Islami* had been mostly discredited for its failure to make any breakthroughs against the ISA. Also people had experienced considerable harassment in the hands of local commanders affiliated with the *Hezb-e-Islami*. After securing the main headquarters of the *Hezb-e-Islami*, the Charasiab district south of Kabul, the Taliban employed the very tactics for which they had claimed all along that they were fighting the *Hezb-e-Islami* - heavy and indiscriminate bombardment and blockade of Kabul.\(^72\)

### Stability of the Taliban Regime

With such powerful backers, and a serious error of judgment by the ISA which actively helped the new force’s campaigns against the *Hezb-e-Islami* all along the route from Kandahar, the Taliban were already knocking at the doors of Kabul in early 2005. The Rabbani government ordered its provincial governors and regional commanders in the key provinces of Kandahar, Ghazni and Wardak to cooperate with the Taliban. Not only that, it also actively supported the Taliban’s operations against Hekmatyar by carrying out air sorties against Hekmatyar positions and using the state-run media to support the Taliban.\(^73\)

Kabul had always been reluctant to take the fight against the *Hezb-e-Islami* in the heart of the Pushtun belt out of fear that such a strategy would be seen as an ethnic conflict.
between the Tajiks and the Pushtuns. Therefore when the Taliban emerged as a Pushtun force in Qandahar, the Rabbani government was quick to dispatch a delegation, consisting mostly of Pushtun religious figures that held various ministries and high positions in the government, to investigate the Taliban’s true intentions and make a common cause with them in opposing the Hezb-e-Islami.

Mullah Naqibullah, a member of the Jamiat-e-Islami and the government’s Corps Commander in Qandahar at the time, had arranged meetings between the delegation and the Taliban leadership including Mullah Omar. The delegation brought back two key messages from the meeting. First, the Taliban had made it clear that their only intention was to clean up the roads from the checkpoints, where the local Hezb-e-Islami commanders extorted money from the travellers. Second, Mullah Naqibullah had told the delegation to convey the message to Kabul that it could view the Taliban as though they were his own army — meaning that Kabul could rest assured that the Taliban were not only well-intentioned but also under control.74

Thereafter although some had misgivings about the true nature of the Taliban, Kabul put its faith in Mullah Naqibullah and ordered all others to follow his advice and give way to the Taliban. In doing so the ISA hoped that the advance of the Taliban towards Kabul would fulfil some of the very objectives which the government had failed so far to realise. It would dislodge the Hezb-e-Islami without any risk of the conflict being seen as ethnic strife and Kabul would be free of the daily bombardment and blockade which the Hezb-e-Islami had imposed upon it since 1992. Initially Kabul never expected the Taliban’s advance to result in a complete rout of the Hezb-e-Islami from its stronghold of Charasiab south of Kabul. Rather it hoped that by opening a second front, the Taliban would force the Hezb-e-Islami to divert its resources and military assets to defend its backyard which would in turn ease pressure against Kabul. However in early 1995, the Hezb-e-Islami, sandwiched between two hostile forces, made a haphazard withdrawal from Charasiab.

With the Hezb-e-Islami forces gone as a military threat and before the Taliban could arrive, Massoud’s forces took full control of the southern suburbs of Kabul and Charasiab virtually unopposed. Massoud ordered his troops to refrain from opening fire if they confronted the Taliban. Massoud’s core guerrilla troops, drawn mostly from the northern provinces, carried on the order literally to the extent that some of them would not resist if

74 Interview with a member of the government delegation to the Taliban, (Anonymous), Kabul, 23 November 2005.
the Taliban asked them to lay down their arms. In mid-February 2005, the Taliban leaders came to negotiate with Massoud and Rabbani in Kabul to secure the Charasiab peacefully from the government troops. As a gesture of goodwill Massoud conceded to their request and relinquished Charasiab on the explicit understanding that the Taliban would not launch rocket attacks in Kabul.

By this time the peaceful interaction between the Taliban foot soldiers and Massoud’s guerrillas had generated enough mutual goodwill on the ground to allow for joint traditional dances of Atan and social get togethers in the open fields. Massoud’s troops would also take many groups of unarmed Taliban fighters, a majority of whom had never seen Kabul, for daylong tours of the city in their military vehicles. Continuation of this situation alarmed the Taliban leaders who requested Massoud to order his troops not to help the Taliban with the city tours because in their view roaming around in the city was going to spoil them. The Taliban leaders had clearly recognised the threat that if their fighters were to continue familiarising themselves with the relatively urbane yet Islamic culture in Kabul, they would no more accept the portrayal of that city by their leaders as an embodiment of all that their primitive archaic worldviews held to be evil. Such a development would have undermined their religious motivation to fight against the ISA.

In the western suburbs of Kabul, however, the forces of the Iranian-backed Hezb-e-Wahdat-e-Islami faction under Abdul Ali Mazari still held sway. The Taliban made several failed attempts to overcome Mazari’s defences. The Shiite Hazaras, long oppressed by successive Afghan regimes, put up strong resistance. Having failed to make any inroads, the Taliban conceded that the government forces would move against the Hezb-e-Wahdat-e-Islami positions from Kabul. This was not lost on the Iranian Embassy or the Iranian media which alleged a link between the Taliban and the ISA. Although the Hezb-e-Wahdat-e-Islami fighters fought bravely on both fronts, yet abandoned by its former allies and under virtual siege from all directions, its defences were overcome by the government forces that moved

to occupy all western suburbs of Kabul. Mazari along with some of his senior lieutenants, having fought for many years bitterly against the government, made the fatal mistake of surrendering to the Taliban. The Taliban summarily executed them all.

It was not long before that the units of heavily armed Taliban fighters started moving in long columns of Toyota-pickups into the western suburbs of Kabul. Many of them indeed passed the front lines which were now manned by government troops who were still under strict orders to abstain from opening fire against the Taliban. With the sudden flood of the Taliban into the western suburbs of Kabul, however, Massoud held no more faith in their pledge that if the government dislodged the Hezb-e-Wahdat-e-Islami they would not move to occupy their positions. It was here that Massoud ordered his troops to resist the Taliban’s advance. In the ensuing fight Taliban suffered heavy casualties and withdrew from the area.

Thereafter for a short period when they still remained in Charasiab and the southern districts of Kabul, the Taliban resorted to heavy bombardment of Kabul with even more powerful artillery than their predecessors including the Hezb-e-Islami, Hezb-e-Wahdat and the Jumhuri-e-Milli Islami. In an address to Afghan diplomats at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Kabul, President Rabbani bitterly complained about the Taliban’s bad faith and lack of gratitude for all that his government had done to help them. In the next few months, however, the Taliban suffered a major defeat and were pushed as far away as the southern parts of the Logar province. This allowed the ISA a breathing space for the first time since 1992 because Kabul was finally out of range of all hostile forces’ rocket attacks. Normalcy returned to Kabul, the main bazaars in the centre of the city were reopened. Even the Kabul University, which had been controlled by the Hezb-e-Wahdat forces since 1992, was also reopened in March 1995.

Facing stiff resistance in Kabul, the Taliban focused attention on the western and eastern regions which were controlled mainly by Ismail Khan and the Shina-e-Nangarhar

80 At the time the researcher lived in Kabul. He witnessed Taliban’s powerful artillery attacks with not only BM-21’s (Katyushas) which Hekmatyar used previously but also with BM-27 missiles (known as Oragan missiles in Afghanistan). One of these missiles landed and destroyed part of the perimeter wall of the German Embassy in Wazir Akbar Khan district. The researcher witnessed this. Also see ‘Taliban Launch Rocket Attack On Kabul’, BBC Monitoring Service, 22 December 1995. ‘Iranian Radio Says 14 Killed By Taliban Rocket Attack On Kabul’, BBC Monitoring Service, 23 October 1995.
82 The researcher was a witness to these developments as he resumed his studies in Kabul University at the time.
respectively. By this time Pakistan had brokered an alliance between the Taliban and Dostum in the north. Ismail Khan had to fend off coordinated attacks from both the Taliban and Dostum’s forces. In the east the Taliban faced little resistance from the Shura-e-Nangarhar whose membership already had deep ties with the Pakistani intelligence agencies and the smuggling mafia. Thus it was not long before the Taliban overran both the western province of Herat and the eastern province of Nangarhar.

On 26 June 1996, Hekmatyar, left desolate and unimportant militarily, finally joined the ISA as Prime Minister. Many authors have rightly commented about the military obsolescence of Hekmatyar’s late alliance with the government. Yet what has not been sufficiently explored is the continued political importance of Hekmatyar during this period. From the ISA’s perspective, Hekmatyar’s joining up could serve at least two important political objectives. First, it would reaffirm the multiethnic character of the government which would deny the Taliban the status of being the sole representative of Pashtun interests. Second, it would line up all the important, non-traditionalist, Mujahideen factions including the Jamiat-e-Islami, the Hezb-e-Islami and the Ittehad-e-Islami against the Taliban-Dostum alliance. During the anti-Soviet resistance the combined forces of these three Mujahideen factions constituted the bulk of those who actually fought against the Soviet and the PDPA forces. Hence, their combined opposition against the Taliban helped deny the benefit of ethical legitimacy to the latter.

These Mujahideen groups in fact looked down with contempt at the Islamic credentials of the other less important Mujahideen factions led by Pir Said Ahmad Gailani and Hazrat Sebghatullah Mojaddadi. They were regarded as little more than charlatan opportunists whose main interest in opposing the communist regime was to restore their previously-privileged positions which they enjoyed under the monarchy. Similarly, two more Mujahideen factions led by Maulavi Mohammad Nabi Mohammadi and Maulavi Mohammad Yunus Khalis were regarded as a conglomeration of traditional Mullahs with little knowledge of the modern world and organised political activism. Among the seven Mujahideen groups in Pakistan, the Jamiat-e-Islami, Hezb-e-Islami and the Ittehad-e-Islami were ideologically close to international Islamic reformist discourse spearheaded by the Ikhwan-

Therefore, the alliance between the Jamiat-e-Islami, Hezb-e-Islami and the Ittehad-e-Islami was tantamount to an ideological alignment of modernist Islamic forces against those of archaic South Asian Muslim clergy and ex-communist atheism as represented by Dostum’s alliance with the Taliban. It is not surprising, therefore, that while the Pakistani regime and the JUI were fully supporting the Taliban, the Rabbani-Hekmatyar coalition was struck partly through the efforts of Qazi Hussain Ahmad, leader of the Jamaat-e-Islami, and Hamid Gul, former director of the ISI.86

However, Hekmatyar’s entry in fact weakened the ISA because Massoud had to stretch his troops thin in order to defend Hekmatyar’s strongholds. Against his better judgement, Massoud had to send a large number of his troops to the Laghman and Nangarhar provinces at the insistence of Hekmatyar and Rabbani.87 Furthermore Hekmatyar’s presence in the government and quasi-integration of his militias with Massoud’s forces undermined military cohesion and morale. Many of Hekmatyar’s local commanders defected to the Taliban in their first opportunity. This left floodgates for Kabul open to the Taliban from many directions. In late September 2006, Massoud had to evacuate his troops from Kabul. This allowed the Taliban to advance for the first time north of Kabul up to the Salang tunnel where the Taliban-Dostum alliance had to finally meet its moment of truth, and with it Central Asia’s complacency about the situation would also come to an end.

It is noteworthy that the financial support from Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and the tacit approval by the first Clinton administration in the US also played a part in Taliban’s quick gains in Afghanistan.88 Saudi Arabia and the US had found a common cause in Taliban as they represented a threat to the Iranian interests in the region.89 Powerful business interests were lobbying the US for supporting the Taliban. In 1997, an international consortium, known as Central Asian Gas Pipeline Ltd (CENTGAS), was officially set up to construct an oil pipeline from Turkmenistan to the port of Karachi in Pakistan. Membership of the CENTGAS included the US Unocal, the Saudi Arabian Delta Oil, the Government of Turkmenistan, the Russian Gazprom, the Crescent Group

from Pakistan, and two Japanese and a South Korean company.\textsuperscript{90} The US Assistant Secretary of State, Robin Raphel, and some other officials in the State Department were somewhat sympathetic to the Taliban.\textsuperscript{91} Soon after the Taliban entered Kabul, the State Department announced that it would establish diplomatic relations with the new regime.\textsuperscript{92} However, subsequently the US retracted its statement possibly due to a realization that the Taliban’s hold over Kabul was precarious.

In a counterattack during mid-October 1996, Massoud’s forces advanced back to the vicinities of the Kabul city which was left undefended by the overstretched forces of the Taliban.\textsuperscript{93} The Taliban could never capture the whole of the Shamali plains, despite implementing a scorched-earth policy of burning and flattening many of its villages and green vineyards. The strong presence of the anti-Taliban forces in the Shamali plains loomed large always as a threat against the stability of the Taliban regime in Kabul. Massoud did not attempt to enter the capital because of fears that his forces would be redrawn to the difficult task of defending the city once again against rocket attacks. Neither did the ISA see much sense in being held responsible for the security and wellbeing of Kabul residents, knowing that the Taliban would again impose a blockade and shower the city with rockets as they, and the Hezb-e-Islami, had done previously.\textsuperscript{94} Within the northern vicinities of greater Kabul, the ISA forces had the capability to strike the city with their BM-21 and BM-27 (or Oragan as it is known in Afghanistan), multiple rocket launchers. Unlike the Hezb-e-Islami and the Taliban, which had used these missiles to destabilize the ISA previously, the ISA forces avoided indiscriminate bombing of Kabul.\textsuperscript{95} This allowed the Taliban to consolidate their control of Kabul. Given the view that the perception of widespread instabilities, during 1992-1996, was ‘to a considerable extent … the product of an urban bias in reporting’, lack of missile attacks in Kabul might have inversely contributed to a false impression that the Taliban had brought peace and stability to the country during post-1996 era.\textsuperscript{96}

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\item Ahmed Rashid, Taliban: Islam, Oil, and the New Great Game in Central Asia, p. 166.
\item Ibid, p. 53.
\item Alexander Kniazev, ‘Afghanistan: Religious Extremism and Terrorism, the Year 2000’, Central Asia and the Caucasus, Number 5, Year 2000.
\item In Maley’s opinion the ‘urban bias in reporting’ led observers to make sweeping assertions about the stability/instability of the whole country based on what went on mainly in Kabul during 1992-1996. William Maley, The Afghanistan Wars, p. 194.
\end{thebibliography}
The Evolving Role of Tajikistan and Uzbekistan

Some commentators have analysed the formation of regional alignments in Central Asia, South Asia and the Middle East against and in favour of the Taliban as they launched their two-pronged offensives, from the two directions of Kabul and the Herat regions, northwards in Afghanistan. A common view holds that the incumbent governments in Central Asia were all ruled by ex-communist leaders, opposed by the Islamic forces from within their countries, who felt threatened by the arrival of the Taliban because it was feared they would ultimately link up with the indigenous Islamic movements and undermine the ruling governments. This view, however, does not fully account for the complexities of internal and regional politics in Afghanistan and Central Asia. First, it minimally dichotomises the internal politics of Afghanistan by assigning to the Taliban the sole role of Islamic torchbearers, marking their opponents as something less than Islamic. Second, it underestimates the strength of ethnic ties between the peoples of Central Asia and northern Afghanistan by assuming that the Taliban could easily exert influence over all the Islamic-oriented trends in Central Asia. Third, it seems oblivious to the fact that the presence of the Taliban in the north indirectly strengthened, rather than weakened, the governments of both Imamali Rahmanov (Imamali Rahman as of April 2007) and Islam Karimov in Tajikistan and Uzbekistan respectively.

The Taliban’s advance into northern Afghanistan was an unprecedented event in the recent history of Central Asia. The region was no more under Russian rule which could circumvent the plight of ethnic communities south of the border and deal directly with the government in Kabul. On attaining independence Central Asian leaders embarked on a speedy process of de-Russification of their countries. Ethnic identities including Tajik, Uzbek, Turkmen, Kirgiz and Kazakh formed the basis of national identities and there was much emphasis on a cultural revival based on ethnic and linguistic traits of the these new countries. Each country glorified the medieval rulers of Islamic Central Asia, who hailed from its ethnic background. Tajikistan made a hero of Ismail Samani and Uzbekistan did

99 To the opponents of the Taliban in Afghanistan, the latter represented a retrogressive force that shared little with what Islam enjoined upon the Muslims. Neither their primitive interpretation of Islam nor their conduct in Afghanistan lent any support to the contention that the Taliban was a puritanical Islamist movement. See Rawan Farhadi, Islam and the War of Liberation in Afghanistan, Central Asia And The Caucasus, Number 5, Year 2000.
the same about Tamerlane. In such a nationalistic environment, the Pakistani and Arab-backed Taliban’s trampling over the Tajik, Uzbek and Hazara communities in the north was bound to provoke Central Asian governments to find a common cause in opposing the Taliban. Coupled with the ethnic dimension were also the issues of increased drug-trafficking and a new wave of Pushtun religious extremism uninhibited by the common bonds which other ethnic communities shared with the peoples of Central Asia.

The arrival of the Taliban-Al-Qaeda forces on the northern borders of Afghanistan with Central Asia threatened these countries’ stability by increasing drug-trafficking, instigating religious extremism and brutalising non-Pushtun ethnic communities who had to cross the northern borders to seek refuge amidst their co-ethnics in Central Asia. Whereas in the early 1990s the total area covered by cultivation of narcotics in Afghanistan had been 19,500 hectares, in 1999 the figure for opium cultivation alone increased to 91,000 hectares in areas under Taliban control. Furthermore, the Taliban legalised drug-trafficking by levying 10 percent tax on opium growing, 20 percent on its exports, and providing bank credits to the drug trafficker in Qandahar. In 1999, Afghanistan under the Taliban had a record harvest of 4,600 tons of opium which could yield around 460 tons of heroin after processing. Over 65 percent of the drugs were reportedly shipped through Central Asia, the total volume increasing as each year passed with large parts of Afghanistan under the Taliban control. According to one study this would fetch almost US$ 130-140 billion in the developed countries’ black markets, exceeding three times over the combined GDP of all the five Central Asian states put together then.

It is noteworthy that in 1999 the Taliban imposed a two-year ban on poppy-growing in their areas of control, as a result of which the volume of narcotics produced by

104 Ibid.
Afghanistan reportedly plunged to negligible amounts in the year 2000. However, the Executive Director of United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime Control, Antonio Maria Costa, has said that the view that the Taliban were ‘the good fellow[s]’ who decreased the production of narcotics ‘is a common misperception’. Citing the UN figures he has argued that the Taliban actually doubled the production of opium from around 2,300 tons to 4,600 tons between 1998 and 2000. Doubts have also been cast by experts about the true intentions of the Taliban’s proscribing of the poppies. It has been argued that the ban was intended to affect a price hike in opium value. In their report to the UN Security Council on 25 May 2001, a group of UN experts said that ‘if Taliban officials were sincere in stopping the production of opium and heroin, then one would expect them to order the destruction of all stocks existing in areas under their control’. The ban caused the average price of opium to jump from US$ 28/kilo in 2000 to US$ 280/kilo in February 2001.

The Taliban also supported some of the most violent religious radical groups such as the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) which directly threatened security and stability in Central Asia, especially in Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. In early 1999, the IMU was implicated in a series of bomb explosions in Tashkent which nearly killed President Karimov. In August 1999, Juma Namangani, the military commander of the IMU, launched a campaign of military raids and hostage taking in Batken region of Kyrgyzstan and Vorukh and Sokh enclaves which are parts of the Uzbek and Tajik territories respectively. The IMU demanded the release of their fellow rebels from Uzbek prisons. After negotiations, however, they reportedly accepted US$ 2-5 million ransom and safe air passage onboard Russian helicopters to Taliban-occupied provinces of Qunduz and Mazar-e-Sharif in Afghanistan. In August 2000, Namangani again launched another attack in the same areas as well as the Sukhandara district and the mountainous region north of Tashkent. Subsequently he again negotiated safe air passage to Taliban-controlled parts of Afghanistan.

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As with the Taliban, the IMU was also involved in drug-trafficking from Afghanistan through Central Asia, which had its own destabilising impacts on Central Asian countries in terms of deteriorating security, increased domestic drug addiction and official corruption in state administrations. Cornell has advanced a highly speculative argument to assert that the IMU’s two operations were aimed at securing transit routes for drugs out of Afghanistan. He has come to such a conclusion simply by observing the timing pattern of IMU operations both in August, 1999 and 2000, which came shortly after the opium harvests in Afghanistan. He further argues that the reduced amount of narcotics in 2001 as a result of the Taliban ban accounted for the IMU’s lack of a subsequent operation in 2001. A more plausible explanation for the lack of IMU operation in 2001, however, might have to reckon with the Uzbek government’s diplomatic overtures with the Taliban and the strengthening of military cooperation within the CIS, particularly Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Kazakhstan and Russia, than a superficial study of narcotics harvesting and smuggling patterns.

Ethnic cleansing by the Taliban of the northern Tajiks, Hazaras, Uzbeks and Turkmens in the late 1990s forced tens of thousands of inhabitants of the northern provinces to flock to Central Asian borders to seek protection from the Taliban’s onslaught. In September 2000, for example, when the Taliban moved into the town of Taloqan (the provincial capital Takhar province) the entire population of that area, estimated to be around 150,000 at the time, headed to the border to cross into Tajikistan. The refugees knew of the massacres which the Taliban had carried out in the vicinities of that area and other northern provinces in the previous years. In December the same year over 10,000 refugees were marooned by the UNHCR on little Islands and peninsulas in the Pyandj River which separates the two countries jurisdictions. The Taliban did not hesitate to shell the refugees’ encampments even on these little Islands. The Taliban did not save even the Turkmens given the fact that the regime of Saparmurat Niyazov in Turkmenistan

112 Ibid, pp. 619-630.
enjoyed friendly relations with the Taliban as well as with Pakistan which was their main foreign sponsor. The flood of Turkmen refugees across the border to Turkmenistan as a result of the Taliban’s advance into the adjacent areas, in June 1997, was indeed an embarrassment to the Turkmen leader who had long sought to present a more acceptable picture of the Taliban to other Central Asian leaders and the wider world.\textsuperscript{118}

Mainly due to the above three policy orientations of the Taliban — promotion of narcotics, religious radicalism and ethnic cleansing —, the Central Asian governments, particularly those of Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, came to oppose them.\textsuperscript{119} The Taliban’s advance, in 1996, into the northern provinces prompted the leaderships of the Tajik, Uzbek and Hazara communities to close ranks despite their internal differences and the Taliban’s initial reassurances to continue their friendship with Dostum. The Tajik, Uzbek, Hazara and some anti-Taliban Pushun factions formed the United Islamic Front for the Salvation of Afghanistan (UIFSA) in October 1996.\textsuperscript{120} In the UIFSA, Rabbani was recognised by all the parties as the President of the ISA and Massoud was endorsed as the main military figure to lead the anti-Taliban campaign. Apart from its military significance internally, the formation of the UIFSA was also meant to attract support from Uzbekistan since Dostum had close connections with that country. Moreover, neither Uzbekistan nor Tajikistan did enjoy good relations with Massoud and Rabbani until mid-1990s. The Afghan Mujahideen leaders had tilted towards supporting the Islamist opposition in Tajikistan against the more secular government in Dushanbe before. Until their split in 1997 as a result of the ending of Tajikistan’s civil war, the Uzbek Islamic rebels were indeed integrated with the Tajik rebels. This meant that the ISA’s support of the Tajik rebels until mid-1990s also worked at cross-purpose to that of the Uzbek government under Islam Karimov. Therefore, in addition to Dostum’s ethnic links with Uzbekistan, the pro-Islamic orientations of the ISA was another reason why Uzbekistan continued to channel its support directly to Dostum despite the fact that his faction was a junior partner to the Jamiat-e-Islami within the UIFSA. However the situation changed after the Taliban overran Dostum’s northern strongholds in 1998 and cut his direct supply lines from Uzbekistan. Thereafter Uzbekistan had to coordinate its policies with Tajikistan because the latter was the only remaining Central Asian country to have a common border with the UIFSA-controlled territory along the Takhar, Badakhshan and parts of Qunduz provinces.


\textsuperscript{119} Hooman Peimani, \textit{Falling Terrorism and Rising Conflicts}, pp. 14-17.

The ending of the Tajik civil war had useful implications not only for the anti-Taliban forces but also to the regimes of Imamali Rahman and Islam Karimov in Tajikistan and Uzbekistan respectively. After the settlement of the Tajik civil war in 1997, Central Asia became more inclined to support the ISA as a single entity. For their part the leadership of the ISA played an instrumental role in bringing about the end of the Tajik civil war. Although Massoud had helped the Tajik Islamic opposition in the past, he exercised significant influence on both sides of the conflict when it came to negotiations for a peace agreement. He participated as an arbiter in some of the direct negotiations that took place between Imamali Rahman and Said Abdullah Nouri. Massoud’s open involvement in the inter-Tajik dialogue in fact goes back to the earliest stages of the process. After their first meeting in Tehran (October 1996), President Rahman and Said Abdullah Nuri, leader of the Tajik Islamic opposition’s second meeting took place in December 1996 at the Chaman-e-Khosdeh in the Takhar province which was firmly controlled by Massoud. It is interesting that the available literature, while referring to the positive role of other parties such as Iran and the UN, has almost ignored the instrumental role of the ISA leaders in the Tajik settlement.

The Tajik settlement proved invaluable for the ISA from a logistical point of view since it could use the Kulob Airbase in southern Tajikistan for transit of military supplies bought mainly from Russia with funds from Iran and the sale of gemstones from northern Afghanistan. Uzbekistan contributed to the anti-Taliban campaign mainly by allowing, surreptitiously, the transit of supplies through its territory and political support to the ISA. The peace accords in 1997 which ended the Tajik civil war, however, caused the Uzbek Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) to split up from their fellow Tajik rebels and

123 Saodat Olimova, Tajikistan-Russia: From “Divorce” To Integration, Central Asia And The Caucasus, No. 3, Year 2000.
124 Massoud’s instrumental role in the Tajik peace settlement was lauded by the Tajik government in 2007 when he was awarded the highest state medal posthumously for his efforts in bringing the conflicting parties together. ‘A ‘taye Neshanha-e Eftekharee Ba Sahm Gaharan-e Sulh-e Tajikistan’ [Award of Honourary Medals to the Participants of Peace in Tajikistan], BBC Persian, 25 June 2007.
continue their campaign under the auspices of the Taliban, Al-Qaeda and the ISI. It is noteworthy that despite his avowed Islamic worldview, Massoud had always shielded the newly independent Central Asian republics against the sort of religious extremism which Hekmatyar and the Taliban exhibited. During the rule of the ISA in Kabul, Jalaluddin Haqqani, the Mujahideen commander who eventually joined the Taliban in 1995, had asked Massoud to allow his forces to wage Jihad in Tajikistan. The request was rejected as much due to Haqqani’s extremism as he was viewed to be an instrument of ISI’s proxy power. Nevertheless, the Tajik-Uzbek split in the Islamic opposition opened the way up for increased ISI and Taliban influence over the Uzbek militants who were effectively used not only against the Uzbek government but also against the anti-Taliban resistance in Afghanistan. Similarly the Taliban supported and recognised the independence of Chechnya in January 2000. By doing so, the Taliban recruited scores of extremely motivated Chechen rebels who participated in the fight against the ISA as well.

The Taliban had no success, however, in asserting influence over the Tajik Islamic opposition chiefly because of Massoud’s popularity among them. By responding favourably to Massoud’s call to come to a settlement with the Tajik government, the Tajik Islamic rebels helped the anti-Taliban resistance on the one hand, and strengthened the Tajik government against Uzbekistan’s proxy warlord, Makhmud Khudoberdiyev, on the other. In August 1997, the Tajik Islamic forces along with the Tajik government soldiers rooted out Khudoberdiyev from his stronghold in southern Tajikistan. The leadership of the Tajik Islamic opposition, both Said Abdullah Nuri and Haji Akbar Turajanzadah, supported Massoud against the Taliban. There were few instances also of individual members of the Tajik Islamic movement participating in the anti-Taliban resistance in the Panjsher valley.

The IMU, by aligning itself with the Taliban and participating in the Afghan conflict,
diminished its chances of success against the Uzbek government in the long term. While the IMU had already split up from the Islamic Renaissance Party of Tajikistan, its alliance with the Taliban meant that its members would fight and antagonize the UIFSA, mainly made up of the Tajiks, Uzbeks and Hazaras, in northern Afghanistan as well. Thus they could not expect any sympathy from the Tajik, Uzbek and Hazara Mujahideen, nor could they expect any friendship from the ex-communist Uzbek militias of Dostum whose close connections with the Uzbek government had already precluded the development of any fraternal relations between the two sides anyway. The ISI had a central role in brokering a truly symbiotic relationship between the Taliban, the IMU and other Caucasian, South Asian and Middle Eastern militant Islamic groups. By doing so the ISI created an effective military machine against the UIFSA, where the foreign militant groups were given sanctuary and bases by the Taliban in return for their participation in the war against the UIFSA. The IMU’s cooperation with ISI and the Taliban might have been an attractive option at the time especially when the latter made significant advances in the north. The ultimate result of this alliance, however, strengthened the Uzbek government in the longer term.

It is noteworthy that the presence of thousands of foreign fighters among the Taliban was instrumental in their military successes because these combatants, often without much knowledge of the complexities of ethno-linguistic politics in Afghanistan, fought with strong motivation and a sense of ethical legitimacy against the anti-Taliban resistance. The foreign Islamic movements’ support also bolstered the ethical legitimacy of the Taliban in the eyes of the common person in the Muslim world. At the turn of the millennium, the Taliban’s image had been transformed from being a primitive group of half-educated Mullahs to a highly sophisticated radical Islamist movement running the only government in the world to ever recognise the Chechen independence in January 2000. The Taliban allowed a Chechen Embassy in Kabul and two Chechen Consulates in Qandahar and Mazar-e-Sharif.

On the other hand the Taliban were increasingly isolated internationally. Saudi Arabia scaled back its diplomatic relations with the Taliban in 1998 due to their continued support

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131 Farhad Tolipov, ‘Geopolitical Stalemate in Afghanistan’, *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, No. 6, Year 2000.
and sanctuary to Osama Bin Laden. Similarly the West grew increasingly distrustful of the Taliban’s policies, ranging from their protection of Bin Laden to the treatment of women and involvement in drug-trafficking. The US government, which had until 1998 viewed the Taliban phenomenon as a stabilizing factor in Afghanistan, found it difficult to continue with its previous policies under domestic pressure from women organisations as well as the need to address the problem of international terrorism emanating from the Taliban-controlled Afghanistan. In April 2001, President of the European Parliament, Nicole Fontaine, invited Ahmad Shah Massoud to Europe where he addressed the EU parliament, the media and the Afghan expatriate community. To the chagrin of the Musharraf regime, Massoud consistently hammered the message that the West needed to put pressure on Pakistan so that it would give up its support of the Taliban. To accusations that he also received support from foreign countries he replied; ‘faced with the aggression of Pakistan, I give myself the right... to seek aid everywhere’.134

Meanwhile the Taliban’s massacre of civilians in Bamian, Mazar-e-Sharif and Taluqan, their scorched-earth policies in the Shamali plains, and their primitive understanding and implementation of Islam, hugely discredit them among a majority of the Afghans including many Pushtuns.135 The anti-Taliban resistance was beginning to expand their operations across western and eastern regions of the country. A number of prominent Pushtun and non-Pushtun Mujahideen commanders including Ismail Khan of Herat, Haji Qadir and Hazrat Ali of Jalalabad, and Asef Noorzai of Kandahar, had started anti-Taliban operations in the west and southeastern regions.136 A wave of high profile defections from Taliban to the ISA had begun to loosen the Taliban’s grip on power not only in the non-Pushtun regions of northern and western Afghanistan but also the Pushtun areas in eastern and southern provinces. In July 2000, the Taliban’s ally and their Pushtun governor of Baghlan province, Mohammad Bashir Baghlani, was arrested by the Taliban on charges that he had established contacts with the anti-Taliban resistance. Later on, Abdullah Jan Wahidi, the former governor of Laghman province and a key ally of the Taliban defected to the ISA. In August the same year, the Taliban’s governor of Bamian, Maulawi Islam, ditched the

135 Hooman Peimani, Falling Terrorism and Rising Conflicts, p. 44.
136 Speech by Ahmad Shah Massoud to members of Afghan expatriate community in Europe, Paris, 4 April 2001.
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Taliban and established contacts with the ISA.\textsuperscript{137} In such a fluid environment of shifting alliances and military fortunes, political stability and the Taliban’s dream of total domination of Afghanistan, was getting farther away as each year passed. Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Russia, Iran and India had all teamed up against the Taliban. Without the cooperation of these countries it was impossible for the Taliban to consolidate their rule for long.\textsuperscript{138}

**Taliban and Turkmenistan**

The Turkmen policy towards the Taliban was driven primarily by Turkmenistan’s growing economic and military ties with Pakistan, and a measure of complacency by the Turkmen leader, Saparmurad Niyazov, that his country was somehow immune to the threat of religious radicalism irrespective of what transpired in its neighbourhood.\textsuperscript{139} This allowed the Turkmen government to be friendly with the Taliban regime. However, in view of the growing international isolation, and the domestic policies of the Taliban, it is doubtful whether the Turkmen leadership could have sustained such a position in the longer term.

Turkmenistan officially remained neutral in the Afghan conflict during the 1990s. It allowed the ISA Embassy to continue functioning at Ashgabat, while at the same time it courted the Taliban and Pakistan. The Turkmen government hoped that friendly relations with Pakistan and the Taliban would allow it to connect its Daulatabad gas fields via a Trans-Afghan Pipeline (TAP) to the port of Karachi. In 1994, Turkmenistan signed an agreement for military cooperation with Pakistan, which required the latter to train the Turkmen military personnel and establish an air force academy in that country. In March 1995, Pakistan’s Prime Minister, Benazir Bhutto, and the Turkmen President, Saparmurad Niyazov, signed a memorandum in Islamabad on building a gas pipeline from Turkmenistan through Afghanistan to Pakistan. The document also provided for reopening of a highway between Chaman near the Afghan-Pakistani border and Turgundi on the Afghan-Turkmen border. On 4 October 1996, when the Central Asian heads of state and Russia held an emergency consultative meeting in Almaty to take stock of the situation in the region after the capture of Kabul by the Taliban, Niyazov ignored the Kazakh


\textsuperscript{138} Hooman Peimani, *Falling Terrorism and Rising Conflicts*, pp. 17-36.

invitation and did not participate in the meeting. He stated that ‘the views of Turkmenistan and Pakistan on the situation in Afghanistan fully coincide’, implying that Turkmenistan was with the Taliban regime in Afghanistan.140

On 30 April 1999, a tripartite document was signed between Turkmenistan, Pakistan and the Taliban to construct a gas pipeline from Turkmenistan across Afghanistan to Pakistan.141 The Taliban’s Deputy Foreign Minister, Abdul Rahman Zahid, visited Ashghabad from 10 to 12 May 1999. He signed a number of agreements on economic cooperation with Turkmenistan.142 Despite the fact that Turkmenistan officially recognised the ISA government, it also allowed the Taliban to open their representative office and encouraged Uzbekistan as well to engage with the Taliban.143 The Turkmen foreign minister took his Uzbek counterpart, Abdulaziz Kamilov, along to visit both Islamabad and Qandahar from 31 May to 2 June 1999. They held talks with the Taliban and Pakistani leaders.144 Turkmenistan’s courting of, and lobbying for, the Taliban prompted many observers to question the validity of its neutrality.145

In spite of Turkmenistan’s pro-Taliban foreign policy, relevant research shows that the Taliban’s control of bordering provinces with that country had some of the same effects that had led the two other Central Asian countries of Tajikistan and Uzbekistan to oppose the Taliban. As indicated earlier, thousands of Afghanistan Turkmens had to flee their homes to enter Turkmenistan because of Taliban’s atrocities. The Turkmen government did not allow these refugees, and those who had managed to cross the border were pushed back to the Afghan side in June 1997. Trafficking of narcotics, mainly hashish, opium and heroin, steadily increased across the Turkmen border after the Taliban came to control the region. In 1995, the amount of narcotics confiscated from smugglers across the Turkmen border was two tons. The figure increased to 14 tons in 1996, 42 tons in 1997 and 60 tons in 1999. Similarly, the illegal border crossings, mainly related to drug-trafficking, increased

142 Murad Esenov, Turkmenistan’s Foreign Policy and its Impact on The Regional Security System.
143 Long-distance interview with a senior Afghan diplomat posted to Uzbekistan during the 1990s, (Anonymous), Kabul, 14 November 2006.
145 Murad Esenov, Turkmenistan’s Foreign Policy and its Impact on The Regional Security System.
from 1800 in 1995 to 2107 instances in 1997, under the Taliban regime. In view of these facts it is doubtful whether the Turkmen government could have managed in the long-term to continue with its pro-Taliban policies. Murad Esenov has observed that Turkmenistan’s neutral status, or any other country’s cordial relations with the Taliban regime for that matter, did not necessarily offer a guarantee against Taliban-Al-Qaeda activities aimed at undermining that country in the future. This is because, he says:

The structures that pose a threat to the security of the country and the region as a whole — the drug mafia, religious extremists, international terrorists, etc. — have never observed the norms of international law, nor will they ever observe them.

Esenov’s views were indeed vindicated in August 2006, when it was revealed in retrospect that the IMU and the Taliban had included Turkmen militants in their ranks who received training in asymmetric warfare at various Al-Qaeda camps based in Afghanistan. They were deployed to fight against the ISA and in Central Asia as part of the IMU. While there is no hard evidence to indicate that the Taliban used these Turkmen militants against Turkmenistan, it is equally hard to accept that the militants would have contained their activities within Afghanistan and other Central Asian countries, and not taken their fight to their own country in the longer term. Hence, it is clear that, while the Taliban regime had earned the enmity of other Central Asian countries by directly engaging in activities inimical to their perceived national interests, the prospects of its relations with the sole remaining country, which was not supporting the ISA, was far from stable. Had the Taliban regime survived long enough to witness a possible deterioration of its relations with Turkmenistan, the implications of such a development for the stability of that regime would have been more threatening than the challenge they had hitherto faced from Central Asia. It would have transformed the entire length of the northern and western borders into an arch of hostile front, literally linking up Iran with Central Asia to support the ISA in such a wide area.

Conclusion

The nature of Afghanistan’s relations with Central and South Asia continued to be one of the most important determinants of political stability in the country throughout the era of the ISA and the Taliban regimes. All aspects of political stability, including political
violence, government longevity, basic structural changes, legitimacy of the political system and its ability for effective decision-making, were affected significantly by the character of the country’s relations with the two regions. The ISA sought friendship with Pakistan, but refused to accept the status assigned to it in the ideationally-transformed worldview of the Pakistani leadership. The military-intelligence and the religious leadership of Pakistan was unimpressed by the mere show of friendship by the ISA, which did not go far enough to accommodate a satisfactory level of subservience to Pakistan’s geostrategic interests in the region. This became a source of friction between the two states, assisting and increasing the rate of organized political violence against the ISA by Pakistan’s proxy, the Hezb-e-Islami, as the main anti-state dissenting party. The power of ideas (or ideology) was also responsible, at least partially, for the acrimonious nature of the Afghan government’s relations with Central Asia and Russia, and for its lack of initiative to exploit the available potential for expansion of relations with India. The impact of the ISA’s ideological domestic and foreign politics on its stability is perhaps a good case study to substantiate Eckstein’s view that ‘too much ideology can kill a government’.

Coupled with the dynamics of domestic politics, the growing hostility between the ISA and its neighbours gave shape to a formidable alliance of the anti-state dissenters, which received support from Central Asia, Pakistan and Iran.

Rivalry between the ISA and its opponents further weakened state control over the conduct of foreign relations, where its supporters also resorted to expanding independent ties with the neighbouring countries which exacerbated instability in the country. In the midst of the prolonged period of instability, Pakistan created a new force to pacify Afghanistan in accordance with the requirements of its geostrategic interests and the wishes of its Pushtun leadership. Rather than being entirely endogenous to Afghanistan, the Taliban movement was in fact an extended arm of influential Pakistani Pushtuns in the military-intelligence and religious establishments of Pakistan, who had felt entitled to assume the position of all Pushtun leadership and to dictate the terms of the Afghan-Pakistan relations—the effect of ideational transformation.

The ISA succumbed under extreme pressure by Pakistan’s new proxy and withdrew from the symbolic seat of state power to the north. However, the Taliban’s military successes had the opposite effect politically. Whereas until mid-1990s, the ISA was diplomatically isolated, with all the neighbouring countries supporting one or the other of the rebel forces against it, in later years Central Asia, Iran, India and even Russia engaged with it.

149 Harry Eckstein, Regarding Politics, p. 211.
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substantially in opposing the Taliban. After the mid-1990s, the ISA adopted more pragmatic, as against purely ideologically-driven, policies in regard to Central Asia as a result of which Tajikistan was stabilized and relations with Uzbekistan improved. Although the Taliban's support to the IMU presented a clear threat to stability in Uzbekistan, its alignment with the Taliban antagonized the local population in northern Afghanistan and the ISA against it. This in turn reduced the chances of survival for the IMU in the longer term, as it could not hope for cross-border ethnic support from Afghanistan to continue its operations in Uzbekistan. Afghanistan was effectively divided into two jurisdictions; the ISA, recognised by the United Nations and supported by Iran, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Russia and India; and the Taliban, recognised by Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and the UAE. The very existence of the two internationally-recognised political systems in the territory of Afghanistan entailed fundamental structural changes to the basic character of the Afghan polity—an essential aspect of political stability/instability.

While there is no doubt that Afghanistan was not stable before the arrival of the Taliban, the view that the Taliban brought any more peace and stability bears little academic testimony. Having been propped up partly by the transport and smuggling mafia across the Afghan-Pakistan border, the Taliban might have secured the major transportation links connecting Kabul with Pakistan for the trucking industries and the occasional journalists. Massacres of civilians, scorched-earth policies, widespread suppression of various ethnic groups, courting violent international organisations and the drug mafia, and the introduction of a reign of terror in major parts of the country could hardly point to the existence of peace and stability.

In view of the growing internal and external opposition to the Taliban regime, its continuity was precarious at best. The Taliban successfully capitalized on their defence of various international Islamic insurgent groups to attain ethical legitimacy among many Muslims around the world. This brought the Taliban some dedicated personnel and resources from organisations, such as the Al-Qaeda, deployed to consolidate the regime and fight off its opponents. The growing influence of radical foreign organisations over the policies of the Taliban, however, operated to antagonize the Afghans as well as a growing number of important players in the international community. While the Taliban regime never had any legal legitimacy; its traditional legitimacy, largely based on an impression by the media and the public that it was representing the Pushtuns, suffered as it became radicalized increasingly under the influence of foreign organisations.
Compared to the ISA, the Taliban regime was more effective in implementing its decisions in domestic as well as foreign policy as it had succeeded in establishing a more centralized political system with the help of the Pakistani military-intelligence establishment. The ability to implement decisions is only one element of effective decision-making, however. In the context of the definition of political stability, the degree of receptiveness to consensus building is an integral part of effective decision-making; something that the Taliban could be hardly credited with. While the Taliban suppressed a majority of the Afghan population including the Tajik, Hazara, Uzbek, Aymaq and Turkmen communities, it is doubtful if they even represented the views of a wide-enough spectrum of the Pushtun community as many Pushtuns opposed them actively. Moreover, the influence of foreign organisations such as the ISI and Al-Qaeda, made the regime even less representative of the myriad of various macro-societies in Afghanistan. By 2001 the role of the Taliban Shuras (consultative councils) in Kabul and Qandahar had become almost non-existent and the regime was effectively directed by the Al-Qaeda and the ISI.

In view of the above, Afghanistan not only remained extremely unstable throughout the period of the ISA and the Taliban’s rule, but the prospects for the political stability of the country seemed remote as ever, as the two political systems struggled for military and political ascendency in the country. In so far as they supported or opposed the belligerents, many countries in Central and South Asia, especially Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Pakistan and India, influenced the political stability/instability of Afghanistan to varying degrees during this period.

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CHAPTER FIVE

Domestic Imperatives of Stability Misperceived

In the wake of the events of 11 September 2001 in the United States, and in parallel with the military campaign to depose the Taliban from power, an unprecedented level of international cooperation focussed on the task of rebuilding a stable political system for Afghanistan. The first significant step in this regard was the inter-Afghan dialogue between various factions under the auspices of the United Nations in Bonn which produced the Bonn Agreement of December 2001. The Bonn agreement provided for the institution of an Interim Authority (IA) consisting of the executive and judiciary arms, and an Independent Commission tasked with convening of an Emergency Loya Jirga which would deliberate about the establishment of a Transitional Administration (TA) to replace the IA within six months. Within 18 months of the establishment of the TA, a Constitutional Loya Jirga was to be convened to sanction a new constitution for the country. Finally the nationwide presidential and parliamentary elections were to be held not later than two and a half years from the establishment of the IA. Thus, the Bonn agreement provided for the establishment of state institutions as well as a process to achieve these benchmarks legitimately. It was hoped that at the end of this process, Afghanistan would be firmly on the road to political stability.

However, almost six years after the Bonn agreements, Afghanistan seems far from stable. The security has deteriorated markedly, and the Taliban’s resurgence has alarmed all the stakeholders who seem desperately searching for alternative policies to stem the tide. The Afghan government and foreign commentators have generally explained the causes of continued instability in a way that steers clear of questioning some of the underlying assumptions in the stabilisation process. They have variously blamed a range of factors including the negative role of the ‘warlords’, drug-trafficking, insufficient funds for

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reconstruction,\textsuperscript{4} Pakistan's interference\textsuperscript{5} and endemic corruption feeding into Taliban violence.\textsuperscript{6} A good amount of analytical materials have been produced about these causes of insecurity by the media, academia and policy circles; some of them making valid points about the relevance of these factors to the growing instability.

The current chapter will go beyond these standard views, however, to see whether certain other factors in the stabilization process have also been responsible for the failure so far. In particular, it will examine the relevance of four interrelated themes which have informed the notion of stabilisation in Afghanistan since the fall of the Taliban regime. These are assumptions on the part of the current Western intellectual discourse and the Afghan government that: 1/ a highly centralised political system largely modelled on the shape of the last Afghan monarchy was an appropriate system most likely to produce political stability; 2/ the anthology of the indigenous leaders (or the ‘warlords’), who remained in Afghanistan and became influential during the past three decades, is generally a destabilising phenomenon that needs to be neutralised in favour of the expatriates (or the ‘technocrats’); 3/ the Taliban insurgency was essentially a rebellion by the Pushtuns who were resentful of a government dominated by the non-Pushtuns in Kabul; and 4/ more military and economic assistance is needed to address the growing threat of narco-terrorism in the south.

Reviving the Past

If ever there was a country in need of an institutional mechanism to break the streak of bad luck of its past, it is Afghanistan. Throughout its history Afghanistan has oscillated between tyrannical yet ineffective centralisation and calamitous civil war. …the document [Afghan Constitution of 2004] heavily favours the presidency over regional interests and risks being flouted by those who control reality on the ground.\textsuperscript{7}

The post-Taliban nation-building policies in Afghanistan are more reminiscent of a classical example of reconstruction, which is about the restoration of war-torn or damaged societies

to their pre-conflict situation, than development, which is an attempt at the creation of new institutions and the promotion of sustained economic growth to transform the society ‘open-endedly into something that it has not been previously’.

Amnesia has, however, afflicted this process of reconstruction which does not take due regard of the causes of instability inherent in the policies of the Afghan state, as they actually were, even before the 1980s. While the legacies of the communist regime in the 1980s, and of the ISA in the 1990s, are deemed undesirable and being undone, most of the programmes and normative practices of the 1940s-1970s are being restored earnestly as though they could provide some kind of a panacea to cure the diseased body politic of the country. The process of reverting to the status quo, far from being helpful, is actually contributing to instability by exacerbating ethnic and centre-periphery tensions within the country and straining its relations with the neighbouring states.

The first steps towards restoration of the pre-1970s status-quo were taken in the Bonn negotiations where the Afghan Constitution of 1964 was reinstated as the basic law of the land. Though its applicability was only to the extent that it did not contravene the Bonn agreements, the fact that this document - not any of its successors or predecessors - was adopted signalled a clear tendency to treat the old era as a reference point for the future. The adoption of the 1964 Constitution automatically decreed Pushtu as the national language and the last monarchy’s flag and emblem as the official banner and insignia. Later on, a new Constitution was drafted in which the ex-monarch was given the title ‘Father of the Nation’ (Article 158), the National Anthem was changed from Persian to Pushtu (Article 20), the Pushtu terminology in the state institutions and academia was decreed as the only acceptable idiom (Article 16), the President was given the power of appointing one-third of the membership of the upper house of the parliament (Article 84), the Kuchi population (Pushtuns for all practical purposes) was allocated a quota of reserved seats in the parliament (Article 84) and the state was made responsible to help them settle for a sedentary lifestyle (Article 14) and improve their education (Article 44). These were some of the basic structural changes which restored many of the centralised and ethno-


9 The word ‘Kuchi’ in Afghanistan has two connotations. It is the name of a Pushtun tribe, not all members of which necessarily live as nomads. It is also used to denote membership of the nomadic communities whose mobile lifestyle puts them in a different category than the rest of the population. While the largest number of nomadic population is admittedly Pushtun, it is by no means confined to this ethnic group alone. There are Kyrgyz, Baluch and Poyenda nomadic populations as well. Yet the practical application of the constitutional provisions dealing with the nomads indicates that the special treatment of the Kuchis in the constitution is meant to benefit the specific Pushtun tribe rather than the larger nomadic population. President Karzai had used his constitutional power to appoint Pushtuns in the upper house of the National Assembly.
nationalistic features of the Afghan monarchy before 1973. Yet all these constitutional recasts have been hugely controversial, as most of the non-Pushtun political figures and organisations have criticised them. There is little hope that the new constitution and the political system which it underpins would be respected by the majority of the population after the international forces have withdrawn from Afghanistan. Publications and the media sympathetic to the former anti-Taliban forces are already calling for major amendments in the constitution.

The process of political stabilisation was significantly sensitive to the political fortunes of individuals rather than subjecting personal political interests to the consolidation of institutions. A case in point is the inclusion of the ex-monarch’s name, Mohammad Zahir, in the constitution and the adoption of a highly centralised form of government to meet the preferences of President Hamid Karzai. Inclusion of the name ‘Mohammad Zahir Shah’ and his celebration as the ‘Father of the Nation’ is indeed an interesting phenomenon. After all constitution making is an exercise inimical to personalised politics rather than institutionalisation of personal politics. There are few other constitutions in the world where individual names have been mentioned as the founders of nations. Turkish constitution regards Atatürk as ‘the immortal leader and the unrivalled hero’ of that country. Pakistani constitution mentions ‘Quaid-i-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah’ as the founder of Pakistan. Atatürk and Jinnah played instrumental roles in carving up their nation-states after the First and the Second World Wars respectively. In world history there have been other great personalities who truly liberated entire peoples and created independent nations. Names such as George Washington, Mahatma Gandhi and Nelson Mandela are inalienably connected to the identities of the US, India and post-apartheid South Africa. But none of these names appears in the constitutions of any of these countries.

Glorification of the former King’s name and legacy in the post-Taliban Afghanistan is symptomatic of a much complex mix of phenomena with both direct and indirect implications for the political stability of the country. It involves the personalisation of politics, the influence of untested and preconceived assumptions about the imperatives of

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10 See, for example, Dar Bara-e Federalism, Bakhsh-e Amoresh wa Farhang-e Hezb-e Kangara-e Milli Afghanistan [Regarding Federalism, Educational Section of the National Congress Party of Afghanistan], (Kabul: Maiwand Publishers, 1383 Solar Hejra Calendar), Issue No. 1. Also see Kangara Monthly, Organ-e Nesharati Hezb-e Kangara-e Milli Afghanistan [Official Gazette of the National Congress Party of Afghanistan], Issue No. 1, 5 July 2005.

political stability, and a measure of ethno-nationalism inherent in the policies of the post-Taliban administration in Afghanistan. It is assumed by the influential members of the international community and the media that the former King, who had never contested an election, was a hugely popular and rallying figure for all the Afghans. Therefore, in their view, a reverential treatment of his name and legacy was to ‘bring a certain authority’ to the process of stabilisation and make it acceptable more widely across Afghanistan. The media often spoke of the era of the last Afghan monarchy in a romantic tone. Much was made of two issues, for example, in this regard: the apparent lack of civil strife before 1978, and the Constitution of 1964 which is said to have inaugurated the so-called ‘decade of democracy’.

Yet a closer look at the circumstances under which the 1964 constitution was produced reveals that it was primarily tailored out to serve the interests of the monarch by formally excluding his ambitious cousins, Daoud and Naim, from positions of power. Indeed the monarchy’s exclusive rule and unpopularity set the stage for Daoud’s coup which in turn precipitated the communist coup and the Soviet invasion in 1979. The King’s subversion of the legislature and his refusal to sign the ‘Political Parties Bill, the Municipalities Bill, and the Provincial Councils Bill in the years 1969-1972 (all of which had been passed by the National Assembly), not only undermined state-building, it also created a political crisis and forced many educated activist Afghans to go underground and become more vulnerable to foreign manipulation. In the words of one expert, Mohammad Zahir’s democracy amounted to ‘nothing more than the public exhibition of a few hollow “democratic” procedures’. It provided, perhaps, a classic example of what Saikal has termed a ‘procedural democracy’ which functions as a smoke screen to cloak the true nature of an autocratic system rather than an exercise in genuine democracy.


Chapter 5

characterisation of Maley, ‘the old state bureaucracy before 1978 was one of the most corrupt in human history, and in no sense represented a model for emulation’.

Assertions about the political stability of Afghanistan during the era of the last monarchy, largely gleaned out of an impression that apparently there was no civil strife in the country at the time, are reversely evocative of Duff and McCamant’s discussion of the indicators of the concept of political stability. They have pointed out that simply because a country does not exhibit the most unambiguous sign of political instability — social revolutions or civil strife— does not necessarily mean that it enjoys political stability. Instability can remain under the surface, latent and unexpressed. Alternatively, and as Dessauer maintains, the appearance of political stability could very well be ‘founded on natural inertia ... [where] the wish for change does not arise’ or is minimal among the population. How is it possible that the ‘popular’ monarch was overthrown and the monarchy abolished in a bloodless coup, yet no one in the entire population of a country that takes pride in its long martial history stood up to defend that monarchy? To barrow Lijphart’s terminology, this lack of ‘positive indicators’ in support of the monarchy, clearly proved that neither the monarch was popular nor was the political system, which he had helped institute, stable.

Nevertheless, assumptions about the popularity of the former King were sufficiently overstated at times to form an important part of the international policy about the removal of the Taliban regime and the post-Taliban political stability of the country. In the lead-up to the start of the international military campaign for the removal of the Taliban regime in late 2001, the US government courted the ex-monarch in the hope that by calling on the Afghans to rise up against the Taliban, he would instigate a grand national uprising in the south-eastern provinces that would compliment the UIFSA-led uprising in the north-western regions of the country. However, long after the former King did call on the Afghans to rise up, there was little evidence to suggest its intended effect in the region. The US military was surprised by the ferocity and the staying power of the Taliban several weeks after the campaign had started. Key expatriate figures associated with the ex-

20 Frederick Dessauer, Stability, p. 137.
monarch, who had successfully presented themselves as alternative Pushtun leaders and were supported by the US, made little impact against the Taliban.\textsuperscript{23}

During the Presidential elections of 2004, it was proved once again that the gulf between the media perceptions of the expatriate royalists and the reality of their standing among the Afghans was extremely wide. The royalist camp, spearheaded by the former King’s most trusted aide and former Justice Minister, Abdul Sattar Seerat, and Hamayoon Shah Asefi, his son-in-law, could not secure even 0.8 percent of the total vote together.\textsuperscript{24} One could of course argue that the candidacy of Hamid Karzai might have diverted some of the former monarch’s supporters away from the royalists. Nevertheless, the fact that these candidates contested elections on a promise to restore the monarchy if elected, as against Karzai’s stand in support of a strong presidential republic, signifies the triviality of popular support for the ex-King’s monarchy. Yet none of these sad realities were apparently enough so as to cause a re-evaluation of the assumptions under which the process of stabilization of Afghanistan proceeded to revive the old elitist system.

Strengthening President Karzai’s authority was an important consideration in the task of drafting the new constitution. Knowing that he was the US government’s favourite for the Afghan leadership, Karzai had threatened that if the new Afghan state would not be highly centralized with sufficient powers for the head of state, he would not run in the elections. The constitutional acknowledgement of the former King was indeed a reward afforded to the latter in a political compromise that the Afghan-born US Ambassador, Zalmay Khalilzad, brokered between them before the presidential elections of 2004. The former King was to forgo any ambitions he might have had to become the head of state in exchange for a constitutional position that effectively made him a ceremonial figure. President Karzai ordered the Constitutional Drafting Commission to institute the new position for the former King, though he had no legal authority to issue such an order.\textsuperscript{25}


\textsuperscript{25} A copy of the order, in Pushtu, signed by President Karzai is in the possession of the researcher. It is regarded by some media commentators opposed to Karzai as one of the most blatant instances of illegal interference by the President in the Constitution drafting process. See Payam-i-Mojahid Weekly, http://www.payamemojahed.com/index.php?option=content&task=view&id=1122&Itemid=34, accessed 08 January 2007.
The whole process of drafting, reviewing and approving the constitution was steered so as to concentrate power in the hands of the President at the expense of the legislature and the judiciary. Karzai disregarded the Draft Constitution which the Constitutional Drafting Commission had produced and the Constitutional Review Commission had already run through a public consultation programme. His office radically changed the draft Constitution, without having any legal authority to do so. In the words of one scholar, ‘ultimately what the Loya Jerga produced was not a constitution for all time, but a constitution for Karzai’. Thus, the institution of the new Afghan constitution, as the most important instrument of affecting what Dessauer regards as ‘stabilization by law’, was effectively reduced to a document heavily influenced by the immediate political considerations of key individuals rather than the long-term interests of state stability. The whole process of creating the new political system once again demonstrated the persistence of ‘personalisation’ rather ‘institutionalisation’ of politics, identified by Saikal as one of the main causes of chronic instability of the Afghan state throughout its modern history.

Juan Linz observes that a strong presidential form of government could be useful if there is national consensus, but is dangerous in ethnically divided countries when the head of state favours their ethnic group over others. Assuming that the Pashtuns form the largest ethnic cluster, the strong presidency favours the Pashtuns ‘since the presidential candidates will have little incentive to appeal to other groups for votes’. President Karzai’s interference and the strong presidential system for Afghanistan have indeed attracted widespread criticism from numerous experts and institutions around the world. Similarly, adopting the Single Non-Transferable Voting (SNTV) electoral system and the exclusion of political parties from contesting presidential or parliamentary elections were measures to benefit Karzai’s political fortunes rather than the country’s long-term stability. The SNTV system and exclusion of political parties have been criticised by numerous experts as not...

27 William Maley, Rescuing Afghanistan, p. 46.
28 Frederick Dessauer, Stability, pp. 150-171.
31 Scott Radnitz, Working With The Warlords, p. 533.
being conducive to genuine democratisation and stability of Afghanistan. Maley’s warning that the adoption of the SNTV could facilitate the forging of a core block of parliamentary Pushen supporters for the President (leading to the intensification of ethnic tensions), has indeed materialised. Sayaf appears to act as the leader of such a block in the lower house of the parliament.

**Dichotomy of ‘Warlords’ vs. Expatriates**

In many cases, the tension between Afghans returning from exile and those that had remained in-country results from the former’s sense of entitlement to power and influence which dismisses the claims of their competitors as illegitimate. In reality, no group is willing to accept the status of a “junior partner” in today’s Afghanistan.

‘Warlordism’ is one of the most contentious issues in the post-Taliban reconstruction process. There is almost universal agreement in the West that the phenomenon of strongmen outside full authority of the state is a major threat against its stability. Members of the international coalition in Afghanistan are also under constant pressure from human rights organisations to do away with the ‘warlords’ and, if possible, prosecute them for the alleged human rights abuses committed by them in the past. President Karzai has gone on record many times in the past to claim that warlordism posed a bigger threat to his government than the Taliban. The amount of emphasis put on dealing with the issue is so great that it has become almost a central yardstick for many commentators, journalists, governments, NGO’s and international organisations to gauge the success of international reconstruction effort in Afghanistan.

Yet neither in Afghanistan nor among the international community is there an accepted definition of what attributes could actually identify a person as a ‘warlord’. The ambiguity in definition has allowed political actors in Afghanistan to manipulate the term effectively against their opponents, resulting in much intra-elite acrimony within the political system.

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The following statement by Younus Qanooni, Speaker of the Afghan parliament, drives the point home.

Surely some of the imported terms and expressions such as ‘warlord’ or ‘gunman’, which certain circles within the government, or particular quarters, use against the Mujahideen, are political weapons that the government leaders employ against their political rivals. They have vouchsafed no clear definition of these terms. They employ these terms against people who do not toe the government line. But those falling in line with the government are called neither ‘warlord’ nor ‘gunman’. If the term is meant to describe those who participated in the Jihad against the Soviet occupation and the struggle against terrorism, then I think ‘warlordism’ is an honourable cause and the ‘war’ is a war of national liberation. Unfortunately the government authorities are paradoxical and self-contradictory. They regard those currently fighting against terrorism as the real defenders of Afghanistan, but those who fought against terrorism previously are labelled as ‘warlords’. ... If a clear conscience is to sit on judgement about these issues, it should not turn a blind eye to the valuable services which the [Mujahideen] rendered to the cause of liberation of Afghanistan during both the Jihad and the resistance [against Taliban] eras. ... In principle we do support all initiatives to deal with the war criminals or human rights violators. But what has been happening in Afghanistan [in this regard] until now clearly indicates that such issues are being used as armaments of a psychological war against those who spent a lifetime in the cause freedom and liberation of Afghanistan.38

In academia, however, recent writings have made some valuable research about the history of warlordism with a view to finding out the basic denominators that distinguish the warlords from the other types of sub-state individual actors. Most of these writings have traced the earliest usage of the term back to the history of medieval Europe when the disintegration of the Western Roman Empire resulted in proliferation of strongmen ruling over various parts of the erstwhile Roman domains. Another context in which the term has been most extensively used historically relates to the collapse of the Chinese Ch’ing dynasty in the early twentieth century. During the 1910s-1920s in China, the term ‘warlord’ meant the provincial military governors and local military commanders who, in the wake of the collapse of the Ch’ing dynasty, continued to command armies and turned the areas under their control into personal fiefdoms.39
There is also a fairly good level of consensus in the academia that in the past several decades the word ‘warlord’ has been widely used to include a wide range of sub-state actors most of whom possess little of a warlord’s profile. In this regard, international media comes under particular criticism for its inaccurate usage of the term in an attempt to employ it as a label to vilify various individuals around the world. The media cobbles together a heterogeneous myriad of criminals, guerrillas, insurgents, gangsters, freedom fighters and even heads of state under the generic name ‘warlords’ to convey ‘a sense of illegitimacy, intimidation and crime’. It is exactly with such meaning that the term is regularly used in Afghanistan, even if it offers little analytical value. More narrowly the term is used to vilify members of the anti-Taliban resistance from the northern and western regions.

For the purpose of our analysis, it is perhaps useful to draw on the research made by T. P Robinson in defining a warlord and then identify as to who in Afghanistan could exactly fit into it. Robinson believes that a warlord should ‘be described as someone who exclusively:

a. is operating in a collapsed or collapsing state, which he has no interest in restoring.
b. is motivated by a narrow, primarily commercial, self interest.
c. has access to balanced armed forces.
d. has contempt for international law and human rights.
e. is undemocratic and unaccountable to the people of the host state.

Some scholars have criticised this definition on account of the inherent ‘relativism [in] the notions of democracy and accountability’. However we take the view that by employing these values, Robinson’s primary concern is to distinguish a legitimate leader from a warlord. In this, ‘popular support’, rather than the formalities of a democratic system as exercised variously in different political systems is the actual criteria. Such an interpretation is intelligible in the light of his suggestion that ‘[A]n actor should only be deemed warlord if

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40 Paul Jackson, ‘Warlords as Alternative Forms of Governance’, p. 134.
44 Kirill Nourzhanov, ‘Saviours of the Nation or Robber Barons’, p. 110.
he is operating without popular support’. Thus ‘unpopularity’ rather than lack of a formal process of democracy and accountability constitutes the fifth identification tag for a warlord.

With the above definition, it is difficult to pinpoint who exactly qualifies as a warlord in Afghanistan. Some of those who have been long slapped with the label seem for all purposes and intent to act in the interests of more than mere commercial self-interest. They claim fairly credibly that they represent ethno-linguistic groups. Many of them also enjoy considerable popular support, even if at least from their own ethnic communities. In an interview with the Australian SBS TV before the presidential elections of 2004, Ahmad Rashid, the well-known Pakistani journalist, dubbed all the main political rivals of President Karzai as warlords.46 Yet they were the ones to secure the bulk of the Tajik, Hazara and Uzbek vote, despite Mr. Karzai’s higher profile as a clear favourite of the West and his coopting of key non-Pushtun figures in his camp.47

There is a fear that the debate surrounding the issue of warlords has been effectively used by President Karzai and many of his expatriate colleagues to vilify political rivals from the Ulfisa (the Northern Alliance) who held influential positions in the post-Taliban administration.48 Moreover, a measure of ethnic undercurrents could be discerned in how the term is used by the Afghan government. Whereas President Karzai, for example, long identified warlordism a bigger threat to the stability of Afghanistan than the Taliban, he conveniently supported Sayyaf, a well-known Pushtun militia leader, to become the speaker of the Legislative Assembly.49 Karzai appointed many other Pushtun warlords and drug barons in high positions including governorship of key provinces and membership of the parliament.50 Some of these privileged figures are what William Maley calls “American

46 Interview with Ahmed Rashid by Mark Davis, Dateline, SBS TV (Australia), 06 October 2004.
Warlords”, who are mostly Taliban supporters who switched sides after 11 September 2001 and were rewarded by coalition for supplying intelligence about Taliban and al-Qaeda forces.  

Similarly, while the Afghan government appeared keen to disarm the predominantly non-Pushtun armed groups in the north, north-east and west of the country, it actually distributed more arms to the mainly Pushtun eastern and southern provinces in an effort to institute what it calls ‘Afghanistan National Auxiliary Police’ (ANAP). Rearmament of militias in these regions was carried out even when there were genuine concerns that the Taliban and druglords were benefiting from it. The idea of creating Pushtun paramilitaries was first floated by the government in mid-2006. Under the programme, some of the most unsavoury elements with connections to the drug mafia, terrorism and the Taliban were rearmed. The plan sparked an international outcry as it flew against the UN and the international coalition’s well-funded disarmament programme known as Disarmament Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR). It also dealt a blow to the government’s credibility in implementing the DDR impartially as many non-Pushtun ex-combatants, who had surrendered their arms to the government, felt betrayed. Zarar Ahmad Moqbil, the Afghan Interior Minister and a key non-Pushtun supporter of President Karzai, publicly opposed the creation of tribal militias, stating that the measure was neither legal nor helpful for the security. Facing strong international criticism, Karzai’s spokespersons subsequently called the tribal militias as ‘community police’ and/or ‘ANAP’. As one observer put it, ‘details of the new security plan, however, seem to shift weekly, largely because of the outraged reaction of Western and Asian diplomats and foreign-aid workers, who believe that these community police are actually old militias in disguise’.  

Nevertheless, the government went ahead with the rearming of the southeastern militias; a policy that has already started to destabilize parts of the country by threatening the fragile interethnic relations. A case in point is the incursion of the Hazara district of Behsood in  

56 Ibid.
the province of Wardak by the armed Kuchis in July 2007. More than 80 villages were looted or burned and their Hazara inhabitants forced out.\(^{57}\) After more than a month of idleness by the government to contain the Kuchis, the Hazara leaders, including those allied with President Karzai, held a large gathering in Kabul and warned the government that if it did not act, they would be forced to rearm their co-ethnics to defend themselves.\(^{58}\)

Whatever the Afghan government's justification for the institution of the ANAP, the reality is that such tribal militias were also formed by previous Afghan governments including the Nadiri monarchy and the PDPA regime. Past experience does not generate much optimism about their effectiveness as agents of stability for the Afghan state. Pushtun tribal militias (Lashkars) were used by Mohammad Nadir in early 1930s to suppress the non-Pushtuns in northern Afghanistan, thereby leaving a long trail of interethnic tensions that continue to haunt the collective memory of the northern communities to this day.\(^{59}\) Tribal Lashkars were also used by Mohammad Daoud to destabilize Pakistan, the legacy of which always poisoned the two countries' relations. Similarly the PDPA used the Uzbek (Dostum) and Pushtun (Esmat Muslim and Jabar Qahraman) ethnic militias to suppress its opponents in various parts of Afghanistan during the 1980s. The institution of tribal militias under the euphemism ANAP has been criticized widely not only because it undermines the reconstruction of legitimate security institutions, but also because it leads to more interethnic tensions in the country.\(^{60}\) Certainly it has not been helpful in creating trust in the government, which is a necessary requisite for successful transition to political stability in all post-conflict countries.\(^{61}\)

In academia it is generally recognised that the phenomenon of warlordism, irrespective of how accurately the term is applied in any given context, often poses a threat to state authority and legitimacy.\(^{62}\) This is a fair observation in view of the fact that the existence of


\(^{59}\) H. Nazarov, Moqam-e Tajikan Dar Tarekh-e Afghanistan, pp. 402-474. Also see G. M. Ghubar, Afghanistan Dar Maseer-e Tareekh [Vol. 2].


\(^{61}\) On the importance of trust in reconstruction see William Maley, Rescuing Afghanistan, 18-20.

a warlord in reality indicates the accumulation of a potentially coercive power outside the full purview of the state that is not wholly unsusceptible to manipulation against the authority of that state. However, establishment of an overcentralised unitary political system is not necessarily the best response to it either, especially if the alleged warlords enjoy popularity in their base regions. A strong unitary system robs a regionally popular strongperson from the opportunity to translate their popularity into legitimate political mandate. In the absence of an institutionalised and legitimate avenue to achieve political power at a regional or provincial level, the popular strongperson will have little choice but to resort to unconstitutional ways of accessing, or maintaining, power. This will put the ‘warlord’ in a direct collision course with the state. Even if the state would succeed in removing the popular strongperson from their support region, it will have destabilising consequences to that area.

The case of Ismail Khan in western Afghanistan is pertinent to the above. He was popular in Herat not only because of his pioneering role in the resistance of the Heratis against the Soviet invasion, the PDPA communism and the Taliban regime, his using of Herat’s customs’ revenues to establish peace and affect reconstruction in the province during the early 1990s and subsequently during the post-Taliban period, has made him even dearer to many Heratis. Yet he is unable to be elected as the governor of Herat because the strong unitary political system in Afghanistan does not accommodate elected governors. Rather the governors are appointed directly by the President upon recommendation from the Interior Ministry in Kabul. The unitary system poses particular challenge to popular regional and provincial leaders especially when the Interior Minister or the President is not trusted fully by the people of that region. In order to be appointed or remain in office, the provincial leader will have to toe the Interior Minister and/or the President’s line(s) fully even if it would mean alienating people of that region. Otherwise an unelected Minister of Interior in Kabul will recommend the governor’s removal, which is exactly what happened to Ismail Khan in 2004. Even when Ismail Khan accepted his removal but preferred to remain in Herat as an ordinary citizen rather than assuming a cabinet portfolio which he had been offered by Kabul, he was pressured to move to Kabul after his son was murdered in a militia attack shortly afterwards. No wonder that the security, and administrative, efficiency deteriorated significantly after his departure from Herat.

The strong unitary political system can also operate to create popular alienation at a regional and provincial level exactly through a reverse process of what transpired in the case of Ismail Khan. In a mirror image of what amounts to plugging out a popular regional leader from its support base, Kabul can impose an unpopular figure as governor on an unwilling population of a given province or region. The best example in this regard is the appointment of Joma Khan Hamdard as governor of the Baghlan Province in early 2005. Hamdard had been a long-time commander of the radical Hezb-e-Islami in parts of the Baghlan Province during the 1980s to the mid-1990s. Subsequently he was aligned with the Taliban until late 2001. He was despised by local people where he held sway. In early August 2005, widespread demonstrations (continuing over two weeks) ensued in the wake of Hamdard’s appointment by the residents of the Baghlan provincial capital, Pul-e-Khumri. He was widely accused of pro-Pushtun bias and favouritism in the appointment of many former members of the Hezb-e-Islami and the Taliban to provincial administrative positions.

The strong public reaction forced Kabul to remove Hamdard from the governorship of Baghlan. He was appointed as governor of another northern province, Jawzjan, where he again sparked public demonstrations by the inhabitants of Jawzjan with similar accusations once more against him.66 Public discontent with Hamdard’s governorship of the Uzbek-dominated province came to a head in May 2007 when a large number of demonstrators, on a march towards the provincial administration headquarters, were shot at by the police and the governor’s security detail. In the event many civilians were killed, and the imminent collapse of the provincial administration was averted only by a strong show of international forces in the region.67

Another example of a clash between the local people and Kabul-appointed governors could be found in the south, where Pasha Khan Zadran and his tribal supporters violently opposed governors of the Paktya province during 2002-2006. Peimani’s assertion that the causes of this conflict were rooted in ethnic tensions is simply untrue, as all the belligerents, including Taj Mohammad Wardak (2002), Hakim Taniwal (2005-2006), and Zadran, were

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What actually contrasted Zadran from the governors was that he was based in the province among his people and the latter two were expatriate Pushtuns, having come from the US and Australia respectively. Among them, Wardak was not even from the Paktya province at all. The government might have hoped that the governorship of these ‘technocrats’ would help improve the provincial administration, yet for Zadran and his supporters they were little-known outsiders who had no right to rule over their people.

From the discussion above it is clear that the debate about warlordism in Afghanistan is not only media driven, it is also a politicised issue with largely unexplored dimensions. An important dimension to the debate is the inability of the centralised political system to accommodate the genuine aspirations of the popular local power holders who wish to exercise institutionalised leadership at the provincial level rather than in Kabul. Another dimension to the debate is the existence of ethnic undercurrents in how the term is used by the expatriate leadership in Kabul. Speaking strictly from an academic perspective, it is hard to see who exactly matches the criteria in Afghanistan. Even some of those the media describes as warlords *par excellence* have managed to transform themselves into established popular leaders — far ahead of many expatriate Afghans who contested the elections — for all practical purposes. One such person is Abdul Rashid Dostum, who has often been presented by the media and academics as the epitome of an Afghan warlord. Yet he proved a popular figure among the Uzbeks, virtually sweeping the votes of all the Uzbek provinces in the presidential elections of 2004, and coming forth runner-up nationally.68

Nevertheless, the ill-informed nature of the debate about the issue of warlordism undermines the country’s political stability in many ways. It undercuts the spirit of cooperation within the government bureaucracy by creating a mutually exclusive dichotomy between the indigenous leaders and the returning expatriates. The expatriates dub the indigenous leaders as ‘warlords’ and the latter calling the returnees ‘dogwashers’ to signify the menial nature of employment some of the expatriates allegedly received in the West prior to their return to Afghanistan.69 The dichotomy is also reflected at a broader national level, where many people who remained in Afghanistan through the years of

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68 Hooman Peimani, *Falling Terrorism and Rising Conflicts*, pp. 48-51.
The government’s apparent double standards in dealing with the so-called warlords have exacerbated ethnic tensions by alienating non-Pushtun ethnic groups. Many Afghans believe that Karzai and his associates strengthen the Taliban and undermining their non-Pushtun opponents with the derogatory label ‘warlord’. At times such resentments have needed only a small spark to be vented out violently against the government and the international coalition. The worst incidence of anti-government mass-violence which occurred in May 2006 in Kabul, after a US military vehicle veered off the road to hit civilians, was a powerful reminder of the simmering ethnic tensions reinforced by the government’s seemingly biased policies in dealing with the issue of warlordism as against he expatriates. The protesters shouted ‘death to America’, ‘death to dogwashers’ and condemned two most powerful representatives of the expatriates’ power, the ex-king and the President himself.23

There is a clear tendency on the part of many academics, media and reconstruction agents to paint virtually all the anti-Taliban resistance leaders as warlords. There is no doubt that some of the anti-Taliban resistance commanders and leaders might have been involved in activities contrary to the spirit of international human rights and freedom. But sparing none of the former resistance fighters, politicians and functionaries from the pejorative description is neither fair nor helpful. Part of the reason why the media and many commentators do so is due to the disproportionate influence of the ‘ethnic entrepreneur’ circle around President Karzai, some of whom had supported or sympathised with the Taliban and the Hezb-e-Islami in the past.74 Having lived in the West, many of them speak foreign languages fluently and are easily accessible and friendly to the international media. However, the double-pronged policy of co-opting popular indigenous leaders at times of need and discrediting them continuously in the media has alienated large sections of the Afghan society.75 It has cost the government with the loss of important levers of influence

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75 Ibid.
at the grassroots level. The expatriate officials and leaders could command little voluntary obedience as they 'have found that *de facto* power rests with the local leaders to whom most Afghans have turned through a generation of warfare'.

In an effort to sideline the anti-Taliban resistance leaders, President Karzai and the ethno-nationalists (or 'ethnic entrepreneurs') constantly downplayed the potential threat posed by the Taliban until late 2005. Instead they sought to dramatise a relatively insignificant threat posed by the 'warlords' against the stability of the Afghan state. While some 'warlords' might have had differences with the expatriate ethno-nationalists over the desirable balance in the distribution of power between the centre and the peripheries, and/or between the executive, legislative and the adjudicative arms of the political system. None was against the, process of reconstruction, the post-Taliban political system as a whole, or the basic notion of democracy which emphasises the necessity of popular mandate for political power. President Karzai characterised the growing concerns about the Taliban threat as "exaggerated" and warned the international community against the 'warlords' by claiming that they constituted a 'bigger threat than Taliban'. This was despite the evidence of Taliban’s increased violence and virtually no real challenge posed against his government by any ‘warlords’ in late 2004. Such distortion of the real security challenges afforded the Taliban ample opportunity to reorganise in the southeastern countryside and pose a serious threat against the existence of the new Afghan state as a whole. Experts and NATO commanders, alike, doubt the staying power of the political system for more than few days, if the international forces withdrew from the country.

While the Afghan government, the media and many academics have drawn attention to other causes of the insurgency, little indeed is spoken about this aspect of instability. The consequences of downplaying the Taliban threat have begun to bite the Afghan government and the international coalition now. The intensity of the Taliban’s resistance has taken many members of the international coalition by surprise and forced them to abandon vast regions to the former. Some members of the international coalition that

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76 Ibid.
have borne the brunt of the Taliban insurgency complain about certain other countries for
not shouldering the burden of anti-insurgency operations in the south; instead of stationing
their troops in the largely peaceful northern and western provinces. Yet they forget that
the original reason for the deployment of these troops to the peaceful areas was to contain
the ‘warlords’, which the expatriate Afghan leadership had long presented as the bigger
threat to the stability of the Afghan state than the Taliban.

**Pushtun Alienation-Taliban Violence: Is There a Correlation?**

In late 2001, when the prospect of a US-led military campaign against the Taliban regime
was becoming imminent, there was much international concern that with the fall of the
Taliban regime the Pushtuns as an ethnic group would be disadvantaged. The concern
was based on the assumption that the UIFSA was exclusively representing the interests of
the Tajiks, Hazaras and the Uzbeks, who were almost certain to regain their position of
military ascendancy in Kabul after the fall of the Taliban. Although the UIFSA was
dominated by Massoud before his assassination on 9 September 2001, it would amount to
reductionism to state that it did not represent an important portion of the indigenous
Pushtun leadership at the time. However, this fact did not figure prominently in the
perception of the international community involved in the stabilisation process.

The scenario of Pushtun power being dislocated once again invoked the memories of
Afghanistan in the 1990s when the ISA government could not bring about stability to the
country. Overlooked was the fact that the paramount reason for the failure of the ISA in
the 1990s was not its ethnic composition, but Pakistan’s active role to destabilise it.
Influenced by these assumptions, the composition of the Bonn talks hardly reflected the
political and military reality of Afghanistan at the time. Prior to 2002, there were two
relevant parties that could effectively exercise real influence on the ground. These were the
Taliban, who controlled larger parts of the country, and the UIFSA which resisted the
former. The Bonn talks unfolded in such a way that excluded the Taliban and mitigated the
role of the UIFSA vis-à-vis the aggregate influence of the other participant factions. In this
way the Bonn agreements sought to create new realities by facilitating a heavy presence of
factions other than those with practical capabilities and influence in the country. To

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83 For details see the preceding chapter.
counterweight the influence of UIFSA, representatives of the ex-monarch, and two other factions, inserted at the behest of Pakistan and Iran, were included in the talks. It was assumed that these three groups would represent not only the views of the Afghan diaspora but also that of the Pashtun populace in general.

While the UIFSA delegation had cancelled itself out of leadership position in the power-sharing arrangement, a majority of the expatriate delegates voted for Abdul Satar Seerat, the head of the Rome delegation and an ethnic Uzbek, to head the Interim Authority (IA). The UN representative, Lakhdar Brahimi, and the UIFSA chief negotiator, Mohammad Younus Qanooni, did not favour Sirat’s leadership because he was not a Pashtun and therefore perceived incapable of swaying the Pashtun populace away from the Taliban. Hence, Hamid Karzai was picked up to lead the new administration. At the end of the Bonn negotiations a list of ministers for the IA was produced, with each minister’s name marked with one of the English letters P, T, H, U, ... etc standing for Pashtun, Tajik, Hazara and Uzbek and other ethnic groups respectively.

The way in which the Bonn agreements were implemented flowed naturally from the ‘ethnicised’ character of the negotiations. Although the agreement provided for the distribution of the government offices on the basis of ethnic identity and organisational affiliation, some, mainly expatriate, Pashtun members of the IA still complained about an alleged lack of sufficient Pashtun representation. Hence, the task of rebuilding Afghanistan from its earliest stages was an exercise in institutionalisation of the role of ethnicity in the state, rather than building the institutions in such a way that they would de-ethnicise politics by design gradually. Although it might have addressed some of the immediate concerns of the Afghans and the international community about the relatively narrow base of the UIFSA, ethnicisation of politics is exactly what they should have avoided as it does not help political stability in the longer term.

The constant pressure about the lack of sufficient Pashtun representation in Kabul generated an upsurge of convergent views in the Western capitals, the media and some policy think-tanks that perhaps ‘Pashtun alienation’ was the cause of continued opposition

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84 'Royalists Get Top Job, Alliance To Keep Peace', The Australian, 4 December 2001. Also see William Maley, Rescuing Afghanistan, pp. 33-34.

85 The author is in possession of a copy of the list with handwritten letters marked in front of each name to denote their ethnicity.

to the government in the southeastern regions.\textsuperscript{87} It was assumed that by enhancing the share of the Pashtuns further in the government, the Taliban’s violence would be reduced correspondingly. The interesting part of the debate about ‘Pashtun alienation’, was that the media and some policy think-tanks often made a deliberate attempt to cast doubt on the ‘Pashtunness’ of Pashtun leaders who had opposed the Taliban in Afghanistan as part of the UIFSA. They strove to present expatriate, English-speaking, posh Pashtun intellectuals as if they were the true representatives of the Pashtun community, while in reality they do not have any more influence among the Pashtuns than have the Tajik intellectuals among the Tajiks.\textsuperscript{88}

In effect, an ideational hypothesis, advocating the necessity of increased Pashtun power in the political system as a remedy for addressing the expanding insurgency, was created. David Isby has summed up the issue aptly in the following words.

Since 2001, both Afghans and Pakistanis have used the argument that unless more Pashtuns were placed in positions of power in the government – and Panjsheris kept from them – there would be a groundswell of opposition against Kabul. The strongest Afghan advocates of this view were urbanized individuals returning from a lengthy exile in the west, shocked at seeing Panjsheris in positions of authority rather than the ethnic status quo ante bellum. Among Pakistanis, the view represented a tendency in some elements of government, especially the security services, to see conflict in Afghanistan primarily through an ethnic prism and hence as a subset of Pakistan’s internal politics.\textsuperscript{89}

To be sure the validity of such a hypothesis was easily challengeable on simple arithmetic from the beginning. Many publications often erroneously portrayed most UIFSA-associated members of the IA as Tajiks, although some of them might not necessarily view themselves to belong to any particular ethnic group. The most widely-misunderstood personality in this sense was perhaps Dr. Abdullah Abdullah, who worked as the Foreign Minister of the Interim Authority, the Transitional Administration and the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan until mid-2006. He was portrayed as a Tajik by the media, which was


apparently believed even by the White House in the US.90 In reality, however, he is a multiethnic personality, born to a father from Qandahar and a mother from Panjsher.91 Perhaps the main reason as to why he was not counted as a Pashtun was due to his close association with commander Massoud. He opposed both the Taliban and their predecessor, Hezmatyar. Similarly, the media tended to regard all the Persian speaking members of the government as Tajiks. Major international news agencies and media outlets, for example, regarded the following ministers of the IA all as Tajiks: Dr. Abdul Rahman (Nooristani), Amin Farhang (Persian-speaking from Kabul), Dr. Suhaila Seddiq (Mohammadzai), Dr. Sharif Faez (Persian-speaking from Herat), Mir Wais Sadeq (Persian-speaking from Herat) and, according to one report, even Abdul Khaliq Fazal (Pashtun) who rarely speaks Persian.92

Nevertheless, the process of implementation of the Bonn agreement over the next few years went in tandem with a reduction in the power of the UIFSA in the government. In fact the hallmark of every benchmark laid by the Bonn agreements was a decrease in the UIFSA’s power, and the process seemed to be supported happily by the expatriate political elites as well as the UN, US and other major Western countries. Six months after the Bonn agreements, Mohammad Yunus Qanooni was ousted from his portfolio of the Interior Ministry and replaced by two consecutive Pashtun ministers, namely Taj Mohammad Wardak and Ali Ahmad Jalali. In the presidential elections of October 2004, another UIFSA leader, Mohammad Qasim Fahim was removed from the Defence Ministry and replaced by Rahim Wardak, another Pashtun minister. After the parliamentary elections of September 2005, Dr. Abdullah, Minister for Foreign Affairs, was dropped from the cabinet and replaced by a pliant expatriate minister, Rangin Dadfar Spanta. One of Spanta’s immediate acts upon assuming power was to issue statistics about the ethnic affiliation of the staff of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) —an unprecedented act in

92 ‘Interview with Dr. Abdullah by Hussaini Madani, ‘Dr. Abdullah: Heech Bahs-e Ke Ba Raees-e Jamhoor Ba Netejia Raseeda Basham Soorat Nagerefa Ast’ [No Discussion in Which I would have Reached an Understanding with the President Has Taken Place], Payam-e-Mojahid Weekly, Serial No. 543, 14 September 2007.
Afghanistan’s modern history. He vowed to increase the number of Pushtuns in the MoFA, although many of his personal friends seem to be some of the main beneficiaries.

Similarly, the Afghan government initiated policies to bring about ‘ethnic balance’ in the civil service and the security institutions. In line with the spirit of the Bonn agreements, an institution known as the Independent Administrative Reform and Civil Service Commission (IARCSC) was established under the leadership of an expatriate Pushtun, Hedayat Amin Arsala. The IARCSC sent out forms to all public officials to register their ethnic identities. In the forms it was explicitly indicated that simply answering ‘Afghan’ to the question of Meliyat (ethnic affiliation) was not acceptable. This was a bizarre requirement because many civil servants were multiethnic, and many others did not necessarily identify with the hereditary notion of ethnicity as they had been raised up in a more complex socio-cultural context than the primeval assumption inherent in the question. In essence, a comprehensive ‘Pushtunification’ strategy was rapidly implemented as a result of which the ethno-nationalist expatriate leadership soon rose to dominate the political system.93

Yet despite all these measures, the Taliban continued to fight and expand their operations against the government. None among the Taliban leaders has ever given any ethnic motivation to justify their opposition against the Kabul regime. In fact they have always invoked Islam, as interpreted by them, to oppose the political system as a whole.94 Mullah Omar, the Taliban’s supreme leader, denounced Karzai’s efforts to resolve the spiralling violence through the proposed tribal jirga —‘a quintessentially Pushtun institution’.95 In a chilling reminder that the Taliban would not settle for anything less than the complete rollback of all of the reconstruction progress since late 2001 —a progress which has so clearly enabled the ethno-nationalists to gain an upper hand in the political system—, he said ‘foreign troops should leave Afghanistan, and then the institutions they have created should be dismantled. … Unless that happens, the war will heat up further’.96

The security situation, far from improving, has actually deteriorated alarmingly since 2002. The Taliban have managed to secure strongholds in southern Afghanistan from where they appear to operate with virtual impunity. The NATO and the Afghan government appear so

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93 A consolidated list of the most influential figures, since 2001, in Afghanistan is given in Appendix 2.
94 See, for example, ‘Taliban Leader Warns of Carnage’, CNN World, 22 October 2006.
95 William Maley, Rescuing Afghanistan, p. 33.
helpless that they have recognised a de facto rule of the Taliban over large swaths of territory in the south. Yet despite all the evidence contrary to the previous assumptions asserting that the Taliban insurgency was a Pashtun backlash against non-Pashtun domination of the government, some scholars are still lagging behind in grasping the futility of the hypothesis.

Similarly, the latest report by the International Crisis Group, although avoiding linking up the Taliban insurgency to ‘Pashtun alienation’, nevertheless asserts that the Tajiks are overrepresented in the police sector. To substantiate the argument, it produces data about ethnic makeup of the graduates from the Kabul Police Academy, and the appointment of the Tier I and Tier II ranking police officers in the Ministry of Interior (MoI). Although the report admits the ‘unreliability’ of its data at the outset, further qualifications need to be inserted in such reports. What are the criteria for determining the ethnic identities in Afghanistan? If fluency in Persian/Pashto as the first language is the criterion, the data would inevitably show an overrepresentation of the Tajiks because Kabul is mainly a Persian-speaking city where many Pashtuns cannot speak Pashto. Moreover, using the police ranking statistics is a misleading criterion for determining ‘ethnic balance’ in any sections of the Afghan security or civil services, as the Afghan administration is full of many insignificant, but highly-ranked, positions.

The best way to measure the influence of ethnic groups in the Kabul police forces is to see who hold the following positions: the Qomand-e Amnia-e Welayat-e Kabul (Commander of the Kabul Province’s Security/Kabul Police Chief), Amer-e Jenaye Wezarat-e Dakhela (Chief of the Crimes Unit of the MoI) and more than a dozen Amer-e Hauza Ha-e Police-e Kabul (Chiefs of Police Departments in Kabul). Similarly, in other ministries, it is misleading to look at the ethnic makeup of the staff generally. For example, in the MoFA, the best way for measuring the relative powers of various ethnic groups is to focus on the Ambassadors, the deputy ministers and the directors of selected political and administrative departments rather than the overall statistics about the general staff.

It is therefore evident that a main theme (thus far unchallenged except by one analysts) of the formula for stabilisation of Afghanistan has been ill-conceived at best from the very beginning. There is little evidence to support the claim that the Taliban insurgency was driven by any notions of Pashtun alienation. On the contrary, much more evidence exists to suggest that the current combative Taliban were against the entire political system irrespective of who dominated it.

**Narcotics and Insufficient Assistance**

The Afghan government and the international community acknowledge that the production and trafficking of narcotics is a major source of instability in Afghanistan. Yet the problem gets bigger as each year passes. According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) figures, in 2002 the potential opium output from Afghanistan was estimated at around 3,400 metric tons. The figure increased to 3,600 tons in 2003; 4,200 metric tons in 2004; and 4,100 metric tons in 2005. It surged 49 percent to a record high of 6,100 tons in 2006. The area under cultivation increased to 165,000 hectares, up almost 60 percent from 2005. Afghan opium accounted for 92 percent of total world supply in 2006, and production the Helmand province alone saw an increase of 165 percent. Figures in 2007 show that 193,000 hectares of land have gone under opium cultivation (an increase of 17% over the previous year), yielding an extraordinary volume of 8,200 tons opium (an increase of 34% over the previous year). Now Afghanistan supplies over 93 percent world opium, and 53 percent of the total Afghan output is produced only by one single province, Helmand. The southwestern and eastern provinces of Helmand, Qandahar, Nimroz, Farah, Orozgan and Nangarhar account for over 87 percent of the total Afghan output. In contrast to the situation in the southwestern and eastern provinces, the centre-north provinces, which did not account for any major part of the country’s total output anyway, registered a sharp decrease. The UNODC report stated:

In centre-north Afghanistan despite massive poverty, opium cultivation has diminished. The number of opium-free provinces more than doubled from 6 last year to 13 in 2007. A leading example is the province of Balkh, opium cultivation collapsed from 7,200 hectares

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102 Ibid.
103 Ibid.
104 Ibid.
105 Ibid.
106 Ibid. p. 5.
last year to zero today. Other Afghan provinces should be encouraged to follow the example of this northern region where leadership, incentives and security have farmers to turn their back on opium. The north-south divide has finally led the UNODC to acknowledge expressly what was long overdue; that the production and trafficking of narcotics has little to do with poverty. The five richest and most fertile provinces, previously known as the breadbasket of the country and a main source of earnings, have opted for illicit opium on an unprecedented scale. The report is a setback to both the Afghan government and the main pro-opium lobbyists that have long argued —with little evidence though— that the problem of narcotics was related to poverty. The main causes of increasing narcotics in Afghanistan, the UNODC maintains, are insurgency, greed and corruption. Now there is no doubt that the Taliban are encouraging the production and trafficking of narcotics; the farmers and traffickers are doing it out of greed rather than poverty; and the government officials are corrupt who take bribes and let the problem continue. The report warns the NATO forces against their ‘tacit acceptance of opium trafficking’ as a way to extract intelligence information and occasional military support in operations against the Taliban and Al-Qaeda. Furthermore, it criticizes the Afghan government’s ‘benign tolerance of corruption’, asserting that the coalition and the Afghan government policies actually destabilize the country.

However, neither the UNODC nor the broader international community has yet recognized the ethnic undercurrents in the debate about counter-narcotics within the Afghan government. There is a measure of suspicion, rightly or wrongly, among the non-Pushtun Afghans that the involvement of high-ranking officials and leaders in the narcotics point to more than corruption. At times the media also has raised doubts about the government’s commitment to eradication of narcotics from the Pushtun regions. In April 2007, the governor of the Helmand province and the local police commander openly and actively arbitrated for compromise between the rich opium-growing landlords and the seasonal opium harvesters who had gone on a strike for better pay. Despite being funded

generously by the international donors, the Ministry of Counter-Narcotics sluggish attitude towards anti-narcotics projects has raised suspicion about the genuineness of official government policy. Many of President Karzai’s close allies, including his younger brother, are said to be involved in the narcotics trade. However, when such allegations have surfaced in the past, the government has simply convened a cabinet meeting and angrily denies them.

There have also been cases where some of President Karzai’s close friends — appointed by him in key positions relevant to the success of the anti-narcotics effort — proved to be convicted drug dealers. In March 2007, it was revealed in a New York Times’ article that Izzatullah Wasifi had served nearly four years in Nevada State prison, after he had been caught selling a bag of heroin, with a street value of US$ 2 million, to an undercover police detective in Las Vegas. Mr. Wasifi, who is a childhood friend and ally of Karzai, was the Director-General of the General Independent Administration of Anti-Corruption and Bribery in Karzai’s government, when the article was published. Karzai’s office declined to answer questions whether the President knew about Wasifi’s past records when he was appointed. Several months have passed since the revelation, however; and many Afghan and foreigners are outraged to see Wasifi still continuing in his position.

Members of the coalition have accepted the Afghan government’s view uncritically that taking strong action against the booming narcotics would drive the southwestern and eastern farmers into the hands of the Taliban. At times, NATO forces operating in southern Afghanistan have been so mindful of the Afghan government’s view that they have gone on air through the local audio media to assure the local populace of their peaceful intentions about the opium crop. This is an interesting twist of logic. On the

one hand the government acknowledges that the Taliban-Al-Qaeda raise substantial funds for their campaign from the narcotics, on the other it opposes any robust eradication programmes to address the growing problem.\textsuperscript{119} The argument fails, however, to appreciate that if the Taliban-Al-Qaeda are benefiting from the narcotics, the opium growing farmers are already involved in propping up the insurgency even if for personal gains. Destroying the opium farms in the southwest and east would dry up a substantial source of income and deal a severe blow to the Taliban-Al-Qaeda’s ability to sustain the violence. Of late, it seems that the US anti-narcotics officials have also come round to a similar view.\textsuperscript{120}

Suspictions about the possibility of ethnic undercurrents in the government’s anti-narcotics strategy boiled over in September 2007, when Ahmad Zia Massoud, Afghanistan’s First Vice-President and a brother of the late Ahmad Shah Massoud, called for the aerial spraying of the poppy fields in an opinion piece on the UK Telegraph newspaper.\textsuperscript{121} Citing official figures, he revealed that the US and the UK governments had spent more than US$ 2.1 billion in the anti-narcotics effort; ‘giving too much “carrot” and not enough “stick”’ to the farmers. The solution he offered was in total contrast to the views of President Karzai who remains strongly opposed to the ‘environmentally safe’ aerial spraying strategy, which has been proposed by the US government a number of times. Karzai’s spokesperson was quick to denounce Massoud’s article as his personal views.\textsuperscript{122} Massoud had reportedly canvassed the issue in a cabinet meeting previously, where the ministers were deeply divided between him and Karzai.\textsuperscript{123} In reality Massoud was expressing frustration, shared by many non-Pushtuns, who suspect that the government has been acting as a shield to protect poppy fields in the south. President Karzai’s anti-narcotics rhetoric and occasional poppy eradication stunt by the Afghan police notwithstanding, they believe that the ethno-nationalist leadership views opium as an important means of sustaining Pushtun domination of the political system in the long run.

\textsuperscript{119} Some Afghan Government officials have claimed that the share of the Taliban from the narcotics could be anywhere between US$ 10 million to US$ 140 million. However the top figure should be treated with caution because it is based on a wrong assumption as though the Taliban had exclusive control over the production, processing and trafficking of the narcotics throughout the country. See Jason Straziuso, ‘Taliban Netting Millions from Poppies’, \textit{ABC News} (US), 10 April 2007.


\textsuperscript{121} Ahmad Zia Massoud, First Vice-President of Afghanistan, ‘Leave It to Us to End The Poppy Curse’, \textit{Telegraph} (UK), 02 September 2007.

\textsuperscript{122} Daoud Naji, ‘Mokhalefat-e Afghanistan Ba Sampashi Mazare-e Khashkhash’ [Afghanistan’s Opposition Against the Spraying of Poppy Fields], \textit{BBC Persian}, 04 September 2007.

\textsuperscript{123} Long Distance Interview with a Key High-Ranking Official Privy to the Cabinet Debate (Anonymous), 06 September 2007.

\textsuperscript{124} For a report about how the Afghan government exaggerates its anti-narcotics commitment and achievements see Rachel Morarjee, ‘Doubts over Afghan Poppy Fight’, \textit{Financial Times}, 26 April 2007.
The UNODC statistics show that in 2007 some 509,000 Afghan households (or 3.3 million people/14.3% of the total population) farmed over 193,000 hectares of poppy. On average, poppy farming yields around ten times the income of a comparable area of wheat, the other main crop in the country.\(^{125}\) If the current ‘benign tolerance’ of the opium industry in the southwestern and eastern regions would continue by the government, the Pashtun households will be enormously better off economically than their non-Pashtun counterparts—not to speak of the smugglers from the region. Accumulation of superior financial resources in the hands of the southwestern and eastern populace will trickle down to guarantee Pashtun domination of the political system when the coalition forces finally withdraw from Afghanistan. Massoud’s comments were quickly seized upon by the UNODC Executive Director, Antonio Maria Costa, to add his voice in support of the aerial spraying. He dubbed the government’s ground eradication efforts as ‘a farce’.\(^{126}\) Meanwhile, Massoud has refused to back down from his position, asserting that the government’s anti-narcotics policies were ‘self-deceptive and illogical’, and that many government leaders were involved in the illicit business.\(^{127}\)

While the Afghan government and the international community have little doubt about the use of narcotics by the Taliban in their violent campaign, it is difficult to estimate their share of the lucrative crop. The Taliban may also have other sources of revenue, including possible assistance from Pakistan and other Islamic organisations and individuals in the Muslim world. On the government’s side, it is frequently stated that a major reason as to why the Taliban have made relatively huge gains in the southern regions is that the Afghan National Army (ANA) and the Afghan National Police (ANP) are poorly funded and equipped. Often when the issue of growing instability is discussed, President Karzai appeals for more military and economic assistance from the international community.

These arguments need to be put in perspective, however. The US government progressively increased its annual assistance to the Afghan security forces from US$ 102 million in 2002 to over US$ 7.6 billion in 2006. It allocated over US$ 10.5 billion to the ANA and US$ 6 billion to the ANP during 2002-2008.\(^{128}\) Additional assistance from other countries exclusively to the ANA and ANP stood at a total of US$ 439 million as of March

According to the US and UK officials, more than half of the total US development aid allocated to Afghanistan is spent in the four insurgency-prone southwestern provinces, and at least one-fifth of the total UK development aid is spent in the Helmand province alone. A majority of the Afghan government ministries have not been able to spend their development budgets, thereby creating surpluses consistently over the past many years. Hence, the view that the scarcity of funds and equipment to the Afghan government is somehow responsible for the lack of security in the southern regions can hardly stand reason. Nor is the debate about the issue of narcotics as simple as it seems.

One could of course argue that suspicions about the sincerity of the government are simply too farfetched, in view of the fact that illicit narcotics fund at least some portion of the Taliban activities against a government which is already dominated by the ethno-nationalist leadership. Such an assertion could not be anymore true, however, than President Karzai’s eagerness to attribute the causes of instability to every other possible factor except the failure of his leadership. Furthermore, since public perceptions form an important part of the legitimacy—and therefore the political stability—of states, it is essential that the government does not behave in a way that would undermine public confidence in its impartiality about major national issues.

It is perhaps useful to quote the converging views of two prominent indigenous Pushtun leaders, one from among the Mujahideen and the other a former Leftist, on how the failure of the expatriate ethno-nationalist leadership has contributed to political instability in the country. Their insights are valuable since they have a ring of reflection on mistakes of the past as well.

The Taliban enjoy a constant, trustworthy and decisive leadership. Their personnel and soldiers will not violate the leadership’s rules. Mullah Dadullah, the current Taliban commander, is a good example. The more people who join his group, the more he himself is strengthened. No one can act against his orders. If Mullah Dadullah orders his soldiers to kill that Hazara or that Uzbek or anyone else, they do it. A new recruit or soldier with a long-term commitment to the Taliban should act upon the commands of his leader. It is his duty. ... [on the other hand], government officials do not resemble the people, especially in the southern part of the country. In this part of Afghanistan, for example, the
people must be confident of a high ranking government official’s religious background. If [the official] cannot act like an imam, he has to join the people in the mosque to pray. In this country, there has been an Islamic revolution. What most of the Afghan people see are long beards and [traditional Islamic] caps. Secondly, the people must be able to trust their leader’s management. A 25 year-old governor without a long beard who is unfamiliar with the people’s culture cannot rule, especially in the southern regions.  

The people of Afghanistan cannot be reduced to the interests of one person or his team. The ruler should have such leadership qualities that would induce people to rally around him. But unfortunately the government is deficient in this respect. … Rootless persons in our government, with little popular standing, often try to preserve their positions one way or the other [by manipulating socially divisive issues]. But rebuilding Afghanistan requires more than protecting the interests of [these] individuals with foreign forces.

The indigenous political elite and many ordinary Afghans rarely share the view that the fragile state of affairs in Afghanistan is the result of insufficient assistance by the international community. Rather it is the insufficient appreciation of the imperatives of political stability by the international community, and the unhelpful manipulation of such ignorance by sections of the ethno-nationalist expatriate leadership, that is responsible for the failure. The new British government under Gordon Brown has effectively admitted the failure of the post-Taliban stabilisation effort by asserting that an Islamic, rather than an ethno-nationalistic, political system can bring stability to Afghanistan. This new discourse among the UK and the US government leaderships seems to emphasise the desirability of concession to the hardcore radicals, including Mullah Omar and Hekmatyar, as the way forward. Offering power-sharing incentives to Mullah Omar and Hekmatyar in October 2007, President Karzai stated publicly that his dramatic policy leap was fully supported by the US government. It needs to be remembered, however, that radical organisations such as the hardcore Taliban and the Hezb-e-Islami, do not have anymore monopoly over Islam.

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in Afghanistan than the expatriate ethno-nationalists claimed to have on the views of the varied Pushtun populace in the country. It is highly unlikely that the newly-discovered imperative of political stability would be anymore useful.

Conclusion

Since September 2001, unprecedented amounts of international effort have been invested to stabilise Afghanistan. The institution of a new political system including its executive, adjudicative and legislative arms owe a great deal to international assistance. Yet despite all the help, the country is experiencing increased levels of instability, most prominently evidenced by the growing power and destructive capacity of the Taliban who remain opposed to the new Afghan state as a whole. As for the internal causes of instability, for a long time a good amount of research and journalistic materials highlighted the presumably unhelpful role of the local power-holders, illicit narcotics, insufficient assistance by the international community, and resentment by the Pushtuns against the government. A critical study of the developments in Afghanistan since late 2001, however, reveals that even after addressing some of these issues, the Afghan state is still so fragile that it cannot possibly survive for long without the active support of international forces. There is no doubt that stabilisation of a country that had seen over two decades of conflict was never an easy task to begin with. Yet the deteriorating conditions raise the question whether some of the imperatives of political stability that the international community and the Afghan government had identified, were indeed misperceived.

The process of rebuilding the Afghan state has wrongly presumed that a strong centralised political system is the most likely guarantee of political stability in the future. Such view was based on the fear of the regional power-holders outside the direct authority of the government in the wake of the Taliban regime’s collapse. However, by constraining the constitutional avenues for political participation of popular political actors at the regional level, the Afghan state has an inbuilt potential for political instability. It has to maintain expensive security forces in order to contain the regional power-holders, who may otherwise resort to unconstitutional, and therefore destabilising, ways of translating their local popularity into political power. Even if the state would succeed in maintaining the required level of security apparatus, containing the regionally strongpersons will involve the use of force, or a constant threat of the use of force, by it. A political system that relies mainly on its coercive capacity to exact compliance from its citizens is not a stable political system.
An analysis of the situation in Afghanistan after the collapse of the Taliban regime cannot be aloof to the evident failure of the ethno-nationalist expatriate leadership which, as a block, had been generally perceived to be the main vehicle of political stability. Although the expatriate leadership is by no means united on all issues, its reliance on the military, political and economic support of the West as the principal means of preserving political power distinguishes it from the indigenous leadership. While they have effectively reduced the power of the indigenous leadership, their eagerness to manipulate international goodwill in support of internal political rivalries has contributed to exacerbate instability in the country. The Afghan government deliberately underestimated the threat of the Taliban, instead reorienting the international focus on a relatively smaller challenge posed by the influence of regional power-holders. This allowed the Taliban to make a strong comeback and pose a more serious challenge to the stability of the new Afghan political system as a whole.

While it is true that long-term stability in Afghanistan requires sustained commitment by the international community to the rebuilding process, the view that pouring more funds and material assistance into the country would simply reduce the violence, is not borne out by the evidence. International assistance for rebuilding state institutions has increased manifold since late 2001. Development assistance spent on the insurgency-prone provinces in the south far exceeds that of other provinces. Despite this, the country remains utterly unstable, and security in the southern region has only deteriorated. The discussion of political stability in Afghanistan cannot be confined to the internal factors alone. Yet the internal factors do affect the nature of the country’s relations with the neighbouring nations, which will be discussed in the coming chapter.
Regional Cooperation and Political Stability

Since 2002, the Afghan government and its international partners have made substantial efforts to promote Afghanistan into a hub of economic cooperation between Central Asia, South Asia, the Middle East and the Far East (China). The Afghan leaders maintain that Afghanistan, far from being a backwater country, is actually located at a very important geographic juncture which could be exploited to benefit not only their nation but also all the bordering countries around it and others in the near neighbourhood. They are keen to transform the traditional image of Afghanistan as a ‘landlocked’ country to one of a ‘landbridge’ which could provide the shortest network of interregional land-connectivity for the above four regions. The Afghan government and major international development agencies have a strategic vision for the development of Afghanistan as the main link between Central and South Asia. They believe if the country could truly perform the role of a facilitator in interregional trade relations, its stability will be given a huge boost not only due to direct economic benefits accrued to it but also because the neighbouring countries will have increased stakes in ensuring the same.

Accordingly, regional cooperation has been identified as one of the main cross-cutting themes in the Interim Afghanistan National Development Strategy (I-ANDS). The I-ANDS is a blueprint for reconstruction and development policy of Afghanistan which was produced by the Afghan government in 2005, seeking to guide the country’s development until 2010. Its ultimate objective is to set Afghanistan in a course that would lead to the attainment of the Afghanistan Millennium Development Goals by 2020. In the I-ANDS, regional cooperation is interrelated with all other aspects of development in Afghanistan. The role of cooperation with the neighbouring countries is thus given such a high importance that it is difficult to imagine progress in any other areas without a concomitant movement on this field. The point is driven home in the following words:

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Without the confidence and cooperation of its neighbours, Afghanistan will not be able to enjoy the stability it needs to reconstruct the country and to reduce the threat posed by drug-trafficking networks and political opponents.\(^4\)

Three main areas which the Afghan government and its international partners have identified to work on for the benefit of enhanced relations with the neighbouring countries, particularly in Central Asia and South Asia, include trade facilitation, electricity trade and transport sector.\(^3\) For this purpose Afghanistan and the UK convened and co-chaired the Regional Economic Cooperation Conference (RECC) in 4-5 December 2005 in Kabul. Afghan leaders hailed the convening of the conference in Kabul as a major achievement and interpreted it as a sign of growing confidence in the future of Afghanistan. The participants included the foreign ministers or senior officials of six neighbouring countries, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, India, Turkey and UAE. There were also representatives of donor countries, the World Bank, the IMF, the UN, Central Asian Regional Economic Cooperation (CAREC), Economic Cooperation Organisation (ECO), Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) and the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC).\(^6\)

Being a landlocked country Afghanistan has always been heavily dependent on roads and air transport for the bulk of its international trade and transit. The countrywide road network which consists of the Ring Road, International Road Links and the direct Kabul-Herat road was mainly developed during 1930s-1970s with help primarily from the Soviet Union and the USAID in the context of the Cold War politics.\(^7\) Afghanistan has seven major international road links which connect the Ring Road (and therefore the major cities of Mazar-e-Sharif, Qonduz, Herat, Qandahar and Jalalabad) to Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Pakistan and Iran. In 2002 when the country embarked on the task of reconstruction, none of these roads was in any good condition. Nor were there much statistics about the overall condition of the transport infrastructure.\(^8\)

\(^{4}\) Ibid, p. 99.
\(^{6}\) I-ANDS, Vol. 1, p. 38. The researcher was involved in the works of the Afghan Ministry of Foreign Affairs’ team tasked with organising the Regional Economic Cooperation Conference in Kabul.
However since 2002 the government has made it a central task of its reconstruction and development strategy to rehabilitate the road networks with the neighbouring countries. The I-ANDS aims at creating a fiscally-sustainable system for road maintenance before the end of 2007. By the end of 2008, the Ring Road and all roads connecting it to the neighbouring countries are scheduled to be fully upgraded and maintained. Afghan leaders never miss an opportunity to claim that the improvement of road networks and better border management will put all Central Asian capitals within 36 hours of a seaport in Pakistan or Iran. In addition to the road construction, Afghanistan is also hoping to build railroads and railheads which will benefit its transit status in an unprecedented way. As per the government strategy, by the end of 2010 both Kabul International Airport and Herat Airport will achieve full International Civil Aviation Organization compliance. Furthermore, airports in Mazar-e-Sharif, Jalalabad and Qandahar will be upgraded for domestic services, all being near to Central Asia and South Asia. The Afghan government also professes a belief in the adoption of an ‘open sky policy’ to encourage the growth of regional air transport and to enhance competition in its own aviation sector.

According to official Afghan government sources, during March 2006-March 2007 alone over 2,200 km of roads were rebuilt across the country. This also included 1,200 km of the total 2,203 km Ring Road which has got seven major links with the neighbouring countries along its route. Construction on the Ring Road started in 2003 with assistance from the US. By the end of 2003, the portion linking Kabul to Qandahar was completed. According to the USAID, travel time between Kabul and Qandahar has been reduced to 5-6 hours from 9-16 hours previously. Its international link with the Pakistani border town of Chaman is in the government’s plan of reconstruction. In late 2006, reconstruction of the Jalalabad-Torkham road was completed with the assistance of Pakistan. With help from the USAID and the Agha Khan Development Network, a number of bridges have been built over the Amu Darya to connect Afghanistan’s northern provinces of Badakhshan and

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11 Ibid, p. 132.
12 Ibid, p. 102.
Qonduz with Tajikistan.\textsuperscript{16} Completion of the main Afghan-Tajikistan bridge in August 2007 was a huge accomplishment in the history of Afghanistan’s relations with Central Asia. It replaces the centuries-old limited ferry service between the two countries, increasing the amount of traffic from around fifty small ferries to over a thousand trucks per day.\textsuperscript{17} The ferry service could not be operational during the cold seasons, and the transshipment costs were huge. The bridge provides an all-year service with significantly reduced transshipment expenses. The Kabul-Hairatan road with Uzbekistan is also being upgraded.\textsuperscript{18}

Over the past several years, Afghanistan has consulted with various countries including Pakistan, Iran, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan on the issue of building railroads that would connect Central Asia with South Asia and various Afghan border cities to the neighbouring countries of Pakistan and Iran. Kazakhstan has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Afghanistan to extend the railroad from Uzbekistan’s border to the Torkham border with Pakistan.\textsuperscript{19} The Afghan government expects the feasibility study of this rail link to be completed until 2008. Pakistan is interested in building a railway from its border town of Chaman to Qandahar and another one from Torkham to Jalalabad. Iran has already started building a railway track which will connect the province of Khurasan to Herat in Afghanistan.\textsuperscript{20} It has completed the construction of a major road which links Iran’s Khurasan province to Herat in Afghanistan.

Afghanistan wishes to act as a transit gateway for the export of hydrocarbon resources from Turkmenistan to Pakistan and India. The flagship project in this regard is the Trans-Afghan Pipeline (TAP) which had been concluded first in a tripartite agreement between the Taliban, Turkmenistan and Pakistan in April 1999. If implemented, the TAP will run across Herat and Qandahar provinces to connect the Daulatabad gas fields to the port of Karachi. Future transit revenues from this project have been estimated at around US$ 160


\textsuperscript{18} The researcher traveled along this road to northern Afghanistan during his field-study trip in January 2006.


million per year, or about half of the Afghan government’s domestic revenue for 2005/6.\textsuperscript{21}

Further, it will create jobs and provide natural gas to Afghan households along its route.

There are also plans to facilitate the transmission of electric power from Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan to Pakistan via the north-eastern provinces of Afghanistan.\textsuperscript{22} In 2006, only around 10 percent of the Afghan population had access to electricity. In a project funded by the USAID, India and the Asian Development Bank, Afghanistan will import electricity from Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan for more than 40 percent of its domestic consumption which will cover a number of its major cities including Kabul, Kandahar and Jalalabad.\textsuperscript{23} In accordance with several agreements signed by Afghanistan since 2002 with Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan, some of the bordering provinces in the north and west of Afghanistan, including Qandahar, Balkh and Herat already import electricity from Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan respectively.\textsuperscript{24} In October 2006, a MoU was signed between Afghanistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Pakistan for the transit of 1,000-megawatt/pa electricity from Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan to Pakistan.\textsuperscript{25}

To further encourage interregional trade through Afghanistan, in recent years the Afghan government has attempted to rationalise its tariff regime by abolishing export duties, lowering the number of tariff categories and introducing uniformed exchange rates. It has also gained more control over custom revenues which used to be administered by local power holders who could impose arbitrary regulations of their own at the expense of a coherent policy of promoting regional cooperation by the national government.\textsuperscript{26} The Afghan government hopes that by the end of 2010, it will be in a position to offer to its neighbours a substantially better trade-friendly environment in Afghanistan through many bilateral and multilateral agreements affecting lower transit times, increased import of electricity and more liberalised labour market regulations that would enable Afghanistan to

\textsuperscript{21} I-ANDS, Vol. 1, p. 85.
\textsuperscript{22} Ibid, p. 85.
\textsuperscript{25} Mustafa Basharat, ‘MOU on Electricity Supply to Pakistan Signed’, Pajhwok Afghan News, 31 October 2006.
\textsuperscript{26} I-ANDS, Vol. 1, p. 37.
import skilled labour from the region as well as allowing the Afghans to seek employment in the neighbouring countries.\(^{27}\)

In recent years Afghanistan has managed to acquire the membership of some of the main regional economic organisations including the Central Asian Regional Economic Cooperation (CAREC), South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), Economic Cooperation (ECO), and has signed a protocol to establish a contact group with the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO).\(^{28}\) Furthermore, in the period between 2002 and 2006 Afghanistan concluded dozens of bilateral and multilateral agreements with Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan and Pakistan.\(^{29}\) The bulk of these agreements represent Afghanistan’s diplomatic efforts to establish itself as the centre of interregional transit and trade between Central Asia and South Asia.

The above shows that there are huge economic benefits to be reaped by all the parties from enhanced friendly relations between Afghanistan and its neighbours in both Central and South Asia. The total volume of official trade between Afghanistan and Pakistan, for example, has increased from eight digit figures in US dollars during the Taliban regime to surpass a billion dollar mark in 2006. The leaderships of all countries concerned do acknowledge that Afghanistan’s stability will bring economic rewards through interregional trade to their nations. The Afghan government and its development partners recognise constrains which could limit regional cooperation. These are mainly technical issues such as poor security, low capacity, public ownership, low efficiency, regulations about cross-border trade, environmental and gender issues, irregular toll collection and translational crime.\(^{30}\) Afghanistan and its international partners seem determined to overcome the technical constraints in consultation with the neighbouring countries. However at no point do they mention the political and strategic issues which have often acted in the past to inhibit regional cooperation, much more than the technical issues. The following sections will discuss some of the political and geostrategic issues with potential negative consequences for regional cooperation, and the possible impact of these issues on the stability of Afghanistan.

\(^{27}\) Ibid, p. 99.
\(^{29}\) The researcher is in possession of copies the agreements MoFA Archives.
Pakistan: Turning the Loss into Asset

The terrorist attacks of September 2001 in New York and Washington sent shockwave effects on Afghan-Pakistan relations. As soon as the Al-Qaeda was implicated in these attacks, it was inevitable that the Taliban would be put under huge pressure to help punish the Al-Qaeda leaders in Afghanistan. Choices were indeed stark for the Taliban. Al-Qaeda was not an easy nut to crack. It had a strong following of its own in Afghanistan, comprised of experienced and dedicated individuals and radical Islamic groups from around the world. The international brigade in fact supplied the core of the Taliban-Al-Qaeda fighting force which the military regime of General Pervez Musharraf had used most effectively against the UIFSA in Afghanistan. The Taliban could not move against Al-Qaeda easily because that would be tantamount to axing their own fighting capability against the UIFSA on the one hand, and losing the support of Al-Qaeda’s sympathisers more widely around the world on the other.

Pakistan tried to save the Taliban by unsuccessfully impressing on them the need to surrender Bin Laden. As it became clear that the Taliban were in no mood to expel Bin Laden, Pakistan had to make its own choice of being ‘either with [the US] or against [it]’ since President Bush had ruled out accepting neutrality from any nation. In effect Pakistan was faced with the prospect of losing all the gains it had made over the previous several years in terms of nearing to its cherished goal of ‘strategic depth’ in Afghanistan. The Taliban-Al-Qaeda’s rule over large parts of Afghanistan had brought Pakistan closer than ever to its ultimate objective of converting Afghanistan into a client state. Under pressure, however, Pervez Musharraf reluctantly agreed to abandon the Taliban and throw his lot with the US-led coalition. This also entailed the Musharraf regime’s cooperation to allow the US aircraft over-flight rights across Pakistani airspace, stationing of the US naval assets in Pakistan’s territorial waters, consenting to the deployment of US aircraft in Pakistani airfields for recovery operations and sharing of intelligence with the US on Bin Laden’s whereabouts.

Pakistan’s cooperation, however, did not come without costs to the campaign against Taliban-Al-Qaeda. The Pakistani military leadership bartered its cooperation for political,

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strategic and economic gains. Immediately after the start of the international coalition’s campaign Pakistan wanted to evacuate its military and intelligence personnel from Afghanistan and prevent the UIFSA forces from taking over the fallen cities. Pakistan was determined to retain its capacity to exert influence in the post-Taliban administration. The Pakistani military regime also saw a renewed opportunity to cash in on the renaissance of international interest in Afghanistan and the wider region. The most immediate objective of the military regime at the commencement of the Operation Enduring Freedom was to evacuate its military and intelligence personnel from the northern provinces of Afghanistan and to prevent the UIFSA forces from entering the cities. In order to achieve this, Musharraf impressed on the United States to hold back from attacking the Taliban frontlines in the north and instead concentrate on pounding their strongholds in the cities. By keeping the Taliban frontlines intact, he hoped to prevent the UIFSA forces from entering the cities after their defences would be weakened as a result of the evacuation of the Pakistani military personnel and other international combatants. In the meantime Pakistan secured US approval for a massive airlift of all its military and intelligence personnel from the northern city of Qonduz.

It is noteworthy that only two days before the events of 9/11, the Al-Qaeda with possible assistance from the ISI and the Taliban had managed to assassinate the main UIFSA leader, Ahmad Shah Massoud. In anticipation of the demoralising impact which the assassination of Massoud would have on the UIFSA forces, large numbers of Al-Qaeda, Taliban and Pakistani military personnel had been moved to northern Afghanistan to launch multipronged attacks to uproot the UIFSA defences. Hence when the Operation Enduring Freedom started, there was a large concentration of the Taliban-Al-Qaeda and Pakistani forces in northern Afghanistan and especially in the Qonduz province. Acquiescence by the US military to the airlift, however, allowed thousands of foreign combatants including the

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37 The two suicide bombers acquired visas from the Pakistani High Commission in London. The author, working at the Afghan Embassy in London then, sighted the copies of the two suicide bombers’ Pakistani visas after they had assassinated Ahmad Shah Massoud in northern Afghanistan. The validity and duration of these visas were unusually long-term on fake Belgian Passports. According to eye witnesses and relevant records, the terrorists traveled through Pakistan, met many of the Taliban leaders including their Foreign Minister Wakil Ahmad Mutawakel, before entering the UIFSA-controlled territory as guests of Abdul Rab Rasool Sayyaf who received them as journalists. Given the level of ISI influence among the Taliban, it is highly unlikely that the ISI would not have been involved in the operation.
Pakistani military-intelligence personnel and important members of the Taliban-Al-Qaeda regime to escape captivity. The US had agreed to the evacuation of the Pakistani military and intelligence personnel in order to save Musharraf from the difficult position of witnessing the return of 'body bags' to Pakistan. Such an eventuality would have put extra domestic pressure against Musharraf’s alignment with the international coalition. However, the operation went out of control and many foreign and Afghan members of Al-Qaeda and Taliban were also evacuated.

While this plausible explanation seems to have been easily accepted by the US officials, an equally candid reason for the operation ‘[slipping] out of hand’ might lay in the Pakistani military regime’s determination to forestall any concrete evidence of possible organisational links between the ISI and Al-Qaeda. If the hundreds, or possibly thousands, of Al-Qaeda members had been captured by the anti-Taliban forces, their interrogations in all likelihood could have revealed much more about the Pakistani military-intelligence links with Al-Qaeda than is so far known. The airlift was criticised by other regional powers, specifically India and Russia, which had supported the international action against the Taliban-Al-Qaeda regime. Hence from the earliest stages of the coalition’s military involvement in Afghanistan, US policy was not fully synchronised with important regional powers. More ominously, though, some of the objectives of the ‘war on terror’ were being conceded by its leading advocate to help the military regime of Pakistan.

Nonetheless, the US-led coalition soon realised that without attacking the Taliban-Al-Qaeda frontlines, it was difficult to remove the regime from power. Furthermore, bombing the cities was much more risky in terms of popular backlash against the UN-mandated intervention than directly hitting the Taliban-Al-Qaeda positions. Therefore the coalition started direct sorties against Taliban-Al-Qaeda frontlines, a tactical change bitterly protested to by Pakistan. The entry into major cities of the UIFSA forces in November 2001 triggered much international apprehension about its ambitions. Although the UIFSA’s quick move to fill the security vacuum left by the departure of the Taliban contributed to salvaging the Afghan cities from the sort of lawlessness which the world later on witnessed in Iraq for example, it demonstrated the UIFSA’s independence from

39 Seymour Hersh, ‘The Getaway’. Also see Michael Moran, ‘The “Airlift of Evil”’.
41 See, for example, Lakhdar Brahimi’s ‘Briefing to the UN Security Council’ on 13 November 2001. He displays concern, though in a mild diplomatic way, about the UIFSA’s takeover of Kabul the previous day. Also see ‘Leaders React to Taking of Kabul’, CNN World, 13 November 2001.
the international coalition. Concerns about the UIFSA’s ambition to gain power contributed to a convergence of interests between Pakistan, the UN and international coalition to sideline the UIFSA in the next few years. With large numbers of pro-Taliban fighters mobilised by Pakistan’s Islamic parties ready to pour across the border and fight the coalition, the coalition had to keep assuaging Pakistan’s concerns so that it would cooperate in containing these forces. The Taliban continued to receive truckloads of military supplies from Pakistan, notwithstanding Musharrafa’s official stance to support the coalition.

The most effective method of reducing the UIFSA influence in the post-Taliban political system was to persistently portray it as a coalition of ethnic minorities, backed by Iran, Russia and India, and responsible for the destruction caused in Kabul during 1990s. The UIFSA’s association with Iran and Russia was particularly damaging to its credibility as a reliable partner to the United States which exercised predominant influence in all aspects of post-Taliban reconstruction. Faced with the prospect of losing its enormous influence in Afghanistan with the inevitable fall of the Taliban in late 2001, Pakistan started promoting a new concept, ‘moderate Taliban’ to maintain political initiative. The military regime persuaded the US State Department to include members of the moderate Taliban in the post-Taliban administration. However, the suggestion was not particularly welcome in the White House and possibly other US government agencies. In a show of commitment to the campaign against the Taliban and Al-Qaeda, General Musharraf urged the US to focus directly on eliminating Mullah Omar and Bin Laden. In the context of Pakistan’s new policy of promoting the ‘moderate Taliban’, however, Mullah Omar’s situation resembled that of a sacrificial lamb that had to be offered in exchange for saving the bulk of Taliban establishment as a reliable client of Pakistan for the future. Musharraf hoped that by taking out Mullah Omar, the campaign against the Taliban would be over.

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42 Hooman Peimani, *Falling Terrorism and Rising Conflicts*, p. 61.
The call for inclusion of the ‘moderate Taliban’ was met with fierce opposition by virtually all other important countries of the region including Uzbekistan, Russia, India and Iran.49 ‘Moderate Taliban’, however, was not the only means by which Pakistan was seeking to drown out the UIFSA influence. The main message which the Pakistani leaders had always sought to send to the world about their position in regard to the conflict in Afghanistan was that they were committed to helping Afghanistan attain stability, but if it were not for the usurpation of power by the UIFSA at the expense of the Pashtuns as the ‘majority’ ethnic group. Sections of the Pashtun leadership, whether represented by the Hezb-e-Islami, the Taliban or the expatriate ethno-nationalist circles, had rarely objected to Pakistan’s interventionist policies in Afghanistan in the past. The ethno-nationalists silence on the subject indicated acquiescence to Pakistan’s active involvement in Afghanistan. Their distance from the UIFSA put them in a zone of broad alignment, espousing a congruence of purpose with Pakistan and its radical Islamic client organisations such as the Hezb-e-Islami and the Taliban about a reconfiguration of ethno-political power structure in Afghanistan.50 The ethno-nationalist leadership’s attitude towards the conflict, coupled with the fact that their co-ethnics enjoyed great influence in the security and religious establishments of Pakistan, made them appear as natural allies of Pakistan against the UIFSA.

Although the Pakistani security establishment had in the past tried to mitigate the role of Pashtun nationalists vs. Pashtun Islamic forces, under the circumstances of post-9/11 era the ethno-nationalists presented the best alternative tool for Pakistan to sideline the UIFSA. President Musharraf pushed for a government in which the UIFSA was envisaged to have only a marginal role with or without the institutional incorporation of the ‘moderate Taliban’.51 The Pakistani leadership welcomed the UN initiative to involve Mohammad Zahir’s camp in a big way in the political reconstruction and invited the representatives of the ex-monarch to Islamabad for negotiations about the future Afghan

50 See, for example, Anwar-ul-Haq Ahady, the leader of the ultra nationalist Afghan Mellat Party’s remarks at the US Senate Subcommittee on the Near East and South Asia’s hearings on Afghanistan, ‘Proposal for Peace in Afghanistan’, 26 June 1996. Also see Ahady’s speech to the Parliamentary Faction of the Social Democratic Party of Germany, in the Bundestag, Bonn, Germany, ‘A Just Peace in Afghanistan’, 16 January 1996. In his long statements he not only does not criticize the Taliban or Pakistan’s role in the ongoing conflict in Afghanistan, he actually blames the UIFSA and appeals for derecognizing of the Rabbani government which was resisting the Taliban-Al-Qaeda-ISI. Both documents could be accessed from the official website of the Afghan Mellat Party at http://www.afghanmellat.org/position_papers_page.htm, accessed 29 January 2007.
In parallel to its courting of the ex-monarch’s representatives, Pakistan also helped convene other forums within that country to bring about an overwhelming Pashtun participation in the process. One such forum, which came to be known as the ‘Peshawar Group’, participated in the Bonn negotiations as one of the four factions officially accepted by the UN.

Ironically, many of the Pashtun representatives who were supported by Pakistan to have major influence in the post-Taliban administration were dedicated ethno-nationalists. Pakistan’s support of these expatriates in the absence of an organized group of ‘moderate Taliban’ was yet another manifestation of that country’s role as the centre of Pashtun political patronage since the 1980s. As we shall see in the coming sections, Pakistan’s policy of ensuring Pashtun preeminence in the post-Taliban power structure was working well only as long as the UIFSA was seen to be dominating the system. As soon as the Pashtun nationalists were ensconced in positions of power and the diminished role of the UIFSA had removed the perception of an existential threat to Pakistan and the ethno-nationalists’ interests, relations between the two sides degenerated to resume their natural shape of mutual hostility. Although Pakistan’s concerted efforts at reducing the UIFSA’s power in the post-Taliban administration were successfully implemented as a means of preserving long-term influence in Afghanistan, they also had a ‘blowback’ effect by bringing to prominence in Afghanistan some of the very elements and foreign policy tendencies which had poisoned Afghan-Pakistan relations in the first place.

Another objective of Pakistan’s military regime in aligning itself with the anti-Taliban international coalition was reminiscent of an earlier successful strategy by the late President General Zia-ul-Haq’s regime to milk the US, the Arab world and other participants of the anti-Soviet campaign in Afghanistan. Pakistan’s situation before September 2001 was in many respects akin to conditions it was in before the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan in the 1980s. The military regime had overthrown a popularly elected civilian government. The country was under US embargo due to the detonation of six nuclear devices in response to those of India in 1998. It was under international pressure on account of

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53 One such person is Anwar-ul-Haq Ahady, the leader of the ultra nationalist Afghan Mellat Party. He was incorporated in the Bonn negotiation of late 2001 at the behest of Pakistan as part of the Peshawar Group’s delegation, even though he did not live in Pakistan.

poor human rights records and lack of democracy. The economy was reeling under the
crippling effects of public sector debt totaling over $US32.8 billion.55 However, no sooner
Pakistan had joined the anti-Taliban international coalition than it was fast lobbying for
economic, political and military rewards in the form of debt relief, tariff concessions, lifting
of the economic sanctions and even support to Pakistan's stance on Kashmir against
India.56 Pakistan was generously rewarded on virtually all of the above issues. The
economic sanctions were lifted promptly. The US soon started planning an aid package of
billions of dollars to Pakistan through a combination of bilateral and multilateral channels.
Pakistan became the third largest recipient of US aid after Israel and Egypt.57

In December 2001, the Paris Club of international creditors restructured Pakistan's US$ 13.5 billion bilateral debt, helping the country's economy enormously.58 Later on, the IMF
approved a US$ 1.3 billion new loan to Pakistan. The US being the biggest shareholder in
the IMF, such loans were not possible to Pakistan previously due to the economic
sanctions against it.59 In June 2002, another US$ 500 million loan was approved by the
World Bank to Pakistan.60 The USAID mission, which had remained closed for many years
in Islamabad, was reopened in early 2002.61 Since then, the USAID alone has spent
hundreds of millions of dollars in the areas of education, health, job creation, strengthening
governance and emergency relief in Pakistan. Pakistan's GDP was estimated to have grown
by 8.4 percent in 2005. The US and other international assistance since 2001 played a major
part in it.62

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56 Hamish McDonald, ‘Carpet-selling Skills Handy as Pakistan and US Play Trade-offs’, Sydney Morning
60 ‘World Bank Discusses Roadmap for Assistance to Pakistan, Approves $500 million to Support
62 Ibid.
On a regional front, the US attempted to address Pakistan’s two ‘biggest concerns’, namely recognising the Kashmir dispute as being ‘central’ to Pakistan-India relations and assuring Pakistan of a ‘friendly’ government in Kabul. The process of stabilization of Afghanistan in which the main anti-Taliban forces were increasingly sidelined stemmed naturally from such a commitment to Pakistan. In June 2004, President Bush designated Pakistan as a Major Non-NATO Ally (MNNA) of the United States. The MNNA status implied ‘special security relationship’ between the US and Pakistan, making the latter ‘eligible for a series of benefits in the areas of foreign aid and defence co-operation, including priority delivery of defence items’. Consequently the US approved the delivery of F-16 fighter jets to Pakistan as part of a US$ 3 billion assistance programme to Pakistan, scheduled for implementation over a five-year period commencing from 2005. Currently there is no statutory cap in the United States on how many such fighter jets Pakistan could buy. It is noteworthy that the first-ever delivery of US F-16 aircraft was made to Pakistan in the early 1980s during the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan. Soon after the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan, the sale of F-16 fighter jets was embargoed on Pakistan in response to its nuclear programme. Instabilities and subsequent military campaign in Afghanistan has once again enabled the Pakistani military regime to draw benefits from its cooperation with the US. The military assistance is not limited to the delivery of the F-16 aircraft however. While the F-16 deal is the most eye-catching component of it, other military assistance which is doled out rather more incrementally to the Pakistani security institutions is also considerable.

In addition to the above, Pakistan has received significant bilateral assistance and cooperation from the other allies of the US as well. These include, for example, tariff concessions and economic aid by the EU and the UK, and the revival of defence ties with Pakistan by Australia. President Musharraf rightly pointed out that the full range of rewards which Pakistan had reaped as a direct result of its alignment with the anti-Taliban-Al-Qaeda campaign cannot be quantified by merely citing dollar figures. He admitted that the dollar figure was not less than US$ 5 billion as of 2006, prompting ‘the economic

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66 For example the delivery of eight Cobra helicopters from the US to Pakistani military and a further plan to deliver 12 more such gunships in the near future. See Ifikhar A. Khan, ‘Pakistan Gets Eight Attack Helicopters’, DAWN, 03 February 2007. Also See Matthew Pennington, ‘Pakistan to Fence Border of Afghanistan’, Associated Press, 02 February 2007.
upsurge that is going on [and] the economic turnaround that has taken place' in Pakistan.\textsuperscript{68} Others put the figure much higher; US$ 27 billion during 2001-2007. This figure is said to include the ‘disguised Pentagon subsidies to the Pakistan armed forces’ as well.\textsuperscript{69} The benefits in terms of international prestige and the expansion and improvement of relations with the West are invaluable gains which the Pakistani President understandably cannot put a price tag on. Clearly the campaign against terrorism in Afghanistan has allowed the military regime of General Pervez Musharraf to cash in on the renaissance of international focus much in the same way that General Zia-ul-Haq’s regime did in the context of the campaign against Soviet occupation of Afghanistan in the 1980s.

In response to a question whether his decision to join the international coalition against Taliban-Al-Qaeda was worthwhile in terms of gains vs. losses to Pakistan, President Musharraf observed:

I would say that we have gained a lot. … [Our] major problem was debt [reduction], debt write-offs, debt swaps with the Paris Club, which happened. That is what was the major element which turned our balance-of-payments deficit into a surplus. … Financially and economically it has been [worthwhile]. … We are getting our F-16s now. … The defense cooperation has increased between the United States and Pakistan. Economically also, we are being funded in various areas much more than before. … Let’s not work everything into money. But we have gained a lot on a broad-based understanding with the United States. So there has been a lot of gain.\textsuperscript{70}

With the above discussion about the benefits accrued to Pakistan as a result of the instabilities which created a condition of US dependence on that country, it is plausible that at least until early 2007, Musharraf’s military regime found little merit in genuinely contributing towards political stability of Afghanistan. Geostrategic circumstances in the region, where anti-US Iran is the only alternative bridge to the sea from Afghanistan, have allowed Pakistan to gain more from its time-tested strategy of ‘[keeping] the pot boiling’ than letting the ‘pot to boil over’ one way or the other. Pakistan successfully implemented such a strategy in the 1980s with the double objective of milking the US on the one hand

\textsuperscript{68} Martin Smith’s interview with President Musharraf on 08 June 2006, ‘Return of the Taliban’, Frontline, PBS TV (US), 03 October 2006.
\textsuperscript{70} Martin Smith’s interview with President Musharraf on 08 June 2006, ‘Return of the Taliban’, Frontline, PBS TV, 03 October 2006.
and undercutting the emergence of a stable Afghan state on the other. There is a sound economic, geostrategic and political rationale for the military regime to emulate Zia’s doctrine once again.

Aside from the perceived national interests of Pakistan as understood by the military regime, there is a ground to argue that at a personal level too General Musharraf had a strong self-interest in perpetuation of the fragile state of security in Afghanistan. Given the US and the West’s extreme sensitivity to nuclear proliferation, especially in the Muslim world, it is not difficult to imagine that the Pakistani military regime would have been treated vastly differently in the wake of the discovery of Dr. Abdul Qadir Khan’s unlawful nuclear proliferation business. Musharraf maintained that the military-intelligence establishment was not aware of Dr. Khan’s activities. Such a position is hardly tenable given the permeating influence of Pakistan’s security institutions in the country. Pakistan also refused to allow interview access to Dr. A. Q. Khan by any foreign officials including those of the United States. Similarly, the international campaign in Afghanistan largely enabled the government in Pakistan to circumnavigate the potential pressure for return to democracy, President Musharraf being the prime beneficiary of the military regime.

The Afghan and Pakistani leaders have repeatedly stated that political stability in Afghanistan was in the interest of both their countries. They often point out the manifold increase in the volume of bilateral trade since the fall of the Taliban regime to drive home the existence of an underlying economic rationale for the governments of both countries to work toward improving, rather than undermining, Afghanistan’s stability. Over the years since September 2001, however, the new Afghan leadership became increasingly vocal in pointing out Pakistan’s alleged negative role in the growing Taliban-Al-Qaeda insurgency. The Afghan government resorted to the practice of revealing through media the testimonies of Taliban prisoners to prove Pakistan’s complicity in the growing insecurity. The Pakistani leaders have challenged the Afghans’ assertions by claiming that there was no ‘motive’ for Pakistan to support the Taliban.

Nevertheless, the economic benefits alone cannot account for the complexities of Afghan-Pakistan relations. It cannot be asserted simply that since stability is conducive to the

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expansion of trade, the governments of both countries would strive towards improving security as a matter of economic rationalism. In fact most of the literature about Pakistan’s foreign policy objectives in Afghanistan, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, fails to account fully for Pakistan’s undermining of the ISA in the 1990s. A central theme in many writings holds that in the 1990s Pakistan’s major interest was to link up with the resource-rich Central Asia both as a source of hydrocarbon energy and as a new market. This is true only to a certain extent. As discussed in chapter four, Pakistan’s pro-Hekmatyar policy in the 1990s, was not exactly helpful for the stability of Afghanistan or the development of trade relations with the Central Asian countries.

Even as late as 2006, General Musharraf’s strong, and largely inaccurate, rhetoric purportedly in support of more Pushtun power in Afghanistan indicated that the military regime in Pakistan cared little about the national unity, and therefore political stability, of Afghanistan. In his interview at the Council on Foreign Relations in September 2006, Musharraf argued that almost sixty percent of the Afghan population is made up of the Pushtuns as against five to nine percent Tajiks; that the Tajiks from the Panjsher valley occupy eighty percent of the government positions within the Afghan security institutions, and that Ahmad Shah Massoud was an enemy of the Pushtuns. Such statistics and statements are mind-boggling from the President of a regime on which the United States relies heavily for intelligence on Afghanistan. Not only are they blatantly wrong, they also seem malicious for all purposes. Pakistani experts have suggested that Musharraf’s inaccurate information was supplied to him by his Pushtun aides.

The military regime’s misinformed and biased policy of raking up the Afghan ethnic issues was deemed so harmful to Pakistan’s interests that it prompted the experts to register a specific recommendation at the Parliament of Pakistan to improve relations with non-Pushtun ethnic communities. They made it clear that the current Afghan government was in fact predominantly led by the Pushtuns for all official and practical purposes. They also accused Pakistan’s Ministry of Information & Broadcasting under Mr. Muhammad Ali Durrani, an ethnic Pushtun, and the military establishment, of misleading Musharraf about

Afghanistan. The incident serves to indicate the enormous influence of the Pakistani Pushtuns in determining the nature of Afghan-Pakistan relations; something that they have increasingly shaped in support of their co-ethnic Afghan politicians with only secondary importance given to Afghanistan’s political stability and Pakistan’s commercial interests.

Pakistani military regime clearly made best of the situation it had been in since late 2001. It largely achieved two of its three main goals after joining the international coalition. The UIFSAs was considerably weakened and effectively sidelined within the Afghan government. Pakistan’s economy became more prosperous, its military better equipped, and its international prestige higher than at any point in the post-Cold War era. On the other hand, transforming the country into a ‘landbridge’ of trade between South Asia and Central Asia is the central pillar of the Afghan government’s economic reconstruction strategy. This means that two of the key foreign policy objectives of Pakistan —Pushtun government in Kabul and access to Central Asia through Afghanistan— are best realised through the Karzai administration. Then why is it that relations are not improving between the two countries?

On the contrary relations have deteriorated significantly, even as the UIFSA has been sidelined, the Pushtuns are ‘at the helm of affairs’ in Kabul, and the Afghan government is keen to facilitate Pakistan-Central Asia commercial links. A valid question is whether the longest-standing objective of Pakistan to seek a ‘friendly’ government in Kabul has been achieved yet. In order to assess this, it is necessary to study what Maley calls ‘policy orientations’ discernable from the behaviour of a state in the absence of a reliable set of ‘programmatic’ policy prescriptions. In other words, we will focus on emerging trends in Afghan foreign policy rather than the exchange of any specific statements, friendly or otherwise, between the leaders and governments of the two countries as reflected through the public media and policy documents such as the I-ANDS.

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78 William Maley, The Foreign Policy of the Taliban, p. 2.
Chapter 6

Competition over Pushtun Leadership

The misconceived imperatives of political stability have influenced the pattern of Afghanistan’s foreign relations. The most immediate effect is felt in the country’s relations with Pakistan. As discussed previously, in the 1980s the centre of Pushtun political patronage effectively shifted from Afghanistan to Pakistan. As the Pushtun community became more entrenched in Pakistan, especially in the military-intelligence apparatus where they are significantly overrepresented now, their stakes in the preservation and integrity of that country grew likewise. Better economic opportunities in Punjab and Sind tied the Pushtun populace and leadership more closely to Pakistan than Afghanistan. The communist disposition of the Afghan state in the 1980s and its Islamic system in the 1990s were both inimical to the essentially ethno-nationalistic philosophy of the previous republican and monarchical regimes of the Mohammadzai clan. The communist and Islamic regimes could have less of a claim to arrogate to themselves the role of all-Pushtun leadership than their predecessors. They were less attractive to the Pakistani Pushtuns than the previous monarchical or republican regimes.

More affluent, better educated, radicalised and more numerous than the Afghan Pushtuns, the Pakistani Pushtuns tended to assume the leading position at the helm of all Pushtun population rather than being mere recipients of political patronage by the Afghan government or that of the Mujahideen factions. The Cold War politics and the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan provided the ideal circumstances to facilitate the leadership relocation. The shift had seminal implications for Afghan-Pakistan relations in that the latter had acquired the capability to exert unprecedented influence, and even project its power directly, in Afghanistan. In turn, the shift had a lasting effect on the Pakistani leadership’s psyche, which came to view Afghanistan as a mere backyard of Pakistan, good for providing ‘strategic depth’ against India. The central role of the Pushtuns of Pakistan throughout the 1980s and 1990s in helping to attain Pakistani objectives in Afghanistan is thoroughly captured by one scholar in the following words:

Most of the dirty work against Afghan governments, whether communist or Mujahideen – which led to Taliban rule and the civil war – was carried out by the Pushtun officials. …

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Ironically, the Pashtuns of Pakistan have played a major role in the destruction of a state, Afghanistan, which was once the most potent supporter of their nationalism.

In the post-Taliban era, however, the push for Pashtunification of the Afghan political system, the tendency to return to the ethno-nationalistic practices of the old monarchy and republican regimes, the sidelining of influential non-Pashtun regional leaders, and the great influence of the Pashtun expatriates — most of whom remained outside and detached from the new realities evolving throughout the past 30 years — contributed in the revival of Pashtun nationalism along the lines of past Afghan policies towards Pakistan. It should be a cause of concern for Pakistan to see the return of many former officials and beneficiaries of the Mohammadzai monarchy in the Karzai administration in which they exercise a preponderant influence. Some of them are strong advocates of Afghan nationalism defined in terms of institutionalised supremacy of Pashtun culture in the political system. In some cases, where some of the former officials are not available now, an offspring generation, literally, of the former ethno-nationalists have come to occupy positions of power and influence.

Since the process of political stabilisation consists of returning the Afghan state back to its pre-1980s character, the policy outputs which the government produces are also reminiscent of the old practices that had poisoned relations with Pakistan in the first place. Karzai has revived old ties with the Pakistani Pashtun nationalists, and glorified their leaders. The government commemorates the Pashtunistan Day on 31 August each year to show its solidarity with the ‘long-suffering’ Pashtun and Baluch communities in Pakistan. In August 2006, when the Baluch insurgent leader, Nawab Akbar Bugti, was killed in a Pakistani air strike, the Afghan Ministry for Border and Tribal Affairs expressed solidarity with the Baluch community for the loss of its leader and another Afghan Minister attended his funeral in a main Kabul Mosque. The Afghan government has also given sanctuary to the Baluchi rebels, prompting Pakistan to accuse it of inciting Baluch insurgency in the

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84 Anwar-ul-Haq Ahady, for example, is one such person. He occupies the key portfolio of Finance Ministry which, among the government agencies, has a central role in the reconstruction process. For his views see ‘The Decline of Pashtuns in Afghanistan’, *Asian Survey*, Vol. No. 35, Issue No. 7, July 1995, pp. 621-634.
85 Hamid Karzai, for example, is the son of Abdul Ahad Karzai, a Pashtun parliamentarian during the monarchy. Kawoon Kakar is the son of Hasan Kakar, a Pashtun ethno-nationalist and historian who taught at the Kabul University before migrating to the US. Both Hamid Karzai and Hasan Kakar were beneficiaries of the old monarchy as scholarship recipients to study in India and the UK respectively.
Baluchistan province. The Afghan National Army and other security institutions are recruiting nationalist Pakistani Pushtuns; a practice which had long been stalled by the previous governments. Similarly, the Afghan government seems to have restored the payment of stipends to the Pakistani Pushtun tribal leaders in the semiautonomous tribal agencies of Pakistan; an exercise in what the Pakistani officials and media have described as the ‘revival of old Kabul policy’.

The Afghan government’s behaviour indicates that the ethno-nationalist leadership envisages the revival of Pushtun nationalism as a countervailing measure to roll back Pakistan’s influence over the Islamic trend among the Pushtuns in Afghanistan. Such vision operates at a cross-purpose with that of Pakistan which has long used Pushtun Islamic forces to not only neutralise the centrifugal tendencies of the Pushtun nationalists in Pakistan but also to project proxy power in Afghanistan. President Karzai’s proposal for a joint Jerga of both Afghan and Pakistani tribes along the border was one such attempt. His choice of venue for suggesting the initiative was significant. He floated the idea in the presence of President Bush at a dinner in Washington which the latter was hosting in late September 2006 in honour of both the Afghan and Pakistani Presidents. Musharraf was reluctant to accept the idea, but Bush’s ready approval of the idea put him in a difficult position where he had to tentatively agree with the suggestion. It is easy to discern what exactly Karzai wanted the Jerga to deliver for him. He wanted the ‘traditional secular Pushtun leadership’ (an euphemism for the nationalist Pushtun leadership) to regain its past influence as against the religious Pushtun leadership in Pakistan.

The traditional secular Pushtun leadership of Pakistan has been undermined systematically and violently. ... The killing of 150 Pushtun leaders in North Waziristan ...is a clear indication of that. This can only stop if we support civil society.

After accepting the idea of the joint Jerga, Musharraf was only lukewarm in actually implementing it. Instead he reinvigorated his proposal to fence and mine the border with Afghanistan to prevent the infiltration of the Taliban and Al-Qaeda insurgents from Pakistan. The border fencing idea was first suggested by Pakistan in September 2005. At

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88 ‘Balochistan Unstable Due to Afghan Govt’s Interference’, Daily Times (Pakistan), 09 June 2007.
92 Ibid.
the time the US government supported the proposal as a measure to block the cross-border infiltration of militants. It encouraged both countries to ‘take up the idea’.

Pakistan hoped to seek assistance from the US for fencing the border. The Afghan government strongly opposed the border fencing plan. Its various spokespersons questioned the legality of the Durand Line as an international boundary between the two countries.

Subsequently, however, the US and Pakistan did not pursue the matter any further (possibly due to opposition from Kabul) and it fell off the radar screen in Afghan-Pakistan relations for a while. As Afghanistan became increasingly bold in accusing Pakistan of harbouring the Taliban, the Pakistan once again brought the issue to the fore; going even further to suggest that it would mine parts of the border. The Afghan government suspected that Pakistan’s resuscitation of its old proposal was actually a ploy to undermine the holding of the joint Jerga and to legitimate the Durand Line as an international border. However, the actual bone of contention in this regard was not whether or not the Jerga should be held, rather how it was to be held.

When in late 2006, Afghanistan revealed the modalities of how it wanted the Jerga to be convened, the Pakistani officials reacted by saying that the Afghan government’s proposal was more akin to holding a ‘seminar’ than a Jerga. The Afghan government had sent an inclusive list of all those Afghan leaders who had a stake in the current system. The list included the names of the leaders and deputy leaders of the two houses of parliament, heads of all the parliamentary committees, chairs of the provincial councils, members of the Ulema Council of Afghanistan, two respected elders from each of the 34 Afghan provinces, and over one hundred other participants drawn from the parliament, women’s organisations and civil society groups.

Pakistan preferred the Jerga membership to be drawn rather more narrowly from among the Pushtun tribes on both sides of the border. Karzai justified his grand vision of the Jerga by claiming that he wished to involve the modern democratic institutions, such as the Afghan parliament, in the affairs of the country. However, the real reason for Karzai’s grand version of the Jerga was far removed from a desire to strengthen the modern institutions. After all he has consistently subverted and sidelined the legislature in favour of more powers to the executive.

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96 Ibid.


The substance of disagreement about the membership of the Jerga could be detected within the context of an unfolding competition over the leadership of Pushtuns between the Afghan and Pakistani governments. The Afghan leaders are alert to the fact that Pakistan exercises significant influence among the Pushtuns of Afghanistan through its religious leadership and security institutions. Karzai even sent letters to the Pushtun leadership of Pakistan including Maulana Fazlur Rahman, Qazi Hussain Ahmad, Asfandyar Wali Khan and Mahmud Khan Achakzai, seeking their help to restore peace in Afghanistan. While the nationalist Pushtun leadership responded to Karzai’s appeal largely positively, the religious leadership appeared contemptuous of Karzai’s government and called for the US recognition of the Taliban by engaging them in direct negotiations. Aware of the influence that the Pakistan could exercise among Jerga delegates through its military-intelligence and religious establishments, the Afghan government preferred to expand its membership to include not only the representatives of the border tribes but also many other groups whose participation could provide a safeguard against possible manipulation of the Jerga by Pakistan. When the Jerga was held in August 2007, members of the Pushtun expatriate leadership with close ties with both the former monarchy and President Karzai’s regime proved the most vocal critics of Pakistan, accusing its security agencies of ‘playing a destructive role in Afghanistan’. Leaders of the religious parties of Pakistan did not participate in the Jerga. Qazi Hussain Ahmad and Fazlur Rehman thought the Jerga was of little value as it did not include the ‘real stakeholders’, nor did it intend to address the real issues of concern to the Pushtun Islamic leadership.

The competition for leadership of the Pushtuns between the Afghan and Pakistani governments is a phenomenon that informs a considerable part of the tension in the two countries’ relations. Since late 2001, Kabul has struggled not only to reassert it authority in the east and south of the country, it has also appeared keen to revive its position as the gravitational orbit of all Pushtuns irrespective of whether they live in Afghanistan or Pakistan. Both Karzai and Musharraf have attempted to present themselves as the true champions of Pushtun cause in the other country. Each has accused the other government

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101 Iqbal Khattak, ‘Sherpao Invites Afghan Speaker to Pakistan’, Daily Times (Pakistan), 10 August 2007.

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of being directly or indirectly complicit in the alleged sufferings of the Pushtuns. Karzai has expressed a high degree of concern about the painful state of affairs which the Pushtuns have allegedly been subjected to, and accused the government of Pakistan of enmity against Pushtuns on both sides of the border. Musharraf has tried to claim the status of being the defender of Pushtun rights against Tajiks in the Kabul government’s power structure.

The international focus and continued military action in the Pushtun areas of Afghanistan and Pakistan have led to a surge of ethnic awareness and attempts at self-introspection in the Pushtun regions of Pakistan. Over the past few years the Pushtun regions of Pakistan have witnessed a proliferation of many Pushtun gatherings, jergas and conferences by secular and religious Pushtun political parties and organisations with the common aim of tackling the challenges posed by the continued campaign in the war against terrorism. This has enabled the nationalist Pushtun parties to improve their chances of performance in electoral politics. Sensing the changed circumstances, now even some Islamic politicians in the NWFP government have started campaigning along the lines of what the nationalist Pushtun politicians had long demanded. A notable development in this regard was the announcement by Akram Durrani, the Islamic-affiliated Chief Minister of NWFP, about changing the province’s current name to Pakhtunkhwa – essentially a modified version of Pushtunistan. Islamabad will of course resist giving in to the Pushtun nationalistic pressure, as has always been the case. Nevertheless, the reenergizing of Pushtun nationalism cannot fail to be a cause of concern for the federal government of Pakistan.

At least until 2007, Musharraf tried to equate the Taliban violence with Pushtun insurgency rooted in the so-called disgruntlement of the Pushtun populace at the alleged domination of the Kabul government by the non-Pushtuns. His aim was to portray the Taliban as a nationalistic force rather than a terrorist organisation. Karzai and his government strongly objected to Pakistan’s portrayal of the Taliban as a nationalist Pushtun force. They accused Musharraf of playing down terrorism by equating it to an ethnic issue. However, the

Pushtun expatriate leadership in Kabul does not seem to realize that in their own political campaign to reduce the UIFSA’s influence in the government, they had acted exactly in the same manner as Pervez Musharraf does now—projecting the Taliban violence as the symptom of alleged domination of the government by the UIFSA. By redefining the Taliban as a nationalist movement, Pakistan hoped to persuade the international community to accept it as a legitimate political force and engage it in negotiations about a possible power-sharing arrangement in Kabul.

Karzai had always been open to the idea of including the non-belligerent Taliban members in his government anyway, provided that they respected the constitution. In late September 2007, he even went so far as to state that he would welcome Mullah Omar and Hekmatyar to join his government. However, the Taliban proved uninterested in power-sharing as they oppose the political system as a whole. Subsequent to Karzai’s conciliatory overtures, which enjoyed the support of the UK and the US governments and the United Nations, the Taliban unveiled their own ‘Islamic’ constitution as an alternative to the constitution approved by President Karzai in 2004. The fact that the Karzai government and some of its most important international partners including the US, the UK and the UN, came to accept the idea of accommodating the hardcore Taliban was a significant victory for Pakistan’s diplomacy. The most important aspect of the new openness towards the Taliban was highlighted by the British defence minister, Des Browne, when he stated that an ‘Islamic-based legal system’ was the solution to the growing instabilities in Afghanistan. Taliban’s supporters in Pakistan can take heart from the fact that if the Taliban violence had thus far forced powerful supporters of the Karzai government to think about a hitherto unthinkable solution, they may well come round the idea of accepting the Taliban’s domination of the political system, rather than submitting to the ethno-nationalist leadership, in the future. Such a scenario would allow the Pakistani religious parties and security apparatus to regain much of the influence they lost with the collapse of the Taliban regime in September 2001.

Hence the dynamics of interaction between the current Afghan and Pakistani governments is such that any gains by one side are interpreted as a loss by the other. The Afghan leadership has claimed that Pakistan is ‘out to enslave Afghanistan’ and that it is fearful of a

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stable and prosperous neighbour to its west. However it has failed to elaborate as to why Pakistan should be fearful of a strong and stable Afghanistan. What historical, political and strategic factors have made Pakistan put off its economic interests in Central Asia and Afghanistan to destabilize the latter? The Afghan leadership not only has made no effort at resolving the longstanding bones of contention between the two countries, it has steered the stabilization process toward a collision course with Pakistan. Under these circumstances Pakistan’s military-intelligence and religious establishments could continue to disrupt the process of stabilization of Afghanistan because they have reason to see it as a trend leading to the revival of old irredentist claims against Pakistan. The Afghan government will continue to have a hard time exerting its influence over the Pushtuns, notwithstanding the promises of good positions and lump sum salaries which President Karzai holds out to them.

Pakistan-India Rivalry

As always, another major factor in Afghan-Pakistan relations is the role and influence of India in Afghanistan. The Pakistani military regime tends to use a simple paradigm to gauge the degree of Afghanistan’s ‘friendliness’ towards Pakistan. It views Afghan-Pakistan relations to be inversely correlated to India-Afghan relations, even though the history of the triangular relationships challenges the validity of such a yardstick to a considerable extent. During the 1971-Independence War of Bangladesh when Pakistan was at one of the lowest points in its history and the Indian army had intervened in support of East Pakistan, Afghanistan remained neutral despite its excellent ties with India and territorial claims against Pakistan. In the 1990s, when the ISA was aggressively undermined by Pakistan’s proxy, the Hezb-e-Islami, in active collaboration with the Hezb-ul-Mujahideen which had training camps in Afghanistan, the Rabbani government never made a common cause with India to denounce the insurgency in Kashmir. Yet none of these facts is apparently enough to disabuse Pakistan of its compulsive obsession to link its relations with Afghanistan to


that of Afghanistan-India. The Karzai government has indeed found it very hard to convince the Pakistani leaders otherwise.\textsuperscript{113}

Given the relatively smaller size of Pakistan’s economy compared to that of a rapidly growing India, it is almost impossible for Pakistan to launch an economic competition for influence in Afghanistan against rival India. As of January 2007, total aid provided/pledged by India for Afghanistan’s reconstruction amounted to over US $750 million since late 2001, whereas the volume of aid provided/pledged by Pakistan stood at US $300 million for the same period.\textsuperscript{114} Equally important is the way in which India spends its reconstruction assistance. In contrast to Pakistan’s relatively invisible attempts to appear as a helping hand in Afghanistan, India has undertaken solid, long-lasting and visible projects in major cities and in the countryside that the Afghan public could easily appreciate.\textsuperscript{115} Construction of the \textit{Shura-e-Milli} (National Assembly) building, providing hundreds of Indian-made buses, trucks and public utility vehicles to the public transport system and the Afghan security institutions, projects for the much-needed power generation and transmission and building of roads to alleviate the landlocked country’s international trade constrains are but few examples which cannot escape the sights of any visitor to Kabul, including the Pakistani leaders.\textsuperscript{116}

Indian assistance is also contributing directly to the human resources development and capacity building areas. Since late 2001, the Indian government has been involved in training many Afghan diplomats and civil servants. It has also extended technical assistance to upgrade and modernize Afghan government departments such as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. India has for decades granted a limited number of government scholarships (10-20) to Afghan students as part of its annual cultural exchange programmes. A good example of the impact of this programme is the current Afghan President, Hamid Karzai, who fondly remembers his university days in Shimla-India.\textsuperscript{117}

\textsuperscript{113} 'Kabul Urges Islamabad, Delhi to Leave It out of Their Bickering', \textit{Daily Times} (Pakistan), 25 June 2006. 
\textsuperscript{117} See, for example, ‘Afghan President to Visit Himachal Tomorrow’, \textit{IRNA}, 14 November 2006.
During the 1990s, Indian scholarships were given to the UIFSA government through its Embassy in New Delhi. After the fall of the Taliban, however, the number was dramatically increased to many hundreds per year. In the wake of his visit to Kabul in 2005, the Indian Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh, announced over five hundred scholarships to Afghan students who were expected to enroll at Indian universities in the academic year 2006 alone. However, when the Pakistani Prime Minister, Shaukat Aziz, made a similar offer during his visit to Kabul in early 2007, President Karzai turned it down and urged the Pakistani leader instead to help prevent the Taliban from burning Afghan schools and killing Afghan students. The contrast in Afghan-India relations as opposed to Afghan-Pakistan relations in this area could not be starker.

On the diplomatic front as well, there is a heightened level of cooperation between the two countries. India reopened its Embassy in Kabul soon after the Taliban’s defeat. But more importantly, it also opened four Consular offices in the major Afghan cities of Mazar-e-Sharif, Herat, Qandahar and Jalalabad. In the past, India never had any Consular offices in these cities. The Indian Consulates in Jalalabad and Qandahar have come under particular criticism by Pakistan because of the proximity of the two cities to its border. Pakistani leaders allege that India does not have any major commercial or Consular interests in these cities, and that these offices are used by the Indian intelligence agency, the Research and Analysis Wing (RAW), to carry out subversive activities in Pakistan. However, neither have the Pakistani leaders produced any proof to substantiate these claims nor do any independent observers verify them. One prominent Pakistani analyst has even accused Musharraf’s government of rapping up all its ‘failures in Afghanistan in a tissue paper and say it is all India’s fault’.

After supporting the UIFSA against the Taliban regime, India is now keen to revive its old friendship and cultivate new ties among the Pashtuns in the south and east of Afghanistan
as well. Unlike Pakistan, India is loath to be seen partisan in the ethno-linguistic politics of Afghanistan. Its four Consular offices are evenly divided between the non-Pushtun (Mazar-e-Sharif and Herat) and Pushtun regions (Jalalabad and Qandahar), with its Embassy being in the multiethnic capital. Indian diplomatic presence and reconstruction activity in the Pushtun regions deny Pakistan the opportunity to portray India as anti-Pushtun. This will make it harder for the ISI to reestablish training camps for the Kashmiri insurgent groups in the Pushtun heartland of Afghanistan in the future. India is well aware of a long tradition by Pakistan to use Pushtun fighters in Kashmir. The tradition goes right back to the beginning of the two countries’ independence in 1947 when a large Pushtun tribal *Lashkar* was sent from Pakistan to wrest control of the Muslim-majority Kashmir out of its Hindu ruler, Maharaja Hari Singh’s hands who eventually acceded to India to fend off against the tribal invasion. Since then, all the major Pushtun Islamic leaders (whether from Afghanistan or Pakistan) and large numbers of Pushtun fighters have often been involved in the Kashmir insurgency. Hence, the Pakistani reservations about the Indian diplomatic presence in Jalalabad and Qandahar, at the present time, might have more to do with this unfolding regional competition over the hearts and minds of the Pushtuns than any genuine fears about any Indian subversive activity in Pakistan.

India-Pakistan rivalry is active in Central Asia as well. Since September 2001, India has gained influence in Central Asia at the expense of Pakistan. The two countries try to outpace each other along three lines of competition in Central Asia. These include access to hydrocarbon reserves, gaining ‘geostrategic advantage point’ in relation to China and Russia and enlisting the support of Muslim Central Asia to their respective positions in Kashmir. Geographically, the Indian Consulates in Mazar-e-Sharif and Herat amount to beefing up of the Indian presence in Central Asia. They could supplement the works of other Indian diplomatic and consular missions in Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan.

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Chapter 6

The Afghan and Indian governments take common positions and cooperate on major diplomatic issues at a multilateral level as well. India's position in the United Nations about how to respond to the resurgent Taliban violence corresponds strikingly well with that of the Afghan government which calls for action against the sources of terrorism in Pakistan rather than simply dealing with its symptoms in Afghanistan. In his statement at the UN Security Council on 23 August 2005 about Afghanistan, Mr. Nirupam Sen, Permanent Representative of India to the UN, used some of the very language that the Afghan leaders have often employed to draw attention to the 'financing, safe havens ... and the networks that support' the Taliban, Hekmatyar and Al-Qaeda in Pakistan. It is noteworthy that the congruent stance of India and Afghanistan with regards to Pakistan is reminiscent of a similar trend in the two countries' relations in the 1950s to 1970s when the objective of their positions often matched in discrediting Pakistan at the UN General Assembly.

In 2005, Afghanistan cosponsored the 'Group of Four resolution' (G-4) for the UN reform, in which India was envisaged to receive a permanent membership at the UN Security Council along with five other countries. Pakistan strongly opposed the G-4 proposal. Pakistani diplomats based in Kabul question Afghanistan's impartiality between India and Pakistan in the wake of its co-sponsorship of the resolution. To the Afghan leaders, however, the ability to take independent decision about such issues as the Indian Consular offices' presence in Afghanistan and/or the co-sponsorship of the G-4 resolution is of paramount importance because it underlines Afghanistan's sovereignty. The researcher was struck by the candid and similar answers from the then Afghan Foreign Minister, Dr. Abdullah Abdullah, and the Chief of Staff of President Karzai, Jawid Ludin, as to why the government had not taken Pakistan into confidence before resolving to support Pakistan's regional adversary in such an important issue as the UN Security Council expansion. They were very clear that the government deliberately avoided taking Pakistan into confidence so that the latter would get used to the reality of Afghanistan

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127 For more details see Hasan Ali Shah Jafari, Indo-Afghan Relations.


129 Interview with Mr. Asif Durrani, Deputy Head of Mission, Embassy of Pakistan, Kabul, 2 January 2006.
being a sovereign and independent state—a attempt at disabusing the Pakistani leaders of the effects of ideational transformation as discussed before.

From the above discussion it is evident that India is not only regaining its past influence, it is actually making inroads, politically, geostrategically and economically, into new areas as well. India’s growing strength and commitment to be actively involved in Afghanistan offer reason to predict that its influence in Afghanistan will only increase steadily into the future. Hence the trend once again is such that the Pakistani leaders cannot draw any comfort from it. On the other hand Pakistan cannot compete with India in economic terms in Afghanistan. Therefore it makes use of its geostrategic location as the middle land between the two countries to keep the costs of active Indian involvement high in Afghanistan. Pakistani government’s refusal to allow land-transit rights for India is a manifestation of this policy. India does not have a common border with Afghanistan. Although there are several direct flights between Kabul and New Delhi by at least three airlines including the Indian Airlines, the Ariana Afghan Airlines and the Kam Air (Afghan private airline), the air route is neither economic nor sufficient for expansion of economic relations between the two countries. The Afghan and Indian leaders have repeatedly asked Pakistan to allow Indian goods to Afghanistan through the land route across the India-Pakistan borderline. Pakistan has rebuffed these requests by proposing that the Indians use the Karachi seaport for their exports to Afghanistan (thereby increasing the transshipment costs for the Indians), even as they have conceded to the Afghan exports to India through the same land route. Indeed much of the unsubstantiated rhetoric about the existential threat of an alleged Afghan-India nexus-of-subversion against Pakistan could be understood with reference to the Pakistani military regime’s anxiety about further linear progression of the current trend in Afghan-India relations.

130 Interview with Dr. A. Abdullah, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Afghanistan, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Kabul, 03 January 2006. Interview with Jawid Ludin, Chief of Staff, Office of the President, Presidential Palace (Arg), Kabul, 20 January 2006.
The combination of both internal and external factors including the rise of Pashtun nationalism, competition for Pashtun leadership, reassertion of national sovereignty by the Karzai government and the growing Afghan-India ties, have contributed to generate fear in the minds of the Pakistani military and religious elites. Under these circumstances Afghanistan’s relations with Pakistan will remain sour, if not actually deteriorate even further. Prospects for stability in Afghanistan are likely to continue to remain distant as long as Pakistan’s geostrategic imperatives in South Asia (including the Pashtun regions of Afghanistan) outweigh its commercial interests in Central Asia.

The Role of Central Asia

Central Asia played a key role in facilitating the coalition’s military campaign against the Taliban soon after the events of 9/11. Of particular importance in this regard were the roles of Tajikistan and Uzbekistan that collectively share over 1343 km border with northern Afghanistan. Uzbekistan, having developed close relations with the US in the previous years, was the first country in Afghanistan’s neighbourhood to offer support to the US against the Taliban. It allowed the US military aircraft and air force personnel at its Karshi-Khanabad Air Base near the Afghan border. Tajikistan granted airspace overflight, aircraft refueling and emergency landing rights to the US and the French forces. The other neighbouring country, Turkmenistan, took little part in the anti-Taliban campaign beyond allowing the transit of humanitarian supplies through its territory. Turkmenistan professed ‘positive neutrality’ between the Afghan warring factions throughout the 1990s because its leadership was keen to develop trade ties with Pakistan through the Afghan territory.

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Unlike Pakistan and Turkmenistan, however, the cooperation by Uzbekistan and Tajikistan in the campaign against Taliban-Al-Qaeda was voluntary inasmuch as it stemmed from their opposition against that regime rather than international pressure built in the aftermath of the 9/11 as was the case with Pakistan. As elaborated previously, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan opposed the Taliban and assisted the UIFSA to resist them. The involvement of the Taliban in production and trafficking of narcotics, their support of the IMU and their atrocities against the non-Pushtun ethnic communities in northern and western Afghanistan were the main issues which had prompted the leaderships of these countries to support their opponents.

Hence the international intervention in Afghanistan for removal of the Taliban-Al-Qaeda regime was welcomed by the Uzbek and Tajik leaders, because it presented them with the best opportunity to reduce the threats of drug-trafficking, extremism and ethnic strife all of which had impacted on the stability of their countries. Olcott has noted that the prospects of economic rewards and closer relations with the United States were important factors in why the Uzbek, Tajik and Kyrgyz governments indeed lobbied the coalition to make use of the facilities they offered in the Operation Enduring Freedom. In the case of Uzbekistan, for instance, the US annual aid was almost doubled from US$ 82 million to US$ 160 million in early 2002. There were also tens of millions more in the form of remittance to each Central Asian country that made their facilities available for Operation Enduring Freedom. In 2005, however, it was proved that direct economic rewards failed to persuade the Uzbek government to allow the US military the continued use of its Karshi-Khanabad airbase. In late 2001, the Tajik government allowed the US to use its facilities in Dushanbe only after it had taken Russia into confidence. Therefore, while economic rewards and closer relations with the US cannot be discounted in this regard, certainly they were not as important as those that had prompted majority of the Central Asian leadership to oppose the Taliban.

The Uzbek President, Islam Karimov, presiding arguably over the strongest of the three northern neighbouring countries, was also the staunchest advocate of the US and coalition

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138 Even a month after Pakistani President, Pervez Musharraf had switched sides to support the coalition against the Taliban, his security agencies continued to send truckloads of military supplies to the Taliban. See Douglas Frantz, ‘Pakistan, An Ally Or Enemy’, New York Times, 08 December 2001.
140 Martha Brill Olcott, Central Asia’s Second Chance, pp. 4-7.
involvement not only in Afghanistan but in Central Asia as well. Since independence, the Uzbek government under Karimov had evolved as the most pro-Western regime in Central Asia. Uzbekistan’s pro-Western leanings were perhaps best reflected in its decision in 1999 to withdraw from the Russian-dominated CIS Collective Security Treaty (CST) as against its growing military relations with the NATO within the framework of NATO Partnership for Peace Programme since 1994 and its close ties with the US and Israel. In the international coalition’s campaign against the Taliban, the Uzbek leadership saw an opportunity to deal a blow to its own Islamic opponents not less than their desire to see the Taliban defeated and the drug-trafficking networks disrupted.

Regional powers with pre-eminence interests and influence in Central Asia, including Russia, China, Turkey, Iran, and India not only sympathised with the US objective to punish the Taliban-Al-Qaeda after the events of the 9/11, they also saw the dismantlement of the Kabul regime as being complementary to their own national interests. Russia abhorred the Taliban as the only regime which had recognised the independence of Chechnya. It had supported the UIFSA from mid-1990s against the Taliban. China was wary of the Taliban because of the fears that their successes would further encourage separatism in the mainly-Muslim Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region in its north-west. Many Uighur Muslims had indeed trained in the Taliban-Al-Qaeda camps in Afghanistan. Iran actively opposed the Taliban because of their close association with violent extremist


144 For information on China’s interests in Central Asia see Bao Yi, China’s Strategic Interests in Central Asia: ‘Cooperation with Central Asian Countries’, Central Asia And The Caucasus, Vol. No. 11, Issue No. 5, 2001.


149 Orozbek Moldaliev, Islamic Extremism in Central Asia, Central Asia And The Caucasus, No. 5, Year 2000.
anti-Shiite outfits such as the Lashkar-e-Toiha, Sepah-e-Sahaba and Lashkar-e-Jhangvi in Pakistan, their easy receptiveness to the Saudi monarchy’s ideological influence and financial sponsorship, their oppression of the Shiites in Afghanistan and their involvement in opium growing and international drug-trafficking activities. India opposed the Taliban as the proxy of its archrival Pakistan. Turkey was against the Taliban both on account of its secular credentials as well as its good relations with the Turkic-speaking leaders of Afghanistan such as Dostum.

This great convergence of interests among the regional powers made it easier for the US and other members of the coalition to station their military forces in Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan for the first time ever in the history of Central Asia. Meanwhile some of these countries expected the US and the West in general to be more accommodating towards their national campaigns against Islamic insurgencies and separatism. They called for removal of ‘double standards’ in the war against terrorism, meaning that while the US and other members of the coalition were involved in the campaign against Taliban-Al-Qaeda, they should not criticize (mainly on human rights grounds) the Russian, Chinese and Uzbek campaigns against what they viewed as terrorism and separatism in Chechnya, Xinjiang and Uzbekistan.

Notwithstanding the initial stage of international cooperation and the strong desire by Afghanistan to make use of its land-bridging location between Central and South Asia, prospects for the country’s relations with Central Asia do not seem any more promising than its already-strained ties with Pakistan. A range of external and internal factors could be cited to be responsible for this. The most important external factor is the suspicion of the regional powers against the continued presence of the US and other coalition forces in Central Asia and Afghanistan. The internal factors could be gleaned out of an assessment of the degree of success vs. failure by the Afghan government to address the most important issues of concern to the neighbouring Central Asian countries in Afghanistan. These include the attitude of Karzai’s government towards the non-Pushtun ethnic

150 Hooman Peimani, Falling Terrorism and Rising Conflicts, pp. 15-16.
151 Irina Komissina, ‘India: Cooperation with the Central Asian Countries in Regional Security’.
154 Xing Guangcheng, The Shanghai Cooperation Organization in the Fight against Terrorism, Extremism.
155 Hooman Peimani, Falling Terrorism and Rising Conflicts, pp. 79-122.
communities that have common ties with Central Asians, Kabul’s willingness and rate of success in reducing the amount of narcotics being exported from Afghanistan and the Afghan leadership’s political willingness and amount of success against extremist groups connected to anti-establishment organisations in Central Asia.

Re-emergence of Major Power Rivalries

Regarding external factors, China, Russia and Iran as the three most influential powers with enormous economic and strategic interests in Central Asia, all share a view that the US is seeking to undermine them.\textsuperscript{156} China has long suspected the US to be promoting separatism in the Xinjiang province as a means of weakening the Asian giant. China believes that part of the US interest in developing close economic links with Central Asia is to multiply that region’s economic ties with the outside world so that China would not benefit from a relatively competition-free market in its backyard in terms of both exports of products and imports of energy.\textsuperscript{157} By doing so, China believes, the US is trying to impede its economic progress with the aim of containing it from becoming a world power. Similarly, Russian apprehensions about the US intentions in Central Asia have been exacerbated by US unilateralism in the war on terror and the expansion of the NATO in Eastern Europe. It has been argued that a shared perception of NATO's policies with regards to Central Asia has generated some sort of a strategic solidarity between China and Russia.\textsuperscript{158} Both countries have come to view the war on terror as a pretext for the US to impose its supremacy in Central Asia.\textsuperscript{159} Iran’s antipathy towards the US is well-known to be repeated here.

The Western leaders’ cheery attitude to applaud the wave of ‘coloured revolutions’ in Georgia, Ukraine and Kyrgyzstan between 2003 and 2005 reinforced suspicions in Central Asia and Russia about the existence of an alleged US and Western-inspired conspiracy to overthrow the Central Asian regimes led by the ex-communist authoritarian rulers.\textsuperscript{160} Even


\textsuperscript{157} Hooman Peimani, Falling Terrorism and Rising Conflicts, pp. 79-122. Russel Ong, ‘China’s Security Interests in Central Asia’, pp 427-434.

\textsuperscript{158} Russel Ong, ‘China’s Security Interests in Central Asia’, pp 427-434.

\textsuperscript{159} Ibid. Hooman Peimani, Falling Terrorism and Rising Conflicts, pp. 79-122.

Iran feared that it was a target of ‘velvet revolution’ conspired by the US.\footnote{Ardeshir Moaveni, ‘Iran’s Leadership Views “Velvet Revolution” Trend with Caution’, *Eurasianet*, 04 July 2005. Also see Jesse Nunes, ‘Iran Arrests Two on Accusations of Plotting “Velvet Revolution”’, *Christian Science Monitor*, 23 May 2007.} In so far as it relates to Afghanistan-Central Asia relations, the violent rebellion of May 2005 in Andijan proved a threshold in driving the Uzbek government to completely reverse its decade-old policy of seeking friendship with the US and easing out of Russian domination.\footnote{Sergey Luzianin, ‘Color Revolutions in the Central Asian Context: Kyrgyzstan-Uzbekistan-Kazakhstan’, *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, Vol. No. 35, Issue No. 5, 2005. Shirin Akıner, ‘Violence in Andijan, 13 May 2005: An Independent Assessment’, *Central Asia – Caucasus Institute, Silk Road Paper*, July 2005. Also see Devendra Kaushik, *Colour Revolutions and Geopolitics in Eurasia*, The Kazakhstan Institute for Strategic Studies, 06 January 2006.} The Uzbek government suspected that the violence was the latest in a pattern of Western-inspired so-called revolutions which had hitherto toppled three other governments in the Eurasian region. While the US criticised the Uzbek government for the allegedly brutal suppression of the violence in Andijan, the Russian government found it opportune to step in and support Karimov’s regime when he was facing a hailstorm of international outcry. The Uzbek and Russian governments shared the view that the Andijan violence was linked to Islamic militants’ training camps in northern Afghanistan near the Uzbek border.\footnote{‘Afghan Militants Concentrated Near Uzbekistan – Putin’, *Interfax News Agency*, 28 June 2005. Also see Clare Bigg, ‘Uzbekistan: Karimov, Putin Say Andijon Violence Was Planned Abroad’, *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, 29 June 2005.} Irrespective of the merits of these assertions, President Putin’s acute sense of time to fully support the Uzbek leader at such critical juncture drove the latter close to Moscow and chunked him out of his erstwhile Western partners’ orbit.\footnote{President Putin’s support to Islam Karimov was fully in line with his pattern of behaviour with respect to similar situations in Belarus, Kyrgyzstan and Ukraine where he took risk to support the incumbent rulers (despite their earlier differences) in times of uncertainty. In such situations, if the incumbent ruler gets through difficult times to continue in their leadership, Russia’s support is rewarded with closer cooperation and friendship. If the incumbent leader is replaced, s/he seeks asylum in Russia.}

In view of the fact that northern Afghanistan had been generally hostile to Taliban-Al-Qaeda, and the Kabul government’s authority was fairly well-established in the region, the Russian and Uzbek leaders’ remarks implied that the anti-Uzbekistan subversion was happening right under the nose of the coalition forces and the Afghan authorities. The Afghan foreign ministry took strong exception to the allegations, calling them ‘totally baseless.’\footnote{The Ministry Of Foreign Affairs Reaction to the Statements of the Russian Foreign Minister’, *Press Release, Office of the Spokesperson of the MoFA*, 25 June 2005.} The regional powers’ wariness with the US-led coalition’s self-assertion in Central Asia, combined with the alienation of the highly personalized political systems in Central Asia, created a favourable milieu for the influential powers to try squeezing the US and other coalition members out of the region. On 5 July 2005, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization’s summit in Astana, comprising leaders of Russia, China, Uzbekistan,
Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, issued a declaration where it called for setting up of a final timeline for withdrawal of the US-led coalition forces from Central Asia. More interestingly, the declaration observed the active military stage of the antiterrorist operation had been completed in Afghanistan, while in reality the Taliban violence was actually increasing.

Close on the heels of the SCO’s declaration, the Uzbek government gave a 180-day ultimatum to the US to evict its forces from the Karshi-Khanabad Air Base near the border with Afghanistan. The Uzbeks also imposed new restrictions on the use of their airbase by the US forces over the ensuing 180-day period. A subsequent announcement by the US Defence Department to pay Uzbekistan the amount of US$23 million in arrears, covering the bills for the usage of the airbase since 2003, was but a vain attempt at dangling economic rewards for continuation of these arrangements. It failed to impress the Uzbek leader.

Recognising the crucial role of Central Asia as a transit bridge for continuation of a robust military cooperation with NATO and the US, the Afghan foreign minister, Dr. Abdullah, appealed to the SCO members on 18 October 2001 not to push for the withdrawal of the international coalition from Central Asia. He reminded the SCO leaders that the fight against Taliban-Al-Qaeda was not yet over, and called on the SCO members and the US to work out their differences in the interest of stability in Afghanistan and the wider region. Afghan leaders have reason to worry about the closure of Central Asian facilities to members of the Western coalition. The more inhospitable Central Asia becomes to the coalition forces, the more likely it is for the latter to increase their reliance on Pakistan as the only other transit route to landlocked Afghanistan. However, neither the US promise of economic rewards nor the Afghan government’s anxious appeals did dent the Uzbek government’s resolute decision to evict the US forces from its soil. The withdrawal of US and other coalition forces from Uzbekistan was a blow to Afghanistan’s diplomacy in

170 Iran, China and Turkmenistan are not hospitable to the Coalition’s use of their territories for the purposes of military operations in Afghanistan. This leaves Pakistan as the only alternative to Central Asia.
Central Asia. It also represented a setback to the Afghan leadership’s efforts to avoid a situation where the coalition would become even more reliant on Pakistan.

Hence, apart from the technical impediments, there is reason to be concerned that Afghanistan might get entangled in major power issues, beyond its control, that would limit the scope of regional economic cooperation. In December 2005, the Uzbek government sent its foreign minister to attend the RECC in Kabul only reluctantly. It did not like the British co-sponsorship of the conference, maintaining officially that it was from outside the region. In the Afghan officials’ view, however, the Uzbek government’s behaviour had more to do with its displeasure at the UK and US criticism of its human rights since the Andijan violence.

The US-funded Afghan-Tajik bridge, which by itself is a massive contribution to regional economic cooperation, cannot be completely detached from major power geostrategic considerations involving the US, Russia, China, Central Asia and South Asia as a whole. It plugs out Tajikistan from transport dependency on Russia and Uzbekistan, opens up an alternative route to South Asian for China, and acts as a gateway of US influence in Central Asia.171 Well before the completion of the bridge, the Tajik government was enormously enthusiastic about its geostrategic fallouts, as it was to free that country from a major dependency on the communication links of its surly neighbour, Uzbekistan.172 Nevertheless, Tajikistan remains hugely vulnerable to pressure from both Russia and China. Russia is host to more than eight hundred thousand labour migrants from Tajikistan and China’s profile as one of the biggest investors in Tajikistan is growing rapidly.173 They can use their leverage to prevent Tajikistan from realizing its full potential for economic cooperation with the US-friendly Afghanistan.

Since the death of the Turkmen President-for-life, Saparmurat Niyazov, on 21 December 2006, major power rivalry over the hydrocarbon resources of Turkmenistan has intensified greatly. In May 2007, the new Turkmen President, Gurbanguly Berdymukhamedov, signed major oil and gas deals with Russia and showed renewed interest in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) from which it had withdrawn its full membership in August

172 Interview with Farhod Mahkamov, Tajik Ambassador to Kabul, Kabul, 09 January 2006.
In broad terms, there are five competing outlets for the Turkmen hydrocarbon exports. These are: the Russian pipeline network to Europe; the trans-Caspian pipelines to Europe; the trans-Afghan pipeline (TAP) to South Asia; a Turkmen-Chinese pipeline to China, and the option of exports to international markets through hydrocarbon swapping arrangements with Iran. The US and EU support both the trans-Caspian and the TAP routes. Hence, Afghanistan naturally falls in the US camp. Western and Afghan commentators view the Afghan President as an ally of the US in the context of the major power rivalries in Turkmenistan. Russia is keen to direct the bulk of Turkmen export through its territory. China’s views the Turkmen hydrocarbon reserves as an answer to some of its rapidly-growing energy needs. Iran is keen to benefit from Turkmen exports through its territory. It also supports any alternative routes that prevent the US and the EU from having a major influence in the Central Asian oil exports. Therefore, the TAP, just like other important pieces of regional economic cooperation, is not an easy project that would be realized simply by overcoming internal security and technical impediments.

Cross-border Narcotics, Terrorism and Ethno-Linguistic Issues

On the domestic front, the performance of the Afghan government on issues such as its anti-narcotics drive, the fight against Taliban and other extremist forces, and its success to mediate inter-ethnic amity rather than exacerbating such cleavages, are important factors which could impact on the country’s relations with Central Asia. The toppling of the Taliban-Al-Qaeda regime provided a huge impetus to Afghan-Central Asia relations early on. Although the three neighbouring countries of Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan had become independent more than a decade earlier, it was only after the overthrow of the Taliban-Al-Qaeda regime that they opened their first embassies in Kabul. However, longer-

term prospects for expansion of relations also depend on how Afghanistan addresses these issues. A positive trend, entailing more amicable inter-ethnic relations, reduced opium production and dwindling extremist influence in the political system, would compliment the thrust for regional economic cooperation. Evidence suggests that the Afghan government is moving in the negative direction on all the three issues. Since 2002 the volume of Afghan opium has increased manifold, a big portion of which is smuggled through Central Asia to Russia and the West.\(^{178}\) While official figures for the amount of narcotics smuggled through Central Asia in 2007 have not come up yet, more than one fifth or 1,220 tons of the total Afghan opium produced in 2006 was exported through the Central Asian routes.\(^{179}\) The drastic reduction of poppy fields in the northern and central provinces in proximity to Central Asia is certainly good news. However, it is not known whether this has actually reduced the amount of smuggled narcotics through Central Asia, since the overall production of Afghan narcotics increased significantly.

The steady increase in the total volume of narcotics produced by Afghanistan and smuggled through Central Asia is an issue that harms Afghan-Central Asia relations. At the minimum the country's reputation as the biggest producer of illicit narcotics would hamper its ability to claim the mantle of land-bridge between Central Asia and South Asia. Becoming truly a land-bridge country requires relaxation of border and immigration regimes both by Afghanistan and all its neighbours. Yet no country would be willing to open up its borders to Afghanistan if they have a reason to suspect that drug-traffickers could take advantage of it.\(^{180}\) Transit of Afghan drugs has had devastating impacts on Central Asia. In Tajikistan, for example, it has undermined economic reform, corrupted government institutions, increased crime, exacerbated health problems, impeded economic growth and even prompted the Russian government to crack down on the 800,000-strong Tajik migrant workers in Russia whose contribution to Tajik economy (estimated to be US$ 600 million, or three times more than Tajikistan's budget in 2003) constituted almost 40 percent of the Tajik GDP in 2003.\(^{181}\)

\(^{179}\) UNODC Annual Report 2007. Also see UNODC Afghanistan Opium Survey 2006.
Alarmed by the increased transit of narcotics, the five Central Asian countries, Russia and Azerbaijan decided to establish a Central Asian Regional Information Coordination Centre (CARICC) in Almaty-Kazakhstan early in 2006. The CARICC is tasked with gathering intelligence and coordinating the implementation of regional law-enforcement measures against drug-traffickers. In April 2006, the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), a military alliance comprising Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Belarus and Armenia, signed an agreement with the UNODC to take joint initiatives against traffic of narcotics through these countries. Some CSTO leaders have long criticized the NATO and the Afghan government for failing to effectively tackle the problems of narcotics and terrorism. They have demanded that NATO take them onboard in the fight against terrorism and narcotics in Afghanistan. In June the same year, member states of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) suggested setting up an ‘anti-drug belt’ around Afghanistan. Although full details of the measure do not seem to have been worked out with the Afghan authorities as of mid-2007, the plan would inevitably involve more stringent border controls by the Central Asian states. Analysts believe that despite the significant achievement in laying infrastructural foundations for regional economic cooperation as symbolized by the completion of the Afghan-Tajik bridge, realization of its full potential will remain a hostage to the negative fallouts of Afghanistan’s reputation as the biggest narcotics producer in the world.

The Afghan government has a mixed record about dealing with the question of extremist religious organisations and individuals with links to Central Asian radicals. The initial impact of the international campaign against the Taliban-Al-Qaeda regime was hugely successful in almost rooting out some of the most active Central Asian radical organisations from Afghanistan. A case in point is the destruction of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) which suffered greatly as a result of its association with the Taliban-Al-Qaeda. It is believed that the IMU’s charismatic military leader, Juma Namangani, along with a large number of other IMU rebels was killed in the fight against the anti-Taliban forces near Mazar-e-Sharif in November 2001. Its political and spiritual leader, Tahir Yuldash, sought sanctuary in Pakistan after the fall of the Taliban. In the past,

President Karimov sharply criticized the Pakistani government of overlooking the Uzbek rebels’ activities on its soil. Recent information from Pakistan indicates that the IMU has progressively rebuilt its fighting capacity significantly over the past many years since late 2001.

Kabul seems determined to root out any remnants of IMU in the areas it controls. In August 2002, for example, seven suspected members of the IMU who had been captured during the course of hostilities were handed over to the Uzbek government. In December 2003, however, the Kyrgyz Foreign Minister Askar Aitmatov complained that the IMU was still active in Afghan soil and threatening the security of Central Asia.

Whether or not the Kyrgyz or Uzbek leaders’ accusations could be given credence is open to question, given the fact that other sources have not come up to confirm them. Yet there is little doubt that outlawed Islamic organisations have continued to thrive in Central Asia even after the overthrow of the Taliban regime in Afghanistan. In July 2007, the Afghan National Directorate for Security (NDS) arrested members of the IMU in the northern Uzbek provinces of Faryab and Jawzajan, without specifying whether they had entered the area from Central Asia or Pakistan.

Research indicates that while the IMU might have been weakened, another more globalised Islamic organization known as Hezb-ul-Tahrir has become more active in Central Asia. Hezb-ul-Tahrir advocates the revival of Muslim unity around the world by spreading Islamic awareness among the Muslims through non-violent means. It is active in many countries, including the US, UK and Australia, and banned in others such as Germany, Russia and all of Central Asia. The Uzbek leadership does not accept the notion that Hezb-ul-Tahrir is non-violent. In the wake of the Andijan uprising, the Uzbek President alleged that the US and NATO had engineered the violence in collusion with the Hezb-ul-Tahrir and other Islamic radicals from across the Afghan border, because he had refused to join the alliance. As indicated in the preceding sections, the Afghan government strongly rejected these accusations. Nonetheless, the incident served to highlight the implications for

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190 Ibid.
191 As mentioned in the preceding sections, the Uzbek leader has also alleged that Islamic extremists operated from Afghanistan.
Afghan-Central Asia relations of Kabul’s national reconciliation strategy, which essentially boils down to a policy of co-opting the Taliban and Hezb-e-Islami members by the Afghan government. In the preceding sections we discussed the concept of ‘moderate Taliban’ which Pakistan started promoting as soon as the fall of the Taliban appeared imminent. It was roundly rejected by Central Asia, Russia, India and Iran. Since then, however, many former members and supporters of the Taliban and the Hezb-e-Islami have been given influential positions both in the central government in Kabul and as governors in the provinces. In May 2005, President Karzai and the head of Afghan Reconciliation Commission, Sibghatullah Mojaddadi, declared a blanket amnesty to Mullah Omar and Hekmatyar. Karzai retracted his words when faced with stiff opposition from the US military spokesman, Col James Yonts, and outright rejection of it by the Taliban spokesperson at the time. Subsequently, Karzai again expressed readiness to ‘embrace’ both Mullah Omar and Hekmatyar if they renounced violence. Hekmatyar indicated a willingness to join the government. If sincere, he would have obviously sought assurances against possible prosecution in the future by the Afghan or any members of the coalition. The core Taliban leadership such as Mullah Mohammad Omar and Mullah Dadullah (until he was killed), who claimed to have many Central Asian fighters under his command, did not appear interested in Karzai’s overtures. In April 2007, Karzai revealed that he had been secretly negotiating with the Taliban; disappointing former members of the UIFTSA, who had not been taken into confidence on the issue. Nonetheless, with the US, UK and the UN clarifying their positions in favour of negotiating with the Taliban in September 2007, Karzai has got the green light to take his national reconciliation to areas that were off limits.

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in the past. The main opposition alliance known as Jabha-e-Milli (National Front), led by Rabbani, has also come to support reconciliation with the Taliban, on condition that the process is transparent and involves all branches of the political system including the executive, legislative and judiciary.  

National reconciliation is undoubtedly essential for political stability in post-conflict, multiethnic, countries. If mishandled, however, it could become a venue for subversive elements to undermine the political system from within and/or by straining its foreign relations. There is ample evidence to suggest that such elements have already penetrated the state apparatus at the highest levels and that they have acquired the capability to be privy to some of the most sensitive and confidential information regarding the government and coalition plans and activities. Even more noteworthy is the quickness with which the Taliban have integrated their access to insider information with operations on the ground. In January 2006, the US Ambassador, Ronald E. Neuman, was the target of a suicide attack as soon as he arrived in a secret visit to the Uruzgan province. On 27 February 2007, the US Vice President, Dick Cheney, was the target of another suicide operation as soon as he arrived on his top secret visit to the Bagram Airbase which is not even a traditional stronghold of the Taliban. It is impossible for the Taliban to know about such visits unless they have access to information from within the closest circle highest-ranking officials and aides to the President.

In view of the government’s inability to improve security in the south, it might by tempting to share power increasingly with members of the Taliban and Hezb-e-Islami groups while sideline those affiliated with the UIFSA which had good relations with Uzbekistan and Tajikistan. It is not improbable, however, that the more the Taliban and the Hezb-e-Islami gain influence in the government, the better prospects will there be for the Central Asian Islamic organisations such as the IMU and the Hezb-ul-Tahrir to receive official or unofficial patronage from powerful institutions and individuals in Kabul and the provinces. This will contribute to strain relations between the Afghan and Central Asian governments. Many


203 As former Afghan diplomat, the author knows that most such visits are not even communicated to the relevant departments or Missions of the Afghan Foreign Ministry. Only a small circle of the highest-ranking officials and the closest aides to the President know about them. Such visits are often communicated with the shortest possible notice through the relevant foreign Embassies or coalition authorities in Kabul.
experts have indeed warned that the Afghan government’s policies might be shaping up the prospects for such a scenario.\textsuperscript{204} As late as mid-2007, the Central Asian governments still remained concerned about the threat of religious radicalism and insurgents exported from Afghanistan to their countries.\textsuperscript{205} Afghanistan might face a possible dilemma in future as to where to strike the right balance between restless populations and the highly-personalized governments in Central Asia; especially if the governments would continue to suppress political dissent under the pretext of fighting radicalism.

The ramifications of policies to address perceived ‘Pushtun alienation’ in Afghanistan are also relevant to the nature of Afghan-Central Asia relations. In late 2001, one of the principal reasons for the Tajik and Uzbek governments’ support to the Operation Enduring Freedom was their opposition to the Taliban’s attempts at imposing total Pushtun domination over the northern ethnic groups in Afghanistan. Emphasis by Western countries on the centrality of Pushtun power as the key requirement to ensure future stability in Afghanistan reverberated rather negatively among the Tajik leaders and intelligentsia.\textsuperscript{206} They wondered whether it would lead to a revival of the policy of ‘Pushtunisation’ which Afghanistan had witnessed under the Mohammadzai monarchy. Since 2001 it has become evident that the ethnicisation of the process of stabilization is a cause of concern not only to the Central Asians but also to other countries with major influence in the region. During his visit to India in early December 2004, the Russian Defence Minister, Sergei Ivanov, openly spoke of his country’s concerns about the matter in the following words:

Russia and India are concerned about the Pushtunisation of Afghanistan. ...This is a straight way to war. ...We are almost unanimous on this matter. We can see that so-called moderate Talibs and extremist Talibs are safe and sound and even claiming membership in the country’s administration. ... There are no moderate Talibs, there are either living or dead Talibs.\textsuperscript{207}

\textsuperscript{205} ‘Mozakerat-e Moqamat-e Tajikistan Ba NATO’ [Tajikistan Authorities’ Negotiations with NATO], \textit{BBC Persian}, 03 July 2007.
Ivanov’s remarks were strongly rebuffed by the Afghan government at the time. However, it is not lost on the non-Pushtun leaders and intellectuals in Afghanistan that when similar remarks are made by Pakistan about other ethnic groups, Kabul remains silent. Ethnon-linguistic ties across the northern borders of Afghanistan have gained strength since the independence of Central Asia. Afghan policies insensitive to the perceived interests of the northern ethnic groups will not be helpful for the political stability of Afghanistan, as they will mobilise transnational ethnic identities that would compete with the influence of the Kabul government in the region. It might be necessary to have reconciliation with even the most belligerent parties, if it could hold a realistic promise of lasting political stability in the country. However, inviting such destructive figures as Mullah Omar and Hekmatyar to join the stabilisation process is not only a clear admission of the failure of the whole process of stabilisation under the expatriate leadership’s stewardship since September 2001; it is a recipe for more instability that would induce renewed regional interference rather than cooperation.

Conclusion

The contemporary history of Afghanistan once again proves the enormous importance of Central and South Asia in the political stability/instability of the country. In late 2001, the international community resolved to effect basic structural changes in the character of the Afghan state, the ‘Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan’, which had become a threat to international security. The United Nations sanctioned the use of overwhelming political violence against the regime in order to achieve the desired changes. However, without cooperation of the Central and South Asian countries, it is unlikely that the international coalition would have been able to put in practice its plan of action against the regime. By allowing their sovereign territories to be used by the coalition, Central and South Asian countries, particularly Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan and Pakistan, facilitated the overthrow of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan. Given the landlocked geography of Afghanistan —and Iran and China’s reluctance to allow the use of their territories for any operational or logistical purposes of the coalition— neither the continuation of the international campaign nor the process of reconstruction would have been possible without the cooperation of Central Asia and Pakistan since late 2001. Hence, since late 2001, Central and South Asia have continued to play a significant part in affecting all aspects of political stability/instability as understood in the context of this thesis.

Having extended support to the international action in Afghanistan, the Central and South Asian countries obviously had their own geostrategic, political and economic interests in mind. Pakistan opposed the change of regime in Afghanistan. When pressured, however, it officially turned against its client regime. Pakistan's volte-face brought it economic, political and military rewards; as it also earned it the wrath of extremist forces aligned with the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan. To a significant extent, the prospects of long-term stability in Afghanistan depends on the continuing goodwill of its Central and South Asian neighbours. In turn, such goodwill is contingent on whether or not Afghanistan can make progress in areas of concern to its neighbouring nations in the two regions. To stimulate regional interest in the political stability of Afghanistan and to effect economic prosperity, the Afghan government and its international partners are keen to promote it as the most important land-bridge between Central Asia, South Asia, the Middle East and China. While there is certainly merit in such a policy, the mere promise of enhanced economic cooperation cannot by itself guarantee a positive attitude of all the neighbouring countries towards stability of Afghanistan. It is essential that Afghanistan recognise the non-technical impediments to regional economic cooperation, and address the causes of concern to the neighbouring countries.

Afghanistan needs the long-term support of the international community in order to develop its infrastructure and build institutions essential for political stability. It will need constantly to perform a balancing act, so that its closeness with the West is not misconstrued by the regional powers to the extent that they would resort to destabilizing interference in the country. Transnational narcotics and religious extremism are of particular concern to Central Asia, yet the Afghan government has made little progress in tackling these problems since 2001. Pakistan is particularly concerned about the growing influence of India; a phenomenon that is closely linked to Afghanistan’s determination to assert its independence and to sustain the substantial flow of reconstruction contribution from that country. If, however, the perception of close Indian cooperation is evoking unhelpful Pakistani reaction to the extent that the gains are outweighed by the losses in terms of long-term political stability, Afghanistan will need to make hard decisions to address the problem. Resuscitation of ethno-nationalism in Afghanistan is a concern shared by both Central Asia and Pakistan; yet it is also one of the most consistent themes permeating various policy strings of the Afghan government.
Chapter 6

The Afghan government needs to recognise that neither its domestic ethno-nationalistic politics, nor its irredentist claims about the Durand Line and the Pushtunistan issue, are sustainable anymore in the 21st century. It needs to resolve these issues in the interest of long-term political stability in the country. Mere security-centric policies, where the main emphasis goes to the establishment of strong security forces without genuine diplomatic efforts to resolve the potential causes of friction with the neighbouring nations, can never bring real stability to the country. Afghanistan has never been able to sustain its security forces on its own. Nor does the notion of strong security forces necessarily lead to political stability, a complex notion that entails more than the martial authority of an over-centralized political system.
The nature of Afghanistan's relations with Central and South Asia has been an inalienable determinant of its political stability throughout the history of the country. The two regions have always played an instrumental role in the rise and fall of whatever political system obtained in the country at any given era. In other words, they have always played a significant part in effecting basic structural changes in the Afghan polity, which is an important aspect of the concept of political stability. Existence of political violence, longevity of the governments, legitimacy of the political system and the ability of the state to penetrate the society with its policies have always depended to a large extent on the nature of the country's relations with the two regions. All the great dynasties and empires centered in Afghanistan before the eighteenth century, to a large extent, owed their grandeur to the availability of material and human resources from the two regions. The Muslim dynasties additionally used iconoclastic notions of foreign conquests in South Asia as a means of boosting their ethical legitimacy and mobilizing popular support which have always constituted important elements of political stability in Afghanistan.

The Afghan state emerged as an artificial political entity in the wake of European colonialism in Central and South Asia during the eighteenth to twentieth centuries. It was patched up out of territories culturally and historically aligned to Central Asia, South Asia and Iran. The country was vulnerable to a constant threat of political instability as it was unable to mobilize, domestically, the amount of material resources necessary to address the fallouts of internal and external tensions intrinsic to its modern identity. An over-centralized state apparatus defined by the ethos of ethno-nationalism often constituted the core of these tensions. The Afghan state enjoyed continuity as long as it received strong economic, military and political support from its various superpower patrons. Continuity forms only one aspect of the political stability, however. Availability of strong foreign support, at times, enabled the Afghan state to exercise political violence to such a degree that it compromised the political stability of the country in its entirety. Dependence on foreign support also had other negative implications for its political stability. The country received more than its fair share of major power rivalries and internal reservations about its legitimacy at various times. Foreign interventions, popular uprisings and coups d'état, which violently overthrew successive Afghan political systems in the past, were closely connected to the precarious nature of the country's clientelist relations with major powers in Central and South Asia and the ensuing popular apprehensions about the legitimacy of the polity.
With the partition of British India, Afghanistan had an opportunity to revive its old historic and cultural ties with its new neighbour, Pakistan. A policy of friendship towards Pakistan, with major emphasis on the existence of deep historic and cultural ties with that nation as a whole, would have helped the political stability of Afghanistan as it could alleviate the constraints of landlocked geography and the potential threat of foreign-inspired subversion in the country. Ethno-nationalism of the Afghan state, however, precluded it from grabbing the opportunity; the Afghan government preferred instead to advance irredentist claims against the new neighbour. Tensions with Pakistan drove Afghanistan towards the Soviet Union. Subsequent decades saw the country making some progress in modernization of its armed forces and economic development mainly sponsored by the Soviet Union. Although the government’s coercive capacity was strengthened and the economy more centralized as a result of the modernization programmes, the country did not necessarily attain more political stability as it was becoming increasingly dependent on the Soviet Union and estranged from two important neighbours, Pakistan and Iran, that could disrupt its transit trade. Questions about the ethical legitimacy of close economic collaboration with the Soviet Union polarized the small intellectual and political elite of the country. Yet both the pro- and anti-Soviet tendencies among the intelligentsia and the political elite opposed the corrupt and nepotistic Afghan political system, the monarchy, which had thus far continued to survive largely on foreign support from British India and the Soviet Union successively. A façade of stability masked the simmering social discontent and the fragility of the Afghan monarchy which was finally stamped out of existence with such ease as to challenge the presumptions of anyone who ever thought it was a tenable political system for the country. In 1973, for the first time in the modern history of Afghanistan, a republican regime was instituted in the country. Dominated by the pro-Soviet elements, the new regime persecuted its opponents, accelerated dependency on the Soviet Union and further antagonized Pakistan. This allowed both the Soviet Union and Pakistan to acquire an enhanced level of subversive capacity in Afghanistan. By the time the regime realized the pitfalls of its ethno-nationalist policies and tried to extricate itself from the stranglehold of the pro-Soviet elements, it was too late.

The communist coup of 1978 inaugurated a bloodier phase of persecution against and reaction from, Afghan society, which viewed the new regime as devoid of any legitimacy whatsoever. Rising instabilities in Afghanistan worried the Soviet leadership which decided to send its stabilization troops to the country. The presence of Soviet troops was counterproductive, leading to a national uprising. The Soviet and Afghan leaderships
implemented a comprehensive programme of reconstruction and diplomatic initiatives to complement the military aspect of their stabilization efforts. Pakistan played a key role in ensuring the failure of these efforts. It functioned as the main intermediary of modern Islamic political thought between the Muslim world and the Afghan resistance as well as playing the role of a conduit of military and economic supplies to the anti-Soviet campaign. Pakistan's role in the Afghan resistance effected an ideational transformation on the part of both the Pakistani leadership and the millions of Afghans who sought refuge in or visited the country periodically during the protracted conflict. The Pakistani leadership viewed the future of Afghanistan as a subordinate partner dedicated to follow Pakistan's lead in the regional and international issues. The Pashtun leadership of Pakistan, in the religious parties and the military-intelligence establishment, assumed a patronage role in relation to the Pashtun leadership in the Afghan resistance. Afghan refugees who visited Pakistan realized the falsehood in the past Afghan regimes' propaganda that had painted the Pakistani Pashtuns as an oppressed nation within the Pakistani body politic. The result of the ideational transformation was a complete reversal of the dynamics of Afghan-Pakistan relations which had enabled past Afghan regimes to use state-sponsored ethno-nationalism as a policy tool in support of irredentist claims against Pakistan. Ethno-nationalism was rolled back with the forces of pan-Islamism which engulfed the Pashtun regions of both Afghanistan and Pakistan. With this went away much of the capacity to maintain initiative-for-subversion from the Afghan to the Pakistani hands.

The ideational transformation of many Pakistanis and Afghans had wider implications for the political stability of Afghanistan beyond its immediate effects during the anti-PDPA resistance. When the Islamic State of Afghanistan (ISA) was instituted with a clear Islamic character and a genuine desire for friendship with Pakistan, but a policy to assert its independence as a sovereign state, Pakistan was prepared to destabilize it. On the other hand the ISA failed to help strengthen its rule because it over overemphasized the ethical legitimacy of the political system internally and adopted an ideological foreign policy that antagonized all the neighbouring countries. In the midst of instabilities in Afghanistan and the failure of Pakistan's main proxy, the Hezb-e-Islami, sections of the Pakistani security establishment and religious parties, dominated by the Pashtuns, took the initiative to introduce a new proxy force, the Taliban, and promote it in the international arena as a stabilizing phenomenon endogenous to Afghanistan. In reality, however, the new force was neither entirely endogenous nor exactly stabilizing. It was effectively the extended arm of sections of the powerful Pashtun strata in the Pakistani body politic and the religious establishment. Gradually the Taliban evolved to become a sophisticated international
maverick entity with tentacles deep into the Pakistani power-structures. Taliban policies further exacerbated ethnic tensions, antagonized important neighbouring countries and allowed an international myriad of foreign anti-state militant entities, generically known as Al-Qaeda, to have major influence in Afghanistan. Under these circumstances the country could not have been further from political stability, when Al-Qaeda assassinated the leader of anti-Taliban resistance (9 September 2001) and attacked the United States (11th of September 2001) successively.

The events of 9/11 in the US galvanized the West to punish Al-Qaeda and stabilize Afghanistan so that it would never again become a terrorist sanctuary. However, the stabilization policies which the anti-terrorist coalition adopted were faulty from the very beginning as they were based on misperceived notions of stability in Afghanistan. Having drawn the wrong lessons from the façade of stability during the 1950s-70s in Afghanistan, leading members of the international coalition assumed that an over-centralized ethno-nationalist system of governance would be best suited to produce stability in the country. Ethno-nationalist Afghan expatriate circles as a whole became key partners in the stabilization process. The status of the indigenous Afghan leadership, which had risen to prominence through many decades of political and military activism, was relegated to a tactical tool that would reinforce the strategic position of the expatriates. The policy had some benefits. It sought to address the concerns of international human rights organizations and the media whose relentless criticism of the indigenous leadership had made the latter a public relations liability to the Western liberal democracies. Having studied, worked and experienced life mainly in the West, the expatriates also held the promises of predictability, technocracy, and of steering the process of economic development in a neo-liberalist path favoured by international financial institutions and leading Western democracies. Relations at a personal level between members of the Afghan expatriate intelligentsia and influential Western figures involved in the process of stabilization ensured that they would be given a leading position in the country gradually.

But the policy had negative consequences as well. The over-centralized system of government had an inbuilt potential for instability as it failed to accommodate the legitimate political aspirations of popular political actors at the regional and provincial levels. Sections of the ethno-nationalist leadership, having spent decades out of the country, resented the entrenched power of the indigenous leadership mainly represented by the UIFSA. The latter were viewed as a bigger threat to the stability of the country than the Taliban which had largely melted away among the population and in neighbouring
Pakistan. As the insurgency grew in the southwestern and eastern regions, its causes were misattributed to extraneous factors, thereby reinforcing the misperception that it was fueled by Pushtun alienation. Yet, after the perceived causes of Pushtun alienation were largely removed, the insurgency showed no signs of abating. Parallel rationalizations for the growing strength of insurgency blamed it on the lack of sufficient funds for the security institutions, poverty, and lack of reconstruction assistance in the southwestern and eastern provinces. On closer scrutiny, however, such explanations could find little justification on the basis of relevant statistics compared to the progress made thus far.

Sections of the Taliban that continued to wage a violent campaign against the stabilization processes and the political systems that came in succession under the leadership of Hamid Karzai, were hardly motivated by the notions of ethno-nationalism. Their organizational links, tactics, and similar worldviews have made it increasingly difficult to distinguish between them and Al-Qaeda. Dangling power-sharing incentives could hardly hold any more attraction to the hardcore Taliban than they would possibly do to Al-Qaeda. The Taliban have made it clear that they do not recognize the ethical legitimacy of the foreign forces, the current Afghan political system, and the new Afghan leadership which dominates the system. They remain a dissenting force against the system as a whole. The ethno-nationalist leadership failed to neutralize the influence of the Taliban in the south; a task for which they have proved ill-prepared as they remained detached from the realities of an Afghanistan which they had seen decades ago.

Evident as it is throughout this thesis, the causes and implications of political stability/instability in Afghanistan cannot be confined to internal factors alone. The Afghan government is aware that stability cannot be attained without the cooperation of neighbouring countries. The development policies which the Afghan government and its international partners have adopted seek to persuade neighbouring nations to have major stakes in the stability of Afghanistan as a hub of regional economic cooperation. However, economic cooperation cannot be detached from the political and strategic considerations that also motivate the foreign policies of neighbouring countries. At the minimum, Afghanistan is expected to tackle the challenges of booming narcotics and a threat perception in Central Asia that extremism is still being exported from Afghanistan into the region.

The issue of extremism in Central Asia may pose a dilemma to the Afghan government in the longer term, especially if these countries resort to persecution of opposition politicians
under the pretext of fighting extremism. Nevertheless, the current policies of the Afghan government do not inspire confidence that it is genuinely determined to address the issue where the threat is manifestly clear. The creeping influence of the 'moderate' Taliban and the Hezb-e-Islami cadres was already a source of concern to Central Asia, Russia and India. President Karzai's offer of power-sharing arrangements with the hardcore Taliban and the Hezb-e-Islami, including Mullah Omar and Hekmatyar, has upped the ante. It is hardly conducive to regional cooperation. The booming narcotics industry clearly impedes regional cooperation; yet the Afghan government so far has been unwilling to address the problem seriously. Similarly, the permeating influence of ethno-nationalism in the Afghan government's policies is not helpful for its relations with either Pakistan or Central Asia. Pakistan is concerned about the revival of irredentism and the growing influence of India in Afghanistan. Such concerns could drive Pakistan to take preemptive measures to keep Afghanistan weak and busy with internal instabilities. For Central Asia, the issue of ethno-nationalism has not yet figured as a prominent impediment to its cooperation with the Afghan government. However, in the context of the emerging major power rivalries in Central Asia, it would be imprudent to leave large sections of the northern communities with the impression that the progress of stabilization was returning them to the status quo ante bellum.

Afghanistan does not have the financial means to maintain large security institutions. International assistance to the country cannot remain open-ended. Even if it did, mere security-centric policies can never bring stability to the country since stability is a multidimensional concept which entails much more than the coercive capacity of the state to exact obedience from the society. Stability could be best ensured by adopting a political system that is capable of relieving systemic frustration through constructive, rather than coercive, methods. In the case of Afghanistan, there is reason to believe that such frustration is also shared by some of the neighbouring nations. Afghanistan needs to make hard decisions if it is genuinely to improve its standing as a stable hub of international cooperation in the midst of Central and South Asia.

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Appendix I

Heads of State in Afghanistan Since 1919

4- King Mohammed Nadir (17 October 1929 – 08 November 1933) — Assassinated.
7- General Abdul Qadir, Chairman of The Military Council (27 April 1978 – 30 April 1978) — Relinquished interim power to civilian leadership.
8- Noor Mohammad Taraki (30 April 1978 – 16 September 1979) — Killed.
17- Hamid Karzai (December 2001 – Current).
Appendix II

Ethnic Affiliations of Afghans with Prominent Influence in the Post-Taliban Political Systems in Afghanistan (2002-2007)

1- Abdul Jabar SABET (Attorney General) Pushtun.
2- Abdul Karim KHORAM (Minister of Culture and Youth Affairs) Pushtun.
3- Abdul R. R. SAYYAF (Influential Mujahideen leader and Parliamentarian) Pushtun.
4- Abdul Salam AZIMI (Chief Justice) Pushtun.
5- Abdullah ABDULLAH (Minister for Foreign Affairs) Tajik/Pushtun.
6- Ahmad Zia MASSOUD (Vice President) Tajik.
7- Ali Ahmad JALALI (Minister of Interior) Pushtun.
8- Amrullah SALEH (General Director of the National Directorate of Security) Tajik.
9- Anwar-ul-Haq AHADY (President of the Central Bank, Finance Minister) Pushtun.
10- Ashraf GHANI (Advisor to President Karzai, Finance Minister, Chancellor Kabul University) Pushtun.
11- Burhanuddin RABBANI (Influential Mujahideen leader and Parliamentarian) Pushtun.
12- Farooq WARDAK (Minister for Parliamentary Affairs) Pushtun.
13- Fazl Ahmad SHINWARI (Chief Justice) Pushtun.
14- Hamid KARZAI (President) Pushtun.
15- Hanif ATMAR (Minister for Rural Development, Minister of Education) Pushtun.
16- Hedayat Amin ARSALA (Minister of Finance, Vice President, Minister of Commerce, Senior Minister) Pushtun.
17- Ishaq Naderi (Senior Economic Advisor to the President) Persian-speaking.
18- Jawid LUDIN (Spokesperson for the President, Chief of Staff of the President) Pushtun.
19- Karim KHALILI (Influential Mujahideen leader and Vice President) Hazara.
20- Mohammad Qasim FAHIM (Minister for Defence) Tajik.
21- Mohammad MOHAQEQ (Minister of Planning, Influential Mujahideen leader and Parliamentarian) Hazara.
22- Mohammad Younus QANOONI (Minister of Interior, Minister of Education, Speaker of the Parliament) Tajik.
23- Mohammad ZAHIR (former King, ‘Father of the Nation’) Pushtun.
24- Umer DAoudZAI (Chief of Staff of the President) Pushtun.
25- Pir Sayed Ahmad GAILANI (Influential Mujahideen leader) Pushtun/Arab.
26- Rahim WARDAK (Minister of Defence) Pushtun.
27- Rangin Dadfar SPANTA (Minister for Foreign Affairs) Persian-speaking.

This list does not include the Afghan Prime Ministers, some of whom exercised such a great influence in the affairs of state as to overshadow the authority of the head of state i.e. Prime Ministers Mohammad Hashim, Shah Mahmoud, Mohammad Daoud and Hafizullah Amin.
28- Sayed Taib JAWAD (Chief of Staff of the President, Ambassador to the United States) Qezelbash from Qandahar.

29- Sebghatullah MOJAHDDADI (Influential Mujahideen Leader and President of the Senate) Pushtunised religious figure with no particular ethnic background.

30- Taj Mohammad WARDAK (Minister of Interior) Pushtun.

31- Yousuf PUSHTUN (Minister for Urban Development) Pushtun.

32- Zalmai RASOOL (National Security Advisor) Pushtun.

33- Zalmay KHALILZAD (US Ambassador to Afghanistan) Pushtun.

34- Zarar Ahmad MOQBEL (Minister of Interior) Tajik.
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